Rajahs and Rebels

The Ibans of Sarawak under Brooke Rule, 1841–1941

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FOREWORD

ACROSS wide areas of Southeast Asia, there was a special quality in the historical relationship between European colonial regimes and tribal societies. The tribal people were, as a general rule, warlike hill rice farmers, without traditions of kingship or any written history. Although they frequently inhabited large regions of the interior, they were usually less numerous than the wet-rice-growing lowland or coastal peoples with their courts and chronicles and their heritage of Indian- or Chinese-influenced civilization.

The remote, ethnically fragmented hill folk often came into contact with colonial government late in time, and then only in the most superficial manner. But when they did develop a relationship with European rulers, it was generally marked more by harmony than by conflict. From northern Luzon to Burma, Western administrators developed a special affection for the tribal peoples, and often came to see themselves as the protectors and preservers of less sophisticated societies vis-à-vis the lowland groups. Unlike the Theravada Buddhist or Moslem lowlanders, the tribal people frequently adopted Christianity, and when nationalism began to develop among the more numerous, better-educated lowlanders, tribal leaders were inclined to regard this phenomenon as a threat to their own distinctive ways of life, and to identify their interests with those of the departing Europeans.

It was my original intention to investigate some of these assumptions through a case study of Sarawak, with the Brooke White Rajahs cast in the European role, and the Ibans as the major tribal group. J. D. Freeman's *Iban Agriculture*, published in 1955, had made it clear that contact between the Brookes and the Ibans was unusually long and eventful. Although in many areas of Southeast Asia the tribal people were too few in number to be of more than somewhat marginal historical significance, in Sarawak they (and the Ibans in particular) were the largest single element in a diverse population, a fact which made the Brooke State appear all the more attractive as a field for detailed study.

Many of the assumptions upon which this plan was based began to seem irrelevant when confronted with the facts of the particular local case. The Ibans were a tribal people in that they lacked any tradition of kingship or sustained contact with a literate civilization, but they were not in any sense a minority group in the Borneo context. There was never any clearly

dominant, 'civilized' lowland or coastal society in Sarawak, where almost everyone lives on rivers, and where, as a result, there has always tended to be a kind of continuum from the interior to the coast, rather than any abrupt oil-and-water cultural frontier. It soon became obvious that the Brookes were anything but typical of European rulers in general, and that some of the most important features of Iban political culture had no equivalent even among the neighboring tribal groups in Borneo. Not surprisingly, the relationship between the Brookes and the Ibans did not resemble anything yet reported from other areas of Southeast Asia. To the best of my knowledge, there was nothing really comparable either in Sabah (North Borneo) or in what is now Indonesian Borneo, the areas where one might most readily expect to find similar patterns of interaction between rulers and ruled.

In view of these considerations I altered my research objectives somewhat. I decided simply to relate the history of the Ibans under Brooke rule, and to emphasize and evaluate aspects of the subject relating to social change. Certainly there are elements of the story which will seem familiar to students acquainted with the experience of tribal societies elsewhere, but the extent of any similarities will have to be explored in a later comparative study, hopefully after much more regional research has been done.

This book considers the kind of contact which developed between a European government and a particular society in one area of Southeast Asia. It is a study set far from the main centers of political and commercial life, in the outlying provinces of a thinly populated, overwhelmingly rural state. It is a story of country places, of ten-shop Chinese bazaars, of villages, of longhouses and of individuals. It is the history of a time and a place where, it might be argued, nothing of great significance ever *happened.* Perhaps because there were few earth-shaking events in Brooke Sarawak, the minor crises and achievements of life, family disputes and personal triumphs, assumed great importance, and have been remembered.

This kind of history deserves to be recorded and studied for a number of reasons. In Sarawak, at least, it is of great interest to the people who were the participants, or to their descendants, and those who write history should, if possible, attempt to consider the needs and interests of the people about whom they are writing, as well as the demands of the academic community. But local history is also particularly relevant to any consideration of the impact of European colonial rule in Southeast Asia. Throughout the area, the majority of the population is rural, and most people came into contact with Western government only at the outstation, district officer level. In the villages and small provincial towns, colonial policy, individual personalities, local cultures and the regional terrain often acted together to produce a new

or greatly altered social scene. Such was the case in Sarawak, and it is my conviction, based on travel elsewhere in Southeast Asia, that Sarawak is not unique in this respect. Before the significance of the colonial era for any area can be fully comprehended, attention must be paid not only to the urban centers and the influence of European rule on the traditional ruling classes, but to the provinces as well. There is a need to supplement the short stories of Rudyard Kipling and Somerset Maugham, which, despite their obvious limitations as historical accounts, have done more than a little to illuminate Western involvement at the local level.

My research was made possible by grants from the London–Cornell Project, which financed both an initial six-month period of work on archival sources in London, and a subsequent fifteen-month stay in Sarawak from April 1965 to July 1966. During the latter period I spent approximately twelve months working in the Sarawak Museum and State Archives, Kuching, and the remaining three months traveling and interviewing elsewhere in Sarawak, mostly in the Second and Third Divisions.

While in Sarawak I enjoyed access to an unusual range of source material, both written and unwritten, owing to the assistance of the Sarawak Museum. Work proceeded under the terms of a cooperative program suggested by the Curator (now Emeritus), Mr Tom Harrisson, to whom I should like to express my deep gratitude. According to this arrangement, I helped Mr Benedict Sandin with the preparation of his book, *The Sea Dayaks of Borneo before White Rajah Rule*, published by Macmillan in 1967. It was expected that this study of pre-Brooke Iban proto-history, based primarily on the oral materials which Mr Sandin has collected over the years, would complement my own interest in the later Brooke period, and that Mr Sandin and I would be able to assist each other on our respective projects. All concerned are agreed that this expectation has been amply fulfilled.

Benedict Sandin, who has recently succeeded Mr Harrisson as the Curator of the Sarawak Museum, is himself an Iban, and the foremost authority on the history and culture of his people. He grew up in a prosperous rubber-growing district, the Paku branch of the Saribas River, Second Division, and received a modern education at Anglican mission schools before World War II.

Although the people of his Saribas home area welcomed education, Christianity, and other new Western practices long before most of the other Ibans in Sarawak, they did not simultaneously abandon all aspects of traditional Iban culture, a feature of their history which will be discussed at greater length in the pages that follow. On the contrary, the Saribas Ibans maintained and even elaborated old ceremonial and literary forms with

exceptional vigor, and as a result Benedict Sandin was fully exposed to an Iban cultural heritage before he learned to read and write English. At an early age he decided to master this heritage, which is conveyed through an oral literature seemingly endless in its volume and variety. He feared that sooner or later, in the Saribas as everywhere else, people would no longer be willing or able to devote the time and effort required to sustain this body of unwritten tradition, and he hoped to collect and preserve as much as possible for the benefit of future generations.

He sought out genealogists, authorities on local history, and the *lemambang* who recite the great ritual songs which precede every major Iban festival, and he learned from them. For many years he continued his studies on a purely amateur basis, while holding a variety of jobs in the Sarawak Government service. Then in 1952 he met Tom Harrisson, who recognized his exceptional talents and recruited him as a full-time Research Assistant for the Sarawak Museum. Ever since that time he has been traveling throughout Sarawak, collecting and recording the history and folklore of many groups, both Ibans and others, in all parts of the country. His unique blend of dedication and experience has enabled him to develop an erudition in Iban history, religion, and folklore which far surpasses that of any other single person in the country.

In the course of research I relied heavily on Benedict Sandin's advice and assistance in many ways. I have not hesitated to cite him as an authority, but his influence on my thinking was far greater than the footnote references might indicate. I cannot overstate my debt to him. In contrast to his own work, *The Sea Dayaks of Borneo before White Rajah Rule*, the present study is based primarily on written sources, described in the bibliography. But local traditions and other oral materials, mostly collected by Mr Sandin over the course of many years, added another dimension to my understanding, and often supplied missing facts as well. Supplemented by my own travel and interviewing, these traditions and Mr Sandin's comments on them enabled me to discuss Iban motives, as well as those of the Brookes, with some degree of confidence.

The beginning of Chapter 6 provides one example of the way in which oral materials have been used in the present study. It describes an epic conflict between an Iban leader and the Resident of the Second Division, a story valuable both for the light it sheds on Brooke methods and for the glimpse it gives of Iban attitudes toward Brooke rule. I first became aware of this episode in the course of conversation with Mr Sandin, who had already recorded a traditional version for his book, *Peturun Iban*, since published (in Iban) by the Borneo Literature Bureau. I knew that he had

learned the story of Munan and Bailey from Ibans in the Krian, the district concerned, where it was remembered in the context of a dispute between two Iban families. Several months after we had first discussed the matter, I discovered in the Archives the 'Kabong Letters' series, three battered notebooks which Mr Sandin himself had never seen, filled with manuscript reports from a contemporary official. Together with items published in the *Sarawak Gazette* these reports confirmed the main outlines of what had appeared at first to be a somewhat fantastic story – indeed the written record was if anything even more incredible than the traditional version. Once I had discovered the documents, Mr Sandin's help was again of enormous value, since he was familiar with all the Ibans mentioned, knew exactly how they were related to each other, and could assess their probable interest in the events described. He was able to judge the reliability of the written reports, which in turn supplied an essential framework of chronology. The documents also provided a necessary picture of official motives and actions which was completely lacking in the Iban oral version.

In presenting material of this kind I have attempted to specify as exactly as possible in the footnotes the kind of sources upon which statements of fact are based. But it must be emphasized that the opinions expressed from time to time are often completely my own. It is possible, indeed likely, that neither Benedict Sandin nor the other people who helped me in the course of this study would agree with many of my conclusions.

In addition to Mr Harrisson and Mr Sandin, numerous others gave freely of their time, knowledge and hospitality to assist me in gathering material. I would like to express particular appreciation to the following individuals, all of whom contributed advice or information (and often both) of great value: Sir Anthony Abell, Mr J. P. Andriesse, Balai of Tapang Pungga, Dato Pengarah Banyang of Julau, Mr T. Stirling Boyd, Mr Anthony W. D. Brooke, Lady Anne Bryant, Mr C. W. Dawson, Mr W. P. N. L. Ditmas, retired Penghulu Gerinang of the Gat, retired Penghulu Imong of Nanga Kumpang, Impin (Pintu Batu) of Bangat, Dato Abang Indih bin Abang Abdul Gapor, Mr Juing Insol of Dabok, Mr John Nichol Kasim, Mr K. Kitto, Judge D. R. Lascelles, Mr Ling Beng Siew, Dato and Mrs A. R. G. Morrison, Abang Naruddin bin Sarkawi, Penghulu Ngali of Delok, retired Penghulu Ningkan of Pudai, the late Governor of Sarawak Dato Abang Tun Haji Openg bin Abang Sapi'ee, Mr Ong Kee Hui, Mr A. J. N. Richards, Selaka of Stambak Ulu, Sirai of Entaih, Mr A. R. Snelus, Mr Peter Tinggom, Mr A. B. Ward, Sir Dennis White, Mr J. K. Wilson, and Dato Abang Haji Zen.

Many others too numerous to mention helped my wife and me during the

course of travels in Sarawak. I owe more than I can express to the constant assistance of the entire Sarawak Museum staff, particularly to the Assistant Curator, Mr Lucas Chin, and to the Archivist, Mr Loh Chee Yin, both of whose cooperation was essential to the completion of my project. I would also like to thank Professors G. William Skinner and John E. Lewis and Miss Gerry Bowman of the London–Cornell Project for their unfailingly prompt and sympathetic attention before and during my months abroad. Like all students who have been privileged to participate in the Cornell Southeast Asia Program I am greatly indebted to Professor George McT. Kahin and Professor John Echols. My wife drafted the maps which accompany this study, gave invaluable assistance at every other stage of the project, and shared all the pleasures and interests of our stay in Sarawak. We would both like to thank Miss Rosemary Jimbau and Miss Mackenna Samuel for instructing us in the Iban language.

I profited in many ways from the advice and criticism of Dr H. S. Morris, who was instrumental in helping me to clarify my research aims. The project would never have been undertaken without the guidance and inspiration of Professor O. W. Wolters. His teaching of Southeast Asian history brought that subject alive for me at the beginning of my studies. His sympathetic supervision of the present work enabled me to impose whatever order may exist in the final product, and made what might have been an onerous chore a constantly stimulating and enjoyable exercise.

A NOTE ON SPELLING AND THE USE OF ETHNIC TERMS

No wholly neat and consistent use of ethnic terminology for the varied peoples of Sarawak would be altogether satisfactory, because the underlying social realities are both imprecise and flexible. Since the significant social categories are cultural, not biological, both individuals and communities may shift their self-professed identities in any number of ways. To cite the best-known example, a pagan who adopts Islam in most cases 'becomes a Malay' (*masok Melayu*), and likewise the son of a rural Chinese shopkeeper who grows up in a longhouse speaking Iban and farming hill rice may be regarded by himself and by others as an Iban. Moreover, it frequently happens that communities which seem to belong in one ethnic category by virtue of one criterion, such as language, may be classified otherwise by virtue of another equally significant criterion, such as religion or economic behavior. It is understandable that the well-intentioned efforts of Western observers to impose 'scientific' consistency by fitting peoples into ethnic pigeonholes have led to endless and sterile controversy, without eliminating ambiguity and confusion.

Nevertheless in order to discuss a highly complex plural society, the political dynamics of which were largely determined by the interplay of different ethnic groups, the writer must have some set of labels. My own method has been to select certain terms which seemed to be generally accepted, at the time of my research, by the particular groups concerned. In using them consistently I do not mean to imply that they are the best or the only terms. The more specific explanations that follow are primarily for the benefit of old Sarawak hands and social anthropologists.

Iban. The Iban people were until recently more generally known as Sea Dayaks, a term which is still widely used and completely valid. The growing acceptance of 'Iban' in recent years is discussed at length in the first chapter.

Pagan. I have employed this word from time to time in reference to all the various tribal societies of Borneo. It is an old and convenient usage (see Charles Hose, *The Pagan Tribes of Borneo*) which, although little heard in recent years, is certainly not necessarily pejorative. For many centuries Western scholars have referred to the ancient Greeks and Romans

as pagans, with the greatest respect, and the term is used here in a similar spirit.

Dayak. Although the Dutch employed the unmodified word 'Dayak' as a collective term for all the tribal people (and the practice continues in modern Indonesia), this usage was never followed in Sarawak, where the Kenyahs and Kayans, for example, were never known as Dayaks. Despite its continuing popularity among casual visitors, 'Dayak' is surrounded by such extreme confusion on a number of counts that I have tried to avoid it as much as possible, except with the modification required to designate two specific pagan groups, Sea Dayaks (Ibans) and Land Dayaks. When Sarawak administrators wrote of 'Dayaks' (unmodified), as they did in numerous passages quoted in this book, they were referring to *Sea* Dayaks or Ibans in nine cases out of ten (see p. 19, n. 4 below).

Malay. According to Sarawak usage, any person who calls himself a Malay is by definition a Moslem. But the reverse of this proposition is not uniformly valid, particularly with respect to the important Melanau group concentrated in the Third Division, which has long been divided into originally pagan (now often Christian) and Moslem components. Although some Melanaus who profess Islam call themselves Malays, others prefer to be known as Moslem Melanaus. The factors involved in this situation are much intertwined in local history and modern politics, and need not be explained here.

My own usage has inevitably been somewhat arbitrary. In the western areas of Sarawak which first came under Brooke rule, the First and Second Divisions, the term Malay is accepted by virtually all Moslems, including many who are no doubt of relatively recent Melanau, Land Dayak or other pagan ancestry. In these two provinces, to become a Moslem is *invariably* to 'become a Malay'. Hence in discussing these two Divisions I have used 'Malay' to refer to any Moslem. In the case of the Third Division, however, where large numbers of people regard themselves as Moslem Melanaus, I have used 'Malay' and 'Moslem Melanau' interchangeably.

In theory it could be argued that the term 'Malay' is unsatisfactory and should be avoided entirely, since it implies that the ancestors of the Borneo Malays were, at some past period, migrants from Sumatra or Malaya. Although at one time such migration theories were popular, it is now generally accepted that no significant physical migration took place, but rather that certain of the Borneo pagan tribal peoples (and probably some who had been acquainted with Hinduism in an earlier era) 'became Malay' be accepting Islam. It could further be argued that in the Borneo context 'Malay' is no more than an artificial, European-supplied synonym for Moslem.

There are strong indications, but no proof in the written record, that it is widely used in Sarawak today only because in 1841 James Brooke brought it with him from Singapore, where it had been vaguely applied to all the coast-dwelling, seafaring Moslems of the Indonesian archipelago, particularly to those of Sumatra and the Malayan peninsula. What lends credence to this theory is the fact that in Sabah (formerly British North Borneo) there are no 'Malays', but only a variety of Moslem sub-groups: Bajaus, Sulus, Bruneis and so on. This is apparently because the administrative vocabulary of the Chartered Company which governed Sabah differed from that of the Brooke regime. If a Sabah 'Brunei' moved to Kuching today, he would instantly be a 'Malay' in Sarawak terminology.

Yet no matter how artificial the origins of the term, it would be absurd and presumptuous to shun the use of 'Malay' at this late date. Over long generations, and thanks in part to features of Brooke rule which will be discussed, 'the Malays' have coalesced into a palpable social category, including most but not all Moslems, which has long functioned as a political force of great importance. Any discussion of Sarawak's past which implicitly denied the existence of 'the Malays' as a group would not only be unintelligible to a local audience; it would do violence to historical reality as well.

Upriver Melanau. I have adopted this term to designate those pagan peoples who were the original, pre-Iban inhabitants of the Rejang River valley, as far upstream as the vicinity of Belaga. The widely dispersed communities who comprise this group include 'Kanowit Dayaks', Tanjongs, settled Punans (or Punan Ba), Skapans, Kajamans, Lahanans and others. These people, most of them longhouse-dwelling, are well aware of their own close cultural relationship with the Melanaus of the coast, although in most cases their style of life today more nearly resembles that of the Kenyahs and Kayans who are their upstream neighbors in the Rejang headwaters.

Spelling. No standardized system of spelling place and personal names has yet been agreed upon in Sarawak. Standard Malay orthography is not necessarily appropriate, since many names are derived from Borneo languages which are far removed from standard Malay. As matters stand, the River Rejang may be spelled Rajang with equal validity; Gat may appear in print as Gaat, Ga'at or even Ga-at, and Baleh is as good as Balleh. The manner in which a man chooses to romanize his name, be it Iban, Chinese or Malay, is still his own business. In all cases where different spellings are possible, my method has been to select one of the more common versions and use it consistently. Since nineteenth-century spelling was often far from any modern variant, names in quotations from original sources have been

altered to conform with the version selected for use in the text. The same rule has been used in spelling common ethnic terms such as Sharif, Dayak and Melanau. I have followed English rather than Dutch orthography (*j* not *dj*, *u* not *oe*, etc.) even for the names of places on what was formerly the Dutch side of the frontier.

ABBREVIATIONS

CCB	Court Case Book (Sarawak Archives)
CO	Colonial Office
FO	Foreign Office
JAS	*Journal of Asian Studies*
JIA	*Journal of the Indian Archipelago*
JMBRAS	*Journal of the Malayan Branch, Royal Asiatic Society*
JSBRAS	*Journal of the Straits Branch, Royal Asiatic Society*
PP	*Parliamentary Papers*
SA	Sarawak Archives
SG	*Sarawak Gazette*
SGG	*Sarawak Government Gazette*
SMJ	*Sarawak Museum Journal*

All dollar figures quoted are in Straits Dollars. Before 1906 the value of the Straits Dollar fluctuated; since then it has been pegged to Sterling at the rate of one dollar to 2*s* 4*d* (usually between 50 and 60 U.S. cents at pre-World-War-II rates of exchange).

I | Land and People

For centuries Southeast Asia has been to some extent a political and cultural low-pressure area. The social character of the region has been deeply influenced by two factors, the fissuring effect of mountain ranges, river valleys and seas, and a location exposed to competing currents emanating from the civilizations of East Asia, India, the Middle East and Europe. Both of these factors have favored diversity. It is true that long before the advent of European colonialism Southeast Asia included some great kingdoms and high cultures, most of them initially inspired by ancient Indian prototypes. Nevertheless the area is more appealing to a mind which enjoys infinite variety than to the purist who prefers the depth and consistency of classical tradition.

Borneo, the world's third largest island, lies across the equator at the geographic center of Southeast Asia. It is fair to say that up to now the island's historical significance has hardly been commensurate with its sheer physical size. The Borneo terrain is an inhospitable mix of mountain, swamp and jungle, and at least partly as a result the island was never the seat of any major empire. Because it remained remote from more civilized centers, it received the diffusion of outside cultures in a relatively tardy and sporadic fashion. Today it remains an underdeveloped island, even by the standards of an underdeveloped region, still characterized by great expanses of jungle. With a population of perhaps five million in an area of roughly 285,000 square miles, it hardly fits the Western stereotype of teeming Asia. Like the upper Amazon valley, Borneo is one of the world's last frontiers.

The southern two-thirds of the island are now part of the Republic of Indonesia, while the northern third (with the exception of the tiny, British-protected Sultanate of Brunei) has been joined with peninsular Malaya since 1963 in the Federation of Malaysia. Like so many of the arbitrary dotted lines which crisscross maps of Asia and Africa, the present division had its genesis in colonial competition during the nineteenth century. The Dutch, controlling most of the Indonesian archipelago from a rich and productive base on Java, emerged from this era holding southern Borneo. The British,

always primarily concerned to keep open the sea lanes linking more important interests in India and China, acquired protectorate powers over northern Borneo in a series of historical accidents and imperial fits of absent-mindedness. The dissolution of empires after World War II followed the colonial demarcations, resulting in the national boundaries that exist today.

The story of Sarawak, larger of two states in what is now Malaysian Borneo, was one particularly colorful episode in the low-key British involvement with the northern section of the island. Familiar in England but little known in the United States, it began in 1839 when a young man named James Brooke embarked on an idealistic adventure designed to extend the British Empire in the Eastern Seas. Because the contemporary rulers of Britain were simply not interested in acquiring more territory in this part of Asia, Brooke failed to attract more than marginal support from London. Instead he became the First White Rajah of Sarawak, founding an English dynasty which lasted until World War II. It is a romantic tale which has enlivened the annals of colonialism, but it had a more serious aspect as well, for Brooke rule shaped the social and political personality of modern Sarawak.

The founder of the dynasty was a rare example of the men who, for many individual reasons, assembled the building-blocks of the British Empire. After resigning a commission in the Indian Army at an early age, James Brooke returned to England where he inherited a modest fortune and pondered ways to slake a thirst for adventure whetted by life in the Orient. At some point he was inspired by the eloquent writings of Sir Stamford Raffles, the founder of Singapore.[1] Raffles had been Governor of Java during the Napoleonic Wars, when for a time the Dutch East Indies were under British control. Emotionally and intellectually committed to the island world, he did his best to make the British presence in Indonesia permanent. But once Holland had been freed from Bonapartist control it was London's policy to shore up a valued European ally, and this meant relinquishing the Indies to Dutch rule. It was only thanks to his adept maneuvering on the local scene, of which his distant superiors remained ignorant until after the fact, that Raffles was able to acquire the site of Singapore for Great Britain in 1819. His dream of a far greater archipelago empire languished in the pages of his dispatches.

Nevertheless when James Brooke began his adventure twenty years later it seemed that there was still some chance for further British initiative. The

[1] For the motives which prompted Brooke's voyage, see James Brooke, 'Mr Brooke's Expedition to Borneo', in *The Private Letters of Sir James Brooke, K.C.B., Rajah of Sarawak*, ed. John C. Templer (London, 1853) I 12–33.

Dutch had not yet consolidated their control over many of the areas in the outer islands beyond Java, including Borneo. Moreover, thanks to the ambiguity of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824, there was no accepted demarcation between the Dutch possessions and the British power sphere centered on the Straits Settlements of Penang, Malacca and Singapore.[1] It was possible that Raffles' dream, or at least a portion of it, could still be realized.

In pursuit of that dream Brooke sailed from Singapore in July 1839 aboard a small armed yacht purchased with his inheritance. Quite by chance he had learned that a prince of the Sultanate of Brunei, the nominal sovereign power over northern Borneo, was governing at a settlement called Sarawak, many miles west of Brunei town. The coast was largely unexplored by Europeans, and was supposed to be infested with pirates, but this prince was reputedly well inclined toward the British. In addition, Sarawak was known to produce valuable supplies of antimony ore. Brooke realized that, however his half-formed ambitions might take shape, a local ally would prove useful, and so he set off in search of Sarawak.[2]

The next hundred years of the Brooke story, to be elaborated in the pages ahead, may be quickly summarized here. James arrived at his destination to discover that the Brunei prince, Pengiran Muda Hasim, was stalled in an inconclusive civil war against a coalition of local foes. In return for helping Hasim, Brooke demanded and received the governorship of the province of Sarawak, or 'Sarawak Proper', roughly the area included in the modern State's First Division. He then began a long struggle to involve the British in support of his enterprise, always hoping that his initiative would pave the way for a more substantial colonial presence.

In the earliest years of his rule the First White Rajah did attract British naval support, without which he would never have survived, but in the long run and for a variety of reasons he failed completely to persuade the Foreign Office that it was in Britain's interest to assume any responsibility for ruling Borneo. It was an embittered and disillusioned man who in 1868 bequeathed to his nephew and successor, Charles Brooke, an impoverished but still wholly independent Sarawak.

Charles, somewhat in contrast to the first Brooke ruler, found untram-

[1] Graham Irwin, *Nineteenth Century Borneo: A Study in Diplomatic Rivalry*, reprint ed. (Singapore, 1965) p. 66; D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, 2nd ed. (London, 1964) pp. 496–7.

[2] For more complete accounts of Brooke's early career in Borneo, see the standard general histories: S. Baring-Gould and C. A. Bampfylde, *A History of Sarawak under its Two White Rajahs 1839–1908* (London, 1909) and Steven Runciman, *The White Rajahs: A History of Sarawak from 1841 to 1946* (Cambridge, 1960).

melled freedom altogether to his liking. Although Sarawak (together with Sabah and Brunei) came under formal British protection in 1888, the internal affairs of the State remained completely in Brooke hands. Imbued with self-reliance by an arduous early career in his uncle's service in the jungles of Borneo, yet also steeped in the social attitudes of the Victorian squirearchy, the Second Rajah governed Sarawak somewhat in the spirit of an English gentleman managing his country estate.

He ruled for half a century, and the force of his austere personality was such that many of his subjects no doubt believed that he would live forever, but he died in 1917 and was succeeded by his son, Vyner Brooke. Because the Third White Rajah was not a strong figure, the closing phase of the Brooke regime smacked of anti-climax. The State was a quiet, moderately prosperous colonial backwater when Japanese troops occupied Kuching shortly after Pearl Harbor. When the war ended, Vyner, perhaps sensing that the day of White Rajahs was over, told his people that Brooke family rule would be unequal to the tasks of postwar rehabilitation and development. Despite bitter opposition from some groups in Sarawak, who found champions among the abdicating Rajah's own relatives, Vyner ceded his State to the British Crown in 1946. British colonial rule lasted until 1963, when Sarawak was merged with Malaya, Singapore and Sabah to create the Federation of Malaysia.

In the record of Sarawak's involvement with the West there is much that is bitter, as there is in any colonial history, but on balance there is more that is sweet. Perhaps this is because Borneo remains an island where mankind is obviously subordinate to nature, where grand rivers and untouched jungles leave deeper impressions on the minds of Europeans and natives alike than does the travail of human politics, no matter how real and tumultuous the latter may be. Certainly departed British administrators have tended to look back on a place of charm and interest, a land appealing to the intellect as well as to the emotions. For them there was little to fear in the physical environment, for northwest Borneo has always been a comfortable place to live, where the equatorial heat is softened by cool breezes and frequent rains. Sparse settlement has precluded such persistent health problems resulting from congestion and pollution as are common elsewhere in tropical Asia.[1] But among the ingredients of Sarawak's appeal the extraordinary cultural diversity of the population is perhaps the foremost.

[1] Sporadic epidemics, particularly of cholera and smallpox, were a common curse until quite recently, not least in the thinly settled interior (see the account of the Cholera Expedition in ch. 7 below). But except in the earliest years of Brooke rule, these ravages were never a threat to British officers, nor to anyone who took minimum hygienic precautions, and Sarawak has never been very malarial.

The three main cultural categories of population in the State will be mentioned constantly in the narrative that follows. They are Moslem Malay, Chinese, and a diverse complex of tribal peoples (originally pagan, now often Christian) of whom the most numerous are the Ibans, the special subject of this book. Although there were Chinese living in Borneo before James Brooke arrived, the great majority came to Sarawak in response to conditions resulting from European rule, as will be described. The Malays are essentially the Islamized component of the original Borneo population. The pagan tribal peoples, today comprising roughly one-third of the total State population of 820,000, include virtually all people (except, of course, for the Chinese) who have never adopted Islam.

The tribal peoples, the only element in the population whose culture is unique to Borneo, have always held a special fascination for outsiders. They were the fabled headhunters, the 'wild men' of sideshow fame, or, more accurately, the inherently interesting truth which bred a host of threadbare legends. Almost every modern visitor to Sarawak knows about these 'Dayaks'[1] and their streamside longhouses, and a surprisingly large proportion leave the country having tasted 'Dayak' life. It is an unforgettable experience.

Today's visit to a longhouse usually begins with an outboard-powered longboat journey up one of Sarawak's innumerable rivers, perhaps commencing in its sluggish tidal reaches near the sea, then proceeding toward the headwaters, into stretches where the current quickens and progress is impeded by frequent rapids. Many longhouse settlements are located well inland along streams narrow enough to be almost completely roofed over by arching jungle foliage. Here one's boat moves as if through a gigantic green tunnel, where kingfishers flit from branch to branch overhead and the rushing waters are clear and cool.

When the water level is low, rocks and rapids are a constant hindrance. Yet sudden rains may transform the most placid river into a roaring torrent, raising the water level by ten vertical feet or more in a few hours. Stream conditions are rarely just right for the traveler, and even with the advantage of modern equipment interior navigation demands much skill and effort. Even now it is easy to appreciate how rivers have regulated the extent of contact between interior communities and the outside world. Wide, quiet rivers giving easy access to the sea (and there are a few) invite the relatively rapid penetration of new ideas and material possessions inland. Narrow streams choked with obstructions have the opposite effect. To say that a

[1] For the meaning of 'Dayak', see p. 19 and n. 4 on that page and the 'Note on Spelling and the Use of Ethnic Terms' at the beginning of this work.

man lives ten miles further up a fast-flowing stream than his neighbor is almost always to say that he lives in a world more isolated from the prevailing winds of change. Outboard motors, highways and helicopters are only slowly invalidating this basic Borneo social rule.

Each of the tribal groups has its own style of longhouse, and the peculiarities of the Iban version will be mentioned later, but all share broad features in common. A longhouse is really no more than a collection of single family dwellings, raised on stilts and jointed together in a row, usually parallel to a nearby river, with certain verandah and passageway portions serving the entire community. (The basic physical layout is not unlike that of a typical American motel.) The visitor arrives at the communal landing-place, cluttered with boats, housewives washing, and urchins swimming. Then he clambers up a narrow, grease-slick notched log to the top of the river bank, only to be greeted by another equally perilous 'ladder' leading into the longhouse itself.

Inside, a warm welcome invariably awaits the guest, regardless of how relatively wealthy or poor the community may be. A vigorous tradition of hospitality has come to be a hallmark of longhouse life, and the fact that an entire village is housed in one structure undoubtedly makes it easier for families to share the expense of entertaining than is the case in a more dispersed rural settlement. Longhouse-dwellers are typically open and gregarious with foreigners, eager for news of the outside world, and extremely fond of entertaining. There is often dancing and more often drink, and the fun may go on for most of the night. The visitor is emphatically expected to contribute to the general festivities. If you are American, for example, you will certainly not be allowed simply to sit back and watch the picturesque natives perform. You had better be ready and able to demonstrate your own cultural attributes by twisting, shaking or even frugging in return. The longhouse hospitality syndrome is not a means of indicating deference; it is designed to produce mutual benefits, with at least as much satisfaction and enlightenment accruing to the host community as to the often red-eyed and exhausted guests.

The appeal of the longhouse has done much to perpetuate foreign interest in the tribal peoples, but that interest existed even before there was a European regime in northwest Borneo. It was already stirring in James Brooke when he left Singapore in 1839 on the first stage of his vague quest for adventure and empire. He knew from his reading and his conversations in Singapore that the ruling classes of coastal Borneo, including the royal family of the Sultanate of Brunei, were Moslems, and he shared the prevailing British assumption, no longer wholly acceptable, that these people were Malays

identical in origin and culture to the other Moslem Malays of the Malayan Peninsula and Sumatra. But the future White Rajah was also aware that there were tribal peoples, living for the most part toward the interior, who, in contrast to the Malays, had never become Moslems. These 'Dayaks', as they were already known to the British, were regarded as the aboriginal inhabitants of the island, but firm information concerning them was sparse.

It was natural that Brooke should be particularly anxious to explore this mystery. Only a few days after his arrival in Kuching, the principal settlement of Sarawak Proper, he asked his Brunei Malay hosts to show him some of the nearby 'Dayak' towns. Somewhat to his surprise they cheerfully cooperated, and before long he was jotting down his first impressions of a longhouse in a journal passage which would sound familiar to many a more recent visitor. The structure, Brooke wrote, was enclosed by a slight stockade:

> Within this defence there is *one* enormous house for the whole population, and three or four small huts. The exterior of the defence between it and the river is occupied by sheds for prahus, and at each extremity are one or two houses belonging to Malay residents.
>
> The common habitation, as rude as it is enormous, measures 594 feet in length, and the front room, or *street*, is the entire length of the building, and 21 feet broad. The back part is divided by mat-partitions into the private apartments of the various families, and of these there are forty-five separate doors leading from the public apartment. The widowers and young unmarried men occupy the public room, as only those with wives are entitled to the advantage of separate rooms. This edifice is raised twelve feet from the ground, and the means of ascent is by the trunk of a tree with notches cut in it – a most difficult, steep and awkward ladder. In front is a terrace fifty feet broad, running partially along the front of the building, formed, like the floors, of split bamboo. This platform, as well as the front room, besides the regular inhabitants, is the resort of pigs, dogs, birds, monkeys and fowls, and presents a glorious scene of confusion and bustle.[1]

Here the founder of the English dynasty describes his first meeting with the people who were to be his most numerous, most troublesome, and yet in some ways most useful subjects. They were Ibans, members of Sarawak's

[1] James Brooke journal entry, 1 Sept 1839, in Henry Keppel, *The Expedition to Borneo of H.M.S. Dido* (London, 1846) 1 51–2. The place names in the early English books on Sarawak are often far removed from current usage: here Keppel gives 'Sibnow' for Sebuyau, and 'Tungong' for Stunggang.

By an odd coincidence, the headman of these Lundu Sebuyau Ibans in 1839 was named Jugah (Keppel gives 'Sejugah', adding a Malay-style honorific prefix), which is also the name of the present (1968) Federal Minister for Sarawak Affairs, Tan Sri Temenggong Jugah; while his eldest son was Kalong, the true name of Sarawak's first Chief Minister after independence within Malaysia, Dato Stephen Kalong Ningkan. Iban names do not recur historically in this manner very often.

largest and, in cultural terms, most uniform tribal society, and the one which today holds the balance of political power in Malaysian Borneo's largest state. The longhouse that James Brooke visited was located at Stunggang on the Lundu River, west of the Sarawak River and Kuching. It was one of several sites inhabited by a splinter group of migrants, known to the early British writers on Sarawak as 'Sebuyau Dayaks', who lived far west of the main area of Iban settlement.[1] Today, after generations of contact with surrounding non-Iban societies, the Sebuyaus have lost many of the features of their original culture and regard themselves as a group apart, but Brooke's description and the vocabulary which he collected prove that in 1839 their way of life was more typical of the Iban majority.[2]

For nearly a century the relationship between the Brooke regime and the Ibans was to be a factor of major importance on the Sarawak political scene. The nature and consequences of this interaction between ruler and ruled, endlessly turbulent yet paradoxically harmonious, are the main topic of this book. But the varied elements of cooperation and conflict cannot be understood without some knowledge of the local terrain, which has exerted a more than usually controlling influence on the historical process.

Contrary to the hopes and rash predictions of some early European visitors, the natural environment of Borneo does not generally favor the works of man. In recent ages there has been little volcanic activity on the island, which for the most part lacks rich soils such as those found in Java. There are some areas of mineral wealth, including Sarawak's First Division, described below, but they are not widespread. Perhaps most discouraging, soil and climate conditions together have created formidable barriers to the practice of settled cultivation.

The hill areas suffer from a common tropical phenomenon known as leaching. Great trees are found growing on the thinnest of soils, but only because of the rapid cycling of nutrients from dead vegetable matter back to living plants. The nutrients do not accumulate in the soil because the heavy, warm rain quickly leaches them away. When the farmer cuts and burns the forest to plant rice, his crops soon exhaust the shallow reserve supply of plant food in the soil. After one or two harvests, he must fell the jungle elsewhere and

[1] For the story of the Sebuyau migrations, see ch. 2.

[2] Keppel, *Dido*, 1 54–5. For example, the Iban word for sea is today spelled *tasik*, but it is still pronounced 'tasiek', as Brooke spelled it, with a marked glide on the vowel *i*, a common and distinctive feature of Iban phonetics. The Lundu Sebuyau Ibans and other Sebuyau groups in the First Division were frequently visited by Western observers when it was still unsafe to visit most areas of the Second Division, and as a result two classic early accounts of Iban culture are based largely on observations of these people: 'The Sea Dayaks' in Hugh Low, *Sarawak: Its Inhabitants and Productions* (London, 1848) pp. 165–238, and 'The Sea Dayaks' in Spenser St John, *Life in the Forests of the Far East* (London, 1862) 1 5–78.

prepare a new field, not returning to the old site until a fallow period of up to ten or more years has passed. If he ignores this rule, crop yields rapidly decline and the value of the soil may be permanently destroyed. Only through irrigation, not practical in most hill areas, can the dilemma be solved, for wet rice, unlike the hill variety, is nourished primarily by water-borne nutrients. With irrigation, endless cropping on the same spot may become feasible.[1]

Unfortunately, lowland soils in Sarawak are subject to another process which presents an even greater challenge to the cultivator. Under certain conditions of poor drainage and high temperature, the bacteria which are the normal agents of organic decay cannot function. Instead of being leached away, dead vegetable matter refuses even to rot. Rather, it piles up in ever increasing layers of acid peat, sometimes accumulating to depths of forty feet or more. In Sarawak, deep peat is encountered in most coastal areas of the Second and Third Divisions. In such regions, only strips along the banks of rivers, where the overflowing waters have deposited fresh alluvium, are suitable for cultivation. Not even drainage will make deep peat soils arable. In some lowland areas where deep peat is not found, such as the Sarawak River delta, mangrove swamp, only slightly less inhospitable, prevails instead. The widespread distribution of such soils helps to explain why the deltas of Sarawak have not and are not likely to become rice bowls similar to the great river deltas of mainland Southeast Asia.[2]

Limitations imposed by environment discouraged the growth of dense population in the pre-colonial era, just as they inhibit economic development today, but they did not prevent an amazing range of human activity adapted to the wide variations in local conditions. Economic pursuits in Sarawak on the eve of Brooke rule ranged from Malay fishing along the coast to Chinese gold-mining in the interior. There were jungle nomads who lived entirely by hunting and gathering, and there were some farmers in the interior highlands who practiced a sophisticated form of wet rice agriculture. But in most districts of northwest Borneo the economy centered around a semi-nomadic form of agriculture, and human settlement patterns were determined above all by rivers.

[1] Clifford Geertz explains the essential difference between wet rice and dry rice 'ecosystems' in *Agricultural Involution* (Berkeley, 1964) pp. 15–28.

[2] In Sarawak, peat swamps cover 5 560 square miles, or 12 per cent of the total State area. There are 1 072 square miles in the Second Division and 2 322 square miles in the Third Division: J. A. R. Anderson, 'The Structure and Development of the Peat Swamps of Sarawak and Brunei', *The Journal of Tropical Geography*, XVIII (Aug 1964) 8–9. The total area of deltaic land in the state is only 7 600 square miles: Sarawak, *The Natural Resources of Sarawak* (Kuching, 1952) p. 8.

The river or river segment was the major focus of political loyalty as well as the artery of all trade and travel. In local parlance, the very term 'river' has long been synonymous with 'district', and people still sometimes say they are 'going to Sarawak', when they mean they are going to Kuching, which is located on the Sarawak River. The application of the name Sarawak to the entire State is, like much else, a product of Brooke rule.[1]

The significant geographic variations in the area which is the main setting for this book are most easily described in terms of three familiar modern administrative units of the State, the First, Second and Third Divisions. These Divisions, each one of which covers more than one major river system (a river and all its tributaries), were established by the Brooke regime only in 1873. Nevertheless they correspond broadly to natural provinces which differ in resources, in ethnic composition, and therefore in political character as well. Two additional Divisions, the Fourth and the Fifth, were formed to include territory acquired from Brunei after 1880, but because these eastern units are not primarily Iban areas, and figure only marginally in what follows, I shall not discuss them here.[2]

The First Division, the westernmost province of Sarawak, centers on Kuching and the Sarawak River, and extends from Cape Datu to the Sadong River drainage, inclusive. James Brooke acquired all of the First Division except the Sadong when he received 'Sarawak Proper', his original grant of territory, from Pengiran Muda Hasim in 1841.[3] In contrast to most other parts of the State, it is a region where there are mountains, in this case craggy limestone hills, close to the sea. At Santubong and Bako picturesque peaks are nearly surrounded by ocean. In fact these are old islands which have been enveloped by the growing Sarawak River delta.

The First Division is unusual on two more fundamental counts. It is a province of considerable mineral wealth where, at various times in the past, iron, antimony, gold, mercury, coal and aluminium have all been mined in quantity.[4] Moreover it is a region where scattered pockets of comparatively

[1] I was introduced to this situation on my first trip to Borneo in 1965, when I was sitting just behind an Iban headman on the jet from Singapore to Kuching. The stewardess, filling out a landing document for him because he could not write, asked what she thought was a purely rhetorical question in Malay: 'You are from Sarawak?' 'No!' came the emphatic reply, 'I'm from *Sadong*'. Sadong is two rivers and roughly thirty miles east of Kuching.

[2] As used in this book, the term 'Division' always refers to the area included in the modern administrative unit. For additional details on the formal establishment of the various Divisions, see p. 142, n. 1 below.

[3] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, pp. 73–4.

[4] G. E. Wilford, *The Geology and Mineral Resources of the Kuching-Lundu Area, West Sarawak, including the Bau Mining District*, Geological Survey Department, British Territories in Borneo, Memoir 3 (Kuching, 1955) pp. 2–3. On iron-working, see p. 11, n. 3 below.

rich, igneous-based soils enable the shifting cultivator to farm in one spot for a somewhat longer period that is normally the case elsewhere. The interior tribal people of the First Division are Land Dayaks, a comparatively peaceful and sedentary group who have never displayed the extreme inclination towards migration and headhunting traditionally manifested by their Iban neighbors immediately to the east.[1] Although the subject has yet to be fully studied, the non-migratory pattern of Land Dayak life may be partially explained by the relative fertility of the First Division.[2]

Throughout history the mineral wealth of the First Division has attracted the attention of outsiders.[3] The fact that several high-ranking Brunei nobles were present in Kuching in 1839 resulted from the discovery of high-grade antimony ore in Upper Sarawak in 1824. The Brunei Malays had learned that the antimony fetched a high price on the newly developed Singapore market, and that the relatively docile Land Dayak population could be induced to work the ore. It is almost certain that these considerations alone motivated them to take up quasi-permanent residence in this outlying corner of the somewhat theoretical Brunei empire.[4] There were no similar settlements of Brunei Malays on any of the other rivers of either the First or Second Divisions. On the Sarawak River, in addition to the Brunei contingent, there was a longer settled population of local Malays, whose principal village was located at Leda Tana, a short distance above the site of Kuching. The

[1] Land Dayaks do migrate, but the movement is gentle and restricted in scope compared to Iban migration. The leading authority writes, 'The Sadong [Land] Dayaks are not nomadic but they tend to stray a little every few generations – not far, but often far enough to need some new arrangement with their neighbors.' (W. R. Geddes, *The Land Dayaks of Sarawak* (London, 1954) p. 11.) During a year and a half of research, I never came across a single recorded instance of a Land Dayak migrating beyond the confines of the First Division.

[2] According to Mr J. P. Andriesse, a Sarawak Government soil surveyor who has studied both Land Dayak settlement patterns and soil conditions in the First and Second Divisions, the border between Land Dayak and Iban areas east of the Sadong River corresponds remarkably to the border between an area where comparatively rich igneous-rock-derived soils are fairly common (on the Land Dayak side) and a region where poor, quartzitic soils are the rule (on the Iban side). Mr Andriesse has not yet published his findings, which are still tentative.

[3] Since World War II the Sarawak Museum has been excavating ancient Chinese trading sites in the Sarawak River delta, where quantities of pre-T'ang ceramics are found in association with iron slag, crucibles, and other evidence of extensive iron-working activity. It seems likely that the ore melted here was limanite, readily available in Upper Sarawak, although the economic purpose of the operation is not yet clear. (Personal information from Dr S. J. O'Connor.) For a discussion of these sites, which are in an area where exciting new finds of Indian religious antiquities have recently been made, see Tom Harrisson, 'Trade Porcelain and Stoneware in South-east Asia (including Borneo)', *SMJ* x 17-18 (July-Dec 1961), esp. p. 222.

[4] Singapore had been founded in 1819. For the discovery of antimony in Upper Sarawak in 1824 and its subsequent effects, see John Crawfurd, *A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands and Adjacent Countries* (London, 1856) p. 377. Crawfurd was Resident of Singapore at the time and his statement may be taken as authoritative. See also George Windsor Earl, *The Eastern Seas* (London, 1837) pp. 310–11; Low, *Sarawak*, p. 17.

Brunei Malays founded Kuching itself not very long before the arrival of James Brooke.[1]

By 1839 mineral wealth had attracted another unique element to the population of the First Division, a colony of Hakka Chinese gold-miners located in Upper Sarawak. This settlement was an extension of the great gold-mining community of adjacent Sambas, Dutch Borneo, which was already well known in the West.[2] The Chinese of Upper Sarawak, their numbers augmented by later immigration, nearly overthrew the Brooke Government in 1857. But accounts of this famous rebellion do not always make it sufficiently clear that in the early decades of Brooke rule there was no other Chinese settlement worth mentioning elsewhere in what later became Sarawak territory. There was none in either the Second or Third Division, where there were no significant gold deposits, and where political conditions were far too insecure to support a settled trading population.

The Second Division differs radically from the First in both population and resources. It is the Iban province *par excellence*, the home base in recent centuries of perhaps the most warlike people in Borneo. A smaller population of Moslem Malays may be found along the lower portions of all the more important rivers, which include the Batang Lupar, with its major tributaries of Undup, Skrang and Lemanak; the Saribas, with its major tributaries of Layar, Paku and Rimbas; and the Krian (or Kalakka).

A traveler who follows the modern highway from Kuching eastwards will sense an immediate change after crossing the Sadong River at Serian, a few miles short of the administrative boundary between the First and Second Divisions. He leaves behind a province of Chinese and Land Dayaks, characterized by relatively sedentary agriculture and intensive settlement, and enters a region of low fertility, marked by poor, quartzitic soils. Generations of Iban shifting cultivators, many of whom have long since migrated elsewhere, have largely destroyed the original forest cover of the Second Division, and the countryside visible from the road, covered with scrubby second growth, often appears blighted and unhealthy. Before the Sadong River crossing, roadside Chinese bazaars are frequent, but east of the crossing the traveler will see nothing at all resembling urban settlement until he reaches Simanggang, eighty-one miles further on.

[1] Pengiran Makota, later the bitter enemy of James Brooke, is credited with founding Kuching: Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 64

[2] Thomas Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java* (London, 1817) I 236–8. The best history of the Hakka Chinese community in the First Division is T'ien Ju-K'ang, 'The Early History of the Chinese in Sarawak', unpublished Appendix I to his *The Chinese of Sarawak: a Study of Social Structure* (London, 1953).

This contrast was intensified in modern times by the officially sponsored settlement of Chinese farmers along the road in the First Division at the time it was constructed there in the 1930s, and by a land policy which prevented similar settlement in the Second Division when the road was extended into that area after World War II. Nevertheless there was a difference between the two provinces even in 1839. Even then the First Division was primarily a Chinese and Land Dayak province, possessing comparative agricultural and mineral wealth, while the Second Division was an Iban province poor in natural resources.[1]

The rivers of the Second Division, already enumerated above, will be mentioned repeatedly in the pages ahead. Considering their importance in recent Sarawak history, they are not very impressive to look at. The Batang Lupar, perhaps the most significant single river in any discussion of Iban culture or history, is the longest, and it is only 130 miles in length. By way of comparison, the Rejang River in the Third Division is 350 miles long, while the great Kapuas of west Borneo, Indonesia, extends 700 miles from its source to its mouth.[2] The branches of the upper Batang Lupar, streams like the Engkari, Delok, Mepi and Lobang Baya, the homes of the most persistent rebels in Sarawak history, are often no more than boulder-filled creeks.

The major Second Division streams have long, muddy lower reaches, shallow and vexed by difficult currents. The tidal drop is considerable, and in two of the most important Iban rivers, the Batang Lupar and Saribas, strong tides entering the long, shallow estuaries give rise to bores, onrushing waves which can be dangerous to small craft.[3]

As already mentioned, the Second Division is weak in mineral and agricultural resources. There has always been a little alluvial gold mining on the Batang Lupar, but the center of this activity lies to the west, in the First

[1] The Sadong River system, which lies within the First Division for administrative purposes, is in many ways a transition zone between the two geopolitical provinces compared here. The Sadong population is a complex mixture of Land Dayaks and Ibans, the latter being restricted to the eastern portions, and includes one group, the 'Milikin Dayaks', who appear to fall mid-way between these two great families in total culture. Diamond deposits, as well as some gold workings along the watershed which forms the border with Indonesia, have over the years attracted both Malay and Chinese miners.

[2] For the lengths of the Batang Lupar, the Rejang and the Kapuas respectively, see N. S. Haile, *The Geology and Mineral Resources of the Lupar and Saribas Valleys, West Sarawak*, Geological Survey Department, British Territories in Borneo, Memoir 7 (Kuching, 1957) p. 13; Sarawak, *Annual Report*, 1958 (Kuching, 1959) p. 128; *Ensiklopedia Indonesia*, ed. T. S. G. Mulia and K. A. H. Hidding (The Hague, 1956?) II 733.

[3] Somerset Maugham wrote a vivid account of the Batang Lupar bore, after it nearly drowned him in 1921, in his short story, 'The Yellow Streak', *The Complete Short Stories of W. Somerset Maugham* (London 1951) I 456–80.

Division. There are extensive coal deposits at Silantek, but they have never yet been successfully exploited.[1] The soils throughout most of the Division are notoriously bad. Before the advent of Brooke rule, there was no significant export trade from this area, as there was from both the First and Third Divisions in minerals and sago respectively. Not surprisingly, there was no permanent Chinese population of any kind, and there is no evidence, either written or in local tradition, of consistent Brunei political involvement here at any period.

The Third Division, the last one under consideration, better fits the Borneo stereotype of enormous rivers and vast expanses of virgin jungle. With an area of more than 22,000 square miles, it is three times as large as the First and Second Divisions combined, and almost three times as large as the State of Perak in Malaya.[2] The Third Division is dominated by Sarawak's largest river, the Rejang, navigable by small ocean-going steamers as far as Kapit, 150 miles from the sea. It also includes the Melanau-populated, sago-growing rivers of Oya and Mukah, as well as the less populous Balingian.

Unlike the provinces previously discussed, the Third Division has been altered almost beyond recognition by social changes since 1839. These have included the arrival of a large Chinese population where virtually none existed before, the spread of Iban settlement from the Second Division into many areas previously almost uninhabited, and the continuing impact of Islam upon the Melanaus. At the time of James Brooke's arrival, the spread of the Ibans to the Third Division was only beginning. The major Balleh tributary of the Rejang, which now has an Iban population of over 20,000, was in 1839 almost completely empty.

At this earlier period, the Rejang was home primarily to a scattered population of Melanaus, who were much more thickly concentrated in the adjacent Mukah and Oya Rivers. The extreme headwaters of the Rejang were inhabited by pagan Kayans and Kenyahs, who were connected by certain cultural similarities as well as by ties of aristocratic intermarriage to the Melanaus of the middle and lower Rejang, many of whom were likewise still pagans living in massive, fortress-like longhouses. It may be assumed

[1] A. H. Moy-Thomas, 'Economic Development under the Second Rajah (1870–1917)', *SMJ* x 17–18 (July–Dec 1961) 50–2, discusses the history of the Silantek coal field to modern times.

[2] The areas in square miles are: First Division, 3448; Second, 4028; Third, 22,838. The total area of Sarawak including all five Divisions is 47,071 square miles: J. L. Noakes, *Sarawak and Brunei. A Report on the 1947 Population Census* (Kuching, 1950) p. 17. By contrast, the area of Perak is 7983 and that of all former British Malaya, including the Federated and Unfederated States and the Straits Settlements, is 52,500 square miles: Rupert Emerson, *Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule*, reprint edition (Kuala Lumpur, 1964) pp. 11, 22.

that the vast interior areas of the Rejang had, for many centuries, been the source of rich supplies of jungle produce.

In the sago districts of Mukah and Oya, however, the situation was different. Here also many of the Melanau people were still pagan, living in longhouses of a type which has completely vanished today. But many others had already become Moslem, in the wake of relatively intense Brunei Malay trading activity. The Brunei traders were active in Mukah and Oya in part because these rivers lay closer to Brunei Town than the areas already discussed, but also in part because this region, like the First Division, possessed the attractive combination of a peaceful population and a valuable economic resource. Just as the development of Singapore after 1819 created a market for the antimony of the First Division, so it stimulated the production of sago for export. This export trade was already an important factor in the local economy before the arrival of James Brooke.[1]

Any attempt to estimate the population of the three Divisions discussed above on the eve of Brooke rule is hazardous in the extreme, but my own approximation would be as follows:[2]

First Division	
Land Dayaks	30,000
Malays	10,000
Chinese	1–2000
Ibans	1000?
(mostly Sebuyau)	
Second Division	
Ibans	50,000
Malays	10,000

[1] In 1842, long before his influence extended to the Third Division, James Brooke observed that 'Mukah and Oya export large quantities of Sago.' (James Brooke journal entry, 19 July 1842, in Rodney Mundy, *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes, down to the Occupation of Labuan* (London, 1848) I 319.) See also Low, *Sarawak*, pp. 38–40, 339. The early history of the sago-processing industry in Singapore is described in 'Sago', *JIA* III (1849) 288–313.

[2] These figures are best regarded as rough orders of magnitude only; areas of greatest uncertainty are indicated with a question mark. They are calculated from the following sources: Charles Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak* (London, 1866) I 44–9; Spenser St John, *The Life of Sir James Brooke, Rajah of Sarawak* (London, 1879) p. 161; Spenser St John, 'Memorandum on Sarawak', 9 Aug 1860, in FO 12/27; St John, *Forests*, II 288, 299, 323, 335; 'The Census 1871', *SG* 31 (15 Dec 1871) (also partly reported in Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 33); Ussher, 'Consular Report for 1877' in St John, *Life of Sir James Brooke*, pp. 379–80. For a good review of the early published sources on Sarawak population, see J. L. Noakes, 'The Growth of the Population of Sarawak', in L. W. Jones, *Sarawak: Report on the Census of Population Taken on 15th June 1960* (Kuching, 1962) pp. 319–24.

Third Division	
Ibans	30,000?
Melanaus	40,000
(and all Moslems)	
Kayans and Kenyahs	5–10,000?

The environment described in the preceding pages imposed severe limitations on the ability of any European government, regardless of its intentions, to impose change. These limitations should always be kept in mind when evaluation of Brooke methods and motives is attempted. But in order to understand the relationship between the Brookes and the Ibans, it is not enough merely to appreciate the effects of climate and terrain. The relationship was unique because neither the Brookes nor the Ibans were remotely typical of European rulers on the one hand or Southeast Asian societies on the other.

Most Western-educated readers will be able to understand the behavior of the Brookes without a detailed digression on the subject of nineteenth-century British social mores. They were not orthodox colonialists, and the Second White Rajah in particular was deeply influenced by his formative years in the wilds of Sarawak. Nevertheless, the Brooke family began as, and in many ways remained, the product of a relatively familiar Victorian English world. Iban society, on the other hand, was highly exceptional even in relation to its more exotic Borneo context. For that reason, an introduction to Iban culture, especially its political aspects, is necessary for the benefit of those not already familiar with Sarawak.

The Ibans are the most widespread of the various pagan tribal groups found in Sarawak. According to the most recent official estimate they number about 247,000, or 30.2 percent of the total State population.[1] Except for the Chinese, who today outnumber them slightly, they are the most numerous single ethnic group. During most of the period covered by this book, before the great increase in Chinese population which began early in the twentieth century, it may be assumed that their number relative to the total population of Sarawak was much higher than it is at present.[2]

Today, as when James Brooke first visited the country, the Ibans are a longhouse-dwelling people, living for the most part along the middle

[1] Sarawak, *Annual Bulletin of Statistics, State of Sarawak* (Kuching, 1964) p. 3. Numbers and percentage of population for the other major groups are listed as follows: Malays, 145,000, 17.7 percent; Melanaus, 48,000, 5.9 per cent; Land Dayaks, 65,000, 7.9 percent; Chinese, 263,000, 32.2 percent; other races (including Bisayas, Kedayans, Kayans, Kenyahs, Kelabits, etc.), 48,000, 5.9 percent.

[2] For a discussion of the growth of the 'non-indigenous' (Chinese) population, see L. W. Jones, *The Population of Borneo* (London, 1966) pp. 39–43.

portions of rivers, practicing the shifting cultivation of rice. There is virtually no such thing as a Moslem Iban. One who converts to Islam automatically 'becomes a Malay' (*masok Melayu*), losing his old cultural affiliation. Although Ibans may become Christians without any similar change in identity, comparatively few have done so despite years of effort by Christian missionaries.[1] The great majority are still animists, believing in a rich and complex spirit pantheon and a highly elaborated multi-level world of the dead.

In addition to the Ibans of Sarawak, concentrated in the Second and Third Divisions, a smaller number live in the adjacent northern half of the Kapuas watershed in Indonesia. It is impossible to judge exactly how many Indonesian Ibans there may be. Little recent information is available from Indonesia, and social conditions in the Kapuas have created problems of ethnographic classification which might make any clear-cut enumeration impossible.

The Kapuas is the biggest river in all Borneo. Flowing across the island south of the headwaters of all the major Iban-populated rivers of Sarawak, it has always been a highroad for cultural penetration into the interior. Long before Dutch rule, tiny Malay states, whose rulers claimed Hindu-Javanese ancestry, existed deep in the Kapuas interior, as far upstream as the lakes district, south of Sarawak's Second Division.[2] In the opinion of a leading Dutch authority on this area, most of the people in the middle reaches of the Kapuas were originally of stock closely related in language and culture to the Ibans. But over a very long period of time many have either become Malays by adopting Islam, or have been greatly influenced by Malay culture. Before World War II, the Dutch recognized certain communities as occupying a distinctly intermediate status, somewhere between pagan 'Dayak' and full-fledged Moslem Malay, a phenomenon never reported for the Iban country of Sarawak.[3]

[1] In the 1960 census, 26,608 Ibans were listed as Christian, 415 as Moslem, and 210,718 as 'Other Religion', i.e. pagan: Jones, *Report on the Census . . . 1960*, p. 96.

[2] The most important of the Kapuas Malay states, Sintang, claimed hegemony over lesser Malay statelets at Selimbau, Suhaid, Bunut and elsewhere. The Penambahan of Sintang traced his descent from a Javanese Prince of Demak, never deigning to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Kapuas rivermouth state, Pontianak, a parvenu 'Arab' dynasty not founded until the eighteenth century: B. J. Kuik, 'Memorie inzake het Landschap van Sintang', Memories van Overgave series (Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, 1936); J. J. K. Enthoven, *Bijdragen tot de geographie van Borneo's Wester-afdeeling* (Leiden, 1903) II 539–58.

[3] Speaking of the Ibans and closely related peoples, the leading Dutch authority, M. A. Bouman, states: 'They have furnished the greatest contingent to the Malays of this region. Those related tribes which have recently become Mohammedan are the so-called Pekaki Malays in the hinterland of Selimbau who, although Islamized, still live in longhouses. Only decades older in date is the Islamization of the inhabitants of Embau, Pengkadan and Bebua, who at present have not yet entirely abandoned their longhouses.' (M. A. Bouman, 'Ethnografische aanteekeningen

Despite the obvious problems involved in attempting to classify the middle Kapuas population, however, there was never any doubt in the minds of Dutch administrators that the majority of those vigorously pagan, warlike, nomadic people, who would today definitely be classified as Iban, were on the Sarawak side of the political frontier. Indeed, the Dutch tended to regard the Ibans as a troublesome plague emanating from Sarawak.[1] My own estimate would be that the number of Indonesians who might safely and unequivocally be described as Ibans is at present not more than one-third of the Sarawak total,[2] but the question must remain open pending further research in Indonesian Borneo.

Iban culture is uniform in comparison to that of most pagan societies in Sarawak, particularly in the area of language. Many other groups, including Land Dayaks, Kayans, Kenyahs and Melanaus, speak a number of dialects which are either mutually incomprehensible or very close to it. In contrast, probably as a result of the great amount of migration and intermingling which has marked the last century of Iban history, two Ibans from the most widely separated areas of Sarawak will have no trouble understanding each other, although they will be aware of minor differences in accent and usage.

Nevertheless, before the Ibans came into contact with Europeans they had no word which expressed their own relative cultural unity, any more

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omtrent de Gouvernementslanden in de boven-Kapoeas, Westerafdeeling van Borneo', *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, LXIV (1924) 185.) Mallinckrodt's account of Iban distribution in the middle Kapuas and the ethnographic map included in his work are apparently based almost entirely on Bouman's article and on Sarawak authors: J. M. Mallinckrodt, *Het adatrecht van Borneo* (Leiden, 1928) I 31–2.

[1] For the Dutch perspective on the Ibans, see the end of ch. 7 and the beginning of ch. 8, esp. p. 254.

[2] Bouman gives detailed population figures as of Dec. 1921 for the directly ruled territories (*Gouvernementslanden*) in the subdistricts of Semitau and Upper Kapuas, which would probably have included the great majority of the Ibans in what was then Dutch territory. Out of the entire population of 48,665, only two groups, 'Kantus' and 'Batang Lupars', totaling 10,028, were definitely Iban. 19,805 people were classified as 'Malay', i.e. Moslem, while the majority of the remainder belonged to one or other of the two great non-Iban pagan tribal groups of the upper Kapuas: the Kayans, and the Malohs and related peoples (Tamans, Palins, etc.). Bouman, 'Ethnografische aanteekeningen', pp. 192–3.

Figures from the regular pre-war Dutch censuses are broken down only into 'Malays', 'Dayaks' (including all pagans), and 'other Asians', and it is therefore impossible to judge the extent of Iban population from them. My estimate here is based partly on interviews with five retired Netherlands Indies civil servants who served in the Sintang District (which includes the Indonesian Iban country), conducted in Holland in September 1966.

The fact that there are undoubtedly more Kayans, Kenyahs, Kalabits and (probably) Land Dayaks in what is now Indonesia than there are in Sarawak has encouraged some observers in Sarawak to believe (in my opinion erroneously) that the same is true of the Ibans. For example, see Tom Harrisson, 'Tribes, Minorities and the Central Government in Sarawak, Malaysia', in *Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities and Nations*, ed. Peter Kunstadter (Princeton, 1967) I 328.

than did the members of the other tribal societies in Sarawak. They identified themselves by river: 'We of Skrang' (*kami Skrang*) or 'We of Undup' (*kami Undup*), or sometimes merely as 'We of this area' (*kami menoa*) – and *menoa* could refer to a river segment, or only to the territory of a single longhouse-village unit.[1]

James Brooke apparently originated the term 'Sea Dayak', by which the Ibans first became generally known. Upon his arrival in Sarawak, the First White Rajah spoke of the 'Hill Dayaks', or sometimes the 'hill tribes', who lived around Kuching, sometimes indeed on the very tops of hills which offered them protection against the raids of the more aggressive 'sea tribes'. The 'hill tribes' gradually became known as the Land Dayaks, and the 'sea tribes' as the Sea Dayaks.[2] It was some time before Brooke clearly realized that the difference in political behavior which he first noticed was only part of a more basic difference in the culture of the two groups, extending to language, religion, house construction and many other traits.

The term 'Iban' did not come into general use until quite recently. According to one old but still honored theory, it is a corruption of a Kayan word, *hivan*, which means 'wanderer', and was used by the Kayans of the Rejang headwaters as a term of contempt for the Ibans, whose restless disposition made them unpleasant neighbors.[3] Despite its possible derogatory connotations, the Ibans of the Third Division, who borrowed heavily from Kayan culture in many ways, adopted this term as well. Neither the Brookes nor the Ibans of the Second Division accepted the word 'Iban' for many years. They preferred 'Sea Dayak', which in everyday usage was frequently abbreviated to 'Dayak'.[4] The Second Rajah, Charles Brooke, commented somewhat grumpily in 1893:

[1] William Howell and D. J. S. Bailey, *A Sea Dyak Dictionary* (Singapore, 1900) p. 34; C. A. Bampfylde letter in *The Sea Dyaks and other Races of Sarawak*, ed. A. J. N. Richards (Kuching, 1963) p. 9. Benedict Sandin confirms this point.

[2] For the development of the distinction between Land and Sea Dayaks see Low, *Sarawak*, pp. 165–6. In an early letter from Sarawak, James Brooke referred to 'Hill Dayaks' (Land Dayaks) and to the 'more savage and predatory tribes of the coast', meaning the Ibans of the Second Division: James Brooke to James Gardner, 10 Dec 1841, in Templer, *Letters*, I 157. In most of his later letters and journal entries he simply called the latter 'the Saribas and Skrang Dayaks' after the Iban rivers which were of the greatest political concern to him.

[3] Robert Burns, 'The Kayans of the North-West of Borneo', *JIA* III (1849) 145. However C. H. Southwell of Marudi, perhaps the greatest living Western authority on the Kayan language, informs me that there is no word *hivan* meaning 'wanderer' in Baram Kayan, although *hivan* is today the recognized term among the Baram Kayans for 'Iban'. It is possible that Burns' word *hivan* was restricted to a Rejang Kayan dialect, or that it has dropped out of use since 1949, or, as Charles Brooke suggested in the passage quoted below, that it was a Bukitan or a Rejang upriver Melanau word.

[4] In Sarawak administrative usage, the unadorned word 'Dayak' almost invariably meant *Sea* Dayak, hence Iban Government officers normally referred to Land Dayaks, Kayans, and

Iban is known to be purely a Kayan and Bakatan [Bukitan] word in their language, and they call Dayaks by this word – It is not Dayak except as having of *late years* been taken from the Kayans and Bakatans – and this is *only* used in the upper waters of the Rejang river, all other tribes in other rivers do not use it – except by manangs who must have used it in some of their incantations – but of this latter question, an uncertainty exists – 'Iban' was not known by any of our Dayaks forty years ago –[1]

As the Rajah observed, 'Iban' may previously have denoted an ordinary person as distinguished from a shaman (*manang*). A missionary authority on Iban religion, writing a few years before, had observed that after a *manang* has been fully initiated into the mysteries of healing, 'He is now no longer an "Iban", a name by which all Dayaks speak of themselves, he is a "Manang". He is lifted into a different rank of being.'[2] Used in this sense, the word implied an important difference in status, but not an ethnic identification.

'Iban' first gained acceptance among Western scholars after the great Resident and amateur ethnologist Charles Hose began to use it, apparently to avoid the confusion surrounding the word 'Dayak', however modified.[3] Only since World War II, and not without a great deal of public debate, has 'Iban' been accepted by all Ibans. Today the term is used by many who opposed it strenuously only a few years ago, including Benedict Sandin, Curator of the Sarawak Museum, but it has not driven the equally valid and completely synonymous 'Sea Dayak' out of circulation. In this book, in an effort to simplify matters as much as possible, the term Iban is employed exclusively. It is applied only to the forebears of people who, as of 1966, recognized themselves as belonging to the Iban group.

The relationship of the Iban language to others has never been determined by a trained linguist, but there is no doubt that it stands much closer to standard Malay or Indonesian than do most other Borneo languages. Pending systematic research, however, it seems most unwise to state, as one writer has recently done, that 'Sea Dayak or Iban . . . has to be counted among the Malay dialects.'[4] The Ibans themselves are today increasingly

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Kenyahs as such. Dutch usage was quite different. '*Dajak*' meant any pagan, and the Dutch, unlike the Brookes, habitually spoke of '*Kajan Dajaks*', '*Kenja Dajaks*', and so forth. Some Dutch scholars accepted 'Iban' after Charles Hose, but the common Dutch administrative term for Ibans was '*Batang Loepar Dajak*', whether they were originally from Sarawak's Batang Lupar River or not: see p. 253, n. 3.

[1] Charles Brooke, letter book, Jan 1893, SA.

[2] J. Perham, 'Maningism in Borneo', *JSBRAS*, No. 19 (1887) 101.

[3] Charles Hose and William McDougall, *The Pagan Tribes of Borneo* (London, 1912) 1 32.

[4] A. A. Cense and E. M. Uhlenbeck, *Critical Survey of Studies on the Languages of Borneo* (The Hague, 1958) p. 10. Cense and Uhlenbeck state that 'several authors' have classified Iban as a dialect of Malay, without naming them. To my knowledge, the only informed observer who ever made a categorical statement to this effect in print was the Rev. William Howell. (Sidney) Ray.

sensitive on the subject of their language and its relationship to the national language of Malaysia. They resent the unfortunate tendency of some politicians in Malaya to describe Iban as 'just bad Malay', something similar to the rural dialects of Kelantan or Trengganu. They are particularly proud of the rich repertory of oral literature in the Iban language, which is totally different in form, content and feeling from anything in peninsular Malay, and is deserving of much further study in its own right.[1]

Two features of Iban culture will be mentioned constantly in the pages that follow: headhunting and the shifting cultivation of hill rice. Neither of these traits is unique to the Ibans. Virtually all other Borneo pagans were traditionally to some extent both headhunters and shifting cultivators. What distinguished the Ibans and helped to bring them into a special relationship with the Brookes was the unusual intensity of their devotion to these two practices. The value which they attached to headhunting and shifting cultivation made the Ibans a race of aggressive migrants. Their expansion across Sarawak will be a constant theme of this study, and the subject of one separate chapter.

No gaudy traveler's tale of adventure in darkest Borneo is more lurid than the documented facts about Iban headhunting. Stories about headhunting may have slandered other pagan groups, and all have been tarred with the same brush, but the Ibans lived up to the reputation. Unfortunately, the question of *why* they did so cannot yet be fully answered. It is properly a question for the anthropologist, not the historian, but thus far no anthropologist has studied the sociology of Iban headhunting. J. D. Freeman, in his monographs on Iban social organization and agriculture, merely makes

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in a thorough comparison of Borneo languages, did not: see his 'The Languages of Borneo', *SMJ* I 4 (Nov 1913), esp. pp. 7–9.)

Howell, an Anglican missionary, once wrote that Iban 'is a dialect of the wide-spreading Malay language intermixed with words borrowed from Kayan and, it is surmised, other primitive Bornean languages with whom the Dayaks have come in contact. . . .' (Howell and Bailey, *Sea Dyak Dictionary*, p. v.) Howell worked for decades in the Second Division and had an unexcelled knowledge of Iban, but he was not a linguist, and elsewhere made it clear that he held to no exact concept of the relationship between Iban and Malay. In an 1898 article he stated: 'The Sea Dayaks, although divided into various tribes, yet speak only one language, and this one language is the Malayan language.' But six paragraphs later in the same article he added: 'It is difficult to form one's opinion or judgement between the two languages (the Malay and the Sea Dayak) as to which is the richer and more expressive. Both languages claim classical forms. When the Malay language is spoken grammatically it is not only expressive but exceedingly musical. It is so also with the Sea Dayak language when it is spoken grammatically.' ('The Sea Dyaks', in Richards, *The Sea Dyaks and other Races*, pp. 3–4.)

[1] A good brief introduction to Iban oral literature is Erik Jensen, 'The Iban World', in *Borneo Writing and Related Matters*, Special Monograph No. 1, *SMJ* XIII 27 (Nov 1966), esp. pp. 24–30.

the point that the urge to take heads was intermingled with the urge to migrate, at the expense of less numerous tribes, to areas where virgin forest, ideal for shifting cultivation, was still in plentiful supply.[1] Freeman did not extend his studies to the ritual significance of Iban headhunting. Moreover his observations were based on field work in one area of the Third Division, and his suggestion does not fully explain the persistence of headhunting elsewhere. It does not, for example, account for the development of maritime Iban headhunting raids during the 'piracy' era in the Second Division, a phenomenon which will be discussed below.

One partial explanation of Iban headhunting lies in the fact that formerly a human head was required in order to 'break' the period of mourning (*ngetas ulit*) for a dead person. During the mourning period, the relatives of the deceased were impeded in many ways from leading a normal life. A bereaved spouse might not remarry, other kin might not wear good clothes or finery, and certain other lesser ritual restrictions were binding on the entire longhouse community. A human head had to be obtained before the ceremony which lifted these restrictions could be held.

According to Benedict Sandin, this custom originated in the days when the ancestors of the Ibans were living in the Kapuas valley, under the leadership of a culture hero and law-giver named Serapoh. Because Serapoh's people knew nothing about the proper care of the dead, merely throwing their deceased relatives into the jungle like so much trash, they began to die in large numbers. At this point a benevolent spirit appeared to Serapoh and told him how to set matters right. He instructed him in proper burial customs and ritual restrictions, and told him that the head of an enemy would be needed to end the period of mourning. Sandin's account continues:

Serapoh listened to the teachings of Puntang Raga [the name of the spirit] with a heavy heart, for he did not know in which direction to look for a head with which to break the mourning period of his longhouse. After puzzling over this problem for some time, he set off carrying a large, valuable old jar (*menaga*) on his back to look for someone whom he could kill. Carrying the jar, he wandered over the countryside looking for someone who was willing to be an enemy. But no one was willing. Finally, at the end of his journey he came to the Kantu country[2] where he met a Kantu man on his way to the farm carrying a child. Serapoh told him that if

[1] J. D. Freeman, *Iban Agriculture* (London, 1955) pp. 11–26.

[2] The Kantu is a branch of the Empanang River, a southward-flowing tributary of the Kapuas west of the lakes district. The original inhabitants of this area, either Ibans or a very closely related group, were hereditary enemies of many Second Division Ibans and were eventually displaced by migrants from the Batang Lupar (see p. 253, n. 2). In the Saribas context from which this story is drawn, the term 'Kantu' came to mean, quite vaguely, almost any enemy in the generally hostile territory south of the Klingklang border range.

he was willing, he would like to adopt the child in exchange for the jar he was carrying. The Kantu man was willing, and the exchange was made. Serapoh was extremely happy to get the child.

Serapoh then returned home. When he came close to the house, within hearing of the rooster's crow, he cut off the head of the child with a war cry. Hearing this, the people of the house rejoiced, for they knew that he had come back from the warpath with a head. Coming to the foot of the longhouse ladder, Serapoh again gave his war cry. The mourning period of all the people of the house was broken and they were happy, because they were no longer bothered with restrictions.[1]

The story of Serapoh illustrates the somewhat undiscriminating Iban attitude toward heads. One head was as good as another, and both children and old women were the frequent victims of headhunting raids. Ibans sometimes disinterred the corpses of enemies to procure their heads, a fact which made war parties loath to leave their fallen in hostile territory. But the customary requirement for heads in connection with mourning rites does not explain the particular intensity of Iban headhunting, for the simple reason that similar ritual practices were found among other Borneo peoples who were never such avid headhunters, such as the Kenyahs and Kayans.[2]

The early British writers on Sarawak, ignorant of social anthropology, believed that the extraordinary Iban preoccupation with headhunting was a recent phenomenon. They blamed it on 'piratical' Malay chiefs, who had allegedly encouraged the Ibans to join them on plundering expeditions, until what had been a fashion became a fad.[3] Disregarding the charge of Malay tutelage, which may well have been rooted in the early Brooke consciousness of political rivalry with the Moslem chiefs, this 'fad' theory has a good deal to recommend it. The Ibans have always been extremely fashion conscious. Throughout their recorded history they have been attracted by certain prestige activities among which headhunting was, for men, traditionally the foremost. Numerous other activities connected with travel have, at various times, functioned as prestige activities, perhaps indeed as substitutes for headhunting. Freeman has described the modern Iban custom of going on journeys (*bejalai*) 'for material profit and social prestige'.[4] He writes:

It is one of the most cherished customs of the Iban that men – and particularly young men – should periodically leave their long-houses and venture out into the

[1] Benedict Sandin, *Sengalang Burong* (Kuching, 1962) pp. 12–14.

[2] For description of Kayan funeral rites, see Hose and McDougall, *Pagan Tribes*, I 158–9. Elsewhere in the same work Hose, who had a low opinion of Ibans in general, commented, 'They seek above all things to take heads, to which they attach an extravagant value, unlike the Kayans and Kenyahs who seek heads primarily for the service of their funeral rites. . . .' (Ibid., I 185).

[3] See for example Low, *Sarawak*, pp. 188–90; St John, *Forests*, I 67–8.

[4] Freeman, *Iban Agriculture*, p. 74.

world to seek their fortunes. These journeys, or *bejalai*, frequently last for several years on end, and often extend to the remotest corner of Borneo, and even to Malaya and the islands of Indonesia. They have two main aims: the acquisition of valuable property and of social prestige. For most young men these journeys are an overruling passion. . . .[1]

Formerly, the concepts of material wealth and social prestige, which Freeman submits are the main aims of the custom of journeying, were quite inseparable in the Iban scheme of things. Wealth was always reckoned in terms of heirloom property, either old ceramic jars of Chinese origin or Brunei brassware, the acquisition of which bestowed both material gain and good reputation. Even today, when a young man returns to his longhouse after working in the timber camps of Sabah, bringing a new sewing-machine or an outboard motor, he is carrying home much more than a mere utilitarian object.

Prestige was not derived solely from activities which involved warfare or travel. The ability to speak well, both formally and in ordinary conversation, was another highly valued attribute. In the early days of Brooke rule, Residents were driven nearly distracted by Ibans living in downriver areas who brought cases before the courts for the sheer love of argument. In general the Ibans tend to admire any display of superior worldly wisdom, and to be intrigued and attracted by new styles in art and clothing as well as by novel mechanical devices. Yet the same people often cling with great tenacity to the fundamental aspects of their traditional culture, such as hill rice farming.

Since the position of women is extremely high in Iban society, it is not surprising that there was a female equivalent of headhunting in the traditional value system. It consisted of weaving blankets (*pua*) according to a laborious resist-dyeing (*ikat*) technique, which the Ibans have developed into a superlative artistic skill.[2] Just as no man was really a man until he had taken the head of an enemy, so no woman could scale the heights of feminine respectability until she had woven a first-class blanket.

One traditional Iban equivalent of the American Horatio Alger rags-to-riches success fable might be summarized as follows. Late at night a young man visits the family room of the young lady he is courting, in accordance with Iban courtship custom (*ngayap*), which allows considerable freedom to the unmarried of both sexes. The girl refuses to grant him her favors until he proves himself in battle and returns to the longhouse with the head of an

[1] J. D. Freeman, *Report on the Iban of Sarawak* (Kuching, 1955) 1 10. The most literal meaning of *bejalai* is 'to walk'.

[2] The standard work on this subject is Alfred C. Haddon and Laura E. Start, *Iban or Sea Dayak Fabrics and Their Patterns* (Cambridge, 1936), still in print.

enemy. Meanwhile, she assures him, she will strive to be worthy of his future attentions by weaving a blanket. The young man goes off to war, and the young lady returns to her loom. The happy ending takes place when the young man returns with the head of an enemy. The young woman meets him at the head of the longhouse stairs, and, amid a scene of considerable community excitement, ceremonially receives the head, swathes it in the new blanket, and then leads a procession of celebration around the longhouse.[1]

Iban women played an important part in encouraging male prestige behavior patterns, including headhunting. In 1949, after events at the end of World War II had stimulated the old Iban interest in bloodshed, a contributor to the *Sarawak Gazette* observed:

> Organized headhunting has of course died out but wandering parties of Dayaks are never above suspicion, since it is so easy to take a stray head or so when the corpses may not be found for a month or two afterwards. Successful efforts immediately encourage others and if the party is not caught quickly – by no means an easy thing to do – dozens of people may be out trying their hands, for nobody who has seen the girls change into little furies of excitement when a fresh head is brought in can doubt that the grim spectre of head-hunting will raise its dismembered trunk on the slightest relaxation of vigilance.[2]

Next to headhunting, the most famous feature of the traditional Iban way of life is the shifting cultivation of hill rice. The Ibans of the Balleh River, a major tributary of the Rejang, were the subject of J. D. Freeman's *Iban Agriculture*, a classic study of hill rice cultivation. As was briefly mentioned earlier, it was the Iban thirst for untouched jungle, ideal for this kind of semi-nomadic farming, which sparked the great migrations and created some very special problems for the Brookes.

Without Freeman's writings on Balleh Iban agriculture and social structure, the task of writing a history of the Ibans under Brooke rule would be next to impossible. Excellent as his studies are, however, they have created an image of the Ibans in the eyes of the academic world which is slightly misleading. Freeman's Balleh people inhabit an area with virtually no flat land, and a still plentiful supply of virgin jungle. Freeman estimates that at the time of his study (1949–50) probably fifty to sixty per cent of the Iban population of Sarawak lived in similar regions, which he calls 'pioneer areas'.[3]

The Ibans of the pioneer areas are, by definition, relatively recent migrants

[1] Based largely on conversation with an elderly Iban woman in a longboat on the Batang Lupar above Lubok Antu, with Benedict Sandin interpreting, in April 1966. She lamented the fact that today the young people just aren't up to this sort of conduct.

[2] 'The Lost Legion', *SG* 1090 (3 Jan 1949).

[3] Freeman, *Iban Agriculture*, p. vii.

from longer settled parts of the country where, in some cases, conditions very different from those in the Balleh have prevailed for many years. In view of the impression which a superficial acquaintance with Freeman's writings can easily convey, it bears repeating that in general the Ibans should not be thought of as inhabitants of the deepest interior. They are typically located along the middle reaches of rivers, frequently at no great distance from the sea, and often even on tidal waters.

Contrary to what Freeman implies,[1] Iban agriculture was not traditionally restricted to the cultivation of hill rice. There are downriver areas in the Second Division where the Ibans have always cultivated what they call swamp rice (*padi paya*). This kind of farming falls neatly between the two classical academic models, built around dry hill farms and wet *padi* fields which, it is widely believed, typify two generally antithetical types of societies in Southeast Asia at large.[2]

The cultivation of *padi paya* typically takes place along the banks of rivers, using strains of rice different from those grown on hill plots. The rice is first planted in seedbeds and then transferred to the field where it matures, as is the case with conventional wet rice. But there the resemblance ends. The Iban *padi paya* farmer uses no plow or draft animal. He, or more frequently she, first clears the ground of its rough marsh grass cover and then burns this off, or as much of it as will burn. The seedbeds are located somewhat haphazardly, usually in a moister portion of the uneven, swampy terrain. The seedlings are transplanted to holes which the farmer makes with her dibble stick (*tugal*), just as would be the case with hill rice seeds. No attempt is made at leveling, bunding, irrigation or any other form of water control. Nor are the swampy fields normally farmed for more than two or three years in succession, although the reason for shifting is not clear and the

[1] Freeman states: 'Formerly, all of the Iban of Sarawak were shifting cultivators growing their *padi* on hillside clearings in the tropical rain-forest. To-day, there are a number of Iban communities (particularly in the lower reaches of the [Batang] Lupar, Saribas and Rejang Rivers) who derive their livelihood from the cultivation of wet *padi* in riverain and deltaic swamps into which they moved following the establishment of Brooke rule.' (*Iban Agriculture*, pp. vi–vii.) But the Ibans themselves know that the lower reaches of the Batang Lupar and Saribas River systems, among others, were home to a population of Ibans growing some *padi paya* (swamp rice) well before James Brooke arrived in Sarawak or the migrations to the Rejang took place. From Benedict Sandin and others.

[2] 'Can there be a greater contrast than that between the shifting cultivators' small, irregular, temporary clearings with their chaotic jumble of fallen and half-fallen tree trunks and stumps, on the one hand, and, on the other, an irrigated plain, subdivided into small fields, each surrounded by a dyke – or a steep slope where a succession of beautifully built terraces leads up for several hundreds or even thousands of feet? These kinds of landscapes are physical expressions of totally different economies, or modes of life, with different cultural patterns, concepts of land tenure, attitudes toward the soil, and material equipment.' (Karl J. Pelzer, *Pioneer Settlement in the Asiatic Tropics* (New York, 1948) p. 6.)

fallow period allowed is often a good deal shorter than that required for hill rice (*padi bukit*).

The Ibans themselves do not recognize any particular advantage in growing swamp *padi*. They say that the yields are somewhat, but not significantly, higher than would be the case with hill rice, and they state that the danger of damage from pests, especially rats, is if anything greater. They explain that they have always grown some swamp *padi* when they happened to live in areas where suitable low-lying land was available.

In many districts Malays and Melanaus practice an identical form of agriculture, which might be termed the cultivation of 'damp rice'. More advanced techniques of wet rice culture were traditional in Sarawak only among the Kelabits of the far interior, Fourth Division, and certain other groups, including Bisayas, Muruts and Kedayans, living on the rivers around Brunei Bay.[1]

But as we have already seen, much of the Sarawak coastal plain is either deep peat or mangrove swamp, where no form of agriculture is possible, while most of the total land area is covered with forest-clad hills. It is therefore not really surprising that, despite some traditional lowland rice farming, it is the shifting cultivation of hill rice, preferably in areas of virgin jungle, which is fundamental to the Iban concept of the good life. The cycle of hill rice cultivation is marked at every stage by the rites of a *padi* cult which lies at the heart of Iban religion.[2] Through most of the period of Brooke rule, ample and accessible land existed in Sarawak to nourish the kind of agriculture upon which this value system depends. But even today, when virgin jungle is in many areas a thing of the past, nothing has yet really replaced the old ethic. Where there is still a plentiful supply of old, unfelled jungle, an Iban longhouse exudes a quality of contentment and well-being which any visitor will rapidly sense. Where such prime hill rice land is scarce, the same atmosphere of satisfaction is rarely to be found, no matter how much rubber the people may be growing.

[1] For some years the Sarawak Agriculture Department has been introducing improvements, beginning with plows, draft animals and simple techniques of water control, and as a result of this program 'damp rice' is in many areas gradually becoming wet rice. I mention this fact because it illustrates how the historic shift from dry to wet rice cultivation, a subject of interest to prehistorians, might well have occurred in an evolutionary rather than in a revolutionary manner.

The account given here is based on personal observation and conversation with agriculture officials and Ibans around Simanggang and Betong in the Second Division. An interesting Iban text in the Appendix to Howell and Bailey, *A Sea Dyak Dictionary* (pp. 3–5) indicates recognition of a basic difference between hill and swamp rice. It states that in the case of swamp rice, 'It is the water that affords sustenance to the paddy.'

[2] Jensen, 'The Iban World', pp. 21–4.

Iban oral literature is rich in imagery descriptive of the hacking, cutting, felling and burning which accompany shifting cultivation. Successful pioneers, the men who led migrations into areas of unfelled jungle, are remembered and included among the heroes summoned from the spirit world to attend the various great festivals. It is because of this emphasis on the prestige of pioneering that Benedict Sandin has recently been able to reconstruct the story of the Iban migrations in Sarawak before Brooke rule, a topic which is discussed in the following chapter.

The picture of Iban culture presented thus far has emphasized two interrelated features, headhunting and migration, which were of particular political and administrative significance during the Brooke era. Both traits may be regarded as symptoms of a more fundamental Iban ethos. Westerners with a knowledge of Sarawak are likely to describe this ethos as either democratic or anarchic, depending on the taste of the individual observer for things Iban.

Freeman, who found Iban society much to his liking, has emphasized the positive, democratic theme:

> Under Iban *adat* all men are equals. During his lifetime a man may acquire high prestige and become an honoured leader, but rank is not inheritable, and there is no institution of chiefship. Iban society is classless and egalitarian – and its members, untrammelled individualists, aggressive and proud in demeanour, lacking any taste for obeisance.[1]

He may well have overemphasized the democratic aspect of Iban society. He says little about slavery, a mild form of which was recognized by all Ibans.[2] The egalitarian outlook which Freeman described on the basis of his Balleh fieldwork, while broadly typical of the pioneer areas, is not found to the same high degree in all Iban districts, a point which will be discussed below. Nevertheless, relative to other Sarawak societies, Ibans in general do display what might be termed democratic tendencies. As Freeman makes clear, this is partly the result of two specific features of Iban social structure, bilateral kinship and the absence of any concept of defined rank.

[1] Freeman, *Report on the Iban of Sarawak*, I 54.

[2] Iban slaves were of two types: debtors, mainly people who could not pay fines incurred for serious violations of customary law; and captives, usually taken as children. The latter were frequently Ibans, as well as members of other ethnic groups. Owners often adopted their slave children through a special ceremony, the *gawai betembang*. Although there was no slave class in Iban society, a definite stigma still attaches to slave ancestry, and it is extremely insulting to imply that anyone is descended from slave stock. An excellent brief discussion is Benedict Sandin, 'Betembang: Slaves Freed by Iban Adoption', *SG* 1278 (31 Aug 1964). Many earlier observations on Iban slavery are collected in H. Ling Roth, *The Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo* (London, 1896) II 209–15.

Iban kinship is emphatically bilateral, which is to say that an individual reckons descent and inheritance through both male and female kin. Members of all modern Western societies generally do the same, perhaps favoring the male line to a somewhat greater extent. Nevertheless, some anthropologists have long argued that in a primitive society bilateral kinship of the type found among Ibans and Americans does not provide an adequate basis for strong political institutions.[1] This is because such a system gives equal recognition to an enormous and unwieldy mass of relatives. In contrast, unilineal kinship systems which recognize either the male or female line, but not both, by definition result in the formation of lineages. These much more restricted kin groupings may, in and of themselves, function as political units. Chinese kinship is unilineal, as is that of most hill tribes in mainland Southeast Asia.

Unilineal kinship is not the only possible basis for strong leadership institutions in a tribal society. In Borneo virtually all the ethnic groups, except the Chinese, have bilateral kinship systems not fundamentally different from that of the Ibans. However, many other pagan groups, including the Kayans, Kenyahs and Melanaus, recognize rigid, formal gradations of rank, including slave, commoner and chief classes, sometimes with subdivisions.[2] Partly as a result of this emphasis on rank, all these societies regularly produce powerful leaders. But there is a total absence of such specific class gradations in Iban society.

The basic unit of Iban social and political organization is the elementary family, superficially little different from the modern Western family, consisting of a married couple, their children, and normally some of their parents. Such a family group occupies one room (*bilek*) of a longhouse, and Freeman has termed it 'the *bilek* family'.[3] It has for many years tended to number between five and six persons.[4]

A child, whether male or female, may marry into another *bilek*, or may bring a spouse to live in the natal *bilek*, or, under certain conditions, may start a new *bilek* family group. Once established, a *bilek* family is perpetuated

[1] An extreme statement of this position is A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's assertion that 'Unilineal institutions in some form are almost, if not entirely, a necessity in any ordered social system.' (A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (London, 1952) p. 8.)

[2] Dr H. S. Morris reported a system of five named rank gradations (*bangsa*) among the modern pagan Melanaus of Oya District, Third Division. See his *Report on a Melanau Sago Producing Community in Sarawak* (London, 1953) pp. 54–5. For Kayan and Kenyah social strata, see Hose and McDougall, *Pagan Tribes*, I 68–72.

[3] Freeman, *Iban Agriculture*, pp. 3–4.

[4] Ibid., p. 5. Brooke administrators in the Second Division during the reign of Charles Brooke (1868–1917) likewise assumed, when estimating Iban population on the basis of door tax receipts, that each door (or *bilek*) of the longhouse signified about five to six people: see p. 272, n. 4.

from generation to generation at about the same size, as some children marry out and others marry in. The *bilek* family unit holds rights to hill rice land which are established, as in many Southeast Asian societies, by felling virgin jungle. It carries on most farming operations, holds certain types of cherished heirloom property, and maintains the vitally important strain of sacred rice (*padi pun*) which is the focus of the *padi* cult.[1] Because it is a continuing social organization with central functions in Iban life, the *bilek* family is what social anthropologists call a corporate group.[2]

The most significant political feature of Iban society is not the *bilek* family, however. It is the absence of equally definable institutions at any higher level. Contrary to popular impression, an Iban longhouse, far from being a communal structure, is no more than a loose aggregation of *bilek* families.[3] Each family owns not only its own *bilek* room, but the adjoining section of the longhouse verandah (*ruai*) and open drying platform (*tanju*) as well. One narrow passageway (*tempuan*) adjacent to the verandah is the only communal portion of the house, and it is exactly analogous to a village street. As the visitor walks along it he will notice that some sections of the verandah are clean, some are dirty; some floors are solid, others are a peril to life and limb. It is distinctly bad manners to intrude on anyone's section of the verandah without being invited. A powerful and unmistakable sense of private property pervades the entire building.[4]

In pioneer areas, the Iban longhouse is anything but a stable social unit. Community quarrels often result in partition or even fragmentation, with individual families joining other houses or starting new ones.[5] Among the Kayans and Kenyahs, who build their longhouses from massive ironwood planks, it is virtually unheard of for anyone to 'break' the house by removing his room. A man who did so would certainly be heavily fined. But traditional Iban houses are lightly built of flimsy materials and do not last more than a decade in any case.[6] In most areas, Iban custom formerly stipulated that a man might remove his entire section of the house, dividing it into two

[1] Freeman, *Report on the Iban of Sarawak*, I 21. [2] Freeman, *Iban Agriculture*, pp. 5–6.

[3] Ibid., p. 10.

[4] Details of Iban longhouse construction vary slightly from region to region. Freeman's diagram (*Iban Agriculture*, p. 2) is typical of modern practice in the Balleh River, Third Division. For an older Second Division variation see Roth, *Natives of Sarawak*, II 11.

[5] Two longhouses in the Sut tributary of the Balleh broke up in 1949 during the period of Freeman's field work. The eleven *bilek* families from one of them scattered to six different sites as much as 100 miles apart, from Sungai Merirai to Sungai Poi. Freeman, *Report on the Iban of Sarawak*, I 44.

[6] This is not true of Saribas District where, especially on the Paku tributary, many Ibans became prosperous rubber smallholders and in the period after World War I began to build more permanent longhouses, sometimes incorporating machine-milled planking, glass windows and Western-style staircases. See ch. 6.

sections and leaving a most inconvenient gap in the middle, merely by paying a nominal fine of one pig, one rooster, and one inexpensive knife.[1]

Although the *bilek* family is the principal customary land-holding unit, Freeman states that the longhouse possesses a community 'right of access' to the territory within which component families hold land. In the Balleh area which he studied, the Government defined such longhouse territories after a long period of rebellion and resettlement which ended only in 1922.[2] Traditionally, however, the 'right of access' was both vaguely defined and subject to frequent disputes. In areas of the Second Division settled before Brooke rule it was customarily established in free-for-alls between neighboring Iban communities. The combatants were armed only with clubs, but sometimes killed each other nevertheless.[3]

Some authorities have written of Iban 'tribes', implying the existence of broader political units above the longhouse level. Usually these are said to correspond to rivers, between which, in long-settled areas, there are still marked variations in language accent, ritual practice and customary law.[4] Freeman refers to tribes 'such as the Skrang, the Lemanak, the Ulu Ai Dayaks etc.', as 'conglomerations of kindred which formed the basis for a loose tribal organization'.[5] He then goes on to define an Iban tribe as 'a diffuse territorial grouping dispersed along the banks of a major river and its diverging tributaries. Formerly it was a grouping whose members did not take one another's heads. . . .'[6] But on one notable occasion in pre-Brooke Iban history the population of one river split into two warring factions, with a third faction unhappily caught in the middle, following an insignificant dispute.[7] Moreover, after the Brookes arrived, they made a common practice of enlisting downriver Ibans to fight rebellious Ibans living in the upper portions of the same river system. There is no evidence whatever that in so doing they violated any traditional concept of tribal unity. In most areas, during the period covered by this study, Iban population was shifting and mingling too frequently as the result of constant migrations to allow the development of consistent, meaningful tribal political units.

[1] A. B. Ward, 'Notes on Certain Sea Dayak Fines and Customs Recognized in the Court at Simanggang' (1915), in *Dayak Adat Law in the Second Division*, comp. A. J. N. Richards (Kuching, 1963) pp. 102–3. In the modern codification of Second Division Iban *adat*, 'breaking' the house is more heavily punished (ibid., pp. 20, 31), but this is an innovation, as numerous Brooke-era court cases in the Sarawak Archives testify.

[2] Freeman, *Iban Agriculture*, pp. 20–1.

[3] Benedict Sandin, *The Sea Dayaks of Borneo before White Rajah Rule* (London, 1967) p. 42.

[4] Bailey and Howell, *A Sea Dyak Dictionary*, pp. v–vi.

[5] Freeman, *Report on the Iban of Sarawak*, 1 31.

[6] Ibid., 1 53.

[7] Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, pp. 81–9; see also the beginning of ch. 8 below.

In the later years of Brooke rule, the Rajah arranged a number of important peacemaking ceremonies between formerly hostile Iban communities and also between Ibans and various non-Iban enemies. The Government made a skillful effort to cloak these ceremonies in the trappings of Iban custom in order to make them comprehensible and binding in the context of Iban *adat* and religion. But there are no clear references in Iban oral literature to similar ceremonies before the advent of British rule. It is safe to conclude that if there was a traditional mechanism for ending or regulating warfare it was both extremely weak and inconsistently applied.[1]

In the field of individual leadership, as in other areas of Iban life, there were few clearly defined institutions above the level of the *bilek* family. The longhouse headman (*tuai rumah*) performed a number of important functions. He served as the custodian of the customary law; he was an arbitrator between the various family groups; and in recent years he has been the intermediary between his longhouse community and the Government. Aside from these roles, 'His authority is negligible and he is in no sense a chief.'[2] Although the *tuai rumah* was frequently succeeded by a son or a son-in-law, this was not the result of any strict hereditary principle, as James

[1] Retired Penghulu Gerinang of the Gat, Balleh, Third Division, now eighty-two years old, told me categorically, 'Before the Rajah came there were no peacemakings (*bebunoh babi bebaik*)'. (Interview at Nanga Balleh, August 1965.) Gerinang must be considered something of an authority. A descendant of the leading upper Batang Lupar pioneers who first settled the Balleh, he attended the great 1924 peacemaking at Kapit (see ch. 8). Earlier he had spent three years in jail for headhunting after he and his warriors killed sixty Lisoms, members of a small non-Iban tribe in the upper Rejang (Balui). The raid is mentioned in Baring-Gould's Third Division December report, *SG* 620 (16 Jan 1913); I. V. Caldecot to Charles Brooke, 16 Dec 1912, 'His Highness the Rajah Confidential', SA.

As early as 1842, the First Rajah specifically excluded the more powerful Iban communities of the Second Division from those 'Dayaks' who possessed a customary peacemaking procedure: 'When one party is weaker, or less active or less warlike than the other, they conduct a peace through some tribe friendly to both and pay for the lives they have taken: the price is about two gongs, value 33½ reals, for each life: thus peace is concluded. This is the custom with these Dayaks universally: but it is otherwise with the Saribas and Skrang [i.e. the Ibans]. But Saribas and Skrang are not fair examples of Dayak life as they are pirates as well as head-hunters and do not hesitate to destroy all persons they meet with.' (James Brooke journal entry, 20 June 1842, in Keppel, *Dido*, 1 302.) Hugh Low likewise observed that although the Land Dayaks made peace by settling a 'balance of heads, . . . the sea-Dayaks . . . rarely adjust their differences with the other tribes, they having gone on so long, and their head debt being so large to so many tribes, that were they to attempt the payment they would find themselves bankrupt immediately. . . . ' (*Sarawak*, pp. 212–14.)

[2] Freeman, *Iban Agriculture*, p. 10. 'Under Iban *adat*, it is possible for a *tuai rumah*, whose behaviour meets with general disapproval, to be removed from office, and for another man to be chosen in his place. Deposition is achieved simply by a transference of recognition. I remember enquiring of the Iban what would happen if a *tuai rumah* refused to be rejected. Their scornful comment on this contingency sums up the general attitude to a *tuai rumah*'s authority with great nicety: "Wherein would lie his power, he belongs to but one *bilek-family*." ' (*Report on the Iban of Sarawak*, 1 48.)

Brooke observed on his first trip to Lundu.[1] The headman needed an extensive knowledge of customary law, genealogies, and the history of past land disputes. A member of his family was naturally in the best position to gain the necessary education in these subjects.

The Brookes created superior headmen (*penghulu*), who it was hoped would exert authority over many longhouses throughout whole river segments, but their performance was frequently disappointing to the Government. Iban society was indeed capable of producing powerful leaders who exercised influence over wide areas, but such ability was entirely a function of individual performance and reputation. Achievement in pioneering, oratory, and above all in warfare enabled a man to attain high political stature. To be considered a war-leader, an individual had to possess not only a reputation for leadership ability, but a necessary range of personal religious experience as well. Such a leader – one who had dreamed the necessary dreams – was said to be 'able to attack' (*tau serang*), and once a man achieved this label he could count on a following.[2] Nevertheless, some of the most famous Iban rebels and warleaders, including Bantin, were not *tau serang*, indicating that this religious qualification was not a rigid requirement.[3] The son of a famous leader enjoyed a head start toward achieving fame and influence himself, but without the necessary personal qualities no amount of hereditary position, much less Government support, could make him an authority.

Not only did Iban society lack strong political institutions above the family level. Those mechanisms which did exist to regulate social intercourse on a higher level were extraordinarily subject to manipulation. Of these mechanisms, the most important were omens and kinship.

Under the Iban system of bilateral kinship, relationships may be traced back through either male or female relatives indefinitely, to enclose a potentially infinite number of relatives. The Ibans refer to the diffuse kin group which results as the *kaban*, which Freeman has translated 'kindred'. One of his informants compared it to the meshes of a circular fishing net, which are woven out from the center in ever-increasing concentric circles. Freeman notes that the kindred is 'by its very nature . . . an uncircumscribed group, and one cannot define its limits by any kind of precise boundary'.[4]

[1] Keppel, *Dido*, I 61. Brooke's assessment of Iban leadership given here coincides remarkably with that of J. D. Freeman just quoted.

[2] Benedict Sandin mentions the importance of dreams for Iban leaders in *Duabelas Bengkah Mimpi Tuai Dayak-Iban* (Kuching, 1962), translated and expanded as 'Iban Hero Dreams and Apparitions', *SMJ* XIV 28–9 (Dec 1966) 91–123.

[3] See ch. 7, esp. p. 220, n. 4.

[4] Freeman, *Report on the Iban of Sarawak*, I 29. See also the same author's 'On the Concept of the Kindred', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, XCI 2 (1961) 192–220.

In other words, an Iban has no way of drawing a precise line between his most distant relatives and people who are not related at all, any more than does the average American.

In former times, however, if a blood relationship could be proved among the Ibans, it sometimes helped to maintain and justify peaceful relations between two groups. The documents used to prove relationship were oral genealogies (*tusut*), memorized by recognized experts (*tukang tusut*). From a political point of view, the most interesting thing about an Iban genealogy is that it could be traced back through any one of innumerable lines of ancestors to establish a desired relationship. At ten generations back in time, even two people from rather widely separate areas were likely to have quite a number of common forebears. If the genealogist was skilled and determined enough, he could find them.[1]

In other words, kinship could be and frequently was manipulated to suit the political circumstances of the moment. Charles Brooke once described how two groups of Ibans only recently at war with each other set about to reinforce a Government-sponsored peace ceremony.

> After this ceremony, they all mixed in the same circle, and told their different relationships, handed down through many generations, and over a large extent of country. . . . This is the common practice of Dayaks, and their eyes sparkle with delight on finding a new Scotch cousin several times removed, although they may have been at feud for years, and only an hour before would have gladly carried each other's head in a bag.[2]

Like most of the other pagan tribal groups in Borneo, the Ibans considered various kinds of omens before undertaking any long journey, war expedition, or major farming operation. They believed that certain birds, the sons-in-law of Sengalang Burong, God of War, were messengers between man and the supernatural. Many other animals and insects also played a part in omenry. By slaughtering a pig and examining the convoluted lobes of the liver, a man could foretell success or failure in almost any enterprise. Dreams, above all the dreams of war-leaders, were another important channel of communication between man and the spirit world.[3]

The Kenyahs and Kayans traditionally tended to adhere scrupulously both to omens and to various varieties of ritual prohibition, even when such behavior might have disastrous practical consequences. As late as 1936 the Sarawak Government concluded that a serious famine in the Baram River had resulted partly from rigid adherence to such religious observances,

[1] For the various functions of Iban genealogies, see my introduction to Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, p. xvii.

[2] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 80.

[3] Jensen, 'The Iban World', pp. 13–18.

which in this case had prevented people from harvesting their crops.[1] But the Ibans, always little inclined to play any game by a narrow set of rules, were never known for such behavior. They went through the motions of omenry, but refused to be hobbled by it. The more flexible Iban attitude is suggested in a passage written by the future Second Rajah in about 1863. He described the waning influence of bird omens among the Second Division warriors who were already accompanying him on constant punitive expeditions. 'You are our bird,' they told him; 'we follow you.'[2]

The salient political feature of traditional Iban society may be summarized as an absence of structured social mechanisms to define and regulate behavior at any level of society higher than the *bilek* family group. Unlike the Malays, who were always familiar at least with the ideal of kingship, through both Hindu and Moslem tradition, the Ibans had no clear concept of regularly constituted leadership beyond the village-longhouse level. Unlike the Kayans, Kenyahs, pagan Melanaus and some other Borneo societies, they were not stratified into slave, commoner and chief ranks. Iban political institutions were egalitarian, flexible, almost formless.

Geographic and demographic conditions in the nineteenth-century Iban homeland created a framework within which an aggressive, expansive, anarchic way of life could thrive. Unlike the Land Dayaks of the First Division, the Ibans did not occupy an area where some soils were sufficiently rich to support an expanding population on the basis of shifting cultivation. The Second Division, their homeland within Sarawak, was an area which rapidly became overcrowded, but which lay adjacent to vast regions covered with virgin jungle, populated only by less numerous nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples. These regions were ideal both for headhunting and, so long as the land held out, for the further expansion of shifting cultivation.

I would suggest that such conditions not only made the unstructured yet dynamic character of Iban society possible; they actively stimulated it. Odd as it may sound, a modified version of the famous Turner thesis in American history has apparent relevance to the history of the Ibans in Sarawak. Turner argued that the existence of a western frontier at 'the hither edge of free land' resulted in the transformation of European forms of government into something distinctively American, disorderly in comparison to its European antecedents, yet democratic.[3]

Critics of the Turner thesis long ago pointed out that no amount of free

[1] Fourth Division September report, *SG* 998 (2 Nov 1936); E. Banks, 'Baram Rice Famine', *SG* 1000 (4 Jan 1937).

[2] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 234.

[3] Frederick Jackson Turner, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History', in *Frontier and Section: Selected Essays of Frederick Jackson Turner* (Englewood, 1961) pp. 37–62.

land served to democratize autocratic institutions in other areas, such as Latin America and Siberia, and his theory is no longer accepted as more than a very partial explanation of American social development. Likewise in Borneo, conditions similar to those experienced by the Ibans did not necessarily result in other Iban-type cultures. The Kayans were also expanding in the early and middle years of the nineteenth century, from an original homeland in the Apoh Kayan area of central Borneo down the Kapuas, Rejang and Baram Rivers.[1] Yet Kayan society certainly did not develop along Iban lines.

Nevertheless, in the one district of Sarawak where the Ibans have been more settled than in any other, the Saribas district of the Second Division, they demonstrate attitudes toward authority which tend to set them apart from the inhabitants of the pioneer districts of still-plentiful virgin jungle, described in the writings of Freeman. Thus Benedict Sandin, himself a product of the Saribas, makes frequent references to 'hereditary chiefs' which strike the reader familiar with Freeman as very odd indeed. In fact there is no institutionalized chiefship among the Ibans of the Saribas, any more than among those whom Freeman studied.

There is, however, a very much greater sense of class in the Saribas, a tendency to think in terms of 'first families' whose members are, or should be, the natural heirs to political power. The difference in attitude is well illustrated by Freeman's observation that the Ibans of the Balleh make no attempt to preserve lengthy genealogies. The longest among more than 500 which he collected reached back only five generations.[2] By way of contrast, fifteen and even twenty-five generation genealogies are commonly preserved in the Saribas.[3]

The special historical conditions which have prevailed in the Saribas will be discussed at length in a following chapter. They include a high degree of involvement with Malay leaders in early and mid-nineteenth-century 'piracy', early adoption of Western cash crops such as coffee and rubber, and early partial conversion to Christianity. The Saribas was relatively peaceful during a long period when many other Iban communities were still subject to raiding, and the Saribas experienced less social fragmentation as a result of migration to other districts.

Some experienced British administrators who prefer the more democratic attitudes of the pioneer districts believe that class-consciousness in the Saribas must be the result of association with Malays in this predominantly

[1] The Kayan migrations are discussed briefly at the beginning of ch. 8.

[2] Freeman, *Report on the Iban of Sarawak*, I 13.

[3] Many typical long Saribas Iban genealogies are appended to Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, pp. 90 ff.

downriver district. They overlook the fact that the Saribas people, far more than any other Ibans in Sarawak, have preserved and elaborated the corpus of oral literature which is the cultural storehouse of a militantly pagan, preliterate society.[1] That this should be the case in an area where people have been growing rubber and cutting their hair short for decades may come as a surprise to those who equate Iban tradition with upriver areas and relatively primitive conditions. But it should be obvious that pioneers, always fighting, headhunting and on the move, can hardly be expected to spend as much time and energy memorizing genealogies as people leading a somewhat more settled life. Nor will active pioneers be motivated to develop much respect for established leadership patterns of any kind.

[1] Upon arriving in Sarawak, I was initially skeptical of Benedict Sandin's assertion that a much greater amount of Iban oral history and literature was to be found preserved in the superficially 'Westernized' Saribas than in the more remote, 'backward', pioneer areas of the Second and Third Divisions. The present Curator of the Sarawak Museum is, after all, a Saribas man himself, and despite the unrivalled depth of his knowledge of Iban culture in general, he might be expected to show some bias in favor of his own home area. But by the time I left Sarawak, after traveling and interviewing in every major Iban district, I was convinced that his assertion was substantially accurate.

Mr Sandin and Mr Tom Harrisson have recently published a valuable selection of Iban oral texts. It is significant that all of the informants who contributed this material are from Saribas stock, although two belong to families which migrated elsewhere after 1890: see Tom Harrisson and Benedict Sandin, 'Borneo Writing Boards', in *Borneo Writing and Related Matters*, *SMJ* XIII 27 (Nov 1966) 98–100. A similar text recorded on the Mukah River originated with an Iban from the Krian River in the Second Division, an area with strong social ties to the nearby Saribas. My informant is Mr Geoffrey Barnes, who was Mukah District Officer at the time; the text is discussed in Tom Harrisson, 'Borneo Writing', *Bijdragen*, 121 (1965) 1–57.

The evidence published thus far strengthens my impression that the various Iban 'writing boards' (*papan turai*) discussed in the articles cited above cannot meaningfully be regarded as anything more than *aides-mémoires* for the memorization and teaching of the oral texts. They also function as cue boards during the long recitals. It is quite clear that the symbols used often depended on the individual creator of the board, and do not embody any regular system of writing, either pictographic, morphemic or alphabetic.

2 | The Iban Country to the Eve of Brooke Rule

STUDENTS have long speculated about the origins of the various cultural groups in Sarawak, including the Ibans. Charles Hose once suggested that the Malay chiefs of the Second Division had transported the Ibans from Sumatra to employ them on 'piratical' expeditions.[1] Hose had a weakness for such farfetched theorizing. He clung tenaciously to his even more unlikely conviction that the Kayans were the descendants of Karen refugees from Burma, although the two groups speak utterly dissimilar languages.[2]

Despite this aberration, Hose was a genuine Kayan authority, but he had little experience in Iban districts, and his theory of Iban origins was never taken seriously by men who did. Place names frequently mentioned in Iban oral literature, plus the assertions of the Ibans themselves, plainly pointed toward an older homeland in the great Kapuas River system of Indonesia. A better informed English student of Iban history has written:

As far as is certainly known, the Ibans say they come from Kumpang; and their old stories have numerous references to that area, which included the northern tributaries of the Kapuas and the Kapuas lakes in Indonesian Borneo.

They entered Sarawak by way of the low-lying watershed between the Kapuas and the Batang Lupar or Batang Ai, following the faulted depression known to geologists as the Danau series, which runs from Indonesian Borneo northwest down the Batang Ai.[3]

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[1] Hose and McDougall, *Pagan Tribes*, II 248–9. Hose modified his theory by admitting that there might have been older Iban settlements in the Kapuas even before the 'pirates' were transported from Sumatra. He believed that these older settlements were perhaps the homes of the ancestors of Bugaus, Kantus and Daus, Iban sub-groups in western areas of the Second Division and adjacent areas of the Kapuas: ibid.

[2] For a debunking of Hose's Kayan theory, which originated with J. R. Logan, editor of the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago*, see Tom Harrisson and B. Brunig, 'Hose's Irrawaddy Pioneers', *SMJ* VI 6 (Dec 1955) 518–21.

[3] A. J. N. Richards, 'The Ibans', in *The Peoples of Sarawak*, ed. Tom Harrisson (Kuching, 1959) p. 10. 'Kumpang', in addition to having the general meaning of the area toward the middle Kapuas, is also the name of a Batang Lupar tributary which enters that river just above Engkilili and which, according to Benedict Sandin, was one of the earliest Iban-settled rivers in Sarawak. An excellent short summary of pre-Brooke Iban history is given in Jensen, 'The Iban World', pp. 3–4.

By means of a thorough analysis of Iban oral sources, Benedict Sandin has now tentatively dated the period of the initial Iban migrations from the Kapuas valley into modern Sarawak territory, and has suggested two subsequent periods in Iban history prior to Brooke rule.[1] According to memorized genealogies (*tusut*), the migrations began about sixteen generations ago.[2] Allowing twenty-five years per generation, which on the basis of modern Iban marriage practice seems reasonable, the first pioneers would have moved into Sarawak in about the middle of the sixteenth century. During the next five generations, as the process gradually continued, nearly all the major river systems of the Second Division, with the exception of most of the Krian, became Iban-inhabited.

The migrating Ibans encountered a thin pre-existing population in most areas of the Second Division. Unlike the Ibans, these people did not yet regularly cultivate rice. They were, at least for the most part, jungle nomads who lived by hunting and gathering. There were two different groups, the Bukitans and the Serus, both of whom were probably related linguistically to the far-flung and extremely diverse Melanau family. The response of the Bukitans and the Serus to the new Iban presence was very different.[3]

The Bukitans were the more westerly of the two groups, occupying the middle and lower Batang Lupar and the nearer portions of the Saribas River system. In general, they tended to accommodate themselves to the more advanced culture of the newcomers. Bukitan leaders intermarried with the Ibans, and it is possible that whole Bukitan communities gradually adopted the Iban language and manner of farming, thereby becoming Ibans themselves. Those Bukitans who retained a separate identity tended to become cultural satellites of the Ibans, who found them useful as jungle scouts and as the occasional objects of headhunting raids. They learned to live in

[1] Sandin's *Sea Dayaks* is the study referred to. This book, which I helped prepare for publication during my research in Sarawak, is the principal authority for the discussion of pre-Brooke Iban migrations which follows. The section titles suggest the periodization which Sandin has employed: Part One, 'Pre-Sarawak Migrations', tells of the earliest movements from the Kapuas to the Second Division; Part Two, 'Clearing Old Jungle: the Pioneers Spread Out'; Part Three, 'Turmoil Along the Coast and Further Migrations'.

[2] Numbers of generations cited in this kind of dating may vary, of course, according to whether one counts back from a living grandparent or an infant. Such dating is always extremely approximate. For a discussion of this subject, see ibid., pp. 93–6, and my forthcoming review of Mr Sandin's book in the *Journal of Southeast Asian History*.

[3] A process of great complexity is oversimplified for the sake of clarity in the paragraphs which follow. 'Bukitan' and 'Seru', like most such ethnic terms, should be regarded with caution. It is possible that they represent labels applied in retrospect by the Ibans to a diverse population of jungle nomads, some of whom assimilated fairly easily ('Bukitans') while others ('Serus') did not. See p. 40, n. 3 below for evidence that the Serus did not traditionally call themselves Serus.

longhouses and remained on the fringes of the expanding Iban territory.[1] Today there are about five longhouses of people identifying themselves as Bukitans left in Sarawak, located on tributaries of the Rejang above Pelagus Rapids, and in the adjacent Anap drainage of the Fourth Division, far away from their original homes in the Second Division.

The Serus resisted Iban encroachment more strenuously, according to Iban accounts. They were soon forced to vacate the Rimbas branch of the Saribas River system entirely, but they succeeded in blocking Iban migration into most of the adjacent Krian until about the time that James Brooke arrived in Sarawak.[2] Iban tradition records no instances of Seru-Iban intermarriage; instead the emphasis is all on warfare. Unlike the Bukitans, few Serus became Iban. On the contrary, caught between the expanding Ibans and the Moslem settlements on the coast, many of them converted to Islam and thereby became Malay. The last pagan Seru died in 1949, so the group is now culturally extinct, but undoubtedly many of the Malays of the Krian are of Seru stock.[3]

[1] On a pioneer voyage down the Katibas in 1861 (described in ch. 7) Charles Brooke observed Bukitans living on this river, which was just being settled by Iban migrants from the Batang Lupar; under Iban influence they were beginning to build longhouses and grow hill rice: *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 195–6. The evidence indicates that the Bukitans continued to migrate with or just ahead of the Ibans, as for example into Mukah and Oya in about 1870; see ch. 8.

[2] Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, pp. 52–3. As late as 1861 Charles Brooke commented on the Krian, 'There are no Dayaks living in these waters. . . .' (*Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 64), but the Krian has several branches, and by that period there were certainly Ibans on some of them.

[3] The best published account of the Serus is Tom Harrisson, 'The Srus and Four Stone Figures from Sarawak', *Bulletin of the Raffles Museum*, Series B, 4 (1949) 117–22. See also Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 330; D. J. S. Bailey, 'The Sru Dyaks' and the reply to this article by F. de R[ozario], both in Richards, *The Sea Dayaks and Other Races*, pp. 251–60.

De Rozario, who knew a great deal about the upper Rejang peoples, was convinced that the Serus were the same people as the Ukits, another jungle nomad group who had lived in the upper Balleh before invading Ibans drove them out of the area. His opinion is interesting in the light of Freeman's assessment of the contrast between the Ukit-Iban and Bukitan-Iban relationship in the Balleh: 'A very significant feature of the Iban migrations into the Rejang basin, was the special relationship – symbiotic in character – which existed between the Iban and the Bukitans. The nomadic Bukitans, whose ancestral territory the Rejang was, acted as guides and allies to the more numerous and accomplished Iban, and under Iban influence they gradually came to follow Iban methods of cultivating rice, and ultimately, to live in longhouses of their own making. The nomadic Ukits, on the other hand, were inveterate opponents of the Iban, and contested their advance at many points, especially in the Balleh area.' (*Iban Agriculture*, pp. 14–15.) This, of course, sounds exactly like the contrast between Seru-Iban and Bukitan-Iban relationship in the Second Division.

Information collected from the last surviving Serus and now on file in the Sarawak Museum indicates that (1) the Serus did not originally call themselves Serus; the name was imposed by early Brooke officers; (2) the Serus believed they were related to other peoples of the Melanau family in the lower Rejang, including the Beliuns and Segalangs; and (3) they claimed an original homeland in the Kapuas, where most Ukits have lived since the Iban migrations drove them out of the Balleh.

After the pioneer phase of Iban settlement in the Second Division had ended about eleven generations ago, around the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Ibans continued to spread within the same river systems, extending and consolidating their presence. For some rivers, notably the Paku branch of the Saribas, Benedict Sandin has been able to document this second period in detail.[1] Until the end of this phase, the story of Iban settlement in the Second Division is almost entirely concerned with pagan peoples: with the Ibans themselves, and their expansion at the expense of the aboriginal Bukitans and Serus. But in a third and final period, beginning about nine to seven generations back from the present, or perhaps a century before the arrival of James Brooke, a wholly new element enters the narrative.

For the first time Iban traditions mention contact with would-be Malay overlords, sometimes acting in the name of Brunei. They tell of Iban leaders receiving titles from Malay chiefs, and describe savage coastal raiding expeditions, sometimes undertaken in cooperation with the Malays, against Land Dayak and Melanau settlements hundreds of miles away. It was during this period, which will be described in greater detail below, that the initial Iban migrations into the Rejang watershed of the Third Division took place. It was also during this period that Rajah Brooke made his appearance.

Benedict Sandin's study, the results of which are briefly summarized above, does not discuss the pre-Sarawak history of the Ibans. Where did the Ibans live in the Kapuas, and where did they come from before that? If there are answers to these questions, they are not easily to be found in the oral source materials available for study. In the long ritual chants which precede every major Iban ceremonial, heroes, including famous migration leaders, are summoned from the spirit world. These individuals and others mentioned in the great mass of Iban tradition may often be roughly dated with the aid of genealogies.

The problem is that an Iban genealogy, which, as we have seen, may be up to thirty generations in length, is by its very nature of uneven historical value. At its lower or more recent end, it functions primarily as a secular oral document with innumerable uses, from settling land disputes to establishing a blood relationship with some prestigious political figure. But the older sections of the genealogy serve a religious purpose, linking the living individual to the spirit world, and documenting the existence of a spirit pantheon. There is a corresponding difference in style between the beginning and the end of an Iban genealogy. The most recent, primarily secular portion is merely a straightforward prose list describing who begot whom, like certain chapters in the Book of Genesis. The older, primarily religious portion is

[1] Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, Part Two.

elaborated into rhythmic stanzas rich in symbolic and literary allusions.[1] There is no hard and fast dividing-line between the two sections, but it tends to occur at about fifteen generations back from the present. That is about the time of the pioneer migrations into Sarawak. The world of earlier levels, which includes references to ancestors from Sumatra and elsewhere, must be regarded primarily as a world of myth. This is not to say that there is no myth at the later levels as well. The difference is relative, but it is there.

Even if the earliest portions of the genealogies could be taken literally, they would not pretend to explain Iban origins. The major law-givers and most important figures in the Iban world appear only a few generations before the initial migrations into Sarawak begin.[2] Since these people were the founders of Iban culture, their own forebears, whoever and whatever they may have been, were certainly not yet Iban.

It should be emphasized that even at the more recent time levels where genealogical documentation may be valid, Iban migration was always more than a physical movement of people. The oral evidence indicates, as we have seen, that certain groups of leaders moved into Sarawak, bearing with them a new culture, new attitudes toward warfare and migration, and above all a new technique of cultivation not yet practiced by the Bukitans and Serus. Some of the Bukitans were converted to 'Ibanism', while the Serus reacted against it. To the extent that conversion did take place, however, what has been called 'migration' in the description above was equally a process of cultural diffusion: a movement of ideas, not just of people.

Finally it should be kept in mind that the pioneer migrations into Sarawak from the Kapuas took place at one time level in a long, complex process of population ebb and flow. The Dutch, viewing the Ibans from a different perspective and time level, never thought of them as indigenous to the Kapuas. On the contrary, they viewed the Ibans as aggressors, spreading from a homeland in the middle and upper Batang Lupar *into* the Kapuas valley at the expense of weaker peoples living there. This theory does not contradict Benedict Sandin's reconstruction of early Iban history. It merely applies to a later time level, beginning in about 1800, when as we shall see the upper Batang Lupar was indeed the source of a vigorous, multi-directional Iban migration.

[1] One of the genealogies appended to Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, is reproduced exactly as it would be recited (pp. 90–2) and illustrates the shift in style mentioned here.

[2] Serapoh, who introduced correct burial procedures (see ch. 1), lived only about twenty-one generations ago, about a generation before Sengalang Burong, the Iban God of War and father-in-law of the principal Iban omen birds, and only about five generations before the initial migrations into Sarawak territory.

With the timing of the initial Iban movement into Sarawak very roughly established, it is possible to speculate about the apparent lack of important contact at any period between the Ibans and the nominal ruler of the Iban country, the Sultanate of Brunei. According to Brunei tradition, the rivers of the Second Division where the Ibans settled lie at the heart of the area which the Sultan of 'Johore' (more likely Malacca) granted to the first Moslem ruler of Brunei, together with items of royal regalia, shortly after the fall of Madjapahit.[1] The fall of Madjapahit is now believed to have taken place not long after 1500.[2] If this date is correct, nominal Brunei suzerainty over the Second Division began somewhat earlier than the period of the earliest migrations, as established by Benedict Sandin.

According to the Brunei story the Malacca 'grant' included only the 'five countries' of Kalakka (Krian), Saribas, Sadong, Samarahan and Sarawak.[3] No mention is made of the Batang Lupar river system, which is centrally located between the Saribas and the Sadong. The Batang Lupar was the first river in Sarawak to be settled by Iban migrants from the Kapuas, and in later years it was the most vigorously Iban river in the Second Division. Its omission from the Malacca grant, as remembered in Brunei tradition, may indicate that the warlike Ibans were soon living along it in sufficient numbers to discourage Brunei interest in what was in any case not a very profitable district.

The Iban country is nowhere mentioned in the slight amount of information available concerning the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Sultanate. A Brunei document dating from the reign of Sultan Muaddin, probably early in the eighteenth century, describes the tributes which the ruler received from his southwestern dependencies, including Saribas and Batang Lupar in the Second Division. The annual Saribas tribute, collected by locally appointed Malay chiefs, consisted of one war boat and 800 *pasu* of *padi*, as well as contributions on certain special occasions such as the death or marriage of a Sultan. The Batang Lupar and Skrang Rivers paid tribute only in cotton.[4] It is quite likely that these tribute payments affected only the primarily Malay settlements nearest the coast.

[1] Hugh Low, 'Selesilah (Book of the Descent) of the Rajas of Brunei', *JSBRAS*, No. 5 (1880) 2.

[2] Hall, *History of South-East Asia*, p. 89.

[3] Low, 'Selesilah', p. 2. It may be assumed that Brunei was a powerful state at this period, which also saw the Sultanate extend its control over the Melanau coastal areas of the Third Division: A. E. Lawrence, 'Stories of the First Brunei Conquests on the Sarawak Coast', *SMJ* 1 1 (Feb 1911) 121–4.

[4] E. Parnell, 'The Tribute Paid in Former Days to the Sultan of Brunei by the Then Dependent Provinces of Sarawak', *SMJ* 1 1 (Feb 1911) 127–8. Today one *pasu* usually equals eight *gantang* of about two quarts each. The measurement is not legally recognized in Sarawak, and varies according to region and commodity measured.

Sultan Muaddin is said to have reasserted some degree of Brunei influence in the southwestern provinces after a long civil war. It had been a disastrous conflict, which resulted in the loss of Sabah's east coast to Sulu, and created a deep and lasting schism in the Brunei nobility.[1] Despite Muaddin's alleged reassertion of power, there are indications that Brunei was never the same again. The reigns of the Sultans who ruled before the civil war are specified in Brunei history, but the subsequent period, covering most of the eighteenth century, is a comparative mystery. Not even the order of succession of the three Sultans who followed Muaddin is known with precision.[2]

Significantly, this time of troubles in Brunei coincided with the end of the period when the Ibans had been consolidating their settlement in the Second Division, and the beginning of the new and aggressive period of contact with the coast. At this critical juncture, the Ibans were not made aware of the existence of any meaningful central Government. Their lack of respect for the Sultanate was quite obvious when the new European overlords arrived. Charles Brooke related a grim tale of some Brunei nobles en route to the Krian, which, it will be recalled, was a district where Iban settlement was thin until after the beginning of Brooke rule. Encountering some Iban marauders on the coast, the *pengiran* in command displayed the Sultan's commission, carefully folded in yellow satin, hoping to dissuade them from attack. But the Ibans replied, 'We don't know about things like that' (*nadai nemu utai bakanya*), and proceeded to take the heads of the entire party.[3]

If the Ibans were largely ignorant of Brunei, it seems likely that Brunei was equally little concerned about the Ibans. A missionary who visited the capital in 1837 sought information about the various tribes in the territory subject to the Sultan, which in theory extended to the southwest as far as Sambas. The Brunei aristocrats enumerated the names of twenty-one groups, many of which can be identified as peoples living close to Brunei Bay, and none of which can be definitely construed to mean Iban.[4]

[1] Low, 'Selesilah', pp. 15–18; H. R. Hughes-Hallett, 'A Sketch of the History of Brunei', *JMBRAS* XVIII 2 (Aug 1940) 32–3.

[2] This is according to Hughes-Hallett, 'Sketch', p. 34; however, Low lists Sultan Muaddin's three successors without qualification: 'Selesilah', p. 29.

[3] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 65. The Iban spelling has been corrected to conform with modern usage.

[4] The list included 'Murut, Kayan, Bisaya, Tabun, Punan, Daya [Dayak?], Tatow, Kanawit [Kanowit], Siting, Bukatan [Bukitan], Sundaya [probably a mistranscription of Lundaya, i.e. Murut-Kelabit], Dali, Baung, Taring, Kajaman, Agis, Tagar [Tagal?], Dusun, Bajow [Bajau], Narun, Milanow [Melanau]. 'Notices of the City of Borneo and its Inhabitants', *Chinese Repository*, VII 3 (July 1838) 133. 'Daya' could, of course, mean almost anything, including Iban; the author notes that the generic Brunei term for men of the interior in general was not 'Daya' but 'Murut' or 'orang gunung' (men of the mountains). There are some surprising inclusions in this list.

By this period Brunei was certainly approaching a nadir of weakness, bereft of the considerable junk trade with China which had survived until the end of the eighteenth century.[1] Yet it may be doubted whether the Brunei nobility had ever at any period been greatly interested in the area which was to become Sarawak's Second Division. Even on the eve of Brooke rule there was still a considerable degree of direct Brunei involvement both in the Melanau-populated sago districts, and in the mineral-rich Land Dayak rivers of the First Division. It bears repeating that there was never much inducement to trade or taxation in the Iban country. From a Brunei point of view, it offered only headhunters and perhaps a little jungle produce, and the latter could be obtained in more safety and greater quantity from rivers such as the Limbang and Baram which were located closer to home.[2]

The story of the developing Iban relationship with the coast which emerges from Iban tradition involves not Brunei but a heterogeneous selection of local Malay chiefs, about whom more will be said shortly. As mentioned earlier, this third and final period of pre-Brooke Iban history began in earnest about nine to seven generations ago, probably not until the middle of the eighteenth century. It is foreshadowed by scattered earlier traditions such as the story of Rusak, the first Saribas Iban to meet a 'Malay'.

Rusak was a pioneer who migrated from the Undup branch of the Batang Lupar to settle in the Paku tributary of Saribas about thirteen generations ago. Soon after his arrival he learned that a tribe of strangers lived at the mouth of the river. Paddling downstream, he eventually encountered one of them and asked who he might be. The man replied that he was from the *laut*, the Malay word for sea. (The Iban equivalent is *tasik*.) Ever since this time, according to tradition, the common Iban word for a Malay person has

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The presence of 'Kanawit' and especially of 'Kajaman' indicates some Brunei knowledge of the deep interior of the Rejang, no doubt because this big river was the source of large quantities of valuable jungle produce, in 1837 as later. The Kajamans are an upriver Melanau group living near Belaga, a remote location even in modern times. Speaking of all these tribes, the author observed: 'They call them the subjects of the Sultan, but from the fear which the Brunians have of these mountaineers it would seem as natural to conclude that Brunei is subject to them, as that they are subject to Brunei.' (Ibid., pp. 132–3.)

[1] Accounts of Chinese trade and junk-building at Brunei in the late eighteenth century are given in John Jesse, 'Substance of a Letter to the Court of Directors from Mr John Jesse, dated July 20, 1775, at Borneo Proper', in *Miscellaneous Papers Relating to Indo-China* (London, 1886) I 25; and in Thomas Forrest, *A Voyage to New Guinea and the Moluccas* (London, 1779) p. 382.

[2] The Second Division, with its small rivers and relatively confined hinterland, was not traditionally an important area for jungle produce, although in later years it did supply large quantities of *jelutong*, a species of wild rubber which thrives in swampy areas. The great camphor-producing area of Sarawak is the Fourth Division, particularly the Baram River, as James Brooke observed as early as 1842. (Mundy, *Borneo and Celebes*, I 319.)

been *laut*.[1] However, Benedict Sandin is inclined to believe that at the time of this meeting the Saribas *laut* were not yet converted to Islam, but were still a pagan group otherwise known as the Lugu, probably members of the Melanau family, all of whom later became Malays.[2]

Following this incident, there is little evidence of further coastal contact for another four generations. Then and only then, Iban traditions begin to tell of warlike adventures along the coast, the phenomenon which James Brooke was later to call 'piracy'. There were two rather different types of raiding activity. One type, which Benedict Sandin has called 'intertribal warfare', consisted of retaliatory headhunting and marauding between predominantly Iban communities which had come to regard themselves as hereditary enemies. In the second type, Iban fleets, often mixed with Malay forces, raided indiscriminately against petty coastal shipping and villages as far distant as the Pontianak area. Most of the victims of these raids were Land Dayaks, Melanaus and other non-Ibans.

The retaliatory, 'intertribal warfare' often pitted the powerful, predominantly Iban communities of the Saribas and Skrang Rivers, who usually raided together, against weaker, mixed Iban and Malay communities located on outlying rivers on the fringes of the Iban territory. We have already encountered one of these weaker groups, the 'Sebuyau Dayaks' of Lundu, whom James Brooke first visited in 1839. These Ibans had migrated westwards from the Sebuyau River on the Batang Lupar to scattered locations in the predominantly non-Iban First Division many generations before Brooke rule.[3] The early British writers state that they had been driven away from their old home by Saribas and Skrang raiders.[4] Saribas tradition maintains that the Sebuyau migrations preceded the fighting, and therefore could not have resulted from it.[5] Either way, a clear and longstanding tradition of hostility between the two groups predated Brooke rule.

A similar history of enmity existed between the Saribas and Skrang allies and the mixed Malay and Iban community at Banting Hill, on the Lingga branch of the lower Batang Lupar. The Banting Ibans, or 'Balau Dayaks',

[1] *Laut* is now gradually yielding to *Melayu* as the Iban term for a Malay person.

[2] *Sea Dayaks*, pp. 21–2. Sandin believes that the pagan Lugus were converted to Islam by Abang Gudam and Temenggong Kadir, who according to tradition were the ancestors of the Saribas Malay aristocracy. Abang Gudam is located eleven generations back from the present on a Malay genealogy: see Benedict Sandin, 'Descent of Some Saribas Malays (and Ibans) – II', *SMJ* XI 23–4 (July–Dec 1964) 515. If this is accurate it would give some faint support to the hypothesis that the Lugus were still pagan when Rusak (at thirteen generations) met them.

[3] In addition to the group at Lundu, there were Sebuyau Iban communities on the Sadong and Samarahan Rivers, as well as one Sebuyau longhouse on Padungan Creek, where there is now a bustling Chinese business quarter of Kuching: for the latter, see Low, *Sarawak*, p. 167.

[4] Low, *Sarawak*, pp. 166–8; St John, *Forests*, I 6, 208.

[5] Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, pp. 6–7, 65.

fought back effectively against the much feared Saribas and Skrang.[1] Like the Sebuyaus, they quite naturally aligned themselves with James Brooke in his early campaigns against Iban 'pirates', who were none other than their old enemies.[2]

The Saribas and Skrang Ibans were the principal and perhaps the only aggressors involved in the second, less discriminate type of raiding activity. Two of the most famous pioneer raiders described in Saribas tradition lived only seven generations ago, indicating that such marauding did not begin much before about 1800. One of them, a warrior named Jiram (Rentap),[3] led the first recorded raid against the Melanaus of the Third Division. But his attack against a great longhouse community at Kanowit[4] failed when the defenders succeeded in overturning his boats by means of rattan rope snares cleverly stretched just under the surface of the river. The story told by Jiram's own descendants relates that he and most of his followers died of starvation trying to walk home through the jungle after this fiasco.

Unggang (Lebor Menoa), who also lived seven generations ago, is credited with building the first of the really big Saribas war-boats, capable of holding up to one hundred men. Similar craft, long and swift but completely paddle-powered, were commonly employed on later coastal raids. The Saribas story states that Unggang was not merely a marauder, but was defending his country against the incursions of Illanun raiders from Sabah and Mindanao, who were common in Borneo waters at this time. But

[1] For accounts of Saribas–Banting hostility, see ibid., pp. 68–70.

[2] There was a similar pre-Brooke history of enmity between the Saribas and Skrang Ibans and those of Undup: ibid., p. 69. The Undups also became staunch Brooke allies, and in later years usually provided most of the recruits for the State's small force of trained troops, the Sarawak Rangers.

[3] He is not to be confused with Libau (Rentap) of Skrang, who was the famous Rentap of the Sadok Wars described in ch. 4. In addition to their given names, most Iban warriors had praise-names (*ensumbar*) which I have placed in parentheses after the given name. A praise-name, nearly always related to acts of bravery in battle and frequently boastful in meaning, could be bestowed by a war-leader on one of his warriors, or might be made up by the warrior himself with the approval of the war-leader. The *ensumbar* was often several lines long, only the first word or two words being normally used: *Rentap* is short for *rentap tanah*, 'earth tremor', which in turn is only the beginning of an entire verse. See ch. 4 for the complete version. For a discussion of praise-names, see the introduction to Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, p. xix; also Roth, *Natives of Sarawak*, II, 276.

[4] Referred to as 'Kanowit Dayaks' in most of the early books, these people were an upriver Melanau community related to similar groups scattered up and down the Rejang, including Tanjongs, settled Punans, Skapans, Kajamans, etc., who were the pre-Iban population of the area. The Kanowit people lived in two great longhouses near the site of the present Kanowit Secondary School. Their living descendants may still be found nearby on the south side of the Rejang, above the Kanowit Bazaar. This community was of considerable political importance during the early years of the Brooke presence in the Rejang, and will be mentioned again in chs. 3 and 4.

the story also emphasizes that Unggang was a very proficient headhunter.[1]

There is no doubt that Saribas and Skrang war parties were the scourge of the coast by the period 1820–30. To this day, *bi Saribas* means bloodthirsty headhunter in the vocabulary of the Land Dayaks of the First Division,[2] who remember with gratitude the First White Rajah's campaigns to end the depredations. The coastal Melanau sago-producing communities suffered from similar raids, such as the one described by a trader of Oya testifying before the Royal Commission which investigated James Brooke in 1854:

> The Saribas Dayaks, under [Mujah] Buah Raya, attacked Oya fifteen or twenty years ago, and burnt 120 houses before breakfast, killing two rajas and twenty men; the others fled to the jungle. They carried off a variety of goods, fire-arms, &c., burning the remainder; they took the heads of the slaughtered. I was there and fired my own guns, which were about 150 katties[3] each; one of them burst. They had no cause, or debt or reason whatever for this attack. They are pirates; they came by sea in their bangkong [war-boats] and the people were unprepared . . . they had 150 bangkong with about 2000 or 3000 men, with three chiefs.[4]

Other witnesses before the 1854 Commission produced masses of similar evidence of Iban 'piracy'.[5]

Apparently because Iban raiding was a relatively recent development, restricted to the northwest coast of Borneo, it completely escaped the attention of the best known early British authors concerned with island Southeast Asia, Raffles and John Crawfurd, despite their constant preoccupation with 'piracy' in general. Only after James Brooke began his spectacular career in Sarawak did the Western world begin to hear about 'Dayak pirates'. Brooke's

[1] Unggang's praise-name, Lebor Menoa, means 'ravish the country', perhaps further indication that his activities were not altogether in self-defense. His career, as well as that of Jiram (Rentap), is outlined at greater length in Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, pp. 63–5, 74–5; see also Sandin, 'The Beginning of the Saribas Piracy on Santubong Mountain', *SG* 1277 (31 July 1964). Descriptions of the type of craft he invented may be found in Low, *Sarawak*, pp. 216 ff.; St John, *Forests*, 1 70. Such boats are no longer made in the Saribas, but there is an excellent model of one in the Sarawak Museum.

[2] Geddes, *Land Dayaks of Sarawak*, p. 22.

[3] A *kati* is a measure of weight, traditionally slightly over three pounds. (The modern *kati* is $\frac{1}{100}$ *pikul*, or $1\frac{1}{3}$ pounds.) Iban fines were often expressed in *katis* of brassware: see p. 170, n. 1 below.

[4] Testimony of Nakhoda Mumin of Oya in 'Reports of Brooke Inquiry', *PP* XXIX (1854–5) 197; for a slightly different version of the same testimony, see *The Borneo Question; or the Evidence Produced at Singapore* . . . (Singapore, 1854) p. 120. The fact that Mujah (Buah Raya) led this raid suggests that the Ibans might have come from the Kanowit branch of the Rejang by river, via the Igan and Sungai Kut, rather than from the Second Division by sea. Mujah was a famous warrior and migration-leader who lived for a time in the Paku (Saribas) before leading an early migration to Julau (Kanowit). But it is not clear at what stage of his wanderings this particular raid took place. For his career, see Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, p. 80. By 1849 he was living in the Entabai branch of Kanowit where James Brooke tried to attack him after the Battle of Beting Marau; see ch. 3 below.

[5] 'Reports of Brooke Inquiry', *PP* XXIX (1854–5) 21 ff.

English political foes were encouraged to conclude that the White Rajah had invented them lock, stock and barrel and was employing the Royal Navy to massacre peaceful, innocent aborigines. But at least one lesser known British author who had visited the west coast of Borneo in 1834, well before James Brooke established himself in Kuching, had published an account of Iban marauding. George Windsor Earl had visited a Chinese settlement near the mouth of the Sambas River, in modern Indonesian territory, just after the departure of raiders who were undoubtedly from the Skrang and Saribas. He reported that, although the town had contained large quantities of merchandise,

> they were contented with the iron and trifles, with which, together with the heads of their victims, they departed unmolested to their homes. Their canoes were made from a single tree, but were much larger than those used by the tribes inhabiting the banks of the rivers, some of them having contained from forty to fifty men. They swept the whole coast from their native place, Serassan, to Sambas, and the news of their aggression having been brought to the latter place by some individuals who had been fortunate enough to escape them, several Dutch cruise prahus were stationed at the mouth of the river to prevent their passing to the southward; but the Malays who composed their crews retreated to the town on the first symptoms of their near approach, and although they might easily have stopped the career of the Dayaks, who entertain the greatest dread of firearms, believing there is no limit to their range . . . none of the inhabitants of Slaku survived to tell the tale.[1]

A Dutch official who testified at the 1854 enquiry said that similar raids had been recorded in the Sambas-Pontianak area 'perhaps one hundred times':

> I know of the tribes Saribas and Skrang Dayaks officially. I have always known them as pirates, killing and murdering, burning houses, all along the coast.
>
> I believe, in the months of November and October, they came down all along the coast in large boats, armed, and with about eighty or ninety men, attacking every one, fishermen; killing the men and carrying off women and children, whom they make slaves. They may have friends along shore, but they keep to the coast, landing when opportunity offered. Their pilots are Malays, who always show the way; the spoil is the property of the pilots, the women and children and skulls are the property of the Dayaks. I know one instance where they killed about 400, and

[1] Earl, *Eastern Seas*, pp. 214, 269–70. Earl's 'Slaku' is probably Selakau, a small river south of the mouth of the Sambas. Cf. the 'Selakau Dayaks', a Land Dayak-related group originally from this area now settled in Lundu District, Sarawak. During the Brooke enquiry twenty years later, when the White Rajah was under attack for his campaigns against the Saribas and Skrang Ibans, Earl told Brooke's great friend Admiral Keppel that 'Serassan', which he gives as the home of the marauding Dayaks, was an erratum for 'Sakarran', one of the common nineteenth-century spellings of Skrang: Henry Keppel, *A Visit to the Indian Archipelago in H.M. Ship Maeander* (London, 1853) 1 201–2. The point is somewhat academic, since the kind of seafaring head-hunters Earl describes could only have been Second Division Ibans.

if I had my notes I could tell of other cases, where they carried away the heads; this happened in the Dutch possession. All the natives on the west coast are well aware of these tribes and fear them; they are different from the other native pirates, who go all around the island. . . . Had I had opportunity I should have killed even more than Sir James Brooke did.[1]

Why did the Ibans, a rice-farming, riverine people, suddenly become coastal raiders? It should be remembered that not all of them did. Such raiding was popular only among the Saribas and Skrang people, and perhaps not even among all of them. Both local tradition and English written sources state that the numerous Ibans of the main Batang Lupar River never took their canoes to sea.[2]

Early European observers, such as the Dutch official quoted above, never doubted that Moslem Malays were the original instigators of pagan Iban 'piracy'. British writers believed that the Malays had taught the Ibans to raid, accompanied them on the expeditions, allowed them to keep the heads of the victims, and retained for themselves captives and plunder. According to Spenser St John:

The Skrang and Saribas, within the memory of living men, were a quiet, inoffensive people, paying taxes to their Malay chiefs, and suffering much from their oppressive practices, – even their children being seized and sold into slavery. When the Malay communities quarrelled they summoned their Dayak followers around them, and led them on expeditions against each other. This accustomed the aborigines to the sea; and being found hard-working and willing men, the Malays and Lanun pirates took them out in their marauding expeditions, dividing the plunder – the heads of the killed for the Dayaks, the goods and captives for themselves.[3]

Certainly headhunting was a major motive for Iban 'piracy', although the Ibans also kept captives and plunder. Coastal raiding naturally appealed to the Iban love of travel and warfare. As St John observed, ambitious young headhunters even served as 'marines' on the big Illanun prahus which spread terror and destruction throughout maritime Southeast Asia.[4] In 1837 the Raja

[1] Testimony of C. F. Boudriot in 'Reports of Brooke Inquiry', *PP* XXIX (1854–5) 112. Boudriot, a Dutch Civil Servant, had been stationed in West Borneo from 1841 to 1846.

[2] See the beginning of ch. 7 below, esp. p. 215, n. 1.

[3] St John, *Forests*, I 67. James Brooke often expressed similar opinions: see, for example, Keppel, *Maeander*, II 102. St John goes on to state that, in some cases, Iban 'pirates' had later developed the ability to raid without Malay guidance.

[4] A Sebuyau Iban told St John that he had once cruised with Illanuns to points as distant as the Gulf of Thailand and the coast of Vietnam: *Forests*, II 239–40.

It is possible that the Ibans were often Illanun crew members before they became 'pirates' on their own. An article which appeared in the *Singapore Chronicle* as early as October–November 1827 reported of the Borneo 'Dayas' that 'some of those who are found about the ports to the northward of Sambas, at times connect themselves with the pirates, and the condition of the

of Pahang appealed to the British authorities at Singapore for help against Illanuns working in tandem with headhunting 'Dayaks' off the east coast of Malaya.[1] A year later the famous Malayan author Munshi Abdullah again reported tattooed warriors and 'Dayak' pirates, who could only have been Ibans, among the Illanuns whose attentions he was grateful to escape on a voyage to Kelantan.[2]

There is no reason to doubt that various Moslem chiefs frequently made use of Iban fighting power, as the Brookes themselves were to do at a later date. But St John and the other early British writers went too far in assuming as they did that the Moslems had corrupted the Ibans from a state of pastoral pagan innocence. Their reasoning was colored by the fact that the Malay chiefs remained active political rivals at the time they were writing, as we shall see.[3] The Ibans had been fighters and headhunters for many generations, and were quite capable of raiding on their own, without Malay guidance or tutelage. Charles Brooke himself testified that on the Saribas, perhaps the most 'piratical' river of all, the habitual leader of the mixed Iban and Malay raiding fleets was an Iban, the Orang Kaya Pamancha Dana (Bayang).[4] More will be heard about this man and his family in the pages that follow.

The development of Iban 'piracy' may be regarded as one symptom of a remarkable outburst of human energy which also led to the simultaneous commencement of Iban migration to the Third Division at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[5] This expansion, both 'piratical' and territorial, could not have taken place without population growth, but it seems equally clear that it was also linked to something other than demographic pressure. It could not have developed without the peculiarly Iban outlook on life, aggressive, exuberant, and endlessly restless. Where it might have ended had European rulers not arrived is a tantalizing question. In an earlier era, the 'pirate' communities of the Second Division might have provided the naval power to support some new and growing harbor principality, in the tradition of the founding of Malacca.[6] As it was, they later supported the Brooke State of Sarawak.

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connexion is, that the skulls and iron shall be their share – the other plunder that of the pirates. ('Memoir on the Residency of the North-west Coast of Borneo', in Moor, *Notices of the Indian Archipelago*, p. 9.) Iban tradition makes no mention of such association with Illanuns, who are always portrayed as enemies; e.g. the story of Unggang, related earlier in this chapter.

[1] *Singapore Free Press*, 30 March 1837, in FO 12/20.

[2] *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah*, ed. Kassim Ahmad (Kuala Lumpur, 1960) pp. 40, 61.

[3] The issue of Brooke-Malay rivalry was not finally resolved until the period of the Great Malay Plot of 1859–60, discussed in ch. 4.

[4] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 155.

[5] For these migrations, see Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, Part Three; also the beginning of ch. 8 below.

[6] The founder of Malacca was served by sea-gypsies or *orang laut*, boat nomads and not rice-farmers like the Ibans; nevertheless he began as a chief supported by 'pirates'. The theme is an

In each of the Second Division river systems where Ibans lived there was a progression of settlements, ranging from Malay-dominated nearest the coast to wholly pagan Iban in the interior. There was often also a middle zone, where Moslems and pagans lived in close proximity. Here, before the advent of Brooke rule, Malays and Ibans gathered at certain sites to trade, and to defend themselves against common enemies. James Brooke saw one such site at Stunggang on his first trip to the Lundu River in 1839: a stockaded Iban longhouse with the huts of a few Malay traders nearby.

Rude and insignificant in anything but purely local terms, these settlements were political pivot points between coast and hinterland, serving much the same purpose as the fort-bazaar outstation complexes of later years. Unlike the later Brooke posts, however, they lacked a settled Chinese population. In the Saribas, Unggang (Lebor Menoa), the pioneer 'pirate' mentioned earlier, is said to have invited the first Chinese traders to come from the Sarawak River about seven generations ago. The Chinese brought many useful things from the Ibans to buy, but they prudently remained in their boats.[1] Not until after 1858, when the White Rajah built a fort on the Saribas, did the Chinese establish shops on shore.

Banting, in the lower Batang Lupar area, was typical of the early mixed-settlement sites. It has been mentioned already as the home of the 'Balau Dayaks', one of the Iban groups perennially hostile to the Saribas and Skrang. Together with a smaller population of Malays,[2] they clustered around Banting Hill, an easily defended promontory which rises above the sluggish waters of the Lingga River. Under the government of a Malay chief all the people made common cause, not only against the Saribas raiders, but against Illanunsas well.

A document dating from 1789 sheds some light on the government of Banting in those days, and particularly on the importance of four Malay ladies, the 'Defenders of Banting':

I, Dato Malek Borhan, who rule at Banting, make this document to show that I put my trust in my four daughters, Pen Uteh, Pen Hajar, Pen 'Aishah and Pen Gemala Sari and they four are given authority in this place of ours, Banting. It is agreed that they should be entitled the Defenders of Banting.

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old one in Southeast Asian history. O. W. Wolters writes of seventh-century Srivijaya: 'The striking power of Srivijaya depended mainly on ships. The kings had their ships, and one pictures the Malay shippers gathering from their mangrove swamps and neighbouring islands in order to reinforce their ruler's fleet in defence of their trade. . . . Though Srivijaya was on a waterlogged and under-populated coast, it was able to draw its manpower from coastal Malays scattered among many maritime settlements south of the Straits of Malacca.' (O. W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1967) p. 239.) The term 'Malay' as used by Wolters has no religious connotation: it simply means island Southeast Asian.

[1] Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, p. 64.

[2] In 1853, according to Charles Brooke, the population of Banting was about 5000, 'chiefly Dayaks'. (*Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 87.)

I give authority also to my nephews, Pen Laksamana, Pen Indra Lela, Pen Lela Pahlawan with the agreement of my brother Dato Aiie, the great merchant, and of the two chieftains Seri Indek and Andek, who lead the expeditions.

Now let each one of you who is subject to my rule remember this – be faithful and true in obedience to their commands, from the mouth of the Lingga to the furthest reaches of the rivers, so that our land may prosper in peace.[1]

The 'two chieftains . . . who lead the expeditions', here provided with the title 'Seri' [Sri], were probably Balau Iban warriors. They may be imagined fighting side by side with the four lady 'Defenders of Banting', who, according to stories handed down to living descendants, often took up arms with the men to repel raiders. Two of the ladies, Pen Hajar and Pen 'Aishah, were still alive when Charles Brooke took charge of Banting on his first outstation assignment in 1853, more than sixty years later. He complained that 'The most powerful of the people in the place were two old ladies, who often told me that all the land and inhabitants belonged to them; and of all the talkers in the world, I would back these old dames to be the most untiring.'[2] In his early months at Banting, the future Second White Rajah was certain that the old ladies were plotting against him.[3]

At some point before the advent of Brooke rule, the government of Banting passed out of the hands of Dato Malek Borhan's family. An 'Arab',[4] Sharif Japar, became the nominal local ruler, presumably with the sanction of the Brunei Sultan.[5] Sharif Japar, unlike other 'Arabs' elsewhere in the Second Division, was an early ally of James Brooke. He led the Balau Ibans to fight for Brooke as early as 1841.[6] But the White Rajah never trusted Sharif Japar

[1] The document, which belongs to Abang Sebli Halek bin Abang Sa'ad of Lingga and Simanggang, is written in *jawi* script on cloth and dated 8 Ramadan 1208 A.H. Mr A. J. N. Richards has deposited in the Sarawak Archives a photograph of the original, the translation quoted above, and an as yet unpublished commentary entitled 'Banting and Lingga, 1789–1844', for which I am greatly indebted.

[2] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 97. The future Rajah identifies only one of the old ladies, 'Dang [Dayang] Ajar': ibid., I 134; but Baring-Gould and Bampfylde identify the pair as 'Dang Isa and Dang Ajar' and give more details of the colorful history of this family: *History*, pp. 158–9.

[3] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 97, 134. It was for this reason that Brooke decided to separate the Malays from the Ibans and move the former to a site further downriver; see ch. 3.

[4] For the meaning of 'Arab' as used in nineteenth-century Sarawak, see pp. 60–1 below.

[5] When James Brooke 'restored' the government of Lingga to the nephews of Dato Malek Borhan in 1844, he was careful to act in the name of Brunei, by means of his friend Pengiran Bedruddin; apparently a tacit acknowledgment that Japar held his authority from the Sultan. ('Borneo Piracy', *PP* LVI 1 (1851) 126.) This area and the entire Second Division were legally subject to Brunei until 1853.

[6] James Brooke's journal entry, 8 Jan 1841, in Keppel, *Dido*, I 181, described Sharif Japar and a force of Balau Ibans and Malays arriving to help in the battle against the Sarawak rebels. The spelling in the original is 'Seriff Jaffer, from Singe'.

and deposed him in 1844, restoring the government of Lingga to three Malay chiefs, at least two of whom were apparently among the three nephews of Dato Malek Borhan mentioned in the document of 1789.[1] It seems likely however, that the lady 'Defenders' remained the real holders of power at Banting.

Above Banting, the Batang Lupar is a broad, tidal stream to a point well beyond its junction with the Undup and Skrang tributaries. Although its side streams and upper reaches were strongly Iban in population, there were Malay habitations scattered among the Iban longhouses along the main river as far upstream as the modern site of Lubok Antu in the period before Brooke rule.[2]

In this area of mixed Moslem-pagan settlement, a pair of 'Arab' brothers, Sharif Sahap and Sharif Mullah, dominated the early nineteenth-century political scene. Much invective is lavished on them in the early British books on Sarawak, as well as a little factual description. They were the sons of an 'Arab' adventurer who had married a daughter of the Sultan of Brunei,[3] and who had later been appointed to govern the major Skrang tributary of the Batang Lupar, where he had replaced a local Malay chief, Laksamana Minudeen.[4] Sahap, whom James Brooke always viewed as the more formidable of the two brothers, was born at Brunei. He first lived at Skrang, but in about 1832 the Brunei Pengiran Muda Hasim, the same man who later befriended James Brooke, named him to rule Sadong in the First Division, where he replaced another local Malay chief entitled Patinggi.[5] From this time until Sahap and his brother were driven out of power by the Brookes

[1] For the 'restoration' of the Banting (or Lingga) government, see James Brooke journal entry, 31 Dec 1844, in Mundy, *Borneo and Celebes*, I 379; Templer, *Letters*, II 112, 118–20. Brooke reinstated three chiefs: 'Indra Lela, Lela Palawan and Lela Wangsa', the same titles given for the three nephews of Dato Malek Borhan in the 1789 document, with the substitution of 'Lela Wangsa' for Laksamana. Different individuals might, of course, have inherited the same titles in the intervening years. According to Saribas tradition, one of the nephews, or an individual with the same title, Indra Lela, was responsible for starting the hostilities between Banting and Saribas: see Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, p. 68.

[2] There were Malay settlements at the mouths of both the Skrang and the Lemanak. These people later gathered around the Brooke Government post, first located at the mouth of the Skrang in 1850, and followed it when it was moved to Simanggang in 1864, and there are now no Malays living at the old settlement sites. However, a 'Kampong Lemanak' survives in Simanggang. For the process of Malay resettlement, see ch. 3.

[3] Keppel, *Dido*, I 86–7.

[4] Templer, *Letters*, III 64. The Skrang, although geographically a tributary of the Batang Lupar, is socially distinct. It was of key political importance in the pre-Brooke period because of its 'piratical' Iban population. The main Batang Lupar, whose population was not 'piratical', is rarely mentioned in the early British literature. It is not altogether clear whether the nominal ruler of Skrang considered himself also the ruler of the main Batang Lupar.

[5] Mundy, *Borneo and Celebes*, I 370–5.

they were active in the affairs of both Sadong and Skrang. According to the White Rajah, the Skrang had been a peaceful district until it was ruined by these usurping Arabs, who allegedly taught the local Ibans to raid.[1]

Despite the sympathy which the new English Rajah was to expend on his behalf, the ousted Laksamana Minudeen of Skrang was not, strictly speaking, a 'native' of the Batang Lupar area, any more than were the 'Arabs'. Minudeen, who was the father of the Second Rajah's favorite Native Officer, Abang Aing, is described in the semi-official Brooke history of Sarawak as a '[Moslem] Melanau' from Matu in the Rejang Delta, who had been 'long settled' in the Second Division.[2] In comparison with the 'Arabs' Minudeen was perhaps more representative of Second Division Malay society. This was derived from highly mixed antecedents, primarily pagan Melanau, but including an element from the Kapuas as well.

The Malays were undoubtedly a small minority of the total population of the Batang Lupar. They lived primarily by trade, exchanging salt fish for Iban rice, and as a result it was natural that they should settle along the middle Batang Lupar. This valley, which had been the path of the earliest Iban migrations into Sarawak, gave easy access from the coast to the lakes district of the Kapuas. The lakes district provided a rich seasonal harvest of fish, a fact which may help to explain the existence of tiny Malay states in that area from ancient times, while the coast provided salt.[3]

Dato Abang Haji Zen of Simanggang, who is the great-great-grandson of Laksamana Minudeen, states that there was a great deal of intermarriage between the Ibans and the Malay traders of the Batang Lupar.[4] As in the Saribas, Chinese traders did not settle in this far from safe area until after the Brookes had established a fort at the mouth of the Skrang, on one of the old Malay trading sites, in 1850.

As elsewhere, the Iban leaders in the Batang Lupar area were warriors first and foremost. Those from the Skrang, the only ones about whom very much is known, raided sometimes at the behest of the 'Arab' chiefs, and often

[1] Keppel, *Maeander*, II 102. Brooke here states that before the advent of Sahap and Mullah, Skrang had been a 'dependency of Kaluka [Krian]', but he does not amplify this statement and no light is shed on it elsewhere.

[2] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 156.

[3] Tom Harrisson believes that Borneo Malay settlement is mainly coastal because it is dependent on a good supply of fish: Moslems cannot eat pork, the major source of protein in the Borneo interior. Owing to the local fisheries, Malay states could and did exist on the Kapuas lakes, although they are *inland* from the predominantly pagan Second Division of Sarawak! Kapuas lakes fishing is described in Gustaaf Adolf F. Molengraaff, *Borneo-Expedition, Geological Explorations in Central Borneo (1893–4)*, English rev. ed. (Leyden, 1902) p. 85.

Salt in Borneo is still manufactured mainly from the Nipah palm, which is found growing along the muddy tidal lower reaches of rivers.

[4] Interview at Simanggang, October 1965.

in company with the Saribas people. One Skrang Iban leader, the Orang Kaya Gassing, later became a powerful ally of the Brookes.[1] Another, Libau (Rentap),[2] is known to every modern schoolboy in Sarawak for his later exploits against the White Rajah. Although he lived further up the Skrang River than did Gassing, Rentap was nevertheless a great 'pirate'. On one excursion to the Sambas area he is supposed to have massacred a boatload of Sambas Malays, among them a nephew of the Sultan, from whom he captured a *kris* with a gold handle.[3]

It is hard to avoid the impression that in the Batang Lupar area, the ambitious and capable 'Arab' chiefs frequently manipulated the fighting Iban population of the Skrang to their own advantage. In the next river system to the northeast, the Saribas, the situation was somewhat different. The Iban leadership was stronger and more sophisticated, while the Moslem elite was weaker. The Saribas is the only district in the area now covered by the First, Second and Third Divisions where neither 'Arabs' nor Brunei *pengirans* were active in the period immediately preceding the establishment of Brooke rule.[4] As was mentioned earlier, the most dreaded Saribas 'pirate', the man who commanded the marauding fleets, was an Iban, the Orang Kaya Pamancha Dana (Bayang).[5]

Dana came from a long line of Saribas leaders. He was what Benedict Sandin calls a 'hereditary chief', although some social anthropologists might dispute this definition. His longhouse was located on the Padeh, a small branch stream not far above the modern Saribas District headquarters at Betong, but his influence was unchallenged throughout the Layar, the main branch of the Saribas.[6] On his war expeditions he drew followers from as far away as the Skrang, as well as from other Saribas tributaries. His fighting ability did much to link the names of these two rivers in terror for the Land

[1] Gassing is mentioned frequently in the early British books on Sarawak; Charles Brooke called him 'a remarkably bad speaker for a Dayak', *Ten Years in Sarawak*, 1 176, while another visitor who met him in about 1863 wrote, 'There is probably no chief left in Borneo so powerful as old Gassing . . .', certainly an exaggeration: Frederick Boyle, *Adventures Among the Dyaks of Borneo* (London, 1865) p. 203; see also Low, *Sarawak*, pp. 183–4, and ch. 3 in the present work.

[2] Rentap's later career is described in chs. 3 and 4. He is referred to henceforth by his *ensumbar* rather than by his given name (Libau), because he is famous in Sarawak as Rentap.

[3] Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, p. 76.

[4] The Rejang was another exception until Sharif Masahor came to power there in 1849: see p. 112, n. 8, and p. 113, nn. 1–3.

[5] See p. 51, n. 4. For Dana's family background, see Genealogy 12 in Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, p. 105. According to Benedict Sandin, he received his title 'Orang Kaya' from the Saribas Malays acting in the name of the Sultan of Brunei.

[6] 'Batang Layar' is in fact the Iban name for the Saribas, 'Saribas' being the Malay name for the lower main river, and the one applied by the Brookes to the entire river system.

Dayaks of the First Division, and helped make his homeland a primary objective for the White Rajah's punitive expeditions at a later date.

James Brooke described Dana in 1845, when he was already well past his prime:

> The Orang Kaya Pamancha of Saribas is now with me – the dreaded and the brave, as he is termed by the natives. He is small, plain-looking and old, with his left arm disabled, and his body scarred with spear wounds. I do not dislike the look of him, and of all the chiefs of that river I believe he is the most honest, and steers his course straight enough.[1]

Dana specialized in raids along the coast toward Pontianak. On one of his voyages into Dutch territory he captured a one-trunnioned iron cannon which became famous during the Sadok campaign of 1861.[2] He was the father of six sons, four of whom, Nanang, Aji, Luyoh and Buda, were later prominent in Saribas affairs. It is no exaggeration to say that any knowledge of Saribas history in the Brooke era begins with a knowledge of this family.

Dana was not the only famous Iban raider in the Saribas. Linggir (Mali Lebu),[3] who was likewise descended from a long line of leaders, was the most influential figure in the Paku tributary at the time James Brooke arrived. Instead of following in Dana's wake toward Pontianak, he preferred to raid against the Melanaus of the Rejang Delta. Charles Brooke first met him in 1843:

> Another chief of a tribe came on board, named Linggir – a short man, of almost perfect symmetry, serpent-eyed, with the strong savage pictured in his physiognomy. While he sat on deck, I could not keep my eye off his countenance, for there was peculiar character lurking underneath the twinkle of that sharp eye – avarice, cunning, foresight, all within so small a compass.[4]

The aristocrats of the Saribas Malay community claimed descent from a pair of high-ranking wanderers: Abang Gudam of Pagar Ruyong in Sumatra, and Temenggong Kadir, who was of Brunei origin.[5] At one time there may have been three Brunei-appointed or -sanctioned Malay officers in the Saribas, with the titles Dato Patinggi, Dato Bandar and Lela Wangsa. At any rate, James Brooke 'revived' these positions in one of his early attempts

[1] James Brooke journal entry, 12 Dec 1845, in Mundy, *Borneo and Celebes*, II 78; for another good description of Dana, see Low, *Sarawak*, p. 183.

[2] Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, p. 76.

[3] The praise-name 'Mali Lebu' means 'nothing is forbidden', or, more literally, 'the taboo is in vain'. Linggir was the great-grandfather of Benedict Sand.

[4] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 25.

[5] For genealogical details on the Saribas Malays, see A. J. N. Richards, 'The Descent of Some Saribas Malays', *SMJ* XI 21–2 (July–Dec 1963) 99–107; also the reply to this in Sandin, Descent of Some Saribas Malays (and Ibans)'.

to influence politics in the Second Division.[1] In Saribas tradition, however, only one such official is clearly remembered, the Dato Patinggi Kedit. He and his two sons, Laksamana Omar and Laksamana Amir, were the most influential local Malays at the beginning of Brooke rule.

Charles Brooke described the Laksamana Amir, the nominal ruler of the Paku tributary, as he appeared in 1861, an old man afflicted with elephantiasis in both legs, but still with an eye for the ladies. Caring little for Moslem rules and restrictions, Amir made a hobby of rearing dogs, and went by the nickname Olak, meaning eddy, or backwater:

> Olak could stir his Kampong with threats, in a storming rage, and make them tremble; he could pacify the Dayak, with whom it was his policy to keep on the best terms, by telling stories exaggerated by all kinds of miraculous adventures. . . . He mulcted heavily every trader who came within his jurisdiction; and he had been a dangerous enemy of ours for many years – ripe at any time for intrigue and treachery.[2]

As on the Batang Lupar, there were areas along several of the Saribas tributaries where the Ibans and Malays lived and defended themselves together. These sites included the 'forts' and 'towns' attacked by the Royal Navy and James Brooke in the expeditions of 1843 and 1849. The Saribas Malays certainly did not control the powerful Iban community, but relations between the two groups were close. They were allies on coastal raids, and the Ibans sometimes sold pagan Bukitan captives taken on inland expeditions to the Malays, who subsequently converted them to Islam.[3] Abang Apong, a son of the Laksamana Amir and a leading Malay 'pirate', regarded himself as a brother of the Iban warrior Linggir. The two men lived close to each other at Karangan Pinggai on the Paku, and later fought against James Brooke together at the terrible Battle of Beting Marau in 1849.[4]

There is no need to discuss at length the pre-Brooke political situation in

[1] Mundy, *Borneo and Celebes*, II 52–3. [2] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 155–6.

[3] From Benedict Sandin, who suggests that the Malay chief of the Krian, an 'Arab' known as Imam Mulana, also profited from the conflict between the Ibans and the aboriginal inhabitants of the Second Division, who in the case of the Krian were Serus: 'It was his policy to encourage the Ibans of Saribas in their wars with the Serus, in order that the Serus might gather around him for protection. He bought Seru captives, as well as those of other groups, which the Iban leaders sold to him. And he gave titles to the Iban leaders who defeated the Serus. The Orang Kaya Temenggong Tandok was one Iban who received his title from Imam Mulana in this fashion. Others were Orang Kaya Beti of Padeh, and the Orang Kayas Antau (Linggang Negri) and and Gun (Mangku Bumi) of Rimbas.' (*Sea Dayaks*, pp. 77–8.)

[4] The Brookes later persuaded Abang Apong and other Malays to move from the former mixed areas in the Paku to sites further downriver (see ch. 3), but the fruit trees which the Malays had planted upriver remained as evidence of the former settlement pattern – and were the cause of lengthy communal quarrels with the Ibans in later years (see ch. 9).

the remaining rivers of the Second and Third Divisions. Two of them, the Krian and the Rejang, were only beginning to receive an immigrant Iban population from the previously settled areas of the Second Division at the time Brooke rule began. In general, however, the concluding remarks that follow apply to these two rivers as well as to the areas of the Second Division discussed in somewhat more detail above.

At first glance there is no order apparent in the traditional Iban world just described. It was no doubt a world fraught with chaos and indiscriminate warfare, where neither life nor property was safe. There was, however, a certain pattern to political affairs, and this pattern must be understood in order to understand the government which the Brookes, largely dependent on local materials, later constructed in the area.

Although the political culture of the Ibans was described in the preceding chapter, nothing was said about that of the Malays. Yet as we have seen, the two groups were intermingled in the lower reaches of all the rivers in the Iban country. During the long decades of Brooke rule, administrative policies were to have the effect of delineating a profound difference between 'Iban' and 'Malay'. At this time, however, the formal cultural categories of later years were not yet recognized with such precision by the people themselves. Except for those of highest rank, the Malays, like the Ibans, identified themselves primarily by geographic community, as 'men of Banting', or 'men of Saribas'. The very word 'Malay' may not have been used in Sarawak until James Brooke brought it with him from Singapore. Even in modern times it has never become widely accepted in neighboring Sabah, where the Moslem people regard themselves as Bajaus, Sulus, Bruneis, and so forth, and not as Malays.

If the concept of Malay did not yet carry any communal significance, Islam itself was nonetheless an immensely important differentiating cultural force throughout downriver Sarawak. Moslems, even the most recent converts, could no longer eat pork, whereas the pig was a pillar of Iban village life, and a major source of protein in the interior. Moslems could aspire to many wives, whereas Iban society is strictly monogamous. The Moslem religion emphasized a wholly different political ideal, worlds apart from the headhunting and migration inspired by the vigorous animism of the Ibans. Both the Hindu-derived features of the Malay heritage and Islam itself encouraged the Moslem chief, no matter how small his field of endeavor, to model his behavior on that of kings.

It followed that on each of the various rivers of the Iban country there was always at least one Moslem chief who conceived of himself as the ruler of the entire river. As we have seen, his actual power over the pagan

population varied from place to place. Nevertheless the Malay concept of overlordship was everywhere significant, because it was a concept which Iban culture could not sustain. The Brookes undertood this fact very well indeed, and their subsequent political involvement with both the Malays and the Ibans resulted from their realization of it.

Malay society, unlike Iban society, was distinctly stratified. Throughout the entire area nominally subject to Brunei, three broad gradations of rank may be discerned. At the top in terms of prestige and political potential were the 'Arabs', distinguished by the title *sharif* or *sayid*, and Brunei nobles known by the title *pengiran*. Beneath them came a second, diverse class of local chiefs, men like Dato Malek Borhan of Banting and the various Saribas Malay leaders discussed above. Unlike the 'Arabs' and the Brunei nobles, who were highly mobile and identified themselves primarily with the prestigious places of origin which their status implied, the local chiefs were closely identified with a particular river. Finally there was a rather insubstantial Malay lower class composed of fishermen, *padi*-farmers, slaves and followers. It should be emphasized that, particularly in the Iban country, there was no relatively numerous Moslem peasantry of the sort which existed in Malaya. The majority of the population were pagan Ibans, who were anything but peasants.[1] The critical political relationship everywhere was between the Moslem chiefs and the numerous pagan communities.

The Brunei *pengiran* class was not, as we have seen, very active in the Iban areas, but 'Arabs' were important in the affairs of several Iban districts. As the later British rulers liked to point out, these men were not of pure Arab blood,[2] but this did not in fact diminish their claim to rank in the slightest. The title *sharif* or *sayid* signifies descent from the Prophet, and is transmitted through the male line regardless of the status of the female partner.[3] Some of those claiming this title in Sarawak may have been impostors, but even those who were quite genuine were often of predominantly Southeast Asian island ancestry.

It is not difficult to understand why the First Brooke Rajah instinctively regarded the 'Arabs' as dangerous rivals. They were an older generation of adventurers, in many ways ideally equipped for either buccaneering or state-

[1] Robert Redfield's definition of peasant society emphasizes the existence of a continuum between a farming population and an elite group, usually urban, 'whose culture is that of the peasant carried to another level of development'. (*Peasant Society and Culture* (Chicago, 1960) p. 36.) This qualification does apply to the fisherman or *padi* farmer of Malaya, but it does not apply to the Ibans.

[2] For a typical James Brooke comment on 'Arabs', see p. 126, n. 4.

[3] Judith Djamour, *Malay Kinship and Marriage in Singapore* (London, 1959) p. 13. However the daughter of a *sharif*, known as a *sharifah*, must marry a man of *sharif* rank, according to 'Arab' custom.

building in the more out-of-the-way corners of Southeast Asia. There were many families and clans of *sayid* and *sharif*. Among the most famous were the *sayid* of the Hadramawt in South Arabia, who had long been professional emigrants to many parts of Asia. In their own arid and forbidding homeland the *sayid* of the Hadramawt were famous both as scholars and as professional mediators between warring tribesmen, who stood in awe of their holy blood. Once in Southeast Asia, they were careful to cultivate a sense of apartness, keeping genealogies and, in some cases, maintaining close family ties with Arabia.[1] The background of all the more important Sarawak 'Arabs' is not known with certainty, but one of them, Sharif Matusain,[2] was definitely of Pontianak origin, and others may well have been also.[3] The point is significant, because the first ruler of Pontianak, the most recently founded of the Borneo sultanates, might be regarded as an 'Arab' James Brooke.

Pontianak, born in 1772, was the political child of Sharif Abdul Rahman. Sharif Rahman's father had emigrated from Arabia and settled at the Bugis town of Mampawa, north of the mouth of the Kapuas River. The son became a successful merchant, made advantageous marriages, and founded a new settlement at the mouth of the Kapuas. Then, by a combination of good luck and good diplomacy, he obtained the title of Sultan from Raja Haji of Riau, as well as the support of the Dutch. Pontianak prospered and survived, although the Dutch subsequently withdrew from Borneo for many years after 1790.[4] With the substitution of Dutch for English and Abdul Rahman for Brooke, this is essentially the story of Sarawak, set only seventy years earlier in time.

The 'Arab' *sharif* and Brunei *pengiran* constituted the elite of the northwest Borneo Malay world,[5] but in so far as relations with the Ibans were concerned, all Malays with any pretension to rank shared certain characteristics in common. All of them aspired to political power, and this aspiration involved them in what might be regarded as domestic and foreign relations, with the people of their own home rivers and the populations of outlying rivers respectively.

Foreign relations in the Iban country were, as we have seen, largely a

[1] R. B. Serjeant, *The Saiyids of Hadramawt*, Inaugural Lecture, 5 June 1956, School of Oriental and African Studies (London, 1957), esp. pp. 14–15, 24–7.

[2] Sharif Matusain's career is discussed in ch. 3 in connection with the founding of Skrang Fort. For his Pontianak origin, see Templer, *Letters*, III 59.

[3] With the founding of Pontianak by an 'Arab', others of the same class flocked to the new Sultanate, which acquired a reputation as a breeding ground of 'Arabs'. See John Leyden, 'Sketch of Borneo', in Moor, *Notices of the Indian Archipelago*, pp. 102, 104–5.

[4] Ibid., pp. 101–6; Irwin, *Nineteenth Century Borneo*, pp. 6–7.

[5] For the elite position of 'Arabs' in the Malay world in general, see William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (New Haven, Conn., 1967), p. 41.

matter of raiding, including both indiscriminate raiding and retaliatory raiding between old, established enemies. To the extent that there was any pattern to the constant warfare, it was a pattern of conflict between different river systems or segments of river systems, not between different ethnic groups. Political loyalties were geographic, not cultural. The Malays and Ibans of Banting fought together against the Malays and Ibans of Saribas. There is no evidence which suggests that a pagan warrior valued the head of a Moslem, or of a pagan who spoke a different language, any more than that of a man whose culture was very similar to his own.

The power of a Malay chief in the Iban country vis-à-vis other districts depended largely on his ability to rally the Ibans to fight on his behalf. In other words, his success in foreign relations was largely a function of his skill in domestic relations. This in turn depended on his personal political expertise, and to some extent on his ability to control trade up and down his river.

The more able Moslem aristocrats could exert a considerable degree of influence even over the warlike and independent Ibans simply because they radiated an aura of superior sophistication. Many Moslems were unable to read and write, but all basked in the reflected mystique of a literate culture.[1] At a much later period, Brooke Residents were forever trying to prevent Malay 'swindlers' from selling charms, often scribbled scraps of verse from the Koran, to the pagan Ibans. In modern Iban folklore, certain Malays remembered for their ability to perform miracles are summoned from the spirit world to attend the great Iban festivals, together with the Iban heroes of the past.[2]

All Malay aristocrats aspired to trade as well as to rule. Indeed, there was no clear-cut distinction in the traditional value system between political and commercial functions. *Nakodha*, meaning merchant captain, was a term of respect, virtually the equivalent of titles and terms of respect like *abang* and

[1] In 1837 an astute missionary visitor to Brunei noted: 'A few of the pangerans can read and write with ease, and they appear to understand what they read. . . . The slaves and common people are ignorant of letters.' ('Notices of the City of Borneo', p. 191.) On their first meeting, James Brooke observed of his later arch-foe, Pengiran Makota, 'His education has been more attended to than others of his own rank. He both reads and writes his own language, and is well acquainted with the government, laws and customs of Borneo [Brunei].' (James Brooke journal entry, 19 September 1839, in Keppel, *Dido*, 1 80.) Although the Kuching Malays maintained schools conducted by religious teachers (Low, *Sarawak*, p. 138), there were apparently no such schools in the ruder Malay settlements of the Second Division. However, the 'Arab' chief of the Krian, Imam Mulana (see p. 58, n. 3), decorated his tumble-down audience hall at Kabong with verses from the Koran, prominently displayed: Low, *Sarawak*, p. 352.

[2] For example, Dato Nuga Omar, who is said to have killed the Rimbas River tidal bore which had drowned his daughter by slashing it with his sword. After this the river smelled like a corpse for a week, and there was never again a bore in the Rimbas, as there is in the main Saribas, of which it is a tributary. (Harrisson and Sandin, 'Borneo Writing Boards', pp. 151, 178–80, 226.)

dato.[1] In his book on Sarawak, Hugh Low remarked of the higher ranking Malays in general,

> Their taste for the pursuits of trade is quite a passion, and during all their early life they look steadily and anxiously forward to the time when they shall be able to indulge it with profit to themselves. It is from this principle being so rooted in their natures, that the kings and princes have been found, in all periods of their history, to be the greatest merchants in their state. . . .[2]

Throughout the Iban country of the Second Division, the most important single trade was the exchange of Malay salt fish for Iban rice. Many Malays, living for the most part in a downriver environment characterized by deep peat soils, could not easily grow their own rice, and depended on the interior for this commodity.[3] The trade was risky, given the volatile disposition of the Ibans, but profitable. On a journey up the Batang Lupar in 1861, Charles Brooke observed that within a day's travel upriver from the Government post at the mouth of the Skrang River, the price of salt in terms of rice had gone up five-fold.[4] He described Malay traders located near the site of what was later Lubok Antu accumulating stocks of Iban rice:

> There are some Malays living here, collecting rice in tumble-down houses or sheds. . . . They seem purposely to have chosen the darkest and dreariest spot, with accumulated filth on all sides; what cares the Malay, while no one worries him particularly? A large profit is sure to be made on his rice, and his muscles and bones do not suffer much.[5]

Rice was also more directly involved in the political relationship between Moslem and pagan. The Saribas Malays attempted to collect a tax of one *pasu* (about four gallons) of *padi* per Iban family per year, acting in the name of the Sultan of Brunei. It is by no means certain to what extent they succeeded, but the Brookes later regarded this tax as traditional, and collected it throughout the Iban country themselves. In Saribas Iban tradition, several famous warriors are remembered for having successfully defied the tax-collectors.

[1] See Charles Brooke's usage in *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 318.

[2] Low, *Sarawak*, p. 136.

[3] Despite the uncertainties of shifting cultivation, it was assumed in the early years of Brooke rule that the Iban districts normally produced a rice surplus sufficient to satisfy Malay and Chinese needs. Hugh Low wrote in 1848, 'The hill Dayaks seldom plant their farms till a month or two later than the sea tribes [Ibans], who consequently have the first of the market; new rice always selling for a higher price than the old, the former being esteemed sweeter and more nourishing by the Malays, who are the purchasers.' (*Sarawak*, p. 232.) As late as the years 1864–5 the country as a whole was still producing a rice surplus, derived mainly from Iban areas, but by 1874–6 Sarawak was a net importer of rice and has remained one ever since. The *Sarawak Gazette* blamed this change on a growing Iban inclination to seek jungle produce for cash sale, instead of diligently farming: *SG* 130 (16 April 1877). But it seems more likely that the real cause was growth in urban population.

[4] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 162.

[5] Ibid., II 164–5.

It is not always made clear in the stories that these Malays, who are portrayed as abusing their tax-gathering powers, are the same chiefs who accompanied the Ibans on raids.[1]

The local Malay chiefs undoubtedly exploited both the salt trade and their shadowy connection with the Sultan of Brunei to the best of their ability. The key role which salt control was later to assume in Brooke efforts to manage the upriver Iban population was foreshadowed to some extent by traditional Malay practice. George Windsor Earl wrote in 1837:

> There are several Dayak tribes in the country behind Borneo Proper which are nominally under the control of the Raja of the latter place, who is enabled to reduce an unruly Dayak chief to obedience simply by stopping the supply of salt, which can be obtained only from the seacoast. So essentially necessary is this article to the very existence of a Dayak, that a chief who wishes to exert his independence is soon forced by his own subjects to acknowledge the authority of the Raja.[2]

Some of the less assertive pagan groups around Brunei Bay may have been coerced in such a fashion, but with regard to the coast in general Earl's picture is overdrawn. No amount of attempted salt control could enable a weak Sultan of Brunei to oppress the powerful Kayans of the Baram, who in the late 1850s were threatening to overrun Brunei Town itself. Much less could the diverse Malay chiefs of the Iban country presume too far in their dealings with the numerous and warlike pagan population. The large number of rivers made it difficult for any one chief or group of chiefs to institute an effective trade monopoly. More important, any attempt to do so might have swiftly converted customers into deadly enemies. Charles Brooke summed up the delicate pattern of Malay-Iban interaction when he observed of the Kanowit Ibans in 1856:

> They loved independence, and the two branches of Dayak employment were simply heads and salt; and as these two requirements could not be found in the same quarter they, in former times, usually made peace with one petty Malay chief for the purpose of obtaining salt, while the heads were brought from some other petty Malay chief's village lying in another direction.[3]

Circumstances thus insured that in the Iban country the Malays did not prey upon the Ibans, in the manner which James Brooke reported as typical

[1] Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, p. 61.

[2] Earl, *Eastern Seas*, p. 318. A witness before the 1854 James Brooke Inquiry testified that before the White Rajah's arrival, various communities in the First Division who had suffered from Saribas depredations sometimes tried to retaliate by blockading the mouth of the latter river with ships to prevent the Saribas people from obtaining salt: testimony of Tan Musa, 'Reports of Brooke Inquiry', *PP* XXIX (1854–5) 180; see also *The Borneo Question*, p. 94.

[3] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 159–60.

of Malay-Land Dayak relations in the First Division. The Malays could and did conceive of themselves as rulers, traders and warrior chiefs as well. In all of these roles, which were quite intermingled in the Borneo view of politics, they attempted to press the greatest possible advantage from their relationship with the primarily pagan Iban population. But the result was not oppression; it was an uneasy sharing of power between those who were Moslems and those who were not, with certain advantages accruing to each party. The Malays, predominantly on the seaward side, were able to act as brokers to the outside world. The more numerous Ibans, expanding territorially and addicted to fighting, were too strong to be used, except at their own pleasure.

3 | James Brooke and the Iban 'Pirates'

NOTHING did more to make James Brooke a figure of romance and controversy than his early struggle with Iban 'pirates'. His campaigns during the years 1841 to 1849 attracted the adulation of schoolboys and the bitter hostility of Radical politicians in England. Historians have devoted more attention to this period than to any other in Sarawak's past. Although they have concentrated on relations between Brooke and London, they have also amply demonstrated that the White Rajah's 'piracy' campaigns were the means by which he maintained and extended his political foothold in Borneo.[1]

Unfortunately the various historical studies of Sarawak 'piracy' often seem unreal to the modern reader familiar with the country and its people. Nothing in the work of Graham Irwin, L. A. Mills or Nicholas Tarling makes it immediately evident that when these writers speak of the sea-going 'Dayaks of Saribas and Skrang' they are referring to the same pagan, river-dwelling, hill-rice-cultivating Ibans described by the anthropologist J. D. Freeman. The reader might be excused for concluding that the historians have been discussing a vanished race, rather than the immediate forebears of one of the most important peoples living in East Malaysia today.

The fog of semantic unreality which has surrounded the subject of 'piracy' is in part the fault of James Brooke himself. Like other Europeans in nineteenth-century Southeast Asia, he was inclined to label all of his numerous and varied native opponents 'pirates'. He used this word partly because he deeply and sincerely believed that his enemies were the willful, lawless adversaries of free trade and good government, and partly because he hoped that public opinion in maritime England would be disposed to support

[1] For accounts of Rajah Brooke and 'piracy', see L. A. Mills, 'Rajah Brooke of Sarawak and the Suppression of Piracy in Brunei', in *British Malaya 1824–1867*, 2nd rev. ed., *JMBRAS* XXXIII 3 (1960) 283–309; Irwin, 'The Pirate Controversy', in *Nineteenth Century Borneo*, pp. 127–50; Nicholas Tarling, 'The Bugis, the Brunei Malays, and the Dayaks' in *Piracy and Politics in the Malay World: A Study of British Imperialism in Nineteenth Century South-east Asia*, reprinted. (Singapore, 1963) pp. 112–45. See also Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, pp. 92–152, and Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, pp. 85–118.

'anti-piracy' campaigns. His usage inevitably implied that all 'pirates' were rather similar, whereas in fact he applied the term to people as different as the Moslem Illanuns of Mindanao and the pagan Ibans of Borneo.

By accepting the term 'pirate' as a valid category, scholars have underemphasized certain social and historical distinctions which are of fundamental importance when the events of this period are viewed from Sarawak. It was the peculiarly Iban love of travel, war and headhunting which led the Ibans into the habit of coastal raiding in the first place, as discussed earlier. Such aggressive behavior inevitably brought them into conflict with the Brooke rulers after 1841. But for the Ibans this conflict was only the first stage in a continuing, often turbulent relationship with the central government, as following chapters will demonstrate. Iban 'piracy' is comprehensible only when it is seen in the context of this longer local history.

Once James Brooke had decided to intervene in the politics of northwest Borneo, he faced a complex set of problems. Not all of them involved the Ibans. He first had to secure a base in the vicinity of Kuching, or Sarawak Proper, in the First Division. He had to define his relationship with the Sultan of Brunei, the nominal overlord of the entire coast. He also had to evolve a policy toward the various other rivers on the coast between Sarawak Proper and Brunei, which were in theory subject to the Sultan but were in fact autonomous.

As we have seen in preceding chapters, the cultural and political character of these districts varied greatly. Comparatively peaceful Land Dayaks made up the bulk of the population in the First Division. Various Melanau communities, including the productive sago-growers of the Mukah and Oya Rivers, were still the most significant element in the Third Division, despite the beginning of Iban immigration there at about this time. Further to the north and east, around Brunei Bay and beyond, there were settlements which played host to Illanun sea raiders from the Philippines. Among all the peoples of the coast, however, the sea-going Iban headhunters of the Second Division were bound to be a cause of particular concern to a new and as yet inexperienced English ruler. They were relatively close to Kuching, comparatively numerous, and under no effective or predictable control from Brunei or anywhere else. Their habit of raiding, sometimes at the urging of ambitious Malay chiefs, made them an intolerable nuisance and a potential threat to any nearby government.

Displaying great political skill, James Brooke had succeeded in mastering his first problem, that of establishing himself securely in Kuching, by early 1842. In the months that followed he began to wage war against the mixed Malay and Iban communities of the Second Division, dealing them sharp

blows with the help of the Royal Navy. But he did not at first even consider governing any of the outlying districts beyond the First Division. Instead he hoped eventually to exert British influence over them through a reformed and enlightened Sultanate of Brunei.

This was a forlorn hope from the beginning. A government compatible with Brooke's political ideals inevitably demanded something more than the indirect measures which he contemplated at the beginning of his stay in Sarawak. His dream died in 1845, when an anti-British faction at the court of Brunei murdered the friendly princes through whom he had hoped to rule. This disaster made it obvious that he would have to follow some other policy, not only toward Brunei, but toward the entire coast as well.

Increasingly preoccupied with his additional duties as an official agent of the British Crown, the White Rajah did not face this fact immediately. Not until 1850 did he begin to realize that the problem of Iban raiding could not be solved without establishing a permanent government post under European control on each of the major Iban rivers. The establishment of these posts, which proceeded with little regard for international legal proprieties, marked the real beginning of Brooke government of the Ibans.

In short, the Rajah's struggle against Iban raiders eventually forced him to extend his infant administration beyond Kuching to the outstations. But the 'piracy' campaigns had a second effect of almost equal importance. They generated a political controversy in England which seriously weakened the White Rajah, encouraging his native enemies to make a final, almost successful effort to get rid of him. The resulting rebellion of 1859–60, which will be discussed in a following chapter, was in many ways the most interesting and profound crisis in the history of the Brooke State.

The story of how James Brooke became Rajah of Sarawak bears repeating only briefly here, with emphasis on the Iban role in events. The future British ruler had arrived in 1839 in the middle of a small-scale civil war. On one side were the Brunei nobles, originally attracted to live at Sarawak Proper by the discovery of antimony in 1824. In rebellion against these representatives of the theoretical suzerain was a coalition of local Malay chiefs, the so-called 'Siniawan Datos',[1] and Land Dayaks.

Brooke immediately sensed the political possibilities inherent in this situation. He agreed to help the Brunei nobles, the senior of whom was Pengiran Muda Hasim,[2] on condition that he should receive an initially ill-

[1] So called because the site of the Sarawak Malay position during the rebellion against Makota and Pengiran Muda Hasim was at Siniawan, upriver from Kuching.

[2] Hasim, mentioned briefly in the first chapter, was the uncle of the ruling Sultan, Omar Ali Saifuddin II. (Since this man had never been ceremonially crowned he did not hold the most important royal title, *Yang Dipertuan*, and might therefore be regarded as no more than an

defined share in the government of Sarawak Proper, which included most of the modern First Division. His assistance was instrumental in bringing the rebellion to a close in December 1840. During the fighting, Pengiran Muda Hasim and the other principal Brunei noble on the scene, Pengiran Makota, also made use of a heterogeneous collection of native allies including Balau Ibans from Banting in the Second Division, and Sebuyau Ibans from the Kuching area and Lundu.[1]

From the time of his arrival in Borneo, Brooke had heard stories about the cruel and lawless behavior of the more powerful Iban communities of the Saribas and Skrang Rivers, the mortal enemies of the people from Banting and Lundu. Even before the Sarawak rebellion was ended, he had decided that 'To quiet this coast, the Saribas should receive a hard lesson.'[2] His discovery that Hasim and Makota winked at Saribas raids on Land Dayak settlements situated upriver from Kuching helped to precipitate and justify his decision to seize power after the end of the rebellion. Months passed after the fighting stopped, yet Hasim showed no signs of fulfilling his promise to give Brooke a share in the government. Brooke became convinced that this man was weak if well-inclined, and he began to regard the more skilled and sophisticated Makota as his bitter enemy in everything.

In the summer of 1841 Brooke learned that one hundred boatloads of Saribas and Skrang Ibans, accompanied by Malays, were about to travel up the Sarawak River. According to his account, these Ibans had been petitioning Muda Hasim and Makota for authority to go on a headhunting raid, but the two Brunei nobles had assured him that no such permission would be granted. A short time later, however, he saw the expedition start off. He angrily intervened only just in time to halt it:

The poor [Land] Dayaks in the interior, as well as the Chinese, were in the greatest

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'acting Sultan', although the exact degree of his political legitimacy is unclear. Similarly Hasim may have held the important office of Bendahara without benefit of ritual investiture.) James Brooke maintained that since Omar Ali had no 'legitimate' children and since Hasim was the eldest 'legitimate' son of the previous Sultan, he was the 'heir apparent'. See James Brooke memorandum on Brunei, dated 31 March 1845, in FO 12/3. This theory suited Brooke's plans to rule Brunei indirectly through Hasim, discussed later in the present chapter, and accorded with English concepts of royal succession, but not with traditional practice in Brunei, where, as in most Malay states, the Sultan was elected from among the royal nobility, and no principle of strict hereditary succession existed. For the internal politics of Brunei at this time see Donald E. Brown, 'Socio-Political History of Brunei, a Bornean Malay Sultanate', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., 1969, esp. pp. 296–8.

[1] Among the others besides Brooke who helped Hasim were 'Kayan Dayaks' (they may well have been pagan Melanaus rather than Kayans in the modern sense: see p. 113, n. 3 below) and a company of Chinese mercenaries from Sambas 'under a very intelligent Captain'. The latter were allowed to settle at Leda Tanah above Kuching in return for their services. (Keppel, *Dido*, I 147–50, 174.)

[2] James Brooke journal entry, 17 Oct 1840, in Keppel, *Dido*, I 147.

state of alarm, and thence I gained some credit amongst them for my interference in their behalf. The very idea of letting 2500 wild devils loose in the interior of the country is horrible; for although they have one professed object, they combine many others with it, and being enemies of all the mountain tribes [i.e. the Land Dayaks] they cut them up as much as they can. What object, it may be enquired, can the Malays have in destroying their own country and people so wantonly?[1]

He concluded that Hasim must have consented to the raid in return for a promised share in the captives and plunder.

A few months after this incident James Brooke used the guns of his yacht to force the still unresolved question of his governorship. The new ruler recorded in his journal that on 24 September 1841 'I was declared Rajah and governor of Sarawak amidst the roar of cannon, and a general display of flags and banners from the shore and river.'[2]

Rajah Brooke lost no time in taking further steps to consolidate his political position in the Sarawak River system.[3] He pardoned the recently rebellious local Malay chiefs, some of whom had fled the area, and reinstated them in positions of trust, instead of condemning them to death. But at the same time he limited their power to exact goods and services from the Land Dayaks, replacing the vague and flexible rights which they had formerly exercised with a fixed revenue, to be paid to them in rice. He promulgated a rough code of laws, which he was careful to present as an allegedly neglected traditional Malay code, or *undang-undang*.[4] These measures were uniformly successful. The Sarawak Malay chiefs were beholden to Brooke because he had saved their lives and restored them to positions of honor and power, while the Land Dayaks could only be grateful for their own improved lot.

By the time this essential first portion of his domestic program had been completed in early 1842, Brooke was already devoting attention to the problem of Iban raiding. If Makota and Hasim had profited from raids against the Land Dayaks, the same was obviously even more true of those Malays who accompanied and in some cases incited the raiders. The new ruler decided that the various 'Arab' chiefs at Banting, Sadong and Skrang were bound to be his most determined enemies. He sent letters to all three of them in January 1842, stating that he wished to remain on good terms with his neighbors, but that he would attack any who plundered in his territory.[5] Always stimulated by the prospect of a good fight, he began to make con-

[1] Quotation is from James Brooke journal entry, 4 Aug 1841, in Keppel, *Dido*, I 227; see also pp. 215–27; Mundy, *Borneo and Celebes*, I 247; Templer, *Letters*, I 162–3.

[2] James Brooke journal entry, 1 Oct 1841, in Mundy, *Borneo and Celebes*, I 271.

[3] This critical period is covered in Keppel, *Dido*, I 252–68.

[4] Reprinted in ibid., I 267; see also Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, pp. 78–9.

[5] Keppel, *Dido*, I 263.

crete plans for an 'anti-pirate' campaign. He thought that twenty-five Europeans would be needed for an attack on one of Sharif Mullah's villages, although where he would get them was far from clear. He considered recruiting some Bugis from Singapore.[1] His journal entry for 18 January 1842 reads in part,

> In the evening I ordered a fine boat to be prepared for the war with the Saribas and Skrang, which appears to me inevitable; as it is impossible, laying all motives of humanity aside, to allow these piratical tribes to continue their depredations, which are inconsistent with safety, and a bar to all trade along the coast.[2]

A few days later the Rajah received a visit from a Skrang Iban chief, Matahari, who presented further evidence that raiding might not die easily:

> His shrewdness and cunning were remarkably displayed. He began by inquiring, if a tribe, either Skrang or Saribas, pirated on my territory, what I intended to do. My answer was, 'To enter their country and lay it waste.' But he asked me again, 'You will give me, your friend, leave to steal a few heads occasionally?' 'No', I replied, 'You cannot take a single head; you cannot enter the country: and if you or your countrymen do, I will have a hundred Skrang heads for every one you take here.' He recurred to this request several times: 'just to steal one or two!' as a schoolboy would ask for apples. There is no doubt that the two tribes of Skrang and Saribas are greatly addicted to headhunting, and consider the possession as indispensable.[3]

If Brooke had a low opinion of his neighbors, it soon became obvious that the feeling was mutual. He and his fellow vassals of Brunei were the products of different cultures with irreconcilable political ideals. The liberal British concept of government which Brooke espoused was based in part on two principles, free trade and control of territory. But in the Borneo Malay concept, trade monopoly was the goal to be pursued, and governments controlled people, not territory. The notion of land tenure was utterly alien to the Sarawak scheme of things. The same philosophy still prevailed in Brunei in 1883, when it was described by a perceptive British Consul:

> Strictly speaking it is not the land that belongs to these Pangerans, but the right to tax the people living on it: and so much is this the case, that, if the people of one river remove to a neighbouring one which is ruled by another Pangeran, the Pangeran they were formerly under may send messengers to receive his taxes from them.[4]

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[1] Ibid., I 264. [2] Ibid., I 271. [3] Ibid., I 274–5.

[4] Memorandum of P. Leys, 5 May 1883, in FO 12/59. There was, if anything, even less emphasis on control of land in Borneo than in nineteenth-century Malaya, of which J. M. Gullick writes: 'Where land is not a scarce commodity however, and this was the case in the Malay States, political power even though it is exercised in respect of defined territorial areas is based on control of people.' (*Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya* (London, 1958) p. 113.)

Not surprisingly, Brooke took a less than detached view of this conflict in political values. His way was right and the Borneo way was wrong and wicked. 'I may mention, among my other difficulties,' he wrote, 'that many, nay most, of the Dayak tribes are held as *private property*: any rascally Borneon [Brunei Malay] making a present to the Sultan, gets a grant of a Dayak tribe, originally to rule, now to plunder or sell. . . .[1] He had already taken steps to regulate such rights held by the Malays of Sarawak Proper over the Land Dayaks, and eventually he would eliminate them altogether. He was far less sympathetic with regard to similar prerogatives claimed by nearby rulers whom he regarded as bloodthirsty 'pirates'.

Under the circumstances, conflict was inevitable. Early in 1842 Brooke became angry with his closest neighbor, Sharif Sahap of Sadong, who ruled certain Land Dayak tribes living just beyond the eastern borders of Brooke's own fief. First he accused Sahap of sending his people to steal captives in Brooke territory. Then, when friction continued, he baldly made plans to resettle Sahap's offending community on his own side of the border. He reported, 'Muda Hasim wrote to Sharif Sahap to tell him the Dayaks were no longer his, but mine; and Sharif Sahap, sorehearted, conspired against us. . . .'[2]

Sharif Sahap, it will be recalled, was the former governor of Skrang, where he and his brother Sharif Mullah still sometimes lived, and where they retained influence over the powerful Iban community. Not long after this incident he unsuccessfully attempted to turn the Malay chiefs of Sarawak Proper against their new English benefactor. Then, in the summer of 1842, he threatened to raid Kuching with a fleet of Iban allies. Among them was the formidable Saribas raider, the Orang Kaya Pamancha Dana (Bayang). Brooke wrote:

At Sarawak [Proper] I found most alarming reports of an intended invasion from the united forces of Saribas and Skrang, and received, moreover, the agreeable information that Bayang, one of the leading men of the former river, had suspended a basket on a high tree, ready to receive my head when he returned in triumph from the conquest of my country. I cared little for these idle threats, though I did not neglect taking the necessary precautions. A stout fence was fixed round the village: a fort was erected commanding the reach of the river, and my war boats, 25 in number, were prepared for active service. I know Sharif Sahap to be a fiend, and my inveterate enemy, and his undoubted power was not to be despised.[3]

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[1] Emphasis in original. James Brooke journal entry, 25 March 1842, in Keppel, *Dido*, I 281.

[2] James Brooke journal entry, 20 June 1842, ibid., I 296–7. To Brooke's annoyance, Pengiran Muda Hasim remained in Kuching until 1844. He was a potential hindrance to the new Rajah's own authority, besides which Brooke wanted him back in Brunei to lead the pro-Brooke, pro-British party there. But he was also useful at times, as on this occasion.

[3] James Brooke journal entry for 1 July 1842, in Mundy, *Borneo and Celebes*, I 313–14; see also Keppel, *Dido*, I 311–13. For background on Sharif Sahap and Dana (Bayang), see ch. 2.

From this period onwards until his final defeat in 1844, Sharif Sahap ranked with Pengiran Makota as one of Brooke's favorite villains, and hardly a page of the Rajah's journals is without some epithet hurled at one or the other of these two men.

Sarawak survived infancy only because James Brooke was able to involve an initially reluctant British Government in his plans for a new expansion of empire in the Eastern Seas. From early 1845 onwards he was the official agent of the Crown in Borneo.[1] Even prior to this appointment he was able to persuade young and adventurous Royal Navy captains to accompany him on 'anti-pirate' expeditions which cowed some of his more troublesome neighbors and extended his own influence along the coast.

Not surprisingly, the first campaigns of this kind were directed against the Ibans and Malays of the Second Division. The Rajah's helper was the Hon. Henry Keppel, captain of a new eighteen-gun frigate, H.M.S. *Dido*. Brooke encountered him in Penang in 1843, and he agreed to come over to Sarawak to hunt 'pirates'. Keppel was under orders to suppress piracy, but his instructions had almost certainly been framed with Illanuns in mind, for these far-cruising rovers were, unlike the Ibans, capable of threatening European commerce. But the captain enjoyed excitement, liked Brooke, and was not inclined to quibble over ethnologic details. Nor, at this period, were his official superiors.[2]

Keppel and Brooke sailed back to Kuching together on H.M.S. *Dido*. Before they reached Sarawak in May 1843, the *Dido*'s boats had an exciting encounter with 'Illanuns', who, after getting the worst of an exchange of fire, turned out to be peaceful emissaries from the Riau Islands and not 'pirates' after all.[3] A few weeks later, however, *Dido*'s boat crews clashed with three genuine Illanun prahus, killing about twenty of the raiders. For this action they later received a total of £795 in head-money, or pirate bounty, from a British Admiralty Court in Singapore.[4]

The magnificent square-rigged frigate, the first such vessel ever to call at Kuching, was a most impressive sight riding at anchor in the Sarawak River

[1] After a great deal of hard work by his friends in England, Brooke was appointed 'British Agent' in Borneo: Lord Aberdeen to James Brooke, 1 Nov 1844, FO 12/2; he received word of this appointment in March 1845.

[2] After the 1843 Saribas expedition, Brooke wrote of Keppel, 'It is to his honour, that what he did was done on his own responsibility, and I am glad to add, that he received the thanks and approbation of the commander-in-chief.' (Journal entry, 1 July 1843, Mundy, *Borneo and Celebes*, I 352.)

[3] Keppel, *Dido*, II 7–10.

[4] Ibid., II 19–22; Keppel report to Vice-Admiral Sir W. Parker, 30 May 1843, in 'Borneo Piracy', *PP* LXI (1852–3) 283. Details of head-money payments are given in 'Head Money', *PP* LV (1850) 49–56; see also p. 83, n. 2

Pengiran Muda Hasim, invited on board, made the mistake of spitting betel juice on the spotless deck. The mate responded by calling him a 'dirty beast', a comment which he fortunately did not understand.[1] But aside from this minor outbreak of cultural irritation, the *Dido*'s visit was a great success. As the representative of Brunei authority, Hasim duly produced a letter calling upon Captain Keppel to undertake a mission close to the heart of James Brooke:

> This is to inform our friend that there are certain great pirates, of the people of Saribas and Skrang, in our neighbourhood, seizing goods and murdering people on the high seas. They have more than three hundred war prahus, and extend their ravages even to Banjarmassin; they are not subject to the government of Brunei [Borneo]; they take much plunder from vessels trading between Singapore and the good people of our country.
>
> It would be a great service, if our friend would adopt measures to put an end to these piratical outrages. . . .[2]

A force of Sebuyau Ibans, Sarawak Malays and a few Land Dayaks, all of whom had long been hostile to the Saribas people, was soon ready to accompany Keppel and the Rajah on an expedition.[3] On 11 June 1843 an initial column of 500 British sailors and natives proceeded up the shallow Saribas River in small boats, keeping an eye out for the tidal bore, about which they had heard fearful stories. They passed Ibans dancing defiantly on the roofs of streamside longhouses, and were hampered by barricades of timber across the river. The first serious fighting took place at the junction of the Padeh and Layar Rivers, not far from the longhouse of the most influential Saribas leader, Orang Kaya Pamancha Dana, who had recently threatened to put James Brooke's head in a basket. A mixed force of Malays and Ibans manning three 'formidable looking forts' situated on the tongue of land between the two streams opened fire with small cannon. *Dido*'s advancing crew members suffered several casualties before the forts were finally captured. A friendly force of about 800 Balau Ibans from Banting arrived at the height of the battle and Keppel nearly attacked them by mistake. The English captain estimated that the total enemy forces numbered about 500 Malays and 6000 Ibans.[4]

On 12 June 1843 the Padeh defenders sent peace emissaries. Brooke threatened to 'unleash' the Balau Ibans on them if they did not behave in future. They agreed to keep the peace, but said they could not speak for the people of the Paku and Rimbas, the two other main branches of the Saribas.[5]

[1] Keppel, *Dido*, II 15.

[2] Ibid., II 28–9. Although this letter, undoubtedly a product of Brooke's urging, states that the Saribas and Skrang are not subject to Brunei, the mere fact of the letter's existence indicates at least some doubt on this point in the White Rajah's mind.

[3] Ibid., II 42. [4] Ibid., II 53–8. [5] Ibid., II 63.

During the next five days the expeditionary force went on to attack fortified points in the Paku and Rimbas, above the site of the modern settlements at Spaoh and Debak respectively. Resistance followed the same pattern, with mixed forces of Malays and Ibans fighting from behind timber fortifications. Sharif Japar's friendly Balau Ibans were able to take heads from the fleeing enemy. A triumphal return to Kuching followed this victory.[1]

Brooke was highly pleased with the result of this expedition. He looked forward to a coming trip to Brunei, when he would obtain from the Sultan a confirmation of his authority to rule in Sarawak.[2] 'I might have a dozen rivers besides the Sarawak', he observed.[3] But his satisfaction was marred when Keppel was called away on other duty, leaving the job only half done and the most important villain unchastized:

> The chiefs of rivers who encourage piracy, serve to foster it to a remarkable degree. Of these, Sharif Sahap of Sadong is certainly the worst, and I am now convinced that Dayak piracy must be suppressed by a blow struck at him. The mischiefs and evils perpetrated by this man have been very great; he was the planner, the mover, the sharer of plunder of all the expeditions against the unhappy Hill Dayaks: and so great was, and even now is, his repute with the Skrang Dayaks, that the name they have bestowed on him is Bujang Brani, or the brave bachelor, after their favourite bird of omen. Would that Keppel had remained to finish his great work![4]

A little over a year later, Captain Keppel returned to Sarawak. In the meantime Pengiran Makota, the founder of Kuching in an earlier era, had joined Sharif Sahap at a stronghold on the lower Batang Lupar River.[5] The Rajah of Sarawak could hardly wait for an opportunity to strike a blow at this pair of monsters and their Skrang Iban allies.

On 7 August 1844 boats from the *Dido* and the East India Company steamer *Phlegethon* stormed Sahap's stronghold, located a few miles below what was later to be the Second Division headquarters at Simanggang.[6] The British forces captured fifty-six brass guns and over a ton of gunpowder and destroyed 200 boats, losing one young officer killed and two men wounded. They were aided by the Balau Ibans, this time unaccompanied by Sharif Japar, who was now suspected of being in sympathy with Sharif

[1] Ibid., II 66–71; Keppel report, 23 June 1843, in 'Borneo Piracy', *PP* LXI (1852–3) 284–7.

[2] For the background and contents of this treaty, see Irwin, *Nineteenth Century Borneo*, p. 84.

[3] James Brooke journal entry for 1 July 1843 in Mundy, *Borneo and Celebes*, I 351–2. [4] Ibid.

[5] Makota had left Kuching after the initial arrival of *Dido* in May 1843, and from that time onwards Brooke was sure that he was plotting with Sharif Sahap.

[6] The actual site of the stronghold was at Pemutus Gran, referred to as 'Patusan' in contemporary accounts. Today it lies some distance inland as a result of shifts in the course of the Batang Lupar.

Sahap.[1] Subsequently, boats from *Phlegethon* and *Dido* went on to destroy Sharif Mullah's deserted 'town' on the Undup branch of the Batang Lupar. Its inhabitants defended themselves at a stockaded longhouse further upriver, which was captured after a stiff fight and the death of another British officer on August 14. One of the Malay chiefs of Sarawak Proper, the Dato Patinggi Ali, nearly captured Sharif Mullah, who barely escaped in a fast boat.[2]

Up to this point, the campaign had been completely different from Government punitive expeditions of later years directed against upriver Iban rebels. In this case, the Malays who led the mixed Moslem-pagan opposition were men of considerable military as well as political sophistication.[3] Sharif Sahap's complex of fortifications, the quantities of powder and cannon captured, and the number of British casualties suffered all bear witness to a more complicated type of warfare than the Ibans would have been likely to conduct on their own. But now the Brunei Malays and 'Arabs' had been defeated. The finale of the 1844 expedition, a foray up the Skrang River into a wholly Iban area, followed a pattern which was to become familiar in the future.

'Having punished the two principals [Sharif Sahap and Sharif Mullah] I next prepared to attack the Skrang Dayaks, the most determined pirates and the most cruel savages in Borneo', Keppel reported. 'They partially man and supply the war-boats which the Malays complete, furnishing the firearms and ammunition. They are said to muster 10,000 warriors, and can put to sea with upwards of 100 war boats, carrying from 60 to 100 men each.'[4]

The Sarawak force advanced up the Skrang, intending to attack the 'capital' of the enemy at Karangan Pris.[5] It turned out to be no more than a stockaded longhouse, located about thirty miles from the mouth of the river. The local Ibans had no firearms or forts, but they fought effectively enough with more traditional tactics, springing a successful ambush on some over-confident Sarawak Malays accompanied by an English representative of Henry Wise, Brooke's London agent.

[1] Keppel, *Dido*, II 85–92; Keppel report, 25 Aug 1844, in 'Borneo Piracy', *PP* LXI (1852–3) 288–90. With Keppel's force was a young midshipman named Charles Anthoni Johnson, later to be Second Rajah of Sarawak.

[2] Keppel, *Dido*, II 92–102.

[3] The captured personal belongings of the leaders give some indication of their cosmopolitan tastes. Makota's valuables, seized at his abandoned house near Pemutus Gran, included a Turkish pipe, some chairs once belonging to Brooke's yacht *Royalist* and other presents from Brooke. At Sharif Mullah's deserted camp in the Undup, Keppel found writing materials and two or three English-made desks; ibid., II 93, 103.

[4] Keppel report, 25 Aug 1844, 'Borneo Piracy', *PP* LXI (1852–3) 289. Keppel certainly exaggerated Skrang fighting strength. As late as 1900 the total Iban population of the entire Second Division was only about 50,000.

[5] Referred to simply as 'Karangan' in contemporary accounts.

The Ibans, probably led by the later famous rebel Rentap, overwhelmed this party with stones and spears when it advanced too far ahead of the main expedition, and capsized its boats in the river. They managed to kill the unfortunate Englishman, Mr Steward, and removed his head. They also killed the leader of the Malays, the Dato Patinggi Ali of Sarawak Proper, as well as twenty-nine of his followers. The episode was memorable on two counts. It was the only time in Sarawak history that Ibans ever definitely took the head of a European. It also made possible the subsequent apotheosis of the Dato Patinggi Ali, who was to be immortalized as the symbol of Malay sacrifice in the service of Brooke Sarawak, and has remained a kind of Sarawak Malay culture hero down to the present day.

The results of the 1844 campaign were inconclusive. The White Rajah succeeded in defeating his Malay adversaries of the moment. Keppel's forces harried Sharif Sahap across the watershed into the Kapuas, where he died soon after.[1] His elder brother, Sharif Mullah, also fled, although the Rajah later allowed him to return to the Batang Lupar.[2] Brooke deposed Sharif Japar, his erstwhile ally of 1840 and 1843, from his governorship at Banting, replacing him with the three local Malay chiefs who he claimed were the original, rightful rulers. He also captured Pengiran Makota after the battle in the Undup, but later released him. Makota returned to Brunei, where he continued to make trouble for Sarawak in later years.[3] But these were momentary triumphs only. Brooke did not attempt to solve the more basic problem of establishing some consistent authority over the Iban inhabited rivers. The warlike population of the Second Division remained a potential source of strength for future 'piratical' opponents.

At this time Rajah Brooke still hoped to exert a benign influence over the coast indirectly, through a reinvigorated Sultanate of Brunei. He believed that he would be able to place his pliable friend Pengiran Muda Hasim on the throne, and then lend him support from a proposed British settlement on the island of Labuan, only a few hours' sail from Brunei Town. Hasim and his brother, Pengiran Bedruddin, could then be educated, guided, and encouraged to reform the administration of the outlying rivers.[4] But the Rajah specifically exempted the Iban districts of the Second Division from his lofty

[1] Sahap's flight to Sintang on the middle Kapuas is reported in Brooke's journal entry for 31 Dec 1844 in Mundy, *Borneo and Celebes*, I 379. By 1845 he was dead: Brooke to Templer, 10 Dec 1845, *Letters*, II 103. The Dutch did not establish a permanent post in the interior of the Kapuas until 1854.

[2] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 109.

[3] Keppel, *Dido*, II 118; Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, pp. 86–7, 108–9.

[4] Nicholas Tarling, 'Sir James Brooke and Brunei', *SMJ* XI 21–2 (July–Dec 1963) 1–3. Brooke set forth his plans for indirect rule in his journal entry for 3 March 1845 in Mundy, *Borneo and Celebes*, II 25–6.

scheme, at least for the moment. In 1845 he wrote that they were too unsettled, too devoid of even the memory of meaningful Brunei rule.[1] It is possible that he hoped to include them within his reformed Sultanate at some later date. But for the immediate future he thought in terms of establishing a more direct form of authority over the Saribas and Skrang. It seems that he was already aware of the strategic potential of these Second Division districts, a potential which, as we shall see, his nephew Charles Brooke was later to develop. The Rajah considered that, in the event that his plans for Brunei went awry, Iban fighting strength might enable him to save his home base, Sarawak Proper:

> If left to my own resources, I must become the chief of the Dayaks, and, by my influence, prevent mischief on a large scale. A gun-boat, twelve good boats with six-pounders and musquetry, with 200 Dayak prahus, will be a formidable force against Borneo [Brunei] itself; and this force may be needed, if Muda Hasim is beaten in Borneo.[2]

For the moment, Brooke attempted to capitalize on the impression left by the two Keppel expeditions. He scolded the Malay and Iban chiefs from afar when they attacked traders, and sent them presents of ceremonial spears and flags when they appeared to be peacefully inclined. But in the fall of 1845 he reported a discouraging recrudescence of raiding, allegedly inspired by a new trio of 'Arabs'.[3] Future events were to make it amply evident that mere exhortations from Kuching would never suffice to compel the Saribas and Skrang Ibans to abandon indiscriminate warfare.

In the same year, 1845, the ruler of Sarawak first became concerned about Iban 'pirates' inhabiting another area, the Rejang River basin. Throughout this period, Ibans from the Second Division were migrating to the Kanowit and other northward flowing tributaries of the Rejang. It is possible that the Keppel expeditions of 1843 and 1844 directed against Second Division communities gave some impetus to the movement.[4] By 1845 Iban settlers were present in the new territory in strength. They retained their love of combat, and exercised it by raiding the Melanau settlements located in the Rejang Delta and on the nearby rivers to the north.

Early in 1845 emissaries from the Melanau settlements visited Kuching,

[1] Ibid., p. 26; 'Memorandum sent to the Pengiran Bedrudeen', dated about May 1845, in Templer, *Letters*, II 70.

[2] James Brooke journal entry, 13 Jan 1845, in Mundy, *Borneo and Celebes*, II 6.

[3] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 117; Mundy, *Borneo and Celebes*, II 45–65; Templer, *Letters*, II 94–106 and III 57–8.

[4] According to Benedict Sandin, the followers of the Skrang Iban rebels Libau (Rentap) and Kedu (Lang Ngindang) migrated to Rejang tributaries after their final defeats in 1861 and 1879 respectively. Earlier military campaigns by the White Rajah might have had the same effect.

complained to the Rajah about Iban headhunting, and asked for protection. Up to this time Brooke had regarded the distant Rejang with an indifferent eye, struggling as he was with problems closer to home. Now he listened to the Melanau complaints with sympathy. Aside from his sincere desire to curb raiding in general, he was increasingly anxious to protect the sago-producing settlements at Matu, Paloh, Igan, Oya and Mukah. The first sago-processing works were not established in Kuching until about 1858, and this product was not yet vital to the economy of the Brooke State, as it later became. But the Malay traders of Kuching were already sharing in the growing carrying trade to Singapore in raw sago, which could hardly be expected to flourish so long as the producers were exposed to Iban attack.

It was clear that most of the raiding parties originated from the Kanowit River. The Rajah, who had never visited the Rejang, apparently believed that the 'piratical Dayaks' of Saribas and Skrang were simply crossing the watershed to take heads, failing at first to realize that permanent migration had been under way for some years. He decided that the ruler of Sarikei, then the principal settlement in the Rejang, must be held responsible. Only a year previously Brooke had expressed approval of this man, the Dato Patinggi Abdul Rahman.[1] Now he was reappraised to fit the familiar role of Moslem villain in league with pagan raiders:

> His government, compared with that of his predecessor, was tolerable, but of late he has shown an inclination to join with the evil disposed of Skrang and Saribas; and he allows their boats an outlet through his rivers to pirate upon the high seas. . . .[2]

At the end of 1845 an event occurred which eventually compelled the Rajah to reformulate his policies toward the Brunei Sultanate and the outlying rivers. At Brunei an anti-British faction whose strength he had grievously underrated murdered his favorites, Hasim and Bedruddin. His dream of indirect hegemony over northern Borneo was rudely shattered. Brooke was outraged by this disaster, for which he held the ruling Sultan, Omar Ali Saifuddin, fully responsible.[3] He arranged the subsequent humilia-

[1] Brooke had written, 'Rejang is the only river that has not been ruined by the Bornean rajahs, Arab chiefs, and pangerans, and which has continued under the rule of a native gentleman of the middling class [Dato Patinggi Abdul Rahman], adding one more example to the many of the superior rule of the native patingi to the chief, who may be said to be a foreigner. I do not intend to say that it is good, but it is so by comparison.' (Journal entry, 1 July 1844, in Mundy, *Borneo and Celebes*, I 365.)

[2] James Brooke journal entry, 22 Nov 1845, Mundy, *Borneo and Celebes*, II 69.

[3] The murders took Brooke by surprise. On 16 March 1846, before definite news of the disaster arrived in Kuching, he had written, 'We have a report that Muda Hasim and Bedruddin have been killed. I do not believe a word of it, so you need not mention it, but if it had happened, it would be owing to all want of [British] protection.' (Letter to Henry Wise, in 'Henry Wise',

tion and punishment of Brunei, carried out with strong British naval forces during 1846. He did not neglect to stage a demonstration up the Rejang River, which had never before been visited by a European force.[1]

The White Rajah also accompanied further naval operations against Illanun 'pirate' communities on the coast of Sabah, believed to have aided the anti-British faction at Brunei. He took advantage of the prevailing panic among his enemies at the Sultanate to obtain a new and more advantageous treaty reaffirming his position at Sarawak.[2] Toward the end of the same eventful year, 1846, Captain Rodney Mundy, another young naval officer who later compiled a second edition of Brooke's journals, brusquely forced the cession of Labuan to Great Britain.[3]

The events of 1846 served to turn the Rajah's attention away from the Iban country and toward Brunei. There were soon other diversions as well. He was a public hero in England by now, and in the fall of 1847 he sailed home to be knighted and feted, not returning to Sarawak for over a year. He reappeared on the coast of Borneo holding a new appointment as Governor of Labuan, while retaining his old positions as Rajah of Sarawak and British diplomatic representative to Brunei. He had not forgotten his earlier concerns. H.M.S. *Maeander*, the new frigate which carried him out from London early in 1848, had been specially equipped for operations against 'pirates' in the shallow rivers of Sarawak, and her captain was none other than his old friend, Henry Keppel.

Even while he was struggling to establish a new government on fever-ridden Labuan, Brooke was preoccupied with his determination to strike an effective blow at the Iban raiders. He believed that his old enemy Pengiran Makota, who had returned to a position of power at Brunei, was now intriguing with the 'pirates' of Saribas and Skrang, 'for the purpose of acquiring power amongst them'.[4] After some initial friction with the naval commander-in-chief on the China Station, who was skeptical about Borneo

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PP XXXI (1852) 441–3.) Two months later Brooke raged against the Sultan, 'He has murdered our *friends* – the faithful *friends* of Her Majesty's Government *because they were our friends* and and for no other reason.' Emphasis in original: James Brooke to Henry Wise, 13 May 1846, in FO 12/4; also quoted in Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 121.

[1] The 1846 Rejang expedition is described in Mundy, *Borneo and Celebes*, II 121–6. A drawing facing p. 126 shows the steamer *Phlegethon* opposite the big Kanowit Melanau longhouse at Kanowit.

[2] This treaty is discussed in Irwin, *Nineteenth Century Borneo*, pp. 125–6, 147.

[3] Ibid., pp. 123–4.

[4] Quotation from James Brooke to Lord Palmerston, 13 Sept 1848, 'Borneo Piracy', *PP* LV (1850) 5; see also James Brooke to Templer, 16 Sept 1848, *Letters*, II 224–6. Brooke also believed that Makota had been preventing men and provisions from reaching Labuan from Brunei; Keppel, *Maeander*, I 32.

'pirates', Brooke obtained the necessary ships for a new campaign.[1] It began in March 1849, with an attack on the Saribas and Krian Ibans.[2] But this turned out to be no more than a rehearsal for the bloodiest and most controversial battle in Sarawak history.

In the early summer the Rajah learned that a large fleet of Malays and Ibans from Saribas and Skrang was raiding in the Rejang Delta. They had attacked Paloh and Matu, capturing a pair of trading boats at the latter place. They had then attempted an assault on Sarikei, which proved too well defended. The leaders of the force included the Saribas Malay Abang Apong and his good Iban friend, Linggir of Paku, and possibly the Skrang Ibans Rentap, Bulan and Rabong. Thwarted at Sarikei, they proceeded down the coast, planning to raid the village of Duri on the Sadong, First Division, an area which they had already plundered only a few months previously.[3]

The Sarawak force set out from Kuching on 24 July 1849, and a few days later took up positions at the mouths of the Saribas and Krian Rivers, which are separated by a narrow point called Beting Marau. The fleet was made up of cutters and a small steam tender from the Royal Navy sloops *Albatross* and *Royalist*, as well as the East India Company steamer *Nemesis*. The native contingent, led by Rajah Brooke in his war-boat, *Singha Rajah*, included eighteen boatloads of Sarawak Malays, and 300 Sebuyau Ibans under Jugah of

[1] Many details of the Rajah's complicated activities at this time have not been mentioned. *Maeander*, which had been expressly fitted out for 'anti-piracy' operations, had been called away on duty elsewhere after carrying Brooke on the first of two diplomatic missions to Sulu at the end of 1848 and beginning of 1849. He then returned to Labuan, at which point his dispute with the naval authorities followed: see Irwin, *Nineteenth Century Borneo*, pp. 139 ff. Brooke made a second trip to Sulu aboard the steamer *Nemesis* after the Saribas-Krian expedition of March 1849, but before the battle of Beting Marau in July. For a good account of the whole period, see St John, *Life of Sir James Brooke*, pp. 138–58.

[2] The attack is described in St John, *Life of Sir James Brooke*, pp. 154–6. It was this comparatively bloodless expedition, oddly enough, which first attracted the attention of Brooke's British political foes, and not the later action at Beting Marau. A highly colored account featuring alleged atrocities appeared in the *Straits Times*, edited by Robert Woods, a bitter enemy of the Rajah's, and was later reprinted in the London *Daily News*, where it came to the attention of the Radicals. See Gertrude L. Jacob, *The Raja of Sarawak* (London, 1876) I 371–2; the text of the article is given in 'Reports of Brooke Inquiry', *PP* XXIX (1854–5) 216–17. Brooke later made an intemperate effort to track down and have punished the author of this article, whom he believed to be Dr Miller, ship's surgeon on the *Nemesis*. His letters were published in 'Borneo Piracy', *PP* XXXI (1852) 495–521; see also Tom Harrisson's compilation of the same material in 'Backwash to Piracy: a Rajah's Royal Rages – and the *Straits Times* Editor of 1851', *SMJ* XI 21–2 (July–Dec 1964) 13–31.

A complete list of the Rajah's native allies on the Saribas-Krian expedition, compiled by Arthur Crookshank, the senior officer in the Sarawak service, was published in *JIA* III (1849) 276–7 and xxvi–xxvii.

[3] The names of the Iban leaders are from Benedict Sandin. He states that Laksamana Amir of Paku was not present at the battle, as Runciman seems to imply (*The White Rajahs*, p. 94); the Saribas Malay leader was Abang Apong.

Lundu, who had been the first Iban to meet James Brooke ten years before. There were also 800 Balau Ibans of Banting, and smaller detachments, probably including more Sebuyaus, from Samarahan, Sadong and other rivers.[1]

The Rajah knew that the raiders' fleet of light Saribas war-boats would be paddling down from the direction of the Rejang, hugging the coast. Acting on his advice, the naval commander Farquhar arranged his forces to cut off all avenues of escape. Brooke and the majority of the native boats blocked the entrance to the Krian, while the British ships' boats and the remaining natives took up similar positions in the Saribas. The steamer *Nemesis* stood by slightly out to sea, where she could move to any part of the field.

Early on the night of July 31, sentinel boats signalled the approach of the Saribas and Skrang fleet, which promptly fell into the waiting trap. Finding the Krian obstructed, most of the boats continued toward the Saribas, where they engaged Farquhar's force. Illuminated by a bright moon and the flash of gunfire and rockets, widespread and confused fighting followed. Some of the 'pirates', who had only a few light firearms,[2] tried to escape ashore through the swamp forest covering Beting Marau Point. One section of seventeen boats under Linggir turned seawards in an effort to escape, only to come up against the aptly named *Nemesis*. Her commander reported what followed:

On coming abreast of them I fired the starboard broadside with cannister shot along the whole line, the nearest prahu being about 20 or 30 yards distant, the small-arm men at the same time, keeping up a constant and important fire upon them. We then wore, breaking the line and driving many prahus ashore in a very crippled state, where they fell an easy prey to a division of native boats under Mr Steele of Sarawak, who did good service, without interfering with our fire.

We now followed five prahus which still pressed on for the Batang Lupar, and on coming up with them passed round each successively, and destroyed them in detail, by keeping up a constant fire of grape shot and musketry, until they drifted past us as helpless logs, without a living being on board, their crews having either been killed or jumped overboard, with the hope of swimming on shore, which few could possibly accomplish.

The pirates had hitherto preserved good order, but now finding themselves surrounded and cut off wherever they turned, they fled indiscriminately, running their prahus aground in all directions, abandoning them, and taking refuge in the jungle, others jumping overboard and swimming for the shore.[3]

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[1] Details of the force are given in Keppel, *Maeander*, I 148–50.

[2] A Malay who accompanied the 'pirate' fleet later testified: 'There were not more than four small brass guns in the fleet', adding that each *bangkong* carried a few muskets and quantities of spears, swords and shields: deposition of Siup in 'Borneo Piracy', *PP* LV (1850) 33.

[3] Report of Captain T. Wallage, 26 Aug 1849, in 'Borneo Piracy', *PP* XXXI (1852) 527–9. Spenser St John, who was with Brooke's contingent blocking the mouth of the Krian, later wrote

Linggir and his boat escaped this carnage, as did Abang Apong. No important Saribas Iban leaders perished in the battle, and it seems likely that the Skrang people suffered far more heavily, both during the fighting and in later efforts to walk to their more distant homes through the jungle.[1] The Admiralty Court in Singapore later concluded that 2140 'pirates' manning eighty-eight boats took part in the battle, of whom 500 were killed, and awarded the enormous sum of £20700 in pirate bounty to the British sailors.[2] Spenser St John and James Brooke argued that only 300 were killed out of 3700 present at the battle, but that 500 more died later, either trying to walk home or at the hands of the Rajah's Iban allies.[3]

On the second day after the victory, the Rajah's forces followed it up by destroying the homes of the 'pirates' on the Saribas River. A short time later the headmen of 250 Saribas Iban longhouses and the representatives of all the Saribas Malays signed an agreement promising not to raid in future.[4] From the Saribas, the victors of Beting Marau moved on to the Rejang, where the Rajah felt it was time to renew the impression left by the Navy's only previous visit in 1846. He hoped to punish a famous Iban war and migration leader, Mujah (Buah Raya),[5] reported living on the Entabai branch of the Kanowit River, far in the interior. Brooke sent a force of native allies up the Kanowit, and although they made no contact with Mujah, they destroyed eighteen Iban longhouses.[6] It was the first such Government action in a district which was to remain noted for political turbulence almost until the end of Brooke rule.

The Rajah then levied a fine in gongs, guns, brassware and gold ornaments

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that Linggir's seventeen prahus had attacked *Nemesis* and that the steamer was in danger (*Life of Sir James Brooke*, p. 197), but this is nowhere implied in Wallage's own contemporary report.

[1] Benedict Sandin, who is the great-grandson of Linggir, and whose knowledge of Saribas history is encyclopedic, can name only one Saribas Iban who died at Beting Marau, Numan of Paku. St John testified in 1854: 'The reason why so many died was, that some of the Dayaks came from Skrang, and they had to walk a very great distance back with only what food they could pick up in the jungle.' 'Reports of Brooke Inquiry', *PP* XXIX (1854–5) 205.

[2] Under the terms of a law designed to discourage piracy in the West Indies, bounty was awarded as follows: 500 pirates 'destroyed' at £20 per head equals £10,000; 2140 pirates 'dispersed' at £5 per head equals £10,700; total, £20,700: Certificate of Court of Judicature, 8 Oct 1849, in 'Borneo Piracy', *PP* LV (1850) 145; see also Irwin, *Nineteenth Century Borneo*, p. 145.

[3] St John testimony, 'Reports of Borneo Inquiry', *PP* XXIX (1854–5) 205; James Brooke to Templer, 1 April 1850, in *Letters*, II 282, 284.

[4] According to Brooke, the agreement was first signed by the Orang Kaya Pamancha Dana (Bayang) and the *tuai rumah* of fifty-seven longhouses, followed by additional Malay and Iban headmen: Templer, *Letters*, II 289. The text is in Horace St John, *The Indian Archipelago, its History and Present State* (London, 1853) II 337–9.

[5] Keppel's narrative gives 'Buah Ryah of Insabi': *Maeander*, I 176; for Mujah's career, see p. 48, n. 4.

[6] St John, *Life of Sir James Brooke*, pp. 190–1, 209.

on the community of pagan Melanaus who lived in a great longhouse at the mouth of the Kanowit River.[1] He punished them because he believed they were in league with the Kanowit Iban raiders, and had allowed them egress into the main Rejang River.[2] He used one portion of the fine to pay the wages of Malay guides employed on the expedition, and to reward those of his Iban followers who had taken captives and not heads, as part of a campaign to encourage more humane warfare. He then directed that the remainder of the proceeds from the fine should be used to pay for a fort which he instructed the Kanowit Melanaus to build nearby.[3]

The notion of building and maintaining a fort to control an outlying river was a new and significant development in the Rajah's political policy. He may have been consciously borrowing a trick from native predecessors. Fort-building was a feature of most Malay warfare in Borneo, as in Malaya. Before the founding of Brooke Sarawak, the Sultan of Pontianak had constructed forts on the Kapuas to prevent Saribas Iban raiders from ascending that river to attack his settlements.[4] Brooke was concerned with the same problem, but at its source: he wanted to prevent the Ibans from descending their home rivers bent on coastal excursions.

The use of forts, as it was developed in Sarawak in later years, permitted two important innovations. Europeans could be safely and permanently posted to dangerous outlying districts, and river traffic could be controlled by means of a few cannon. The officer in charge could prevent war fleets from coming down. Equally important, he could keep essential commodities, such as salt, from going up. In a country of warlike tribes where all social and political behavior was attuned to rivers, such outposts were the first step toward any local administration.

Obvious as the advantages of forts may have seemed in retrospect, James Brooke made little mention of them until the eve of the Beting Marau campaign. He had long been aware of the importance of salt control, but his previous ideas about how to achieve it had not been very practical. 'I shall

[1] These were the so-called 'Kanowit Dayaks'; see p. 47, n. 4.

[2] Brooke had written to Dato Patinggi Abdul Rahman in 1845, urging him 'to be strong with the Dayaks of Kanowit [i.e. the Kanowit Melanaus] because unless the Dayaks of Kanowit assisted the people from Saribas and Skrang [i.e. the Iban immigrants settled in the Kanowit interior], they could not make boats or come down the river. The fault is with the Kanowit Dayaks.' (Brooke letter dated 29 Nov 1845 in Templer, *Letters*, II 99–100.) Ironically enough, the Kanowit Melanaus and related communities in the Rejang suffered more than anyone else as a result of the continuing Iban expansion into this area, but, as noted earlier, the Rajah's knowledge of the Rejang was still, at this period, very slight.

[3] Keppel, *Maeander*, I 178. Details of the fine levied on the Kanowit Melanaus and the uses to which it was put are given in 'Borneo Piracy', *PP* LV (1850) 13.

[4] 'Journal of a Tour on the Kapuas', *JIA*, n.s.1 (1856) 87–8. This is a diary kept by two American missionaries on a trip to the lower Kapuas in March 1840.

blockade the Skrang River, prevent mischief at home and bring the enemy to terms by shutting out that great necessary, salt', he had written in 1844.[1] But a blockade required strong and continuous naval support to be more than a temporary solution. It might be noted here that the White Rajahs continued to stress the importance of salt in later years. '. . . a Dayak once having eaten salt can *never* do without it', Charles Brooke commented in 1871; 'This article tames a savage more than ought else, human or divine.'[2]

James Brooke could not easily afford to maintain Europeans in command of permanent posts on the outlying rivers, or so it must have seemed in his earliest years. As a result, he continued for some time to think in terms of indirect measures. In the case of the Rejang he had written in 1846: 'I propose attacking the Dayaks on the Kanowit as a lesson, and then obliging Patinggi Abdul Rahman to build a fort, at the mouth of the Kanowit, to prevent them descending that stream.'[3] Nothing had come of this idea at the time.

Three years later, just before the Battle of Beting Marau, Brooke finally conceived a comprehensive plan of Iban river control. He described it to Lord Palmerston at the Foreign Office in April 1849:

At the same time, although piracy must be curtailed at any cost, I am desirous to effect its suppression at the smallest possible sacrifice of human life, when once driven from such strongholds, and made to feel their inability to contest in the field with the power opposed to them [*sic*] – This might be done by cutting off all communications between the piratical tribes and the Malays who provide them with salt, iron and other necessaries.

This desirable and temporary cessation of intercourse has already partially been carried into effect, much to the distress of the pirates, especially in the great article of salt, of which they are large consumers, and without which they cannot exist. After a blow shall have been struck, three points require to be guarded for a few months in order to cut off this supply; and guarding these points, I venture to express a confident opinion, that the piratical community would soon submit, and give us ample security for their future good conduct.

As however a large naval force cannot be employed on this service, I should recommend its being done in the following manner. At the mouth of the Skrang river, a strong fort can be built and armed, and placed under a native force, which can readily and without expense be supplied for this duty. This fort would not only command the Skrang River, but likewise the Batang Lupar, and the numerous and not ill-disposed Dayaks of the latter river would be protected and supplied with salt in exchange for produce.

The second point at Kanowit, a branch of the large river of Rejang, could be sufficiently guarded by the small steamer 'Ranee', a vessel attached to the 'Maeander'

[1] Brooke to Templer, 18 June 1844, *Letters*, II 30. [2] *SG* 20 (1 July 1871). Emphasis in original
[3] Brooke to Templer, 10 March 1846, *Letters*, II 128.

frigate, and now lying here; by the gun boat 'Jolly Bachelor' and by one or two boats of any vessel of war which may hereafter be steadily employed for the suppression of piracy, and the same vessel could man the above-mentioned steamer and gunboat.

At the mouth of the Rimbas in the Saribas, a steamer or brig of war would be necessary, and with these not very large means, after one vigorous attack, the piratical habits of a numerous community might be eradicated.[1]

Three months after setting forth this scheme, the Rajah administered his 'vigorous attack' on the pirates at Beting Marau. By then he had concluded that a fort and not just a warship would be required at Kanowit as well as at Skrang, and, as we have seen, he made sure that the Kanowit Melanaus themselves paid for the fort by means of the fine which he levied on them. But this pioneer effort at outstation administration in the Rejang, about which little is known, failed; a smallpox epidemic struck Kanowit within a year, and the place was deserted.[2] Kanowit Fort was not re-established until the spring of 1851, when a British officer, Henry Steele, and a force of seventy Malays from Kuching took up quarters there.[3]

At the time of Beting Marau, Brooke still hoped to rely on local Malay chiefs to command his new outposts, but his experience in establishing what proved to be the first permanent outstation in Sarawak convinced him that European officers would be necessary. Late in 1849 or early the next year he sent the senior member of his small staff, Arthur Crookshank, to build a fort at the junction of the Skrang and Batang Lupar Rivers. Crookshank did not remain in the Second Division, however. He left the new post in charge of an 'Arab', Sharif Mohammed Hussain, or Matusain, who unlike most Malays of his class had been a consistent and valuable friend of Rajah Brooke.[4]

[1] Brooke to Lord Palmerston, 16 April 1849, in 'Borneo Piracy', *PP* LV (1850) 7.

[2] Brooke to Foreign Office, 22 June 1850, FO 12/8.

[3] Harriette McDougall, *Sketches of Our Life at Sarawak* (London, 1882) pp. 82–100; Charles John Bunyon, *Memoirs of Francis Thomas McDougall* (London, 1889) p. 76. The founding o outstations did cost money, as indicated in one of the few Brooke documents which survived the destruction of Kuching during the Chinese rebellion of 1857. It lists an expenditure of $743.51 for 'Rejang expedition, warboats, rice, powder &c. &c. Steels [*sic*] money for Kanowit Fort'. (Entry dated Oct 1851, Sarawak Treasury Cash Book, SA.)

[4] Sharif Matusain (often spelled 'Moksain' in older books) was, as noted in ch. 2 above, originally from Pontianak; he had fought on the side of the Sarawak Malay rebels against Muda Hasim and Makota. James Brooke employed him during the peace negotiations which ended the rebellion in 1849 (Keppel, *Dido*, I 181) and the two men remained on excellent terms. After Matusain had been recalled from Skrang Fort in some disgrace, he nursed the Rajah through a severe attack of smallpox in 1853, and remained a loyal and useful servant throughout the period of the Malay Plot (1859–60), proving that Brooke was not automatically hostile to all 'Arabs', nor vice-versa: Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, pp. 188, 236.

Sharif Matusain was the ancestor of important Native Officers of later years, including the

According to Brooke, the friendly local leaders, both Malay and Iban, had indicated that they wanted Sharif Matusain as their headman. The people then did the actual work of building the fort. But the Rajah soon decided that Matusain's conduct left much to be desired. He 'played the Dayaks against the Malays', unjustly appropriated the slaves of others, and was generally rude and high-handed. Brooke claimed that the Skrang people themselves demanded the next step:

All alike cry out for the Government of a European: and a European they shall have if I can find the way. He, or rather they (for there must be two) are to live as best they can for the next two years; after that time there will be no difficulty; the country will develop itself; trade will increase, and the revenue will support a small establishment.[1]

William Brereton, the young man whom the Rajah soon sent to Skrang Fort, was the first British officer to be stationed outside Kuching. Brooke told the Iban headmen that they would have to support their new chief by paying the vaguely customary 'door tax' in rice, which the Malays had sometimes collected in the past in the name of the Sultan of Brunei. This revenue would be supplemented by income from a salt duty. Brooke wrote in 1851:

The establishment of this fort has cost me some money and I shall derive nothing from it. Brereton in undertaking the charge, lives at his own expense, and is entirely dependent on the Dayaks for the amount of revenue it may please them to give but from what I know of them, I do not doubt of their giving what has been an immemorial custom.[2]

Here the Rajah originated the story, popular in later years, that his pioneer outstation officers were independent gentlemen of means who served Sarawak without compensation. It was at best only half true. Both Brereton and a second officer who soon joined him, Alan Lee, in fact received monthly salaries from Kuching at fairly regular intervals.[3]

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recently appointed second Governor of Sarawak, His Excellency Dato Tuanku Bujang bin Tuanku Othman of Sibu, who calls him 'Sayid Moshen': 'My Family and Other Anecdotes', *The Sarawak Teacher*, Special History Issue, 11 2 (1966) 4–5. For many years now, Sarawak 'Arabs' have in general preferred the title *tuanku* to either *sharif* or *sayid*; it signifies exactly the same thing, descent from the Prophet.

[1] James Brooke journal entry, 20 Nov 1850, in Keppel, *Maeander*, II 84–5.

[2] James Brooke to Templer, 31 March 1851, *Letters*, III 62.

[3] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde state that 'Brereton and Lee were both men of independent means, who had joined the Rajah to assist him in his great work, and who never drew a penny from the Sarawak Government.' (*History*, p. 156.) However, in December 1850 the Rajah himself observed, 'Both Brereton and Lee will have a small sum yearly to live upon; and out of what they can get, and I can afford to supply, they can pay their establishment of half a dozen men. . . .' (Keppel, *Maeander*, II 108.) Treasury records reveal that in 1849 Brereton was paid $20 a month. He later received a raise in salary: 'Brereton's salary Sept–Oct–Nov–Dec [$]160.' (Entry dated October 1851, Sarawak Treasury Cash Book, SA.) The pay was certainly low; by 1873, an Assistant Resident received $150 per month.

Brooke hoped that the new European presence in these wild Iban districts would soon be augmented by the arrival of missionaries. In 1847 his British friends had organized the Borneo Church Mission specifically to work in Sarawak.[1] The Rajah's attitude toward the mission was clear from the beginning. He insisted that no attempt should be made to proselytize among the Moslems, fearing that such efforts might upset the delicate and still evolving relationship between himself and the Malay aristocrats. But he felt that Christianity could only be a stabilizing influence among the pagan Ibans. He revealed the political aspect of his interest in missionaries when he invited Anglican priests to work in certain Iban areas only nine months after the Battle of Beting Marau. The districts he proposed were precisely those 'piratical' rivers where he was just beginning to establish forts manned by lonely European officers:

Recent events have opened a large field for your labours and those of others. At Kanowit and Skrang are noble fields for missionary exertion unchecked by Mohammedan jealousy. The Dayaks are numerous and as you know pirates and head-takers, but the more we restrict the latter propensity the greater hope of their embracing a new faith.

At Kanowit an intercourse may be opened with the Kayans, and besides this powerful race of uncontaminated people, there are the people of Katibas, Julau, Poi and Kanowit, and the Skrangs and Saribas located on the river named after the last mentioned tribe [i.e. the Kanowit River]. This population cannot be computed at less than 50,000 souls, and I repeat that it is a field worthy of a great effort.

Skrang is hardly inferior to Kanowit, and the Dayaks of the Batang Lupar are numerous, quiet, and not given to piracy, though the Skrangs are. Lundu in Sarawak is likewise a place where missionary labour can be hopefully and safely carried on, and where, in my opinion, it would be appreciated. Saribas itself may not be beyond our efforts if efficient men are to be had.[2]

The Rajah's nephew and successor was later to write: 'The conversion of the Dayaks would be the means of strengthening the government beyond measure.'[3]

In 1849, however, James Brooke's plans for Skrang and Kanowit were premature, not to say visionary. The events of the next ten years were to

[1] For the foundation of the Borneo Church Mission (absorbed by the S.P.G. in 1853), see Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, p. 90; C. F. Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.* (London, 1901) II 682 ff.

[2] James Brooke to F. T. McDougall, 27 April 1850, in Bunyon, *Memoirs*, pp. 60–1; original in 'Borneo and Malaya, 1846–1910', S.P.G. Archives, London. The text gives 'Kagulo' for Kajulau, or Julau.

[3] Charles Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 325.

prove just how unsettled these two districts were. In 1851, the Anglican Borneo Mission, absorbed by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel two years later, sent a missionary to Skrang Fort. He found the local Ibans altogether unresponsive to the gospel, and almost immediately retired down the Batang Lupar estuary to Banting, where the Balau Ibans had, for reasons of tribal politics already discussed, always been friendly to the Brookes. In 1863 a second mission station was opened among the lower Undup Ibans, who, like the Balaus of Banting, were hereditary enemies of the Skrangs and hence well disposed toward Sarawak.[1] It would be another three decades before chronically disturbed Kanowit received a resident missionary.

The men who manned the new Government forts were often either relatives of the Rajah or the sons of Brooke family friends. The case histories of the first five who served in Iban areas are typical. William Brereton was both a distant Brooke connection and the son of the Reverend C. Brereton, an early organizer of the Borneo Church Mission. He first visited Sarawak in 1843 as a navy midshipman, resigning his commission to join the Rajah's service in 1848.[2] Both Henry Steele, the first officer posted to Kanowit, and Charles Fox, who took charge of nearby Sarikei in 1856, originally came to Borneo to work as catechists and schoolteachers for the Anglican Mission in Kuching, but later decided Government service was more appealing.[3] Virtually nothing is known of the personal background of Alan Lee, who followed Brereton to Skrang Fort. The fifth officer to serve among the Ibans was the Rajah's younger nephew, Charles Anthoni Johnson, later Second Rajah Charles Brooke. From the beginning, outstation officers were often extremely young; Brereton was only twenty when he took up his duties at Skrang Fort.

James Brooke later claimed that he had never intended to leave his men in such lonely and perilous locations as Skrang and Kanowit without constant British naval support. When his 'piracy' suppression measures became controversial after the Battle of Beting Marau and this support was denied to him, he bitterly informed the Foreign Office that they would be responsible for any loss of life, British or native, which might ensue.[4] There is no doubt that the early outstation men lived lives compounded of high adventure, boredom and terror. Four of the first five who worked in the Iban country

[1] Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.*, II 684–90; Edwin H. Gomes, *The Sea-Dyaks of Borneo* (London, 1907) pp. 66–7.

[2] *Sarawak Civil Service List, 1925* (Kuching, 1925) p. 64; Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 139 n.

[3] *Sarawak Civil Service List, 1925*, pp. 70, 79.

[4] James Brooke to Foreign Office, 4 April 1853, FO 12/13.

died at their posts, three killed by hostile natives, and one by dysentery.[1] Of them all, only Charles Brooke survived the experience and, as we shall see, enjoyed it hugely.

The Rajah founded additional outstations in the years after 1851.[2] Slowly at first, they began to influence social and political alignments in the lower reaches of the Iban rivers. Through them, the Government purposely encouraged a physical separation of the Malay and Iban communities in those areas where they were intermingled. This was done because, as we have seen, it was believed that Iban 'piracy' was the result of Malay influence. The Brookes were convinced that in order to control the Ibans, they would first need to control the Malays.

Following the Battle of Beting Marau the Rajah attempted to persuade the Malays of the Paku, who were scattered up and down that branch of the Saribas, living among the Ibans, to gather at one place near the mouth of the river.[3] This effort continued during the next few years. It eventually succeeded, resulting in the concentration of Malay population in a village at the mouth of the Paku, known in recent years as Spaoh.[4]

Similarly, Charles Brooke moved the Malays of Banting Hill away from the Balau Ibans, relocating the Moslems near the new Government post at Lingga soon after he took charge there in mid-1853: 'The Malay population lived thirteen miles from the mouth of the [Lingga] river, on a hill named Banting. . . . The Sarawak Government considered it for the good of the community to move the Malays to the mouth of the Lingga. . . .'[5] The

[1] Alan Lee's death at the hands of hostile Skrang Ibans is mentioned later in this chapter. Brereton died of dysentery in 1854 and the murder of Fox and Steele at Kanowit in 1859 initiated the Malay Plot; see ch. 5.

[2] The Government post at Lingga (near Banting) was founded in 1852, the second in the Second Division. Sarikei, the second post on the Rejang, was established in 1856. (Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, pp. 156, 218.) The third outstation in the Second Division was established at Betong on the Saribas in 1858; see ch. 4.

[3] 'Abang Apong arrived at the same time as Nanang: the latter inhabits Padeh, the former Paku. He is a fine young man, and well spoken; and, if I may trust to his assurances, there is no doubt that the Malays of Saribas will desist from piracy. It is certain that the tone of submission at present is better than after Keppel's operation. The repetition of the blow has done much good; and as I am assured that the Malays of their own accord desire to establish themselves at Boling, I have great hopes of their sincerity; for at Boling they are accessible at all times.' (James Brooke journal entry, 28 Oct 1850, Keppel, *Maeander*, II 54.) Boling preceded Spaoh as the Malay settlement at the mouth of the Paku, the exact location as well as the name of which has varied over the years.

[4] 'In June [1857] he [James Brooke] went himself to the Saribas and persuaded the whole Malay population to remove to the mouth of that river, thereby snapping many chains of intrigue with the [Iban] interior. . . .' (Jacob, *Raja of Sarawak*, II 250.) This was at the time of the second Sadok expedition, described in ch. 4. For a similar resettlement effort in 1852, see Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 24.

[5] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 88.

Anglican missionary who was already stationed at Banting observed hopefully just before the move took place, 'This is the Malay *bulan puasa*: when ended I trust the Malays will set about in earnest a removal to the town to be at the Fort, so as to leave me freer action amongst the Dayaks.'[1] Banting became an exclusively Iban community, and has remained one down to the present day, except for the later growth of a Chinese bazaar.

Further up the Batang Lupar, the Malays who had formerly lived at the mouth of the Skrang and Lemanak Rivers also gradually congregated around the new Government post, Skrang Fort. In 1864 they followed the fort when it was relocated downriver at Simanggang, where the headquarters of the Second Division has remained ever since.[2] The Rajah probably urged them to make these moves, although in this case no evidence has survived. But in any event most Malays were probably willing enough to live in close association with a regime which offered them security, which was carefully solicitous of their religion and culture, and which from the beginning relied on them in many ways. The effect of this and similar movements was profound. Throughout the Second Division, the areas of mixed Iban and Malay settlement which had been a feature of the pre-Brooke scene gradually passed out of existence.

As the Malays were isolated from the Ibans, so the power of the Government over the nearer, downriver Ibans began gradually to grow. At the same time, however, the more distant upriver Iban warriors resented the Rajah's effort to bottle them up in the interior and cut them off from their accustomed plundering grounds. They remained hostile to the Government. As a result, a new kind of political alignment began to develop. It first became apparent in the case of the Skrang River in 1853.

Rentap was the most prominent warrior of the upper Skrang, the probable slayer of Dato Patinggi Ali in 1844, and later the most fabled Iban rebel in Sarawak history. Early in 1853 Brereton learned that he was on his way to attack Skrang Fort and force an opening to the sea. Brereton summoned Alan Lee, who had previously been posted to the new station at Lingga, and the two men prepared a defensive stockade some distance up the Skrang River above Skrang Fort. When Rentap's warriors appeared, and had been momentarily halted by cannon fire, Brereton impetuously dashed out to

[1] Rev. W. Chambers to Bishop McDougall, 22 June 1853, D Series, S.P.G. Archives, London.

[2] Mr A. J. N. Richards believes that some Malays may not have left the Lemanak until the time of the Bantin Revolt, when, especially in 1904, this area was constantly exposed to rebel raids (see ch. 7, esp. p. 228). If so, it seems odd that the presence of Malays in this area was not mentioned in Second Division reports published in the *Sarawak Gazette* between 1870 and 1904, nor in the Simanggang Court Records, although the Hakka Chinese settlement at Marup (near modern Engkilili) is frequently referred to.

fight them. He did so against the advice of Lee, who was subsequently killed trying to rescue his rash friend.[1] On this occasion, however, the once 'piratical' downriver Skrang Ibans swiftly retaliated against the upriver people. 'Our friend Gassing, without even mentioning to Brereton his intention walked away into Rentap's country and destroyed twenty villages', James Brooke wrote in a tone of pleased surprise.[2]

Neither Iban tradition nor British accounts make any mention of similar conflict between downriver and upriver Ibans of the Skrang River prior to this incident.[3] Before Brooke rule, the Skrang Ibans had all raided together, in alliance with local Malays and with the Saribas people, against Land Dayaks, Melanaus, and the Balau and Sebuyau Ibans of Banting and the First Division. The presence of Skrang Fort and an English officer had changed the pattern of hostilities. Henceforth, instead of raiding with Malay leadership or encouragement against the people of neighboring coastal areas, the downriver Skrang Ibans, with European leadership or encouragement, would attack upriver Ibans. A similar pattern developed in the Saribas after a Government post was established there in 1858. The new alignment was to persist throughout more than half a century of Brooke rule, providing what eventually became an ingrained, customary outlet for the traditional Iban love of war.

The new relationship between the downriver Skrang Ibans and the Brooke authorities did not come into being overnight. Problems were involved, such as the fact that the Balau Ibans of Banting, who had fought with the Rajah from the beginning, were of course the traditional enemies of the newly pro-Brooke lower Skrang people. It required constant effort on the part of the new British rulers to keep this obsolete quarrel from recurring. In 1851 Captain Brooke Brooke, the Rajah's older nephew and at this time his heir apparent, had arranged a peacemaking between the two groups, the first of many similar Government efforts throughout the years. The Iban leaders exchanged old Chinese jars as a pledge of peace. Brooke Brooke presented each leader with another jar, a spear and a Sarawak flag, and exhorted them to forget past enmities.[4] Nevertheless three years later Charles Brooke found that it was still a delicate undertaking to persuade the Balau and lower Skrang Ibans to serve on Government expeditions together.[5]

[1] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, pp. 155–7; Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 36–8. It is not certain whether Lee's head was taken.

[2] James Brooke to Templer, 15 May 1853, *Letters*, III 217.

[3] This stands in contrast to the situation in the main Batang Lupar River, where there was a pre-Brooke tradition of enmity between upriver and downriver Ibans: see the beginning of ch. 7.

[4] McDougall, *Sketches*, pp. 85, 89; St John, *Forests*, I 25–7.

[5] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 108, 137.

In the earliest days of outstation rule in the Second Division, before it became apparent how useful Iban levies could be, such men as Brereton still regarded the Ibans as frightening and undependable savages. He wrote his clergyman father in July 1852,

> If I were alone here, and had only my own interest at heart, I should discard the *sword and pistol as repugnant to my feelings*, as they would be *injurious to my safety*: but that I have nearly 2,000 Malays who have joined their fortunes to my own. . . . It must be remembered that this is the heart, the central spot where piracy has prevailed for years; from whence thousands yearly passed out to scour the high seas, whose hands were against every man's, and whose religion encourages murder. . . . I have attained my present influence amongst these people, and the place has attained its present importance, without my having caused the death of a single individual, although I have often been obliged to present a musket. A firm attitude has accomplished this: but I have no hesitation in affirming that, if I had not been prepared, my own life, and that of all the Malays under me, would have been in danger. A dog will quarrel and bite, if his bone be taken away, and it is thus with the Dayaks with blood.[1]

But only a year after Brereton wrote these words, the Rajah's younger nephew, Charles Brooke, arrived in the Second Division. And under his talented leadership, the Skrang Ibans were to save the hard-pressed State of Sarawak twice in the stormy years ahead.

The first Sarawak outstations at Skrang, Lingga and Kanowit were located in rivers still legally part of Brunei, and were strictly speaking an infringement of Brunei sovereignty. The semi-official history of Sarawak later asserted that the Rajah had an 'understanding' with Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin allowing him to build the forts.[2] Early in 1851 the Sultan did ask Brooke to help him collect the revenues of seven rivers: Samarahan, Sadong, Lingga, Skrang, Krian, Saribas and Rejang, the same districts which were definitely ceded in 1853.[3] But Brooke, who never forgave the Sultan for his assumed complicity in the killing of Hasim and Bedruddin in 1845, later told the Foreign Office that he regarded this request as no better than 'waste paper'.[4] It was only after Sultan Mumin acceded to the throne in 1852 that the English Rajah deigned to accept a new treaty which at last transferred the major Iban areas of the Second and Third Divisions, including all of the Rejang except the Igan mouth, to Sarawak. One of the clauses of this 1853

[1] Quoted in Keppel, *Maeander*, II 34–5. Emphasis in original.

[2] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, pp. 143, 218.

[3] The text of the Sultan's request is enclosed in Edwardes to Foreign Office, 8 June 1860, in FO 12/27.

[4] James Brooke to Lord Addington, 13 March 1852, FO 12/11.

treaty specifically empowered the Rajah to punish the 'pirates' of Saribas and Skrang, while he pledged not to receive into Sarawak territory any refugees from Brunei. He also promised an annual payment of $1500 for the new cession, plus one half of any surplus revenues which might be raised.[1]

The new outstations, far more than the Battle of Beting Marau, put an end to the era of Iban coastal raiding. It might be argued that the consequences of Brooke's military measures were anything but helpful to the cause of law and order in the long run. They precipitated a controversy in England which eventually encouraged rebellion in Sarawak, and indeed proved nearly fatal to the Brooke State.

By displaying his distaste for commercial speculation in no uncertain terms, the White Rajah had already offended certain British merchants in Singapore. They felt that his Crown appointments obligated him to encourage trade, but instead he jealously excluded the only self-professed British trader who appeared in Borneo.[2] Simultaneously, in England, Radical politicians and stalwarts of the anti-slavery movement were urging repeal of the piracy 'head-money' laws, which they regarded as both immoral and extravagant. By fighting the Battle of Beting Marau, James Brooke, a professed humanitarian, rendered himself vulnerable to attack on humanitarian grounds. Meanwhile the Rajah has also alienated his capable London agent,

[1] The text of the 1853 treaty, enclosed in Edwardes to Foreign Office, 8 June 1860, FO 12/27 is given in Appendix A of this study. Brooke never submitted this treaty to the Foreign Office for approval, as he should have under the terms of the Anglo-Brunei treaty of 1847 (see Irwin, *Nineteenth Century Borneo*, p. 125). However he made no secret of the agreement at the 1854 Inquiry (see his testimony in 'Reports of Brooke Inquiry', *PP* XXIX (1854–5), 223) and the matter was never raised against him.

There has been some confusion over the date that the Rejang River was ceded to Sarawak. It apparently stems from the failure of Baring-Gould and Bampfylde to include that river among those transferred in 1853 (*History*, p. 159). Sir Steven Runciman has apparently followed them, and his map on pp. 188–9 of *The White Rajahs* includes the Rejang with territory acquired in 1861, which is incorrect.

Further confusion arises from the fact that none of the Sarawak-Brunei treaties defines exactly the districts or rivers ceded. As already noted, the Brunei Malays had little concept of control over territory; what they were ceding was a collection of rights over people and revenue. These rights presumably extended to the population of the furthest headwaters of a river mentioned, at least in the eyes of the Sultan, if not of the people themselves. But did such rights extend to all the *mouths* of a river, as well as to its upper tributaries? Clearly in the case of the Rejang they did not. All parties concerned in the events of 1859–60, when this was more than an academic question, agreed that the territory ceded in 1853 stopped at Cape Sirik, exempting the Igan mouth and the settlement of the same name, which was the home base of the leading rebel, Sharif Masahor. This was the opinion of James Brooke himself: see Jacob, *Raja of Sarawak*, II 87.

[2] This was Robert Burns, a grandson of the poet; for his history and its consequences for Brooke, see Irwin, *Nineteenth Century Borneo*, pp. 131–3.

Henry Wise, thereby creating a determined antagonist who soon proved capable of uniting all his potential enemies against him.

The story of what followed has been told many times.[1] James Brooke became the subject of a violent public debate in England which raged from 1850 onwards. Eventually the Radicals succeeded in obtaining a Royal Commission of Enquiry to investigate the White Rajah's position in Borneo. It met in Singapore in 1854. The Commission concluded that Brooke was legally a vassal of the Sultan of Brunei, and that this status was indeed incompatible with his Crown appointments, which he had already resigned earlier in the controversy. It also decided that the Ibans were undoubtedly 'pirates', rejecting the Radicals' contention that the raids against native communities and shipping were 'intertribal warfare' rather than piracy. The Battle of Beting Marau received conditional approval only, for one of the two Commissioners deplored the fact that the Royal Navy had acted in concert with Sarawak's 'savage allies'.[2]

The entire controversy, more than the actual decision of the Commission, was damaging to Brooke's position. Well before any results were announced the Navy became much more cautious about sending ships of war to the coast of Borneo,[3] and after 1854, despite continuing pleas for protection from Brooke, such visits stopped nearly altogether. This circumstance, together with the loss of his Crown appointments, made it obvious to the local people that the Rajah of Sarawak was no longer in favor with his own Queen.[4] Already mentally wearied by the strain of the long public debate, Brooke was physically weakened in 1853 by an attack of smallpox which almost killed him.[5] He had exhausted his own small fortune, and was compelled to make increasingly lengthy trips to England to seek financial backing, to recuperate, and above all to find some new source of political support. During his absences he left the State in the hands of his two young nephews, whose prestige and authority could not at first hope to match his own. Yet all these misfortunes befell him before his control of Sarawak was

[1] The best account is Graham Irwin's: ibid., pp. 127–50. See the other works cited on p. 66, n. 1. A sample of the Radical charges against Brooke is included in Appendix A.

[2] The more conscientious of the two Commissioners, H. B. Devereux, compiled a long 'Memorandum on the Piracy of the Skrang and Saribas Dayaks', concluding that if the Ibans were not 'pirates', they were guilty of something much worse: 'indiscriminate massacre at sea': 'Reports of Brooke Inquiry', *PP* XXIX (1854–5) 23–8. The other Commissioner, C. R. Prinsep, who was certified insane shortly after the inquiry (Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, p. 114), registered strongest objections to Brooke's employment of 'savage allies': ibid., p. 7. Both Commissioners were members of the Bengal Civil Service.

[3] See the Admiralty order dated 19 April 1853, in 'Borneo Piracy', *PP* LXII (1854) 49–54.

[4] St John, *Life of Sir James Brooke*, pp. 286–7.

[5] Ibid., pp. 247–8.

certain, when large numbers of the pagan peoples, including the majority of the Ibans, were still beyond his influence, and when both the nobility of Brunei and various Malay chiefs along the coast were still unreformed rivals to his authority. Thus the stage was set for the most critical period in Sarawak history.

4 | The Malay Plot

THE Dutch, regarding James Brooke anxiously from their possessions in southern Borneo, always saw Sarawak as no more than a somewhat unorthodox extension of the British Empire. Future students of history may be tempted to take the same view. European domination, it may be argued, was essentially the same phenomenon, whether exercised directly by a great power, or indirectly through a family of benevolent adventurers. But this point of view would overlook at least one important difference between Sarawak and contemporary European colonies in Southeast Asia.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, when a great Western power came into conflict with Southeast Asian opponents the outcome was virtually certain. Hesitancy on the part of the Western power sometimes postponed the inevitable, as in Malaya, or prolonged the process of conquest over decades, as in Burma. Stubborn local resistance required years of 'pacification' campaigns in the more remote areas of some colonies, such as Vietnam. In North Sumatra, a combination of Dutch ineptitude and determined Achehnese opposition led to a local stalemate, and the Acheh War dragged on from 1873 to 1909. But as a general rule, such contests were one-sided.

No doubt this would have proved true in Sarawak if the British had continued to lend a minimum amount of moral and naval support to the Brooke family. Largely as a result of the great 'piracy' controversy, however, no more *Dido*s sailed to the Rajah's rescue after 1854. Instead, at one period in 1860, a hostile Governor of Labuan threw the full weight of official British support behind rebel elements seeking to rid themselves of James Brooke and his two young nephews. For an almost fatal few months, Sarawak was a dependency with nothing to depend on, a colony not only orphaned but rejected as well.[1]

[1] For a thorough study of Sarawak's international relations during this period, see L. R. Wright, 'British Policy in the South China Sea Area, with Special Reference to Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1963. See also the same author's 'British Recognition of Sarawak' in *SG* 1281 and 1282 (30 Nov and 31 Dec 1964).

During this most critical period, the Brookes were forced as never before to rely upon local allies and local techniques, for no other materials were available. Since they had to compete on local terms one must, in studying their progress, consider the motives and methods of their native friends and enemies, as well as their own. It is this aspect of the Sarawak story which makes it unique in the annals of later European rule in Southeast Asia.

The early political history of the Brooke State may be regarded as a contest between an English family and a diverse Moslem ruling class for influence over a predominantly pagan Iban and Melanau population. The decisive events in that contest took place during the nine years under consideration in this chapter, 1854 to 1863. Weakened by personal misfortunes as well as by the loss of British support, the Brookes triumphed over their native rivals, but only by a narrow margin.

The man primarily responsible for this triumph was the Rajah's younger nephew and eventual successor, Charles Brooke. Posted to the Second Division at an early age, he soon demonstrated a remarkable ability to use large forces of Ibans as an effective, mobile, totally unpaid army. This talent, combined with other abilities, enabled him to save Sarawak twice in moments of extreme danger. These victories left an indelible impression on the man who was to rule Sarawak until 1917, and whose personality was to influence the entire later history of his State.

The first crisis occurred in 1857, when the Hakka Chinese of the First Division sacked Kuching. The Chinese rebels, who were restricted to the Sarawak River system, were a grave threat solely because of their proximity to the Brooke capital. Dramatic though their outbreak was, it has been somewhat overemphasized by historians. A second and more profound conflict grew out of competition between the Brookes and Brunei for control of the economically valuable, sago-exporting Melanau country on the coast of the Third Division. As this struggle progressed, dissident Malay chiefs throughout Sarawak, under the leadership of Sharif Masahor, an 'Arab' with widespread Melanau family ties, made common cause with Brunei against the Brookes. After the murder in 1859 of the only two European officers in the Third Division, the Rajah's representatives feared, with considerable justification, that the rebels would be able to rally the still only partly controlled Ibans, as well as other peoples, against the Brookes. This episode, the Malay Plot,[1] may be seen as the inevitable reaction of a widespread, semi-independent Moslem ruling class against the new and obviously

[1] Many authors, including Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, St John, and Runciman, have simply referred to it as the 'plot' or 'conspiracy', while one, Owen Rutter, called it 'Sharif Masahor's Conspiracy'. See Owen Rutter, *Rajah Brooke and Baroness Burdett Coutts* (London, 1935) ch. 4.

weakened British overlords. For this reason, and not merely because it almost succeeded, it was the most significant political crisis in the early history of the Brooke State.

During these years of turmoil, the First White Rajah, physically ailing and disheartened by his failure to win more appreciation and support in England, was ever more frequently absent from Borneo.[1] The burden of ruling fell upon his two nephews, Captain James Brooke Johnson and Charles Anthoni Johnson, both of whom later took the surname Brooke. The older nephew, usually known as Brooke Brooke, arrived in Sarawak in 1848 and was henceforth regarded as the likely successor to James, who never married.[2] Together with Arthur Crookshank, the senior member of the Rajah's small staff of Europeans, Brooke Brooke spent most of his time in Kuching. His career in Sarawak was unhappy to the point of tragedy. He suffered the loss of two wives in succession, as well as a son, and in 1863 he was denied the succession after a bitter, senseless quarrel with his uncle. His few surviving writings show little sympathy for or understanding of the country for which he made such great personal sacrifice.

It was the enormous good fortune of his younger brother, Charles, that he was not in his early years being groomed for the succession. His title was the Tuan Muda (young lord), whereas Brooke Brooke was known as the Tuan Besar (great lord). Charles spent his early career, not in Kuching, but at the newly established outstations in the Iban country, where he avoided Brooke family conflicts. There he gained the experience that enabled him to save the State and qualified him to rule for almost half a century as the successor to James.

The two great Brooke Rajahs differed both in temperament and in early training. Much more has been written about James, who is the subject of three biographies,[3] and whose published letters and journals fill ten volumes.[4] He was a man of warmth and eloquence, who came to Borneo motivated by a vision of empire, in pursuit of which he constantly addressed himself to the outside world. Fond as he was of the State which he founded, he always hoped that it would prove a stepping stone to something greater. Sarawak itself was too small an arena to contain his ambitions, and he was downcast and disillusioned when British policy doomed his grander plan to frustration.[5]

[1] James Brooke was absent from Sarawak from January 1851 to May 1853, from November 1857 to February 1861, and from September 1861 to February 1863: *Sarawak Civil Service List, 1925*, p. 1.

[2] James did have an illegitimate son in England, however, a fact which greatly complicated his relationship with Brooke Brooke: Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, p. 136.

[3] See works by Jacob, St John and Emily Hahn in the bibliography.

[4] See works by Keppel, Mundy, Templer and Rutter in the bibliography.

[5] For an eloquent and moving statement of James' disappointment, see his introduction to his nephew's book: Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I xii–xiii.

The founder of Sarawak enjoyed a cultured and comfortable family life. He left school at the age of sixteen, but received a generous informal education at home. His early career as an Indian Army officer, and his subsequent travels before 1839, gave him a sophisticated and cosmopolitan outlook on the world. He did not visit Sarawak for the first time until he was thirty-six years old.[1]

Less is known about his nephew Charles, whose biography has yet to be written. The Second Rajah's own book, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, remains the best source of insight into his personality, and the best account of his formative years in the Iban country.[2] Neither that work nor the published commentaries of his wife and two daughters-in-law[3] shed much light on his pre-Sarawak experience, which varied from that of his uncle in at least two important respects. Charles left school at the age of twelve to embark on the Spartan life of an officer in the sail-powered navy. He first saw Sarawak from the deck of Keppel's *Dido* during the lower Batang Lupar expedition of 1844. He was still only twenty-three when he retired from the navy in 1852 to join his uncle's service, thirteen years younger than James had been when he arrived in Borneo. In comparison to James, Charles began his Sarawak career with less education, both formal and informal, and with a much more limited experience of European society.[4] Moreover, his disposition was as withdrawn as that of James was gregarious and exuberant. His uncle, well aware of his political talents, nevertheless found him 'reserved to a fault'.[5]

As time passed, Charles derived great satisfaction from his accomplishments in Sarawak, but his often savage experiences were not the sort that he could easily communicate to a European audience. He was not inclined to embellish or romanticize the story of his life to make it palatable for home consumption. Whereas James had constantly concerned himself with England and the outside world, his nephew's mind turned inwards, and Charles' only

[1] The best source on the First Rajah's early life is Jacob, *Raja of Sarawak*, I 1–62.

[2] The most complete collection of Charles Brooke letters known to exist is in the Sarawak Archives. Valuable as they are, they date only from 1880, and reveal little about his earlier experience.

[3] See works by the Ranees Margaret and Sylvia of Sarawak, and by the Dayang Muda of Sarawak, cited in the bibliography.

[4] The great contrast between the prose styles of the two men reflects the ruder schooling of Charles. James was a polished writer, not above letting his penchant for eloquence take precedence over his respect for the unadorned truth. Charles, on the other hand, frequently displayed ignorance of the basic rules of grammar. He was a master of the run-on sentence, delighting in an endless succession of clauses linked by dashes. Nevertheless he was able to say a great deal with very few words, and at times his writing has a rough grace and much power. Like his uncle, he was an avid and omnivorous reader.

[5] James Brooke letter, 29 April 1863, in Rutter, *Rajah Brooke and Baroness Burdett Coutts*, p. 188.

real concern remained the country which he came to know supremely well. His empathy for his subjects was matched by his recurring feeling of alienation from the British social and political elite, a feeling which in later years was aggravated by his disapproval of many aspects of British imperial policy both in Borneo and elsewhere.[1] Perhaps more than any other major figure in colonial history, he became and remained a creature of his Eastern experiences; a child, in every sense, of Sarawak.

After joining the Sarawak service in 1852, Charles was initially posted to Lundu in the First Division, the same district where his uncle had first visited an Iban longhouse only thirteen years previously. In June 1853 he moved to the Second Division, the heart of the Iban country, replacing the slain Alan Lee as the officer in charge of Lingga, close by the friendly Balau Ibans of Banting Hill. 'From this date', he wrote, 'I considered myself fairly among these gentlemen of the jungle. . . .'[2] From the start he was constantly concerned with the hostile Iban population whose longhouses lay along the Skrang and its tributaries, far upriver among the blue-green hills just visible from Lingga.

Rentap remained the principal enemy. His prestige as a war-leader had been greatly enhanced by his successful encounter with Brereton and Lee only a few months previously. He had composed a new praise-name (*ensumbar*) for himself:

Rentap tanah, Rentap menoa
Tuan Lee ke mati enda berega
Tuan Brereton tau masok ka kain
Enda tanjong ka bala Raja
Rita Layang tampak terang
Mandang ka Airupa
Abang Aing badu agi ka pending bala
Undup abis tepelut leka mata
Balau nadai agi kerangau sabelah kerapa.

'Earth tremor, land tremor
Tuan Lee, easily killed
Tuan Brereton wears women's clothing
And no longer dares to lead the Rajah's forces

[1] Charles Brooke set forth his anti-imperial views at length in a pamphlet, *Queries: Past, Present and Future* (London, 1907), which is well discussed and summarized by Runciman (*The White Rajahs*, pp. 213, 227–8). However, Runciman fails to mention the pertinent fact that this outspoken attack on British colonial policy was published only one year after the Colonial Office had bitterly disappointed Charles by sending a British Resident to Brunei, thereby precluding its annexation by Sarawak. See R. E. Stubbs' 1906 memo on Brunei in Appendix A to this study.

[2] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 87–8.

The news of Layang's exploit flashes to Europe
Abang Aing is no longer the Rajah's ears
The Undups open wide their eyes in amazement [at Rentap's deeds]
The calls of Balau warriors are no longer heard in the jungle.'[1]

Rentap attracted followers not only from the upper Skrang, his own home area, but also from the nearby Saribas, where the first Government fort was not constructed until 1858. The most important Saribas Iban leaders, who as yet saw no reason to leave their accustomed lives of periodic raiding, were Linggir (Mali Lebu) of Paku, and three sons of the Orang Kaya Pamancha Dana (Bayang) named Aji, Luyoh and Nanang.[2] Their father, the greatest leader of former times, died of smallpox in 1854.[3]

For Charles Brooke the early campaigns against Rentap and his followers were all part of a learning process. In December 1853, six months after he arrived at Lingga, he joined his uncle James and a force of Sarawak Malays on a reconnaissance expedition up the Skrang River. It was the first time a Government force had entered the area since the death of Lee the previous spring, and the results of a parley with Rentap and other leaders were inconclusive. The Tuan Muda felt that this conciliatory approach was a sheer waste of time. 'Despotism I dislike', he commented, 'but forbearance does not go beyond a certain point in the management of Dayaks, who have the feelings of children; kindness and severity must proceed hand in hand with such a people.'[4]

In the following year, 1854, the Rajah authorized two punitive expeditions against the hostile Ibans in the watershed area between the Skrang and Saribas Rivers. The first, directed against the house of Apai Dendang, was a total fiasco.[5] Later Brooke Brooke led another expedition against Rentap, who was living on Sungai Lang, a Skrang tributary. Rentap's stockaded longhouse was captured and the enemy leader was wounded, but he succeeded in retreating into the interior, to an even stronger and much more inaccessible location on the summit of Sadok Mountain.[6] This 3000-foot hill, just visible on a clear day from the modern Saribas District headquarters at Betong, has been famous ever since.

[1] Collected by Benedict Sandin. Layang, Rentap's son-in-law, was the warrior who killed Alan Lee in 1853, while Abang Aing was the principal Native Officer at Skrang Fort.

[2] Dana had three other sons, one of whom, Buda, was the first Saribas convert to Christianity, as described in ch. 6.

[3] Testimony of Spenser St John, 'Reports of Brooke Inquiry', *PP* XXIX (1854–5) 206.

[4] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 102.

[5] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 106–18. Apai Dendang is an Iban teknonym meaning 'father of Dendang'. According to traditional Iban usage, a man or woman with children is addressed as father or mother of the first-born child.

[6] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 163.

Charles felt that these early expeditions were badly organized. There was too much European paraphernalia, too many heavy boats and too many British officers.[1] The conviction was growing in his mind that only Ibans could be used to fight Ibans: 'Only Dayaks can kill Dayaks',[2] and once formed, it would never leave him. He soon had a chance to test his own theories, for William Brereton died of dysentery contracted on the Sungai Lang expedition of 1854, leaving Charles the senior officer in the Second Division.

In April 1856 he led a force against the Ibans of the Julau River, a branch of the Kanowit draining a portion of the rugged borderland between the Second and Third Divisions. He believed that the Ibans of this region, never before penetrated by a Government expedition, were behind a good deal of the prevailing lawlessness in the Saribas and Skrang. It was entirely the Tuan Muda's own operation, for Kuching contributed only a few antiquated muskets. His lieutenants were three trusted Malays, Pengiran Matali,[3] Abang Aing and Sauh Besi ('Iron Anchor').

The expedition proceeded by way of the Krian River and Budu, and thence across the watershed into the enemy territory along the Julau. It was still a recently settled area, and the local Ibans, migrants mainly from the Saribas, Skrang and Lemanak Rivers, had been enjoying ample crops. Charles wrote: 'The results of their harvests were to be seen in the great quantity of *padi* stocked in their houses, which were crammed, and yet they could not be contented without committing butcheries by which heads could be obtained.'[4]

In the familiar pattern of later years, only one brief skirmish took place between the Brooke force, consisting of some 300 Malays and about ten times that number of Ibans, and the hostile inhabitants. After reaching the heart of the enemy's country, the Tuan Muda's Ibans spread throughout the surrounding area, burning longhouses and plundering them of their old Chinese jars and Brunei-made brassware. Charles described the results: 'Twenty-five houses had been destroyed, some large, some small. The amount of property plundered was immense. The ashes of *padi* were in some places a foot deep, and continued to smoke and smoulder.'[5]

On this expedition Charles made progress toward solving one of the tactical problems involved in such warfare, that of restraining his over-eager

[1] At least eight British officers took part in the Sungai Lang expedition of August 1854, far more than the number normally employed on similar operations in later years: ibid.

[2] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 188.

[3] Pengiran Matali later succeeded Abang Aing as Senior Native Officer in the Second Division.

[4] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 187. In all early books the Julau is called 'Kajulau'.

[5] Ibid., I 192.

Iban followers, who were prone to dash into ambush. Once in enemy country he arranged his force in the shape of a bird, in a manner which was to become a model for Sarawak expeditions through the years. Behind a few Iban scouts, the beak of the bird consisted of the most reliable Malays. More Malays marched in the center of the bird's body, surrounding the lone English leader. The much larger Iban force composed the wings, with the Balaus on one side, and the Skrangs, still inclined to be unfriendly to the Balaus, on the other side.[1] Charles impressed upon the Malay vanguard the need to keep the force together on the march. His choice of the bird image to symbolize the formation no doubt appealed to the omen-conscious Ibans.

The Ibans fought for plunder and for heads, which could be legitimately taken from the enemy, but something had to be done to remunerate the Malays. They were not allowed to scatter away from the formation in search of loot, and they showed little talent for this kind of work in any case. To solve this problem the Tuan Muda ruled that one half of all valuable plunder must be turned over to himself as the representative of the Government. He would then auction the goods, and use the proceeds to pay the Malays.[2] In later years, as will be described, this system was abandoned. Instead, Malays subject to expedition service paid no taxes.

The Rajah's young nephew was not only evolving a new technique of warfare, admirably suited both to the terrain of Borneo and to the pocket-book of a far from wealthy Government; he was also enjoying himself immensely. In the pages of *Ten Years in Sarawak*, compiled largely from the journal which he kept at the time, a note of exultation recurs among descriptions of hardships and toil. On the Julau expedition, Charles relates, the sight of friendly Iban war-boats surging upstream completely cured him of his aches and pains.[3] He compared his own position to that of a queen ant among hundreds of workers.[4] The loneliness of outstation life was more than matched by its wild splendor:

> It was no position for a family man, with a taste for the social luxuries of evenings at home. The enjoyable part of *our* life was the glorious independence of it, connected with a considerable degree of power and influence over our fellow creatures. We could imagine mountains (not monarchs) our footstools, and gaze over the wide extent of wild waste until, as the Chaldeans of old did with the stars, we peopled it with multitudes.[5]

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[1] Ibid., I 164–97; see ibid., p. 181 for a diagram of the arrangement of the force.
[2] Ibid., I 140–2, 244–5.
[3] Ibid., I 171.
[4] Ibid., I 238.
[5] Ibid., I 322. Emphasis in original.

In February of 1857 the Tuan Muda and his Iban irregulars were, for the first time, instrumental in saving Sarawak. In that month the Hakka Chinese gold-miners of the Sarawak River destroyed Kuching, nearly killed James Brooke, and further weakened his already far from vigorous Government. From the beginning of his rule the Rajah had welcomed the Chinese to Sarawak, realizing that a Chinese population was the surest key to economic self-sufficiency.[1] But although his relations with Hokkiens and others who settled as merchants in Kuching remained cordial, the Hakka gold-miners, concentrated around Bau on the upper Sarawak River, were always a problem. They maintained close ties with their numerous and well-organized brethren across the border in Sambas, even after the Sambas Chinese had been heavily defeated by the Dutch in the 'Kongsi Wars' of 1853–4, and they were most reluctant to accept any directive from the new British ruler in Kuching. Not surprisingly, there was continual friction between the Bau Chinese and James Brooke.

The Rajah railed against the evil influence of Chinese secret societies in the pages of his journal,[2] and swiftly punished the agents of such organizations when he apprehended them.[3] Several times before the rebellion of 1857 the Government feared that trouble was brewing in Upper Sarawak. Only a year prior to the actual outbreak, Charles Brooke and a force of Ibans had been summoned from the Second Division to cope with an expected disturbance which never took place.[4]

The Chinese Rebellion, which broke out on the evening of 18 February 1857, has been fully described elsewhere.[5] The timely appearance of a steamer belonging to the Borneo Company[6] played a large part in dislodging the rebels, who had captured and sacked Kuching. However the Tuan Muda and his Ibans were equally responsible for the eventual Brooke victory. Rajah James had been on his way to the Second Division to seek their

[1] For favorable comment on the Chinese by James Brooke before he became Rajah, see his journal entry for 2 Sept 1839, in Keppel, *Dido*, I 66.

[2] James Brooke journal entry, 18 Jan 1851, in Keppel, *Maeander*, II 126–30.

[3] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, pp. 187–8.

[4] McDougall, *Sketches*, p. 126.

[5] The most complete account of the Chinese Rebellion is to be found in Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, pp. 125–33. The standard sources are St John, *Forests*, II 336–64; Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 214–26; Ludvig Helms, *Pioneering in the Far East* (London, 1882) pp. 164–92; McDougall, *Sketches*, pp. 125–6.

[6] Founded in 1856 to work in Sarawak, the Borneo Company remained the only important European firm operating in the Brooke State until the development of the Miri oil-fields after 1909 by a subsidiary of Shell. At this period the Borneo Company's only important activity was antimony-mining, but plans were being made to develop a sago-processing works: Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, pp. 123–4.

assistance when the steamer unexpectedly arrived.[1] The unpleasant prospect of Iban intervention occurred to the victorious Chinese themselves in their hour of triumph. They had gathered a number of British prisoners in the Kuching courthouse and the Chinese commander was sitting in the Rajah's chair, when one of his prisoners suggested that the Rajah's nephew might not approve of recent events. According to Spenser St John's account,

> At the mention of Mr Johnson's [i.e. Charles Brooke's] name there was a pause, a blankness came over all their faces, and they looked at each other, as they now remembered apparently for the first time that he, the Rajah's nephew, was the Governor of the Sea Dayaks, and could let loose at least 10,000 wild warriors upon them. At last it was suggested, after an animated discussion, that a letter should be sent to him, requesting him to confine himself to his own government, and then they would not attempt to interfere with him.[2]

This request, if delivered, was certainly not heeded. The Tuan Muda's lower Skrang and Balau Ibans arrived not long after the Borneo Company steamer had driven the rebels from the vicinity of the capital, and set to work harrying them over the border toward Sambas. According to Charles Brooke, his levies did their work 'very effectually, though irregularly'.[3] Before long they were drying the heads of the late insurgents in the Kuching bazaar, to the distress of one European observer:

> This head cooking was the most disgusting part of the whole affair, and made us feel very strongly that it was only one set of savages who had been called in to punish another. This feast of heads will put off the 'civilization' of the Dayaks, and the prosperity of Sarawak, *sine die*.[4]

It should be borne in mind that the rebels, besides reducing Kuching to ashes, had slaughtered a number of the British, including two small children.

The Chinese could never have hoped to govern far beyond the Kuching area. Perhaps 150,000 people lived in the territory which had passed under

[1] 'When the steamer arrived the Rajah had been on his way to Skrang, for the less warlike people of Sarawak [Proper] were temporarily scared at the suddenness of the blow, and it was to the Skrangs he had chastized that Sir James Brooke turned in his hour of need, and did not turn in vain.' (Jacob, *Raja of Sarawak*, II 243.)

[2] St John, *Forests*, II 350–1.

[3] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 224. What role, if any, the local Land Dayaks of the area through which the retreating Chinese passed took in the operation is not clear. According to Charles Brooke's account, one group situated on a hill near the border accepted a bribe from the retreating Chinese, who were in a sense their old neighbors, to allow them to pass: ibid., I 223–4. St. John says that they were actively loyal to the Rajah: *Forests*, II 356. Most accounts imply that they were loyal but, as usual, not very effective militarily.

Helms, *Pioneering in the Far East*, p. 190.

Brooke rule by 1857.[1] Only about 4500 of them were Chinese,[2] and they were almost entirely restricted to the First Division. However, the near success of the revolt may well have demonstrated to the Malay chiefs, whose potential power base was far wider, just how easy it might be to get rid of the Brookes.

Throughout this period the 'piratical' upriver Ibans of Skrang and the majority of the people of Saribas, Malay as well as Iban, remained actively or potentially hostile to the rule of the White Rajah. No sooner were the Chinese rebels defeated than Charles Brooke returned to the Second Division. Only three months later, in June 1857, he launched his first major expedition against the fortified longhouse of Rentap on the summit of Mount Sadok, which the Ibans believed was impregnable. Charles wrote:

> Their legends and songs make mention of it as being the Grand Mount, toward which no enemy dare venture; and our arch-enemy Rentap had been located on it since the fall of Sungei Lang. He was here supported by the Skrang Dayaks located in the interior, and also by the inhabitants of the interior of Saribas, who offered every aid and assistance so long as he occupied this eyrie, which stood as a nucleus and basis far removed from danger, and to which they all might, in case of need, retire to find a haven from the stranger's rule, which thwarted their head-hunting propensities. He was called Rajah Ulu (inland Rajah), and was the centre of all the opposition to the rule of the Rajah of Sarawak.[3]

The Government force, which consisted of 3500 Ibans and 500 Malays, struggled to the summit of Sadok, but could not capture Rentap's longhouse. Abang Aing, the Tuan Muda's senior Malay officer, was wounded, and upon returning to the base of the mountain the Ibans found that most of their boats had been washed away by a sudden flood typical of Borneo rivers. They grumbled that the Tuan Muda had not listened to the right bird.[4]

In the following year, 1858, Charles continued his campaign against Rentap and his Saribas allies. In April he received word that the Orang Kaya Pamancha Dana's son, Aji, was preparing to go on a headhunting cruise in company with a famous Julau war-leader, Lintong (Moa Hari).[5] To thwart

[1] This figure is based on my own calculation from the sources cited on p. 15, n. 2. It does not include the population of the rivers north of Cape Sirik, which were still legally part of Brunei.

[2] St John, *Forests*, II 355.

[3] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 235–6.

[4] Ibid., I 235–63.

[5] Lintong, a Lemanak Iban who had migrated to the Julau, was a famous and troublesome character in Third Division affairs for many years. He organized an attack on Sibu Fort in 1870, but was pardoned and, although never fully trusted, was a *penghulu* at the time of his death in 1887. See his obituary in *SG* 261 (1 Oct 1887); also The Ranee Margaret of Sarawak, *Good Morning and Good Night* (London, 1934) pp. 73–5.

this raid, the Tuan Muda promptly sent an expedition up the Saribas. But on this occasion, convinced that the local Malays were still encouraging the Ibans in 'piracy', he decided to make the Brooke presence a permanent one. 'I resolved not again to abandon this river', he wrote, 'but to build a fort and permanently take possession in order to guard and establish some system of government, whereby inch by inch we might hold fast what we had gained, and so prevent all our work from being undone by Malay rascality.'[1] The Saribas fort, later christened Fort Lili, was soon constructed, and a young godson of the Rajah, James Brooke Cruickshank, remained behind to command it.[2] It was only twelve miles by a swampy trail to the Tuan Muda's own headquarters at Skrang Fort, but the Saribas was so unsettled that Charles was extremely concerned for the safety of young Cruickshank.[3]

According to Iban tradition, the establishment of Fort Lili owed a great deal to a smouldering dispute between two Iban families, which, like the feud between the Montagues and the Capulets, was an important factor in local politics for years. Following the death of the Orang Kaya Pamancha Dana in 1854, no leader had arisen who could match his power and prestige. Instead, three of his sons, Nanang, Aji and Luyoh, quarreled with the descendants of the famous pioneer raider Unggang (Lebor Menoa), the best known of whom were Bunyau[4] and his son Bakir. Unggang's descendants continued to live at Entanak Longhouse, while Dana's family room (*bilek*) remained at Buloh Antu, on the Padeh. Both sites are on tributaries of the Layar and are only a few miles apart, and it is significant that Entanak is only a few minutes' walk from modern Betong, the site where Fort Lili was built.[5]

The Iban version of events maintains that Aji had not in fact organized the alleged raid of 1858 which resulted in the Tuan Muda's expedition to the Saribas. What really happened was that his rival, Bakir, had sent a false report

[1] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 276–7.

[2] Fort Lili, rebuilt many times through the years that followed, still houses the administrative headquarters of Saribas District at Betong. It is the oldest fort in Sarawak. Most of the Sarawak forts were named after Brooke friends and family members. The Ranee Margaret, wife of Charles Brooke, née Margaret Lili Alice de Windt, supplied names for several, including Fort Lili and the later Fort Alice at Simanggang: Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, p. 205; 'Fort Names in Sarawak', *SG* 856 (2 Jan 1925).

[3] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 282, 287.

[4] According to Benedict Sandin, the 'Saribas Dayak' sketched by the English midshipman Frank S. Marryat (*Borneo and the Indian Archipelago* (London, 1848), facing p. 79) was none other than Bunyau. The portrait illustrates the old Saribas and Skrang hair style and fashion of wearing many earrings down the sides of the ears, which were always unique to those two rivers and which differ completely from modern upriver Iban styles.

[5] Fort Lili is so close to the junction of the Entanak and the Saribas that for many years the site was called Rantau Entanak (i.e. the shallows at Entanak). Not until after 1880 was the modern name Betong adopted. See plate for a photograph of the present Entanak longhouse, on the same site as the one discussed here (between pp. 170 and 171).

to this effect to Charles Brooke, knowing that the Rajah's nephew would lose no time in bringing his Balau and Skrang Iban allies to punish Aji. When this happened, Bakir willingly provided wood and labor for the construction of Fort Lili. The expedition which built the fort also destroyed longhouses belonging to Aji and to his brother Nanang, Dana's oldest son. A few months later, in July 1858, Dana's sons retaliated by attacking Fort Lili in strength, but Cruickshank, aided by Bakir and his warriors, repelled the attack.[1] The Brookes had once again exploited a fragmented Iban leadership to win the allegiance of an important downriver faction, as they had done in the case of the Skrang eight years previously.

Before the end of 1858 the Tuan Muda replied to the attack on Fort Lili with a full-scale invasion of the Saribas, culminating in a second assault on Rentap and Mount Sadok. This time the Sarawak force dragged a small mortar up the mountain with them, but despite the high expectations of the friendly Ibans this weapon had little effect on Rentap's well protected position. 'Bring all your fire guns from Europe,' the rebels jeered, 'we are not afraid of you.'[2] They added injury to insult by replying effectively with a cannon of their own, probably one captured in 1853 at the time of Alan Lee's death.[3] The Brooke force lost four killed and many wounded, and beat an ignominious retreat back down the slippery slopes of Sadok.

The preliminaries to this action were of far greater consequence than the attack on Sadok itself. As the Tuan Muda's forces came ashore from their boats at Sungai Langit, hostile Ibans under Aji attacked them unsuccessfully, and Aji himself was killed. 'A good riddance . . .', Charles Brooke observed:

> His father, the Orang Kaya [Pamancha Dana] Bayang, who died only a few years ago, had maintained a surprising influence over both Dayak and Malay; the latter always following his counsel for the settlement of their more difficult and intricate cases. Aji's name and acts had been in my ears and dreams for years past. Many a bloody deed had he perpetrated and always boasted that the white man's powder and shot would take no effect on his body.[4]

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[1] The traditional Iban account is from Benedict Sandin. It is essentially similar to the version in a 'Historical Sketch of Saribas' in Frederick Boyle, *Adventures among the Dyaks of Borneo* (London, 1865) pp. 291–306. Boyle's book is not uniformly reliable, but he obtained his Saribas history from Walter Watson, a Brooke officer who joined J. B. Cruickshank at Fort Lili before the end of 1858 and was at that post throughout the period of the Malay Plot, 1859–60. For the date of Aji's attack on Fort Lili, see Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 179.

[2] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 316.

[3] All Ibans traditionally kept heirloom cannon, chiefly of Brunei manufacture. Together with old Chinese ceramics and different forms of brassware they served as currency, and (also like old ceramics) they were often viewed as possessing magical powers. But some Ibans had by this period learned to use cannon in warfare as well, possibly as a result of association with Malays and Illanuns on coastal raids.

[4] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 295.

Aji was the bravest and most skilled of Dana's sons. Once he was dead, the days of resistance to Brooke rule in the Saribas were numbered.[1] But his demise had the immediate effect of further enraging his brothers, Nanang and Luyoh, who were more than ever disposed to join Rentap and the upriver Skrangs in their resistance to the Rajah.

Charles Brooke returned to Skrang Fort, where, between expeditions, he was attempting to interest the nearby Ibans in planting sago. He intended to start an experimental plantation, and to establish himself as the headman of a longhouse in its midst. 'I should have had many followers to attach their doors to my dwelling,' he wrote, 'but whether it would have been a success was a doubtful question, which was never proved, and shortly afterwards a distressing event occurred, which led to my being left in charge of Sarawak [i.e. Kuching] and the coast.'[2] The distressing event was the death of his older brother's wife, which caused Brooke Brooke to leave the country. Thus, early in 1859, Charles assumed supreme command of the Brooke State on the eve of its greatest trial. For the next two years duties elsewhere would prevent him from taking any further major action against the hostile Ibans of the Second Division, who nevertheless were to be of no small concern to him in the crisis now at hand.

To understand the development of the Malay Plot, it will be necessary to return to the period around 1854, and to relate some episodes neglected in the narrative above. Late in that year a miniature civil war began in Mukah, the wealthiest of the Melanau districts on the coast of the Third Division, when the local Brunei governor, Pengiran Ersat, insulted another aristocrat, Pengiran Matusin,[3] who murdered Ersat in retaliation. In the intermittent six-year struggle which followed, the Brookes consistently supported Matusin, while a party at the Brunei court hostile to Sarawak aided Ersat's son and successor, Pengiran Nipa. At stake was the district's rich production of the palm-derived starch, sago.

In earlier chapters it has been mentioned that sago exports from the Melanau country were considerable even before James Brooke came to

[1] This is the opinion of Benedict Sandin. According to a Saribas story, Aji's head was taken by a Skrang Iban in the Rajah's force, but after he carried it home, it turned into a malignant spirit and caused no end of trouble. Assuming the form of a handsome human bachelor, it would wait near the bathing place of the Skrang longhouse in the period before dawn when women came down to draw water. After enticing them into the water, it would suddenly change into a crocodile, with fatal consequences. Finally the perplexed Skrang people agreed to return Aji's head to the Saribas, where it was buried in the grave of his father, Dana, at Buloh Antu, Padeh.

[2] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 324.

[3] A contraction of Mohammed Hussain. I have followed Baring-Gould and Bampfylde's spelling to distinguish this man from Sharif Matusain (also a contraction of Mohammed Hussain); see p. 86, n. 4.

Sarawak, and that Kuching Malay traders began to share in the carrying of this product to Singapore after the beginning of Brooke rule. The Rajah's desire to protect the sago districts from Iban raids had played a large part in his decision to establish a fort at Kanowit in 1851.

Certain elements among the Brunei aristocracy had for some time resented the growing activity of the Kuching traders, backed by the prestige of the White Rajah, in what they may well have regarded as the most valuable territory remaining to them. Toward the end of 1846 James Brooke had written:

> Makota, the other day, composed a pantun, on the occasion of a respectable man of Sarawak [Kuching] (but not nobly descended) arriving at Mukah in a fine trading boat. The sense was this – 'Formerly steel alone could separate the trunk of the tree, now the very leaves rend the parent stem.' The leaves are the non-noble traders on their own account.[1]

Although the Melanau sago districts remained legally part of Brunei, the Brooke State's interest in the area rose considerably after 1858. By that year Chinese-owned sago-processing mills were operating in Kuching.[2] The Kuching Malay traders now collected some of the raw sago formerly taken from Mukah and Oya to Singapore, and carried it directly to the Brooke capital for processing. By the end of the decade, when the White Rajah's financial resources were under increasing strain, the sago industry had assumed a major importance in his infant economy.

Four times between 1855 and 1859 the Rajah or his nephews intervened in Brunei affairs, hoping to end the civil war in the sago districts, and to place the friendly Pengiran Matusin in power at Mukah. But whenever they succeeded, Matusin would inevitably resume his losing feud with Ersat's son and successor, Pengiran Nipa, and eventually be forced to leave the district. From the Brooke point of view 'disorder' continued, and regular trade between Kuching and the sago districts remained impossible.[3]

Charles Brooke's account of these events, which became the official Sarawak version, asserted that Pengiran Ersat was a typical Brunei despot, and portrayed Pengiran Matusin, whose mother came from the 'working

[1] James Brooke to Templer, 4 Dec 1846, in *Letters*, II 161.

[2] Wong Lin Ken, 'The Trade of Singapore', *JMBRAS* XXXIII 4 (Dec 1960) 90. The earliest reference I have found to the Chinese sago factories of Kuching is in Bunyon, *Memoirs* (p. 57), where a letter from Bishop McDougall indicates that at least one such factory was in operation by 1858.

[3] For the various interventions see Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, pp. 216–17; Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 219; St John, *Life of Sir James Brooke*, pp. 323–4; and Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 329–34.

class', as a far more popular leader.[1] But when the entire episode was over, and the Melanau country had been annexed to Sarawak, Charles himself admitted obliquely that the Brooke cause had not been popular.[2] When Matusin was named the first Sarawak Native Officer in Mukah in 1861, he proved so corrupt that he soon had to be posted elsewhere,[3] and a decade later the mere hint of his return sent shivers of apprehension through the population of Mukah. In 1872 the Resident reported, 'A rumour is abroad here . . . that Pengiran Matusin is about to return. I think however that the time for that event is hardly yet ripe. Were Pengiran Nipa to return I think everyone would be pleased.'[4] As for Nipa, he was considered so dangerous that as late as 1877 Charles Brooke refused to allow him to return to Sarawak territory.[5]

Spenser St John, who had been British Consul at Brunei since 1856, was well aware of the true state of affairs. In both 1858 and 1859 he was critical of Sarawak interventions in the Mukah dispute. He believed that Brooke's nephews had been 'high handed', and that Matusin, however fond the Tuan Muda might be of him, was clearly not acceptable to the people of Mukah. In 1859 he urged James Brooke, then in England, to restrain his subordinates in Sarawak. The Rajah grumbled but complied.[6] But Brooke's old friend and former private secretary kept these remonstrances strictly private, in significant contrast to the man who succeeded him as British Consul at Brunei.[7]

The key anti-Brooke figure in the long-drawn crisis over Mukah was not Pengiran Nipa, however, but his brother-in-law, Sharif Masahor. Little is known about Masahor's family background, or his whereabouts before 1849, when he replaced the Dato Patinggi Abdul Rahman as the Brunei governor of Sarikei in the Rejang.[8] According to Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, he

[1] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 150–1. What Brooke presumably meant was that Matusin's father, a Brunei aristocrat, had married a local Melanau woman of low rank. H. S. Morris points out that Brunei *pengirans* who traded and settled in the Melanau districts normally intermarried with lower class Melanaus, since their wives had to become Moslems, a step which the Melanau pagan aristocrats were least willing to take. From a lecture by Morris at the London School of Economics, November 1964.

[2] He said in effect that the stubborn Melanaus had preferred being the oppressed slaves of the Sultan of Brunei: *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 99.

[3] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 213 n.

[4] Rodway Third Division (Mukah) report for Nov 1872, SA.

[5] Report of Supreme Council meeting, 24 March 1877, *SG* 130 (16 April 1877).

[6] St John, *Life of Sir James Brooke*, pp. 328–9.

[7] There is no mention of this subject in St John's contemporary dispatches to the Foreign Office in the FO 12 series.

[8] Keppel, *Maeander*, I 179. This account makes it clear that Masahor was in power at Sarikei by early 1849.

was a native of Igan, a coastal village on the most northerly mouth of the Rejang, just beyond the limits of the territory ceded to Sarawak in 1853. He was allegedly a 'usurper' in Sarikei.[1] Despite the Brooke historians' assertion that he was 'but lately settled in the Rejang',[2] Masahor apparently had wide family connections among the Rejang Melanaus.[3]

Usurper or not, James Brooke retained him as headman at Sarikei after 1853, when the main Rejang River was ceded to Sarawak, in accordance with his normal practice of retaining existing chiefs. However in 1855 Masahor intervened in the Mukah civil war against the Brookes. Gathering a force of lower Rejang Iban warriors, probably from the Kanowit and Sarikei Rivers, he proceeded to Mukah and expelled Matusin, reinstating his own brother-in-law, Pengiran Nipa. His Iban followers killed a number of Matusin's people. In retaliation the Tuan Muda, backed by his own Ibans from the lower Skrang, fined Masahor and deposed him from his governorship of Sarikei.[4] After the Chinese rebellion in 1857, however, James Brooke restored Masahor to his old post, and he continued to serve at Sarikei, where a Government fort had been established in 1856, under the supervision of an Englishman, Charles Fox.

Masahor was evidently an able, sophisticated and ambitious leader with considerable influence among both the pagan and Moslem peoples of the Third Division. It is not surprising that when Pengiran Makota of Brunei died in 1858, Masahor soon replaced him the eyes of the Brookes as the *bête noire* of Borneo politics. St John, who never doubted that Masahor was guilty of conspiracy against the Brookes, nevertheless could not help liking him,[5] any more than he had been able to dislike Makota, whom he later termed 'the most talented man I met in Borneo'.[6] But from the White Rajah's point of view, ambition, ability and high rank in a Malay chief were, at this period in Sarawak history, the essential attributes of a troublemaker.

Serious trouble for Sarawak began on 25 June 1859, when Charles Fox

[1] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, pp. 208 n., 248.

[2] Ibid., p. 138.

[3] Charles Brooke states that Masahor was related to the 'Kayans' (*Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 21), but at this period the English in Sarawak tended to apply the term 'Kayan' somewhat loosely to all the middle and upper Rejang people, including both the upriver Melanau groups (Kanowit, Tanjong, settled Punan, Skapan, Kajaman, etc.) and the true Kayans. All these groups were connected by ties of aristocratic intermarriage, as they are today. But it is likely that in 1859, before later Chinese and Iban immigration, these ties were of much greater relative political importance, and that the network of aristocratic intermarriage extended nearly all the way to the coast. Hence the Tuan Muda's fear that Masahor's kinship with the 'Kayans' might dispose a substantial segment of the Rejang population to join him in resisting the Rajah: ibid.

[4] Ibid., I 151–3.

[5] St John, *Life of Sir James Brooke*, pp. 343–4.

[6] Ibid., p. 20.

and Henry Steele, the only two Brooke officers in the Third Division, were murdered at Kanowit Fort.[1] The principal figures behind the murders were two pagan Melanau chiefs, Sawing and Sakalai.[2] In addition to the Kanowit Melanaus, some of the Iban migrants settled along the nearby Kanowit, Poi and Ngemah tributaries of the Rejang were also involved in the plot.[3]

The 1859 killings came as a terrible shock to the tiny European community in Kuching, just recovering from the effects of the Chinese Rebellion. Charles Brooke, responsible for the Government in the absence of both his uncle and his older brother, reacted with characteristic vigor. After inspecting the desolate scene at Kanowit, he returned to Kuching, where he convened a meeting of the Sarawak River Malay chiefs, and, sword in hand, swore vengeance on the murderers. In order to return to the Rejang to fulfill his vow, he was forced to borrow a schooner from the Anglican Bishop of Sarawak, a commentary on the extreme weakness of Sarawak at this period.[4] By the end of July 1859 he had gone back to the Rejang, where, with the active assistance of Sharif Masahor, he executed at least ten men believed implicated in the murders, as well as five Government fortmen who had deserted their posts at Kanowit after the disaster. In the Brooke-sponsored history of Sarawak, Masahor is said to have cooperated out of eagerness to get rid of possible witnesses who might have revealed that he was the arch conspirator.[5] In *Ten Years in Sarawak*, Charles Brooke claims to have believed all along that Masahor was guilty, but argues that he could not act against him for lack of firm evidence.[6] However, contemporary letters indicate that at the time of these events the Tuan Muda was not yet convinced of Masahor's involvement in the murders, and his failure to admit as much in his later account casts some doubt on the reliability of the Brooke version of the crisis.[7]

[1] The date is taken from Fox's tomb in the old European cemetery behind the Anglican Cathedral in Kuching; see also *Sarawak Civil Service List, 1925*, p. 71.

[2] A traditional Kanowit Melanau account of the tragedy, collected by an educated member of that group, which in 1966 numbered only seventy people, is Tuton Kaboy's 'The Murder of Steele and Fox: Two Versions', *SMJ* XII 25–6 (July–Dec 1965) 207–14. The article includes excerpts from the accounts by Charles Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 335–7, and Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, pp. 223–6, which present the Brooke version of the tragedy.

[3] It is possible, but in my opinion not likely, that by fining the Kanowit Melanaus in 1849 (see ch. 3), the Rajah had created among them a lasting resentment toward the Sarawak Government.

[4] Bunyon, *Memoirs*, p. 195; McDougall, *Sketches*, p. 177. The Borneo Company had removed the steamer which had played such an important part in ending the Chinese Rebellion, and at this date there was no regular communication between Sarawak and Singapore: Bunyon, *Memoirs*, p. 189.

[5] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 228.

[6] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 341.

[7] Immediately after the Tuan Muda's return from the Rejang, Bishop McDougall, who had remained in Kuching, wrote to his superiors in London, 'The Sarawak and Sarikei Malays behaved well, the latter with Sharif Masahor have it is believed cleared themselves of all suspicion

The rebel leaders Sawing and Sakalai, together with their Kanowit Melanau followers, had fortified themselves on the Kabah, a Rejang side stream not far above Kanowit. Before returning to Kuching, the Tuan Muda attacked them with the help of local Ibans, whom he did not trust, and who may in fact have been involved in the killing of Fox and Steele. His trusted Iban followers from the Skrang disappointed him by failing to arrive in time to assist. But despite his misgivings, the local Ibans performed well. The fortified longhouse of the Kanowit Melanaus fell with considerable slaughter on both sides. Sawing and Sakalai, however, escaped toward the Kayan country at the headwaters of the Rejang.[1]

During the next six months all the Europeans in Sarawak became convinced that the murders of Fox and Steele were the first stroke in a plot directed by Sharif Masahor. News of the Indian Mutiny was still fresh, and now there were reports of a bloody uprising against the Dutch in south Borneo. This revolt, the Banjermassin War, had also commenced in June 1859, with considerable loss of life to Europeans.[2] The handful of English in Kuching began entertaining visions of a Borneo-wide Moslem conspiracy to massacre all the white people, and some of them fled the territory.[3]

As it was later reconstructed by Sarawak authorities, the Malay Plot reached a climax in the early months of 1860. At that time an impostor claiming to be the Pengiran Temenggong Hasim Jalil of Brunei, who was regarded in Sarawak as the Sultan's heir apparent,[4] appeared in the Sadong district east of Kuching. Predicting the imminent restoration of Brunei rule, he began rallying the mixed population of Malays, Ibans and Land Dayaks to his cause. According to the Brooke version of events, it was Masahor's plan that this man should march across the border toward Pontianak, where he was to make contact with a banished Kuching Malay chief, the former Dato Patinggi Gapur. Then, according to the plan, they would return together toward Kuching in time to meet Sharif Masahor sailing from the Rejang, and together the three of them would complete the overthrow of the White Rajah.[5]

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of conspiracy.' (Bishop McDougall to Hawkins. 22 Aug 1859, D Series, S.P.G. Archives, London.) The Bishop had previously suspected that Masahor was guilty; Bunyon, *Memoirs*, pp. 193, 197–8. The information which caused him to change his mind in Masahor's favor can only have been obtained from Charles Brooke.

[1] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, 1 347–55.

[2] Irwin, *Nineteenth Century Borneo*, pp. 175–6.

[3] Helms, *Pioneering in the Far East*, pp. 205–6.

[4] Pengiran Temenggong Hasim Jalil did succeed Sultan Abdul Mumin in 1885 and reigned until 1906.

[5] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 235.

Masahor did appear proceeding toward Kuching with two heavily laden boats and about eighty followers in early February 1860, just before the Dutch reported that they had captured the false Brunei prince and warned Kuching that he was indeed an agent of Masahor.[1] But Charles Brooke had already concluded that Masahor was behind a continuing conspiracy. He later wrote that Pengiran Matusin, who at this point was in Kuching, had received a letter actually forged by Masahor but purporting to be from the Brunei Pengiran Temenggong urging him to join the plot. Matusin had delivered this alleged further proof of Masahor's guilt to the Tuan Muda.[2] It seems odd, to say the least, that Masahor should have thus attempted to enlist the support of his principal native opponent in the Mukah civil war, a man who was well known to be completely dependent on the Brookes.

The Tuan Muda immediately took steps to intercept Masahor on his way to Kuching. Having met the Sharif's boats along the coast, he ordered them to follow him up the Sadong River. There, on 6 Feburary, he made a determined but unsuccessful effort to kill Masahor. He sank Masahor's craft with cannon fire, but the Sharif himself escaped into the jungle and eventually made his way to Brunei, not neglecting to visit his brother-in-law Pengiran Nipa at Mukah on the way.[3]

Once at Brunei, Masahor was soon in touch with a sympathetic British Consul, about whom more will be heard shortly, to whom he related his own plausible version of events. He said that Charles Brooke had left him in charge of Sarikei after the murders of Fox and Steele, and had instructed him in writing to collect the local taxes and bring the money to Kuching at a later date. He had merely been carrying out his duties as a loyal Brooke officer, he added, when this inexplicable attempt on his life took place.[4]

Exasperated by his failure to eliminate Masahor, the Tuan Muda decided to strike at his home base in the Rejang Delta. Leading a force of 150 boatloads of Ibans, he attacked Sarikei and then Igan. At both points large houses belonging to Masahor were burned, and altogether sixty-four local people

[1] The Dutch warning, contained in a letter from Col N. L. Nauba, is dated 17 Feb 1860, eleven days after the date of Charles Brooke's attack on Masahor. There is a copy in FO 12/28.

[2] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 4-6.

[3] For the Brooke version of the sinking, see *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 9-13. Charles implies that he was acting on the advice of the loyal Kuching Malay chiefs and of Pengiran Matusin, who remarked of Masahor, '*He* is the one to strike; the rest are mere trifles.' (Ibid., II 10.) The date is from a missionary account, reprinted in S.P.G. *Annual Report*, 1860, p. 159.

[4] Masahor's account, recorded and translated by Hugh Low at Brunei on 27 and 28 June 1860, is enclosed in Edwardes to Foreign Office, 2 July 1860, FO 12/27. The text is given in R. Pringle, 'The Murder of Fox and Steele: Masahor's Version', *SMJ* XII 25-6 (July-Dec 1965) 215-27. According to Masahor, his boats left the Rejang for Kuching on 27 January; he gives no date for the sinking.

were killed. The Rajah's nephew admitted that his force of Ibans proved unusually hard to manage on this expedition, displaying a 'peculiar wildness' which he blamed on the constant recent unrest. The Sultan of Brunei, already apprehensive about Sarawak's intentions regarding the sago districts, was further upset by the attack on Igan, which was in Brunei territory.[1]

Meanwhile at Mukah Pengiran Nipa prepared to resist any efforts by Sarawak to reopen trade with the sago districts during the forthcoming season. Trade was possible only during the three months of fine weather which followed the end of the northeast monsoon in late March or early April. After this period rough weather would again prevent native craft from approaching the exposed coast of the sago districts. Early in the year the Tuan Muda had learned that ships flying the Sarawak flag would not be admitted to Mukah. The Sarawak Malay traders were most upset, since the local Melanaus owed them from eight to ten thousand dollars for goods advanced the previous season.[2]

For Sarawak, the implications of this renewed threat to the sago trade were extremely serious. Rajah James, already deeply concerned about the future political status of the country,[3] faced deepening financial difficulties as well. His relations with the Borneo Company were on an uneasy footing. In 1859 Sarawak's only European business enterprise had demanded that he repay a £5000 debt. He had been able to meet this demand only through the timely generosity of a philanthropist friend, Miss Angela Burdett Coutts, who advanced him the necessary sum interest free.[4] Now the Company's Kuching manager, a Dane named Ludvig Helms, had ordered expensive sago-processing machinery due to arrive in the summer of 1860. Helms wrote that it was 'a life and death matter for Sarawak that Sharif Masahor is crushed and the sago trade restored'.[5] Brooke Brooke, who had returned from

[1] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 20–3. No date is given, but the expedition must have taken place in March or early April 1860. The Sultan's complaint, which supplies the detail that sixty-four people were killed, is in his letter to Edwardes dated 25 April, enclosed in Edwardes to Foreign Office, 8 June 1860, FO 12/27.

[2] Brooke Brooke to Wilson, 30 Aug 1860, CO 144/18. For a similar account, presumably based on evidence supplied by Brooke Brooke, see Rutter, *Rajah Brooke and Baroness Burdett Coutts*, pp. 90–5.

[3] Following Lord Derby's rejection of his appeal for protectorate status in 1858, the Rajah was considering surrendering Sarawak to the care of some foreign power. Early in 1859 he approached Holland. Later, at about the time of these events, he made overtures to Napoleon III. But these attempts were distasteful to Sarawak's eventual savior, Miss Coutts, and her objections, together with those of the heir apparent, Brooke Brooke, led James to abandon them: Irwin, *Nineteenth Century Borneo*, p. 185; Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, p. 143.

[4] Rutter, *Rajah Brooke and Baroness Burdett Coutts*, p. 59.

[5] Helms to John Harvey, 23 Aug 1860, in Estelle Gardner, 'Footnote to Sarawak, 1859–', *SMJ* XI 21–2 (July–Dec 1963) 51.

England and replaced Charles as head of the Government in April, expressed an equally emphatic opinion:

> The prosperity of this country mainly depends on this sago trade, and without it a heavy loss will accrue to the several factories here, particularly to the Borneo Company, who have recently ordered out from England, expensive machinery for this manufacture.[1]

Shortly after he had attempted to kill Masahor, Charles Brooke wrote to the Brunei Pengiran Temenggong demanding that Mukah be reopened to Sarawak traders, in accordance with an alleged earlier agreement with James Brooke. The letter ended with a thinly veiled threat to use force if this demand were not met.[2] The trading season was well under way before the Sarawak authorities received a reply, stating that the Kuching traders were welcome to visit Mukah. But reports of Pengiran Nipa's hostility persisted. Finally, armed with the Brunei permission, a Sarawak expeditionary force advanced toward Mukah. It consisted of twenty-five boats belonging to the Malay traders and three small, sail-powered gunboats. Among the latter was the latest addition to Sarawak's cockleshell navy, a fifty-ton craft named *Venus*, home-made only weeks earlier under Charles Brooke's expert nautical supervision. *Venus* mounted two long six-pounders; her crew consisted of twelve European beachcombers recruited on the docks of Singapore.[3]

Pengiran Nipa and his followers promptly made their sentiments known by firing on emissaries sent in advance of the Sarawak force. Brooke Brooke, in charge of the expedition, decided to go in fighting. But the invasion of Mukah proved to be a very considerable chore, thanks mainly to Nipa's well-positioned stockades. Brooke Brooke sounded a plaintive note: 'Our small six-pounder shot made no impression on the Bornean palisades and . . . the very small force I had with me (not more than fifty men) was quite unequal to assaulting them, so there was nothing for it, but to wait for reinforcements.'[4] After more than a month of waiting, the hoped-for reinforcements began to arrive. Some were apparently Malays from Kuching. Most were

[1] Brooke Brooke to Foreign Office, 6 June 1860, FO 12/27.

[2] Charles' letter, dated 19 Feb 1860 (less than two weeks after his attempt on Masahor's life), is enclosed in Edwardes to Foreign Office, 8 June 1860, FO 12/27. The Brookes never presented any evidence of the alleged agreement guaranteeing Sarawak trading rights at Mukah, although the Rajah also insisted that such an agreement did exist: see James Brooke to Miss Coutts, 4 Feb 1861, in Rutter, *Rajah Brooke and Baroness Burdett Coutts*, pp. 103–4.

[3] Brooke Brooke to Wilson, 30 Aug 1860, CO 144/18. For the building of *Venus*, see Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 27–8.

[4] Brooke Brooke to Wilson, 30 Aug 1860, CO 144/18. For a full account of the siege of Mukah, see Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, pp. 246–59.

Ibans from the Second Division, whose war-boats began to appear in swarms off Mukah. The Sarawak leaders were confidently preparing a final attack from positions on either side of the town when their adversaries received even more potent assistance, in the person of Governor George Warren Edwardes of Labuan aboard the Honourable East India Company steamer *Victoria*.[1]

Up to this point, Sharif Masahor, Pengiran Nipa and their allies had been getting the worst of a rather rough fight. Thanks to Governor Edwardes their prospects were momentarily brightened, for Edwardes was convinced that the Brookes were guilty of aggression against Brunei, and that the safety and prosperity of his own failing colony of Labuan required the British to cultivate better relations with the Sultan.[2] Although he had been Governor of Labuan for four years, he was in no position to act upon his convictions as long as Spenser St John remained British Consul at Brunei. But in May 1860 Rajah Brooke's friend went home on sick leave, and Edwardes, named acting Consul, began to exercise diplomatic functions.

Brooke's enemies at Brunei lost no time in exploiting this opportunity to play off one Englishman against another. From the moment that St John left in April, the Sultan directed a stream of letters and deputations to Edwardes, protesting the behavior of the Rajah's nephews and seeking British assistance. After the Tuan Muda's attack on Igan, for example, the Sultan called Edwardes to Brunei, and it was during this visit that the Governor heard Masahor protest that he was innocent of any conspiracy. 'I was not able to convict him of prevarication', Edwardes reported.[3] News that the Sarawak invasion force was approaching Mukah brought a final

[1] The Governor's account of his intervention mentions with disapproval 'prahus filled with Dayaks from the Skrang and Saribas Rivers pouring in' at Mukah simultaneously with his arrival there on 18 July: Edwardes to Foreign Office, 10 Aug 1860, FO 12/27.

Edwardes (1802–79) was a son of the second Baron Kensington, a former Guards officer who had been Auditor of St Helena from 1845 to 1856, when he came to Labuan. He was elderly and irritable, unpopular with both his superiors in London and his staff at Labuan. After he had quarrelled with St John (then Consul at Brunei) in 1857, a Foreign Office official recorded his lack of trust in either man: 'One is a coxcomb, and the other is a creature of Rajah Brooke.' (Unsigned minute on a copy of Edwardes to Colonial Office, 23 Oct 1857, FO 12/24.)

[2] Edwardes' conviction that good relations with Brunei were necessary to save Labuan, which the Colonial Office was considering abandoning, is set forth in his dispatch dated 28 April 1858, in CO 144/15. In 1858 Labuan revenues were only about one-tenth those of Sarawak. Graham Irwin notes, 'Most Governors of Labuan between 1860 and 1880 were in fact jealous of Sarawak, and with good reason, for they saw in its expansion along the north-west coast a threat to the prosperity, if not the existence, of their own colony.' (*Nineteenth Century Borneo*, p. 193.)

[3] Edwardes to Foreign Office, 8 June 1860, FO 12/27. In the same dispatch Edwardes forwarded Brunei appeals for protection, and a mass of documents to support his contention that the Brookes were guilty of aggression.

appeal from the Sultan,[1] and Edwardes decided to intervene without waiting to hear whether London would approve of his behavior.

Arriving at the scene of the siege, Edwardes ordered the Brookes, who as British subjects came under his consular jurisdiction, to lay down their arms. Brooke Brooke then called together the Kuching Malay chiefs and convened a meeting of the Sarawak Supreme Council on the spot.[2] He informed Edwardes that although an Englishman was head of the Government, the country was ruled by this Council, composed of Englishmen and natives. The English, he said, would withdraw, but the natives had decided to go on fighting. Edwardes, unmoved by this tactic, told the Kuching chiefs that he considered them 'part of the force assembled there by Mr Brooke',[3] and added that if they wanted to fight the Mukah people, they would have to fight the steamer *Victoria* first.

At this point the Sarawak leaders gave up. To their evident disgust, Labuan Magistrate Hugh Low, an old acquaintance of the Rajah's and much later famous as Resident of Perak, served Edwardes diligently throughout the incident. Unfortunately it is impossible to tell from the evidence available whether he approved of Edwardes' conduct, which seems unlikely, or was merely doing his duty for a superior officer.[4] The Governor's party also included the Brunei Orang Kaya di Gadong, the noble who was at this time

[1] Sultan to Edwardes, 7 June 1860, enclosed in Edwardes to Foreign Office, 3 July 1860, FO 12/27.

[2] The Supreme Council, which James Brooke had established in 1855, institutionalized the special position of trust and confidence held by the Malay chiefs of Kuching (or Sarawak Proper), whom Brooke had pardoned and reinstated in 1842. At this period it consisted of four Kuching chiefs and three British officers, plus the Rajah. Its function, although not unimportant, was always wholly symbolic and advisory. It should not be confused with the triennial Council Negri inaugurated in 1867, for which see ch. 5. The best account of the Supreme Council is T. Stirling Boyd, 'The Law and Constitution of Sarawak', unpublished typescript, 1934, pp. 29–32. A less reliable description is R. J. Pole-Evans, 'The Supreme Council, Sarawak', *SMJ* VII 7 (June 1956) 98–108.

[3] Edwardes to Foreign Office, 10 Aug 1860, FO 12/27.

[4] (Sir) Hugh Low came to Sarawak as a botanist in 1845. After writing a book dedicated to the Rajah in 1847 (*Sarawak; Its Inhabitants and Productions*), he returned to Borneo with James Brooke in 1848 and joined the Labuan service, where he remained for many years. He named his son, later a Resident under the Second Rajah, Hugh Brooke Low, and he praised Brooke rule in his book. Many of his ideas and methods during his more famous later years in Perak have been traced to his early association with Sarawak: Emily Sadka, 'The Journal of Sir Hugh Low, Perak, 1877', *JMBRAS* XXVII 4 (Nov 1954) 17 n. However, Low also knew more about Brunei than any other Englishman on the coast, with the possible exception of St John, and he just may have sympathized with the Sultan.

Charles Brooke never mentions Low by name in his first-hand account of the siege of Mukah, but his sardonic remarks about '. . . a gentleman attached to the Governor's [Edwardes'] suite, who brought a polite message to say, than no more fighting would be permitted on either side' (*Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 53) can refer to no other person.

in theory entitled to the revenues of Mukah, and who was noted for his anti-British sentiments. No sooner had Edwardes departed, Brooke Brooke later complained, than this man 'set to work in true Brunei fashion to levy tremendous fines on all those who had befriended us', even recommending to the Sultan that some should be executed.[1] Nor did Edwardes make any effort to prevent the hated Sharif Masahor from rejoining his relatives in Mukah just as the siege was ending.

Six weeks after the Governor's intervention, Brooke Brooke summed up its unhappy impact on Sarawak:

> Of course, the effect is disastrous, our prestige with our people is gone, our trade is utterly ruined (not less than 3000 tons of native craft are now lying empty and idle in this [Sarawak] river). The Chinese talk of shutting up their shops, and the schooners from S[ingapore] which formerly carried on native trade return without cargoes.[2]

As for the Borneo Company, he continued, 'It is hard times for them, and just as this expensive plant of machinery has arrived from England, the English Consul deprives the Company of the raw material it was to work on.'[3]

Brooke Brooke's reference to the Chinese is particularly significant, for it indicates a genuine fear, echoed elsewhere by Bishop McDougall,[4] that prolonged insecurity might cause a full-scale exodus of the Kuching Chinese merchant community. The loss of the sago trade was bad enough,[5] and both the Tuan Besar and his good friend Helms of the Borneo Company were determined to prevent any prolonged stoppage, all the more so in view of the Company's recent investment in milling machinery. But a panic among the

[1] Brooke Brooke to Wilson, 30 Aug 1860, CO 144/18. The Orang Kaya di Gadong should not be confused with the Pengiran di Gadong, one of the four great ministers of state of Brunei. The Orang Kaya di Gadong was the head of a class of sixteen *menteri*, who ranked below the four great ministers (*wazir*) and eight intermediate officials (*chetria*). Hugh Low later wrote of the *menteri* that they 'were not of noble [royal?] birth, being taken from among the trading classes of the community; they are selected for their intelligence, and have had great influence in the politics of the country'. ('Selesilah', p. 15 n.) St John states that this particular Orang Kaya di Gadong was, moreover, 'a consistent opponent of any intercourse with Christian nations', and had been the principal figure behind the assassination in 1845 of Pengiran Muda Hasim, James Brooke's benefactor and favored candidate for the throne of Brunei: *Forests*, II 246–7.

[2] Brooke Brooke to Wilson, 30 Aug 1860, CO 144/18.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Bunyon, *Memoirs*, p. 195.

[5] Raw sago imports to Kuching declined from 6000 tons in 1859 to 2000 tons in 1860, the year of the crisis: St John to Foreign Office, 8 March 1861, FO 12/28. In 1861, after trade had been restored, sago flour exports from Kuching amounted to more than 58 per cent of the total exports to Singapore: Col Orfeur Cavenagh, *Report upon the Settlement of Sarawak* (Calcutta, 1863) p. 46.

Chinese would have been far worse, for Sarawak, in common with many Eastern dependencies, derived the major portion of its revenues from opium, gambling and spirits monopolies or farms, which were a form of indirect taxation on the Chinese population.[1]

The Brookes were also more deeply worried than ever about Sharif Masahor's influence over the pagan population. They knew well enough from their own experience that official British support, which he now enjoyed, might greatly increase his leadership potential. In fact Masahor had not hesitated to solicit help from the still rebellious Ibans of the Second Division, against whom the Tuan Muda had campaigned incessantly until forced to turn his attentions elsewhere in mid-1858, as we have seen. The Sharif was also suspected of having incited trouble in many other districts. Charles Brooke commented: '. . . Our enemies were numerous up the rivers Skrang, Saribas, Kalakka [Krian], Sarikei and Kanowit, numbering many thousands of families, all of whom relied on the support of Sharif Masahor.'[2] Naturally enough, Masahor's power was greatest among the Ibans nearest his home. According to a tale still told by the Ibans of Rumah Bantan on the Sarikei River, a cannon which he placed near the mouth of that stream marks the spot where he concluded a pact with the crocodiles, who promised him they would never go further upriver.[3]

In the Saribas, Nanang and Luyoh were still smarting over the death of their brother, Aji. According to family tradition, Luyoh, who was a great traveler and had many relatives in the Julau region, first got in touch with Sharif Masahor at Sarikei after Aji had been killed in 1858. As a result of this contact, some of the Saribas Ibans fought with Pengiran Nipa against the Brookes at the siege of Mukah, and in return Sharif Masahor presented them with some cannon. Thus armed, they returned to the Saribas, bearing news of the Rajah's humiliation at the hands of Governor Edwardes, and began to incite further rebellion.[4]

Walter Watson, the Brooke officer at Saribas, returned to his post after participating in the Mukah campaign to find his district in an even greater state of turmoil than usual. He discovered that Masahor had sent a war spear

[1] In 1859 the various Government monopolies, which at this period were still entirely dependent on the First Division Chinese, netted $22,715, or about 70 per cent of the total revenue of $35,485: Sarawak Treasury Cash Book, SA. Slightly different figures submitted by St John in a 'Memorandum on Sarawak' dated 9 Aug 1860, in FO 12/27, show the farms amounting to about 65 per cent of total revenue.

[2] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 63.

[3] Collected by Benedict Sandin.

[4] Information from Benedict Sandin and from Nanang's grandson, Juing Insol of Rumah Dabok, Layar. See also Boyle, *Adventures*, p. 300.

among the people, the traditional means of summoning Ibans to battle.[1] Rumors were circulating that Charles Brooke himself had been killed at Mukah, but the Tuan Muda soon quashed these reports by arriving at Saribas in person. Many among the divided population were still loyal to the Brookes, and with the additional help of the always reliable Balau Ibans of Banting, he was able to launch two expeditions against Nanang's fortified position at Nanga Spak on the main Layar branch of the Saribas. Nanang was defeated, and he and his party retreated to join Rentap, who was still in his lair on Mount Sadok.[2] Before they left, they threw the cannon which Sharif Masahor had given them into the river at Nanga Spak, where to this day they sometimes unpredictably foul the lines of fishermen, in the accustomed manner of very old cannon possessing magical powers.

Masahor and his allies enjoyed British backing throughout the remaining months of 1860, but this was thanks only to the slowness of nineteenth-century communications. In assuming that London might approve of his intervention, Governor Edwardes had sadly miscalculated the reaction of his superiors. It was one thing to leave Rajah Brooke in a legal never-never land without official British support, but it was quite another matter to turn the full weight of British authority against an English gentleman in an hour of trial. The Rajah and St John, aghast at the news from Sarawak, visited the Foreign Office, where they had no trouble convincing Lord John Russell of the folly of Edwardes' behavior.

The Brooke position was backed up by vigorous protests from the Singapore Chamber of Commerce, and, independently, from the Sarawak traders and millers whose sago business had been ruined.[3] John Crawfurd, the former Resident of Singapore and a well-known authority on archipelago affairs, volunteered the contrary opinion that the Sarawak invasion of Mukah was 'strictly an act of piracy, whatever the purpose',[4] but apparently no one listened to him.

On November 17 the Foreign Office sent a stiff rebuke to Edwardes, and a month later the Colonial Office notified him that he was to be called home

[1] Brooke Brooke to Wilson, 30 Aug 1860, CO 144/18; see also Rutter, *Rajah Brooke and Baroness Burdett Coutts*, pp. 94–5. Watson had replaced Cruickshank, who had been transferred to the Rejang to fill the void left by the murders of Fox and Steele.

[2] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 67–8; Boyle, *Adventures*, pp. 302–5.

[3] The protests are all in FO 12/28.

[4] Crawfurd to Foreign Office, 12 Nov 1860. Crawfurd had enjoyed good relations with Brunei during his term of office in Singapore. According to J. R. Logan, he was the author of the friendly article on the Sultanate entitled 'Borneo Proper', written in about 1824 and reprinted in Moore, *Notices of the Indian Archipelago*, pp. 1–4, in which he strenuously urged the establishment of a British post at Labuan.

in disgrace.[1] Lord Russell instructed St John to return to his post at Brunei, and he sailed for the East in company with James Brooke before the end of the year. The Rajah was in much better spirits, thanks to his friend and benefactor, Miss Angela Burdett Coutts. Several months previously she had supplied him with an armed steamer, something for which he had always yearned.[2] Named *Rainbow* for the symbol of hope, this vessel had sailed independently to Singapore. In the spring of 1861 Brooke and St John set to work to repair the damage done by the man the Rajah called '*Babi Labuan* – the Hog of Labuan – the Hon. George Edwardes'.[3]

The Brunei nobles had not stopped appealing to Edwardes after they had learned of his impending disgrace.[4] They even made a somewhat pathetic attempt to enlist the aid of St John after his return.[5] Being realists, however, they soon realized that further efforts would be futile. James Brooke arrived at Brunei aboard *Rainbow* on 20 April 1861, and Sultan Abdul Mumin soon agreed to send letters to the chiefs at Mukah directing them to receive the White Rajah as his representative, and ordering Sharif Masahor and his people to leave the place. The Sultan lamented his own weakness: 'The Pomfret is an excellent fish when fresh, but when stale, nobody cared for it. So with him – he was useless, his people would not obey his orders in his capital – how much less at a distance.'[6]

Bearing the Sultan's letter, James Brooke then went to Mukah, preceded by Consul St John aboard a Royal Navy warship. The Rajah was taking no chances; his own force consisted of Sarawak's three sailing gunboats, over three hundred war-boats of Ibans and Malays, and *Rainbow*.[7] Negotiations with Masahor were held in a Melanau longhouse nearly one hundred and twenty feet long and raised on posts twenty feet above the ground.[8] The Sharif, still protesting his innocence, agreed to leave the country for exile in Singapore. James Brooke set about to establish his authority in Mukah, sending a number of unfriendly *pengirans* back to Brunei,[9] and appointing his loyal follower, Matusin, to act as Native Officer.[10]

[1] Lord Russell to Edwardes, 17 Nov 1860; Duke of Newcastle to Edwardes, 26 Dec 1860; both in CO 144/18.

[2] Rutter, *Rajah Brooke and Baroness Burdett Coutts*, pp. 71–3.

[3] James Brooke to Miss Coutts, 26 March 1861, ibid., p. 115.

[4] Edwardes to Colonial Office, 25 Feb 1861, CO 144/19.

[5] St John to Foreign Office, 1 May 1861, FO 12/29.

[6] James Brooke to Miss Coutts, 30 April 1861, in Rutter, *Rajah Brooke and Baroness Burdett Coutts*, p. 119; for the Rajah's visit to Brunei, see St John, *Life of Sir James Brooke*, p. 42.

[7] Rutter, *Rajah Brooke and Baroness Burdett Coutts*, pp. 122–3.

[8] Gardner, 'Footnote to Sarawak', p. 59.

[9] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 100: 'Then Mukah was weeded of the Brunei aristocracy, who returned to the capital.' See also Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 263.

[10] Ibid., p. 213 n.

Only one step remained to be taken. In August of the same year, 1861, Rajah Brooke once again visited Brunei and obtained the cession of Mukah and the other sago districts, as well as the entire coast as far as Cape Kidurong beyond Bintulu. The agreement was roughly similar to the treaty of 1853. This time, however, Brooke agreed to pay an annual sum of $4500, three times the amount due for the less valuable, predominantly Iban-populated rivers covered by the earlier agreement.[1]

The Borneo Company immediately established a sago-processing factory in Mukah which was operating by May 1862.[2] As years went by, however, it proved unable to compete successfully with Chinese-owned mills, and it was subsequently abandoned. All that remains of it today is an impressive vine-covered smokestack near the Mukah bazaar, one of the few ancient monuments in Sarawak, and a fitting memorial to the events of 1859 and 1860.

The Malay Plot was over. Sharif Masahor remained in exile in Singapore, where he died in 1890.[3] The Brookes were content to believe him guilty of conspiring to murder Fox and Steele, without ever producing convincing evidence. Unlike the murder of Birch in Perak in 1875, the 1859 murders in Sarawak were never the subject of any official inquiry. The White Rajahs were not fond of fussy legal niceties, which in any case required both personnel and funds, always in short supply. Given the biased and contradictory evidence available,[4] it can only be concluded that Masahor might conceivably have been innocent of any conspiracy until early 1860. After that time he certainly had no choice but to resist a Government which was strenuously trying to take his life.

If it is fruitless to attempt any judgment of Masahor at this distance in time, it may be stated with certainty that his exile and the annexation of the

[1] St John to Foreign Office, 29 Aug 1861, FO 12/29; for the text of the treaty and facsimile of a copy in James Brooke's handwriting, see *SG* 1304 (31 Oct 1966).

[2] Helms, *Pioneering*, p. 212; T. C. Martine, 'History of the Borneo Company, Ltd.', Borneo Co. Archives, London.

[3] W. H. Read, who interviewed Masahor in Singapore in 1876, reported 'He is a fine specimen of a Malay and must have been a Hercules in his time.' (Jacob, *Raja of Sarawak*, II 331 n.) Baring-Gould and Bampfylde state that he was granted a small pension by the Sarawak Government (indicating, perhaps, that the Rajah's conscience was not entirely clear on his account), that he supplemented this by boat building, and that he continued to 'intrigue' in Sarawak affairs from afar, through his relatives: *History*, p. 264. His death is reported in Bampfylde's Third Division March report, supplement to *SG* (1 May 1890).

[4] All of the contemporary British commentary is biased one way or the other, including that of Spenser St John, who liked Masahor but believed him guilty. In later writings, notably his *Life of Sir James Brooke*, St John was sometimes quite critical of the Brookes. The *Life* was published after he had been away from Borneo for eighteen years, however. The tone of his contemporary correspondence is altogether different, and shows him to have been fervently loyal to the Rajah throughout the crisis: see, for example, his letter of 10 June 1861 in Rutter, *Rajah Brooke and Baroness Burdett Coutts*, pp. 122–3.

sago districts served to put the State of Sarawak on a much firmer footing. The Brookes simply could not tolerate a leader with such demonstrated ambition, independence and ability in a region whose population and resources made it vital to their own interests. They knew that the Sultan of Brunei had supported Masahor to the best of his ability.[1] By acquiring the sago districts, the White Rajah eliminated the last remaining base from which the Sultan or any other elements at Brunei could pose a mortal threat to Kuching. There were to be further quarrels between the two states over the territories remaining to Brunei, but these less populous districts were never of such concern to Sarawak as Mukah had been. In the eyes of Charles Brooke in particular, Brunei was reduced to the status of an abiding nuisance, an anachronism to be eliminated if possible, but henceforth no longer a rival to be feared.

Recurring hostility between the Brookes and the highest ranking Malays, who were 'Arabs' and Brunei *pengirans*, grew out of rivalry, and the rivalry was in no small measure a contest for influence over the Iban population, as the history of the Malay Plot demonstrates. The Ibans were of central political importance because they loved to fight simply for the sake of fighting. The success of Charles Brooke with Iban levies from the lower Skrang and Saribas has already been described, but it is obvious that, at this stage in Sarawak history, calling out the Ibans was still a game that more than one could play. At the time of the Chinese revolt in 1857, Charles had summoned his Skrang followers to the aid of besieged Kuching by sending a spear among them.[2] Three years later the Brookes were indignant when Sharif Masahor used exactly the same tactic in the same area to call out hostile Ibans to fight the Rajah after the siege of Mukah.[3] Well into the twentieth century, as we shall see, the dispatch of a 'calling-out spear' remained the standard official method of summoning Ibans for unpaid military service.

'Arabs' and Brunei nobles were the most dangerous potential rivals to early Brooke rule,[4] but there was also friction between the new overlords and the local Malay chiefs of somewhat lower rank. The First Rajah was always careful to distinguish between the 'Arabs' and *pengirans* on the one

[1] The Tuan Muda wrote, 'I was well aware these seditious proceedings were being pushed and countenanced by the Brunei authorities, who were as false and polite as any eastern diplomatists could be.' (*Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 16.)

[2] This detail, not included in most accounts of the rebellion, is given in Boyle, *Adventures*, p. 184.

[3] See references cited on p. 117, n. 2.

[4] In 1845 James distinguished between three types of 'pirates': long-range Sulu-based rovers including the Illanuns and Balagninis, the Ibans, and 'a third, and probably the worst class . . . usually half-bred Sharifs, who, possessing themselves of the territory of some Malay state, form

hand, and the local Malay chiefs on the other.[1] His basic political policy was to support and rely upon the latter group, of whom the Sarawak (Kuching) Malay Datos were the archetypes, while picturing 'Arabs' and Brunei aristocrats as foreigners and usurpers. Nevertheless a number of the local chiefs were involved in the Malay Plot. The Kuching Malays, the men Brooke had pardoned and reinstated in 1842, had more reason than any others to feel grateful to the White Rajah, and yet one of them, the former Dato Patinggi Gapur,[2] was a rebel at this time. The Brookes sensed a degree of rivalry even with the majority of the local chiefs who remained loyal. During the time of troubles described in this chapter Charles Brooke remarked, 'The Malays are jealous of our power with the Dayaks and I have many times seen it and felt it, with even Abang Aing at Skrang.'[3] His reference to Abang Aing is significant, for this man was his most trusted subordinate, praised repeatedly in the pages of *Ten Years in Sarawak*, and held up as a model of right conduct before later generations of Malay Native Officers.

Nearly all of the more important Malay aristocrats involved in the Plot were connected by ties of kinship to each other, and to Sharif Masahor and Pengiran Nipa.[4] It is also worth noting that nearly all of them, including Masahor himself, were men whom the Rajah had formerly placed or confirmed in positions of trust. But they remained the products of a political culture which condoned practices unacceptable in Brooke eyes. Some, like the Data Patinggi Gapur of Kuching, found it difficult to abandon their old habit of 'oppressing' the more tractable pagan peoples. Masahor was guilty of calling out Iban warriors to further the political interests of his own family, which happened to be in conflict with the interests of the White

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a *nucleus* for piracy. . . .' ('Memorandum on the Piracy of the Malayan Archipelago', in Keppel, *Dido*, II 190.) Emphasis added. This opinion may have been partly inspired by Raffles, who also had a low opinion of 'Arabs': *History of Java*, I 228–9. However it was essentially a reflection of Brooke's own fear of effective competition. It might be noted that, at the most important stages of their respective careers, both he and his nephew Charles acted as political nuclei, among the people of the First and Second Divisions respectively.

[1] See p. 79, n. 1, for an expression by the Rajah of this distinction.

[2] Gapur's part in the plot has been omitted from the necessarily condensed version of the events of 1859–60 in this chapter. He was not one of the original Kuching chiefs reinstated by James in 1842, but had replaced his father-in-law, the Dato Patinggi Ali, when the latter was killed by Rentap's Skrang Ibans in 1844 (see ch. 3). When he continued to 'oppress' Land Dayaks under his jurisdiction, the Rajah deprived him of his position and title and sent him on a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1854. He was pardoned and reinstated after the Chinese Rebellion in 1857, and was allegedly involved in Masahor's plot from its inception.

[3] Charles Brooke letter, Oct 1859, in Bunyon, *Memoirs*, p. 351.

[4] Gapur's daughter was married to Masahor's brother, while his niece was married to another alleged conspirator, Bandar Kassim of Sadong. Masahor, as stated earlier, was Pengiran Nipa's brother-in-law.

Rajah. James Brooke could not immediately transform these men into wholly loyal and acceptable servants, and yet there were no others upon whom he could rely. The history of Sarawak which his nephew later authorized described his dilemma:

> When the Rajah assumed the Government of Sarawak, he had to look out for suitable officials among the Malays to carry on the Government, and suitable officials were not easily found where hitherto all had been corruption and oppression. There is not much choice in rotten apples.[1]

The Rajah could depose the worst offenders, as he had deposed Sharif Masahor in 1855, but this accomplished little since, as traditional leaders, they remained figures of standing within their own communities, each a potential nucleus for subversion. Sterner measures entailed the risk of alienating all of a particular chief's relatives, who might well include every other Malay of political significance in the district. Besides, there is little doubt that James Brooke had a genuinely forgiving temperament. As often as not, he both forgave the men whom he had considered delinquents and restored them to positions of power, where they were on hand to join actively or passively in the Malay Plot.

The extreme weakness of Sarawak, aggravated by the withdrawal of British diplomatic support, permitted the latent political rivalry between the Brookes and the Malays to develop into a nearly fatal crisis. Once it was over various factors precluded any recurrence. British support was restored, although never formalized until Sarawak, together with North Borneo and Brunei, became a protectorate in 1888. The defeat and exile of Masahor, the cession of the sago districts and the continuing decline of Brunei all added to the strength and stability of Sarawak. Above all, the vigorous leadership of Charles Brooke, who was in complete control of the Sarawak Government after 1863,[2] made further rebellion wholly impractical. His actions during the two years after the crisis may be regarded as the aftermath to the Malay Plot.

In 1861 and 1863 he organized two military expeditions into the interior, larger in scale and more significant in consequence than any similar operations in the past. As might have been expected, Charles first took steps to elimin- Rentrap and his hostile party at the headwaters of the Skrang and Saribas

[1] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 207.

[2] James Brooke left Sarawak soon after the crisis of 1859–60 had been resolved, and returned again for only a few months in 1863. His elder nephew and heir apparent, Brooke Brooke, was the senior officer in Sarawak until 1863, when he was deposed and sent into exile. Charles was the real ruler from this time onwards. He retained the title Tuan Muda until James died in 1868, when he became Rajah.

Rivers. While his uncle was still negotiating the Mukah settlement in the fall of 1861, the Tuan Muda launched the third and final Sadok expedition. In addition to the usual force of Malays and Ibans, he brought Chinese laborers to make paths through the jungle and a large brass howitzer specially cast for the occasion in Kuching.

Before the expedition reached the summit of Sadok, Nanang and his brother Luyoh surrendered, agreeing to pay a fine of forty valuable old jars worth an estimated £400.[1] According to Nanang's descendants, he and Luyoh deserted Rentap because of a quarrel over some cannon ammunition which had originally belonged to the deceased Aji, Nanang's younger brother, but which Aji's widow had bequeathed to Rentap.[2] Rentap also retained possession of a famous iron cannon belonging to Nanang which his father, the Orang Kaya Pamancha Dana (Bayang), had captured on a raid in the Pontianak region many years previously.

With infinite labor the Tuan Muda's forces dragged their own brass howitzer to the top of the mountain, where a brief duel ensued between the two weapons. According to the Iban story, a lucky early shot from the Rajah's howitzer killed Rentap's gunner, and the blood of the dying man soaked the rebel supply of ammunition. This spelled defeat for the Skrang Iban leader. He and his small band of remaining followers retreated from Sadok and took refuge in the rugged and inaccessible hills at the headwaters of the Katibas, Kanowit and Skrang Rivers. Here Rentap died a few years later, worn out by his long struggles. He is one of the few great Iban rebels who is said to have been embittered by his experience. He is supposed to have sworn that he would never look upon the face of a white man again.[3]

The third Sadok expedition achieved the final pacification of the Saribas and Skrang Ibans, who for so long had been a thorn in the side of Sarawak. Except for some trouble in 1879 with a Skrang chief named Kedu (Lang Ngindang), which resulted from a blunder on the part of a Brooke Resident, the Rajah was not to be concerned with rebels from these rivers in the future. Nanang, whose timely change of sides was a major factor in the Brooke

[1] The date of the surrender was 25 September 1861: Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 141.

[2] From Benedict Sandin and Juing Insol. According to the story the ammunition had been collected by Aji and his brothers on a trading voyage to Samarang, Java, some years previously. On the same trip the Javanese had taught the brothers how to make charcoal for gunpowder by burning the bark of a kind of bamboo called *temiang* in Iban.

[3] From Benedict Sandin. Charles Brooke tells essentially the same story: *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 147–51. Rentap has no descendants living today. His daughter Tambong married Layang, the slayer of Alan Lee, and they were childless. However they adopted a daughter, Subang, who married Munan, son of Minggat, the Rajah's Penghulu Dalam, of whom more will be heard in later chapters: see genealogy 23 in Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, p. 112.

victory, was henceforth regarded by the Brookes as the senior Iban leader in the Saribas, and was later admitted to a position of unusual prominence in the councils of the Government.

Even after the defeat of Rentap, one major piece of work remained to be done. Following the murders of Fox and Steele in 1859, the Kanowit Melanau chiefs Sawing and Sakalai, believed to have been the principal perpetrators of the deed, had taken refuge in the far interior of the Rejang, either among the other upriver Melanau people (Tanjong, settled Punan, Skapan and Kajaman), or among the true Kayans who lived at the very headwaters of Sarawak's greatest river. The Tuan Muda had had little experience of the true Kayans, and no Brooke force had ever penetrated their country, but he was convinced that they were a proud and treacherous people who stood in need of chastizement, and he was determined to punish them for harboring the murderers.

His determination was increased after a remarkable journey of exploration which he undertook late in 1861, just after defeating Rentap. Together with a few Malays he traveled up the Batang Lupar River and then crossed into the remote headwaters of the Katibas, a major tributary of the Rejang. The Katibas was still being settled by Iban migrants from the upper Batang Lupar, whose expansion had already brought them into conflict with the upriver Rejang Melanaus and Kayans. They complained bitterly to the Tuan Muda about Kayan raids, and it is clear that he was altogether willing to believe their stories of Kayan treachery and cruelty, without considering whether the migrating Ibans might not be the real aggressors.[1] It was at this period that he remarked of the Kayans, who proved to be model subjects when the Sarawak Government came to know them better,

> No one could ever trust a Kayan's faith or word. They are false in the extreme, neither proving true friends nor steady enemies, and always committing some acts of treachery upon a weaker tribe. Their names have been extolled preposterously.[2]

The Ibans, he added, were 'without doubt the finer looking people and superior in most respects, being braver, more truthful, less treacherous and more warlike.'[3] After he had paid a brief visit to England, Charles lost no time in organizing what later came to be known as the Great Kayan Expedition of 1863.

His own book remains the only original source of information about this

[1] For further discussion of this migration, see the beginning of ch. 8. The Tuan Muda's Batang Lupar voyage is more fully described at the beginning of ch. 7.

[2] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II pp. 224–5.

[3] Ibid.

expedition, which was by far the most impressive military action yet attempted by the Brookes.[1] The Tuan Muda's force consisted of 15,000 men in 500 large boats. The great majority of the warriors were Ibans, and they came from rivers in both the Second and Third Divisions whose populations had in many cases been mutually hostile in former times. The expedition penetrated over 200 miles upriver, above the Pelagus and Bakun Rapids, into an area which had been visited by only two Europeans previously[2] and which is still considered wild and remote today. Despite the size of the force and the huge distances covered, the Great Kayan Expedition cost the Government only $689, a commentary on the economic advantages of relying on Iban levies.[3]

Certain disadvantages resulted from this reliance as well. Much to Charles Brooke's disappointment, the Ibans never came in contact with a genuine Kayan, but they spread death and destruction among the scattered upriver Melanau communities, proving quite uncontrollable. The bloodshed was a little too much even for the Tuan Muda's hardened stomach:

> There had been more dreadful sights in this campaign than I had bargained for. Many women and even children had been killed by our people, who state, with some degree of truth, that they had mistaken them in their excitement for men, as they wore head-dresses similar to the dress of men in their country.[4]

He resolved that on any future occasion he would impose a heavy fine on anyone guilty of such atrocities.

The expedition was unable to capture Sawing and Sakalai, who by this time had definitely taken refuge among the Kayans further in the interior, together with a third man believed implicated in the Kanowit murders, Talip. Before turning back, Charles entrusted two tokens, a cannon ball and a Sarawak flag, to one of his captives, with instructions to deliver these items to Oyong Hang, the chief of the Kayans. He was to be informed that

> We had attacked their country because they had taken part against our friends and the subjects of Sarawak, and had harboured the three chief murderers of Messrs Fox and Steele, named Sakalai, Sawing and Talip. Whoever befriended them must necessarily become our enemies; besides, they had made several attacks on the Dayaks [Ibans].[5]

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[1] Ibid., II 230–303. The best secondary source is Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, pp. 279–94.

[2] Robert Burns was the first man to visit the Rejang Kayans, in 1847: see his 'The Kayans of the North-west of Borneo'. Henry Steele was apparently the second, in about 1852: Keppel, *Maeander*, II 37. The Great Kayan Expedition penetrated to the Long Linau area, above Belaga.

[3] Entries for April to August 1863, Sarawak Treasury Cash Book, SA.

[4] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 297–8.

[5] Ibid., II 295–6.

The flag would serve as a safe-conduct for a Kayan emissary to reach Kanowit Fort. Otherwise it would be assumed that the Kayans had accepted the cannon ball, the token of war.

A little over a month later a party of Kayans arrived at Kanowit, bearing the flag together with the heads of Talip and Sakalai. They reported that Oyang Hang had cut down Talip with his own hand at a great meeting of all his followers. Sakalai had perished at the same meeting.[1] Sawing escaped for the moment, but by the end of the year he was in Government hands, and was soon executed. The Tuan Muda wrote finis to the drama of Fox and Steele:

> Now the deaths of private friends and public servants, who occupied a distant and isolated outstation, have been completely avenged, – the last and chief of this tragedy being brought to punishment, just five years since the original act took place.[2]

The results of the Great Kayan Expedition went far beyond the gratification of the Tuan Muda's personal and official desire for vengeance. By associating the Sarawak Government with an Iban force of great size in such a way, he gave unwitting encouragement to Iban raiding against the ethnically distinct, far less numerous peoples of the upper Rejang. This was probably apparent within a few years to Charles Brooke himself. The Katibas Ibans, whose complaints about Kayan misbehaviour had spurred him to undertake the expedition, and who participated eagerly in it, did not remain his allies for long. Willing enough to take heads at Government command, they were unwilling to stop when requested to do so. Charles soon regarded them as enemies, and felt compelled to send a series of punitive expeditions into the Katibas after 1868.

The upriver Melanau people, who were the principal victims of the Great Kayan Expedition, regarded it in later years as a disaster visited upon them for helping their relatives from Kanowit who had murdered Fox and Steele.[3] No one knows to just what extent this great Government-sponsored raid may have scattered and disrupted the population of the upper Rejang, for the area above the Pelagus Rapids did not come under effective Brooke supervision for another sixty years. It is entirely possible that many longhouse communities were driven completely out of the

[1] Ibid., II 304.

[2] Ibid., II 310.

[3] 'Tuloi made a long and telling speech in the Kejaman tongue; and he spoke clearly and slowly. He told the story of his own downfall and the ruin of his race for siding with the murderers of Fox and Steele.' From a report by Hugh Brooke Low, then Resident of the Third Division, in *SG* 224 (1 Sept 1884).

Rejang, either at this time or as a result of the unsanctioned Iban raids that followed.[1]

Charles Brooke was a stern but hardly a cruel man. He deplored the misdeeds of his Iban warriors, and he might have regretted some of the long-range consequences of their employment in the upper Rejang on such a scale, had he realized them. The area was new to him, and he relied on the advice of the Ibans. But even had he been better informed, he probably would not have behaved differently, for his main concern at the time of the Great Kayan Expedition was still the very survival of Sarawak. He believed that it was essential to revenge the murders of Fox and Steele, and to demonstrate to all the Rejang people that such rebellion would bring retaliation on a scale quite unexperienced in the previous history of the country. Even without gunboats, the British ruler could maintain his authority, thanks to his prestige and organizational ability. From the Tuan Muda's point of view, this lesson had to be learned. Some people would suffer in learning it, but, as we have already seen, he was convinced that the conditions of life and politics in Borneo dictated the use of harsh means to attain worthy ends. Until the point had been made, his Government would never be secure in Sarawak's largest and potentially most valuable river system.

Viewed in broader perspective, the third Sadok expedition and the Great Kayan Expedition together represent an old phenomenon in the process of state-building. Sarawak had just passed through a supreme crisis following a period of weakness. Her prestige had been damaged, and the never yet secure foundations of her power badly shaken. But in the very task of guiding her to survival, the young man who was to be her ruler for the next half century had gained the experience which would enable him to cope with any lesser crisis in the years ahead. Then, to put his own authority on the firmest possible footing, he carried the power of the State well beyond the limits it had formerly reached, demonstrating to even the wildest tribes in his outermost dominions that no further threat to the center would be tolerated. Parallels to this period in Sarawak history may be found perhaps less in the colonial era than in the careers of earlier Southeast Asian rulers. In such a way the fifteenth-century Vietnamese emperor Le Loi, after expelling the Ming Chinese who had conquered his country, led expeditions to punish the barbarian T'ai tribes of northern Tonkin, to secure his own

[1] During his long field work in the upper Rejang, spent primarily among the Ibans of the nearby Balleh, J. D. Freeman found that 'Many of the [settled] Punan Bah people fled to the Tatau area during the great expedition of 1863.' Quoted in Rodney Needham, 'Punan Ba' *JMBRAS* XXVIII (1 Mar 1955) 31.

frontiers, and to demonstrate that royal power was once again firmly established.[1]

In Sarawak many of the more remote upriver Iban groups remained beyond control of the Government, but after 1863 the nature of the Iban problem altered. Like Brunei, the upriver Ibans were to remain a source of intermittent worry and exasperation to the Rajah, but also like Brunei they were never again to be involved in a serious challenge to the existence of the State. This progress was due largely to the success of Charles Brooke in learning to use the downriver Ibans as an effective fighting force. No one appreciated his achievement better than James Brooke, who some years previously had written to him, 'We are all children in Dayak management compared to you.'[2] Now the aging First Rajah evaluated his nephew's initial ten years in Sarawak, emphasizing his accomplishments in the Second Division:

> He is looked up to in that country as the chief of all the Sea Dayaks, and his intimate knowledge of their language, their customs, their feelings and their habits far exceeds that of any other person. His task has been successfully accomplished of trampling out the last efforts of the piratical Malayan chiefs, and their supporters among the Dayaks of Saribas, and of the other countries he has described. He first gained over a portion of these Dayaks to the cause of order, and then used them as instruments in the same cause, to restrain their countrymen. The result has been that the coast of Sarawak is as safe to the trader as the coast of England, and that an unarmed man could traverse the country without let or hindrance.[3]

Charles had mastered the methods of warfare and government appropriate to the Borneo terrain. Conditioned by attitudes acquired during his vigorous apprenticeship, he was ready to turn his attention toward building a distinctive system of rule for the State which James had founded.

[1] E. Gaspardone, 'Annamites et Thai au XVe Siècle', *Journal Asiatique*, CCXXXI (July–Sept 1939) 405–36.

[2] James Brooke to Charles Brooke, 7 April 1858, in Jacob, *Raja of Sarawak*, II 274.

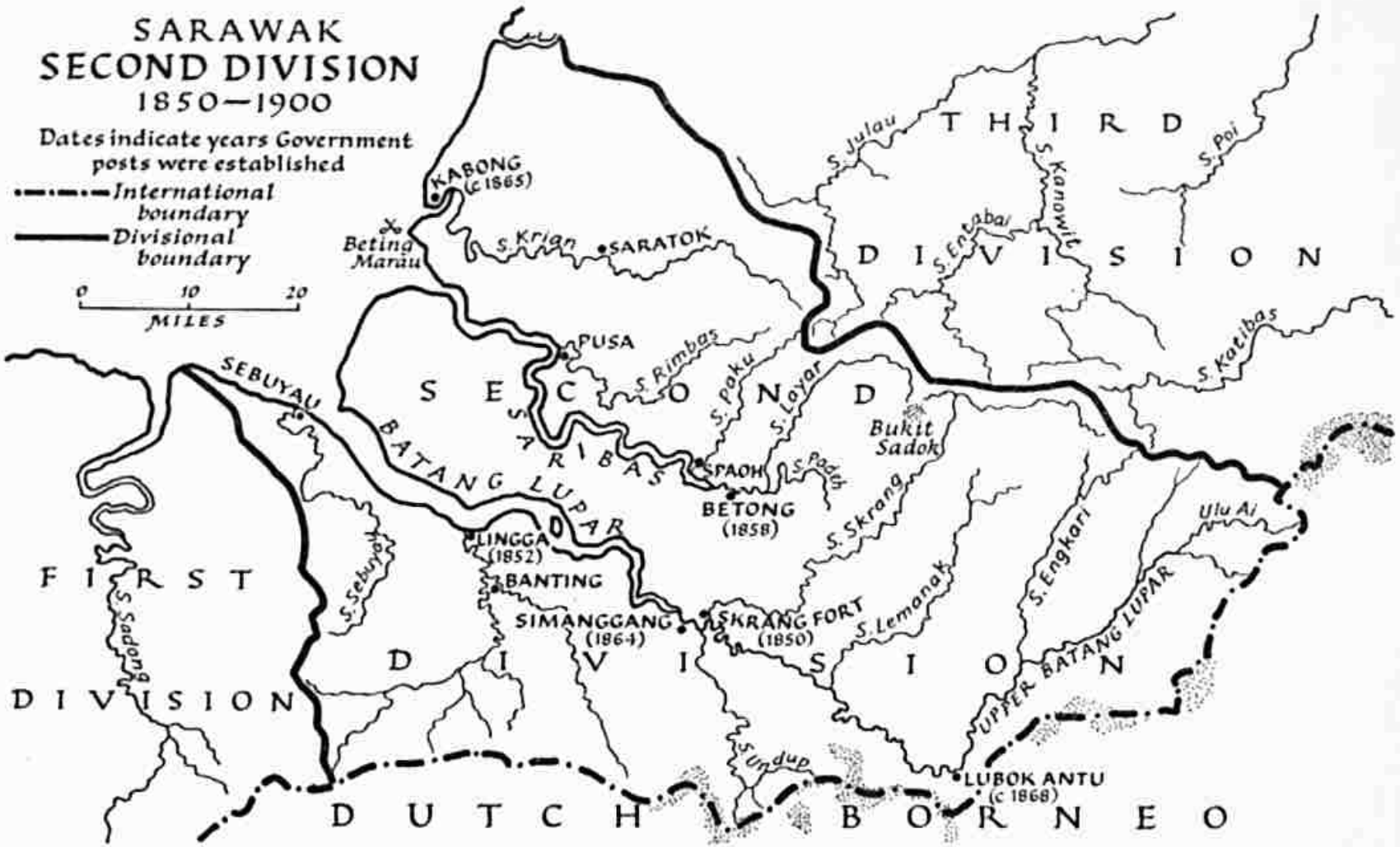
[3] James Brooke, introduction to Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I xi–xii.

5 How the Second Rajah Ruled: Theory and Practice at the Outstation Level

AFTER the tumult of the Sadok expeditions and the Malay Plot, a degree of peace settled over the Iban country of Sarawak. There was still no shortage of excitement. The upriver people, unwilling or unable to obey restraints imposed by the Rajah, were often in rebellion against him. The story of this conflict is not without interest and significance, and it will be told in a later chapter. But it was not the whole story. In the lower reaches of the various rivers, the Ibans came increasingly under the influence of Brooke Government. Judged by modern standards, or in comparison with colonial regimes elsewhere, it was a small-scale Government which asked little from the people and gave them little in return. Nevertheless, viewed in the context of its time and place, it stimulated a surprising amount of change, bending rather than breaking local customs into new patterns.

Charles Brooke was an absolute monarch, and it follows that his Government can be understood only by considering his personal background and philosophy of rule. Since he varied his informal administration to meet the particular needs of different river systems, it can be described in detail only at the local, outstation level. In the present chapter I will first discuss the Second Rajah's political beliefs, and then relate them to the day-to-day government of one of the two major Iban regions of Sarawak, the Second Division. In the chapters that follow, more will be said about the impact of Brooke policies on the Iban people.

Charles Brooke derived his political philosophy partly from the precepts of the First Rajah and partly from nineteenth-century liberal ideals, but perhaps above all from his own early experience. During his initial decade in Sarawak he came to know and love the country and its people, and also to realize the limitations which Borneo conditions imposed on his ability to effect change. He had learned to use many facets of local behavior, including the Iban love of war, to help accomplish his own ends. As a result, unlike


SARAWAK
SECOND DIVISION
1850—1900
Dates indicate years Government posts were established
International boundary
Divisional boundary
0 10 20
MILES
KABONG (c 1865)
Beting Marau
S. Krian
SARATOK
PUSA
S. Rimbas
S. paku
S. Layar
S. Padas
PAOH
BETONG (1858)
Bukit Sadok
S. Skrang
SEBUYAU
BATANG LUPAR
S. SARIBAS
LINGGA (1852)
BANTING
S. Sebuyau
SIMANGGANG (1864)
SKRANG FORT (1850)
S. Lemanak
S. Engkari
Ulu Ai
UPPER BATANG LUPAR
S. Undup
LUBOK ANTU (c 1868)
S. Sadong
S. Julau
S. Kanowit
S. Entabai
S. Poi
S. Katibas
THIRD DIVISION
SECOND DIVISION
FIRST DIVISION
DUTCH BORNEO

those colonial rulers who looked down on Asian mores and saw nothing good or useful to be gained from them, Charles Brooke saw no reason to force his people into some new mold. He differed from most Westerners in the East in that he was not convinced that the common man of Europe, caught in the grime and misery of the early Industrial Revolution, was better off than the Iban or Malay in Sarawak, a comparatively green and spacious land. After a trip to England in 1862 he commented on the peasantry of his native country,

I could not help drawing comparisons between their discomfort and the easy state of many of the Dayak tribes, furnished with sufficiency for their wants of life. The existence of the latter, in many cases, presents a happier aspect than that of our countrymen. In point of creature comforts the Dayaks certainly have the best of it.[1]

The Second Rajah believed that both the British and other European rulers throughout the Far East consistently violated two tenets which were central to his philosophy: respect for local custom, and a gradual, selective approach to change. He was sure that the only type of central government which would suit his own scattered and diverse population was one-man rule, softened by sympathy and respect for regional variations in behavior. His Government could not be uniform, because Sarawak was not.[2] It should not be impersonal and formal because the people would not understand such an approach. It could not move rapidly, because popular adherence to custom dictated otherwise. He called his method 'letting system and legislation wait upon occasion'.

There are two ways in which a Government can act. The first is to start from things as it finds them, putting its veto on what is dangerous or unjust, and supporting what is fair and equitable in the usages of the natives, and letting system and legislation wait upon occasion. When new wants are felt it examines and provides for them by measures rather made on the spot than imported from abroad; and to insure that these shall not be contrary to native customs, the consent of the people is gained for them before they are put into force.[3]

In my view, set forth at greater length in the final chapter, this philosophy

[1] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 214.

[2] 'Governments, like clothes, will not fit everybody', James Brooke had written to his mother in 1842. 'I am going on slowly and surely, basing everything on their own laws, consulting all their head men at every step, reducing their laws to writing, and instilling what I think right, merely in the course of conversation – separating the *abuses* from the customs.' Emphasis in original: Templer, *Letters*, I 228.

[3] Unsigned lead article in *SG* 48 (2 Sept 1872), quoted in Alleyne Ireland, *The Far Eastern Tropics* (Boston, 1905) p. 71. Ireland attributes the article to Charles Brooke (but cites the wrong issue of the *Sarawak Gazette*).

functioned primarily to justify and rationalize the inexpensive, informal government which was the only kind that the limited resources of the State would allow. But this is not to deny the importance of the Rajah's tenets as administrative principles. Under Charles Brooke, system and legislation were indeed allowed to wait upon occasion, even when the results sometimes amounted to near-chaos. Until after his death in 1917, Sarawak functioned without a comprehensive land law, without a uniform system of taxation, and without any code of regulations for the important native civil service. The Rajah's Notices and Orders, the only written legislation in the country, were issued piecemeal, in response to local problems. Many of his most important administrative concepts were never committed to paper, and today must be inferred from the records of court decisions. There was no defined Secretariat in Kuching, and no specialized British staff of any kind in most of the outstations. Everywhere there was regional variation, administrative informality and ingrained suspicion of methods which were not in line with the simple dictates of common sense. But everywhere the Rajah's personality was in evidence, and this gave his Government, for all its lack of rules, a certain symmetry.

Charles Brooke appreciated Sarawak as he had found it, and for that reason neither education nor economic development came high on his list of priorities. He offered only limited inducements to attract European planters, tending to regard them as a class of unscrupulous speculators who deprived gullible stockholders in England of their savings and natives in Asia of their land. In 1917, at the end of his reign, there were only three European-owned rubber estates in Sarawak, two of them controlled by the Borneo Company, which had long enjoyed a special relationship with the Brookes.[1] But the Second Rajah's economic policy had a positive as well as a negative side. He made every effort to introduce new crops to his people, maintaining experimental estates near Kuching at a considerable financial loss. As we shall see, he was at least partly responsible for the rapid spread of smallholder rubber cultivation after 1909.

[1] The Borneo Company estates, later transferred to the subsidiary Sarawak Rubber Estates Ltd., were at Sungei Tengah and Dahan, both in the First Division. The third estate, at Lawas in the Fifth Division, was operated by a former employee of the Borneo Company. In 1910, fearing that smallholders might be tempted by European speculators during the prevailing rubber boom, the Rajah prohibited 'native inhabitants of Sarawak, and settlers of Chinese, Indian, Eurasian or any Eastern Nationality' from selling rubber gardens to any European firm or individual: Order XXV of 1910, *SGG* (1 Nov 1910). The Rajah's article explaining this prohibition provides an excellent example of his thinking on the subject of Western enterprise in the East: 'Sale of Rubber Plantations', in *SG* 567 (1 Nov 1910). It is unsigned, but there is a copy in his letter book, SA. See also his letter to 'My Dear Harry [Brooke]', 5 March 1910, in Appendix A below.

His attitude toward education was ambivalent, the product of conflicting emotions. He believed that education was a worthwhile and growing force in the world, but he also knew that Western education was bound to erode the native cultures which he admired. He thought that Asian civilizations should be built upon rather than suppressed as he concluded they were in most British possessions:

Our system of education is just the reverse of what it should be. We stuff natives with a lot of subjects that they don't require to know, and try to teach them to become like ourselves, treating them as if they had not an original idea in their possession.[1]

At the turn of the century, Charles began to put his own educational theory into practice, establishing in Kuching a 'Government Lay School' which taught Malay boys in the Malay language and Chinese boys in Mandarin.[2] Between 1904 and 1911 he started similar but sometimes separate Malay and Chinese schools on a much smaller scale in many outstations.[3]

It must be emphasized, however, that neither the Ibans nor the members of the other pagan tribes, who together made up the majority of the Sarawak population at this period, were enrolled in the Rajah's rudimentary school system. Since they were not literate, he could not accommodate them within his theory of educating people in the context of their own cultures. Teaching 'Dayaks' to read and write in any language, even their own, would be tantamount to destroying their particular genius, which Charles very much admired. Obviously referring to the Ibans, whom he knew best, he commented in 1892:

We find that their senses or natural facilities are not rendered any more acute by education. In fact, the contrary may be the case. The memory of the Dayak is wonderfully retentive and accurate; a Dayak can remember the history of his ancestors related by word of mouth from father to son for centuries back, and no doubt this retentiveness is produced greatly by not being able to take notes in

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[1] Brooke, *Queries*, p. 4.

[2] Originally the school was to be called the Sarawak National College; in announcing plans for it, the Rajah said that he believed it would 'almost surpass in usefulness anything that has been done in Sarawak heretofor'. (Report of Supreme Council Meeting, 25 Jan 1901, in *SG* 421 (1 Feb 1901).) See also 'The New School', *SG* 444 (2 Jan 1903); Charles Brooke to Father Van Mens, 23 May 1904, SA.

[3] *SG* passim. As far as I can determine, the Second Rajah's Chinese schools predated the first formal independent Chinese school in Sarawak, which was not founded until 1912: see 'The Chinese Free School', *SG* 610 (16 Aug 1912). After 1912 independent Chinese schools proliferated with the help of Government grants, and the Government abandoned its own efforts in this field. Vyner Brooke, who succeeded his father in 1917, operated State schools for Moslems ('Malays') only: see ch. 10.

writing; if a Dayak walks in the jungle his eyes and ears hear and observe things most accurately, to the minutest sounds of birds or insects.[1]

He knew that such abilities would not survive formal education. He also believed that the longhouse people were likely to be corrupted by the sinful practices of the bazaar. He particularly feared that Iban girls, conditioned by the permissiveness of their own courtship customs, would be easily led into prostitution.[2]

Yet in the speech just quoted, Charles went on to evaluate education in general as a force which could not be stopped, without stating when, if ever, he felt that the pagan peoples should be exposed to it. When he wrote *Ten Years in Sarawak*, published in 1866, he had favored a system of modest Government schools for some Ibans, to be located in the outstations,[3] but he never implemented this idea. Instead he allowed Iban education to remain wholly in the hands of the missions, usually providing them with an initial subsidy for school buildings, followed by an annual grant.

Since Charles did not allow different Christian sects to compete in the same area,[4] the Anglican S.P.G. remained responsible for all Iban education in the Second Division, while a Roman Catholic mission established in 1882 operated a few schools in the Third Division.[5] Both missions maintained substantial boarding-schools in Kuching, but in the outstations their efforts were meager indeed. In 1913, after more than sixty years of labor in the Second Division, the S.P.G. was operating only two schools in that province, one at Banting and one at Sabu (near Simanggang), with a total enrollment of thirty-three students.[6]

The Second Rajah's personality was full of inner contradictions. Beneath

[1] *SG* 321 (1 Oct 1892).

[2] Charles Brooke to Archdeacon [A. F.] Sharp, 15 Aug 1909, SA; Charles Brooke to Bishop [W. R. Mounsey], 8 May 1913, SA.

[3] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 326.

[4] 'I have always endeavoured and generally made it known that the S.P.G. operations were to be among the Dayaks of Batang Lupar, Saribas and Kalaka [Krian] – and the Rejang District would be reserved for the R. C. Mission – and later on the American [Methodists]. . . . The object in keeping the work separate was to prevent the clashing and jumble of two religions in the same river among the Dayaks. . . .' (Charles Brooke to Archdeacon Small, 18 Sept 1915, SA.) Until after World War II, the Methodist Mission in the Rejang confined its activities entirely to the Chinese.

[5] The earliest S.P.G. activities in the Second Division are described in ch. 4. The first Catholic school for Ibans in the Third Division, at Kanowit, was in operation with fifteen pupils by 1883: *SG* 227 (1 Dec 1884); Fr Bruggemann, 'The History of the Catholic Church in the Rejang 1882–1966', *The Sarawak Teacher*, Special History Issue, II 2 (1966) 18.

[6] Ward Second Division April Report, *SG* 629 (2 June 1913). At the same date, Government Malay and Chinese schools at Simanggang had forty pupils, evenly divided between the two groups: ibid.

an austere façade, he was both a romantic and a traditionalist, always loath to abandon the methods of warfare and government which he had perfected during his outstation years. He reigned until he was eighty-seven years old, surviving his closest friends by decades, and in the loneliness of his advancing age he was more than ever tempted to dwell in the past. But although sentimental inclinations often influenced his policies, he never allowed them to overcome completely his essentially hardheaded, pragmatic approach to government. Both his sentimentalism and his desire to recognize and solve the problems facing Sarawak resulted from an intense devotion to the country.

At the very end of his life, in the era of World War I, he was anxious to employ expanding revenues to keep Sarawak secure in what he recognized to be a radically changing world. Despite his great age and dislike of innovation, he launched constitutional reforms,[1] built a railroad in the First Division, and installed a wireless network to link the major outstations with Kuching and the outside world. He wrote to his wife in 1913, 'Having now got over the poverty stage, my desire is to advance the country in useful and needed developments.'[2] Had his successor demonstrated a similar interest in progress, the closing years of Brooke rule might have been different, a point which will be raised again at the end of this book.

Throughout his long reign, Charles retained a special affection for the Second Division, the province which is the subject of the rest of this chapter. Here he had served his formative first ten years in Sarawak, among the Ibans and Malays of the Saribas and Batang Lupar. The Rajah's continuing interest in the area was not based solely on nostalgia. His ability to raise Iban levies in the Second Division had enabled him to bring the State through its gravest hours of trial, and he continued to regard it as a strategic heartland, the touchstone of his security. An admirer of Napoleon,[3] he considered himself a military expert, and judged, not without reason, that he knew more about handling Ibans in warfare than did any of his officers. Like other Divisions, the Second was administered on a day-to-day basis by a Resident, but he was of lower rank than his brother Residents in the First and Third Divisions. In theory the Rajah himself always retained direct control over the government of his old district, and

[1] For a brief discussion of these reforms, see ch. 10.

[2] Charles Brooke letter, no date and no addressee, SA. The content shows that it was to the Ranee Margaret, whom the Rajah was as usual scolding for undue extravagance, and its place in the letter book indicates that the date was late March or early April 1913.

[3] Charles Brooke was an ardent Francophile in other respects as well: A. B. Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Data Paper No. 61 (Ithaca, N.Y., 1966) p. 23; Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, p. 161.

in practice he tended to intervene in its affairs somewhat more than he did elsewhere.[1]

The Second Division retained a special political significance in the eyes of the Rajah because of its Iban population,[2] but it was never important to the economy of Sarawak.[3] It remained a province lacking both good soils and mineral resources. Chinese traders followed the establishment of Brooke forts, as they did everywhere, but partly owing to the Rajah's policy there was no great influx of Chinese agriculturists in the Second Division, as there was in the lower Rejang valley of the Third. Continuing Iban emigration and the occasional ravages of epidemic diseases kept the population level fairly constant. As of 1900 there were about 50,000 Ibans, 10,000 Malays and probably not more than 2000 Chinese.[4] Time brought little change of any kind to the Second Division, even less than it did to other areas of Sarawak. It completely lacked the bustle and boom that came to characterize the Rejang, which received both Chinese and Iban migrants in great numbers.

The beginning of Brooke rule in the Second Division has been described in preceding chapters. The First Rajah and his nephews established forts at the mouth of the Skrang River in 1850, at Lingga on the lower Batang Lupar in 1852, and at Betong on the Saribas in 1858. Charles Brooke founded a

[1] *Sarawak Civil Service List, 1925*, pp. 4–5; Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, pp. 24, 129. Under Charles Brooke, the grades in the Sarawak Civil Service were Resident First Class, Resident Second Class, Assistant Resident, and Cadet. A Resident First Class was appointed to head the First and Third Divisions, and sometimes the Fourth as well after its creation in 1885, but, with one very brief exception in 1875, the officer in charge of the Second Division was never more than a Resident Second Class.

As explained in ch. 1, I have used the term 'Division' throughout this book in reference to the areas covered by the modern administrative Divisions of Sarawak. However the First, Second and Third Divisions were not designated as such until 1873, while the Fourth and Fifth Divisions were created in 1885 and 1912 respectively from later Brunei cessions. (For a time, under the Third Rajah, there was a Coast Division, including the coastal areas of the Third Division, and during the depression of the 1930s the Fourth and Fifth Divisions were temporarily merged.) Charles Brooke himself, in his official but still highly informal correspondence, rarely spoke of Divisions, referring almost invariably to rivers instead.

[2] Charles retained theoretical direct control over the upriver Ibans of both the Second and Third Divisions until 1916, the year before his death, when he formally transferred this control to Rajah Muda Vyner in a public proclamation entitled 'Dyak Affairs', reproduced in Appendix A below. To my knowledge, Charles never committed his concept of direct royal responsibility for upriver Iban affairs to writing at any other time or place. The whole idea was somewhat academic, since in theory and in fact he was an absolute monarch who could and frequently did become personally involved in all aspects of his Government, including the most trivial.

[3] See Appendix B for a comparison of Second Division and total Sarawak Revenues.

[4] The Iban population may be inferred from door tax receipts: see p. 272, n. 4. Figures for Malays and Chinese are my estimates. The 1960 Second Division population was 109,422, including 70,634 Ibans, 26,296 Malays, and 12,081 Chinese: Jones, *Report on the Census . . . 1960*, pp. 120–1.

fourth Government post at Kabong, at the mouth of the Krian River, in about 1865, and a fifth at Lubok Antu, on the Batang Lupar near the Netherlands Indies frontier, in about 1868. The oldest post at Skrang was always regarded as the senior and most important station. In 1864 it was relocated at a new site, Simanggang, seven miles downriver, where it has remained ever since.[1]

As peace gradually settled over the downriver areas and the confidence of the Government increased, the Rajah, always anxious to save money where he could, whittled down the size of the European establishment and concentrated it at Simanggang. He did not post a British Resident to Betong (Saribas) after 1869, nor to Kabong (Krian) after 1874. During his reign no European ever served at Lubok Antu except during periods of rebellion, or at any of the other minor Government posts which were established from time to time elsewhere.[2] Simanggang became the nucleus of its own small political world. From the ironwood ramparts of Fort Alice, named after the Ranee of Sarawak, the Resident and at most two additional British officers governed the Division.

The men who wielded power in Sarawak during the reign of Charles Brooke may be divided into four categories, although these were never officially defined as such. First came the Rajah himself. Only the fact that he could not be everywhere at once limited his absolute power, but in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Sarawak this was a grave limitation. Second in power and influence came the European administrative service, headed by the Residents of Divisions. The Residents' British subordinates were Assistant Residents or Cadets. There were no formally constituted Districts within the Divisions until after 1920, and under Charles Brooke the term 'District Officer' was never used.[3]

[1] Dates of founding of the posts at Kabong and Lubok Antu are uncertain. A British Consular Report of 1864 from Kuching lists 'Kalakka' (i.e. Krian, hence Kabong) as one of the 'Residencies' of Sarawak, with its own European officer: Ricketts report, 25 Sept 1864, FO 12/32A. Charles Brooke implies that T. S. Chapman, the first and only Englishman to serve there during his reign, was newly posted in May 1867: entry for 19 May 1867, 'Extract from the Diary of Charles Brooke'. Kabong was certainly founded long before 1878, the date given by Runciman (*The White Rajahs*, p. 205). A Dutch article reports an Iban attack on Lubok Antu in 1868 (see p. 217, n. 2) but Lubok Antu was not mentioned in *Sarawak Gazette* reports until the issue of 1 Dec 1874. For the relocation of Skrang Fort at Simanggang, see James Brooke to Miss Coutts, 15 Aug 1863, in Rutter, *Rajah Brooke and Baroness Burdett Coutts*, p. 310.

[2] This observation, like all those in this chapter, applies only to the reign of Charles Brooke. Under Rajah Vyner Brooke (1917–46) local administration expanded to keep up with the widening scope of Government activity, and English officers were eventually posted to several points in the Second Division besides Simanggang, including Saratok, Betong, Engkilili (a settlement which did not exist until the pepper boom of the 1920s) and Lubok Antu.

[3] In a description of the Sarawak Government published in 1912, Charles Hose wrote of

Third in the Sarawak political hierarchy was a diverse native service centering around a corps of Native Officers, largely but not exclusively composed of Malay aristocrats. The native service also included clerks, police personnel and all other salaried native employees of the State. Community headmen comprised the fourth and final category. In contrast to the native administrative service, they did not receive regular salaries, but usually retained commissions on taxes and fines. Whether he was an Iban *penghulu*, a Malay *tuah kampong*, or a Chinese *kangchew*, the community headman managed local affairs in accordance with the customs of his people, and represented them in dealings with higher levels of the political system.

It was the general rule that at each level of the system, from the Rajah downwards, a senior member of one category could intervene in the affairs of a subordinate category, although in practice he rarely did so. Including the Rajah, the entire structure may be regarded as a four-tiered layering of usually benevolent despotisms, excepting perhaps the level of the community headmen, who acted more as arbitrators and intermediaries than as rulers.

At all levels, the staffing of the Sarawak Government reflected the Rajah's instinctive Victorian sense of class, and his pragmatic willingness to use whatever materials were available to him. He personally recruited the British members of his senior service from many sources. As in the time of his uncle, some were Brooke family members, while others were the sons of old family friends.[1] Some wrote to him looking for employment, and some he encountered by chance.[2]

Although he had no use for men who were too fastidious to soil their hands at manual labor, he insisted above all that his officers should be gentle-

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'district officers' (*Pagan Tribes*, II 269), perhaps because he thought this familiar phrase would be better understood by an audience outside of Sarawak. He goes on to make it clear that the officers were in fact entitled Residents and Assistant Residents. See also Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, pp. 309–10. Individual river systems within each Division were sometimes casually referred to as 'districts', as indeed were the Divisions themselves. Under the Third Rajah, however, 'Districts' were formally designated within the Divisions, and both District Officers and Assistant District Officers were appointed.

[1] Among the best known members of the Brooke family on the Sarawak payroll, exclusive of the Rajah's sons, were Henry de Windt, brother of the Ranee Margaret and briefly (1872–3) aide-de-camp to Charles, and Henry Carslake Brooke Johnson, Charles' nephew, who was in the Sarawak service from 1894 to 1902 and was for a time Treasurer. After leaving the service Johnson quarreled violently with his uncle, following an almost successful effort to become a White Rajah himself in Lawas, now part of Sarawak's Fifth Division, but not yet at this time (1904) absorbed by any European state: Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, pp. 197–8.

[2] A. B. Ward, whose *Rajah's Servant* has been an invaluable source of information for this chapter, had come to Malaya to work on a coffee plantation in 1897. When the coffee market collapsed his Johore employer, who knew Charles Brooke, arranged an interview for Ward, who was soon hired: *Rajah's Servant*, p. 13.

men. 'I am particular about one joining our service who is not a gentleman,' he wrote in 1910, 'as it is a matter of great importance with the native community who are generally such gentlemen themselves.'[1] Irishmen were not gentlemen,[2] and the Rajah had grave doubts about Americans and Australians as well.[3] The brief regulations pertaining to the Sarawak Government service specifically placed non-gentlemen, defined as 'Europeans suited to occupy subordinate positions', in the primarily native category which also included 'Eurasians, Chinese or Natives of whatever order'.[4] The Rajah set forth a definite scale of salaries and pensions for his senior service,[5] without which he might have found it difficult to attract suitable young men from England. In contrast, he paid the natives and others entirely at his own discretion, and he alone decided how large native pensions (if any) should be.

Undoubtedly the best known 'subordinate' European (or possibly Eurasian) to serve in Sarawak was F. D. 'Minggo' de Rozario, whose father had been a Portuguese chef in the service of James Brooke. Minggo was born at the Astana kitchen in Kuching and served the Government from 1864 to 1911. For more than thirty years he was in sole charge of the upper Rejang station, first located at Nanga Balleh and later moved to Kapit. He was married to a Tanjong (upriver Melanau) woman, was an authority on upper Rejang ethnography, and wrote extremely colorful reports.[6] Despite his long service and the important post he occupied, Minggo was never counted a member of the senior service (he certainly lacked formal education) and was paid, like any Chinese clerk, completely at the discretion of the Rajah.

Charles insisted that his British officers should stay at their posts for long periods, learning the local languages and customs as he had done in his day. In theory he allowed them to go home on leave only after ten years of

[1] Quotation from Charles Brooke to W. R. B. Gifford, 4 Jan 1910, SA. For the Rajah's dislike of fastidious aversion to rough living, see his preface to Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. viii.

[2] Seeking a new officer, the Rajah wrote to his London agents, 'He must be steady and I shall like to have a man *who is a gentleman* and not an Irishman strong in health and kindly in disposition. . . .' Emphasis in original: Charles Brooke to Woodhead and Co., 4 Feb 1897, SA.

[3] Charles believed that both Australians and New Zealanders were inclined to be 'wild' (Charles Brooke to Sir Thomas Fairbairn, 11 Aug 1880, SA), while he was certain that Americans included the crudest and most ruthless of all speculators. But he greatly admired the American Methodist missionaries who came to work in the Third Division. His views on both types are contained in a speech reported in *SG* 609 (1 Aug 1912).

[4] Orders dated 2 Aug and 20 Oct 1886 and Nov 1888, in *Orders which have not since been cancelled, issued by H.H. the Rajah of Sarawak or with his sanction from 1863 to 1890, inclusive* (Kuching, 1891) pp. 86–8.

[5] See Orders dated 25 Feb and 26 Feb 1873, ibid., pp. 83–4.

[6] Runciman says that De Rozario was 'of eclectic origin'. (*The White Rajahs*, p. 204.) See also his obituary in *SG* 856 (2 Jan 1925) and, for an example of his knowledge of the upriver tribes, his 'The Sru Dayaks' in Richards, *The Sea Dyaks and Other Races*, pp. 259–60.

service, the same length of time that he had served before his first furlough, although in practice the period was sometimes reduced to five years.[1] Only nine men held the senior post in the Second Division during his forty-nine-year reign. Two, H. F. Deshon and F. A. W. Page-Turner, were at Simanggang for more than a decade, and one, D. J. S. Bailey, remained there for twenty years.

Senior Officers in the Second Division under Charles Brooke[2]

Senior English Officers (total service at Simanggang)		Senior Native Officers	
James Brooke Cruickshank	1869–1870	Abang Aing bin Laksamana Minudeen	*c.* 1854–1884
Henry Skelton	1870–1873		
Francis Richard Ord Maxwell	1872–1881		
Henry FitzGibbon Deshon	1879–1892	Pengiran Matali (Mohammed Ali)	1885–1898
Demetrius James Sandford Bailey	1888–1908	Tuanku (or Sharif) Putra bin Sharif Sahap	1898–1906
Rajah Muda Charles Vyner Brooke	1898–1899		
Arthur Bartlett Ward	1899–1901 1909–1915	Abang (later Dato) Tamin bin Abang Mohammed Ali	1907–1923
Frederic Ambrose Wilford Page-Turner	1915–1926		

Simanggang was not isolated in comparison to many Sarawak outstations, but the trip from Kuching still required two days by a combination of Government steamer and hand-paddled river boat.[3] To survive a long assignment in such a place, an officer had to have greater than average inner resources, as the Rajah himself well knew. He wanted his men to take an

[1] Order dated 26 Feb 1873, in *Orders which have not since been cancelled . . . 1863 to 1890*, p. 84; Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 96.

[2] Compiled from the *Sarawak Civil Service List, 1925*, and from the *Sarawak Gazette*. Dates given for the British officers cover their total time of service at Simanggang, including furloughs and temporary postings elsewhere, and not just the periods that they were senior officer in the Division. Other minor details are omitted, such as the fact that James Brooke Cruickshank was appointed Resident First Class of the Second Division for one month prior to his retirement in 1875.

[3] Transportation from Kuching had changed little by 1921, when Somerset Maugham visited Simanggang. He describes the trip in 'The Yellow Streak', *Complete Short Stories*, 1 456–80, as well as his adventures with the Batang Lupar tidal bore. The names of persons and places are altered in what purports to be a wholly fictional account.

interest in their surroundings. He urged them to collect specimens for the Sarawak Museum, which he founded, and encouraged them to write articles on local ethnography and folklore for the semi-official *Sarawak Gazette*.[1] He believed that a practical rather than a classical education would best prepare a man for the varied duties of a Resident, and would help him to survive the isolation. He wrote to the father of a prospective officer:

> About his education I recommend strongly the modern system – civil engineering, mapping, surveying, a little of architecture, of drawing to scale, road tracing and something of geology and natural history, on birds or plants. If your son can get a moderate groundwork on these branches he will have resources in himself to take an interest in things around him as well as his professional qualifications being of a much higher order than with one only possessing the commonplace education of a man at home.[2]

Few of his Residents had ever attended a university. According to one of them, Charles Brooke wanted men with a personal touch, not 'brilliant scholars'.[3]

By hiring his officers at a tender age[4] and requiring them to remain officially single, the Second Rajah tacitly encouraged them to live with local women. In this respect he differed from his uncle, James, who once lectured one of his subordinates on the dangers of familiar association with native women.[5] Charles recruited only single men, he did not allow them to marry 'at any rate before ten years service', and even then he was not happy when they brought English wives back to Sarawak.[6] Unlike James, who seems to have been insensitive to the opposite sex, Charles frequently commented in writing on the looks, good or otherwise, of local women,[7] and it was well known even at the Colonial Office in London that he had at least one child by a native mother in Sarawak.[8] Far from worrying that mixed-blood children might be caught between two worlds, he expressed the belief early

[1] For some details on the founding of the Museum, plans for which were announced as early as 1878, see Tom Harrisson, ' "Second to None": Our First Curator and Others', *SMJ* x 17–18 (July–Dec 1961) 17–31. In 1875 the Rajah had offered a half-yearly prize for the best paper on the ethnology, history or natural history of Borneo or neighboring lands: *SG* 94 (16 Jan 1875).

[2] Charles Brooke to R. Bradford, 6 July 1891, SA.

[3] Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 33. To my knowledge, only two members of the Second Rajah's service had attended university: D. J. S. Bailey and Charles Hose, both of whom were at Jesus College, Cambridge. Only Bailey obtained a degree.

[4] The Rajah expected his men to retire on pension after at least twenty-one years service, 'in the prime of life say 40 to 45 years. . . .' (Charles Brooke to [H. C.] Brooke Johnson, 18 July 1899.)

[5] James Brooke to Thomas Williamson, 26 Jan 1846, in Templer, *Letters*, II 116–17.

[6] Quotation from Charles Brooke to R. Chatfield, 7 Jan 1909, SA. The Rajah believed that marriage reduced a man's effectiveness by fifty percent: Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 59.

[7] See, for example, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 66, 103, 206, 357, 372–3.

[8] R. E. Stubbs memorandum, 10 Dec 1906, CO 144/81, in Appendix A to this work.

in his career that they would make superior Eastern citizens, the most likely agents of enlightenment, and perhaps in time the most capable rulers.[1]

He did not approve of officers flaunting their liaisons in public. In about 1882 he noted that some Residents had taken to 'living openly with native women' and forbade them to take their mistresses with them on Government steamers.[2] But many years later he came to the defense of his men in no uncertain terms when a senior member of the Anglican mission in Kuching presumed to criticise their morals:

> I don't feel disposed to interfere with the private affairs of the unmarried men (Europeans) employed in this country, one thing I feel very positive about is that they are no worse than the world in general nor a quarter so bad as those of their class who live in the cities of Europe – notwithstanding numerous churches and zealous clergymen.[3]

He required all his men to be proficient in Malay, and those who served at Simanggang and other stations in the Iban country were expected to speak Iban as well. A number of them, through long years of service, developed a deep and sometimes scholarly interest in Sarawak. Charles Hose, Resident of the Fourth Division from 1888 to 1904, had failed to obtain his undergraduate degree from Cambridge, but he built a considerable academic reputation on the basis of his years among the Kayans and Kenyahs of the Baram, and in later life was showered with honors by European universities and learned societies.[4] Hugh Brooke Low, son of Sir Hugh Low of Perak, who served in the Third Division from 1875 to 1887, was another amateur ethnologist. His notes served as the basis for H. Ling Roth's classic two-volume compendium, mainly of Iban lore, *The Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo*. Charles Agar Bampfylde, one of the Rajah's closest friends and most valued servants, was the co-author and moving spirit behind *A History of Sarawak under its Two White Rajahs*. Charles Brooke helped to finance the publication of this work in 1909, and it remains one of the soundest and most knowledgeable books ever written on Sarawak.[5] In the

[1] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 332–4, 337–8.

[2] 'His Highness the Rajah's Order Book', I, SA. The Order is undated, but from the context appears to have been issued in 1882; it was never published in the *Sarawak Gazette*.

[3] Charles Brooke to Bishop [W. R. Mounsey], 1 Oct 1913, SA.

[4] Hose received an honorary Doctor of Science degree from Cambridge University in 1900. He describes his own career at length in *Fifty Years of Romance and Research; or a Jungle Wallah at Large* (London, 1927). His *The Pagan Tribes of Borneo*, co-authored with anthropologist William McDougall, includes what was for many years the only published description of outstation Government (II 257–310) by a Charles Brooke Resident. This has now been supplemented by A. B. Ward's *Rajah's Servant*, frequently cited in the current chapter of this work.

[5] Evidence that the Rajah helped to finance the book is in his letter to H. Sotheran, 10 Jan 1909, SA. The co-author, whose contribution was apparently entirely stylistic, was Sabine Baring-

Second Division, D. J. S. Bailey, a man whose name will recur frequently in the remainder of this study, cooperated with the veteran Anglican missionary William Howell to produce a fine dictionary of the Iban language, dedicated to the Rajah.[1]

Just as the Rajah insisted that his Residents should be gentlemen, so he believed that they could not succeed without the cooperation of natives of superior breeding. He blamed the Kanowit disaster of 1859 partly on Steele's habit of purposely employing low-class men to guard the fort. 'This is a mistake', he observed after the tragedy,

> . . . for as with a European, so with a native; the man well born and well-to-do takes a great pride in his work, if he has a pride in himself and a character to lose. These slave born followers were capable of being misled by anyone who would offer evil suggestions, as it too truly turned out in the fatal future of these two Europeans.[2]

It was his policy always to associate natives from what he conceived to be the best families in each river, whether Moslem or pagan, with the Government.

The Native Officers of the Second Division, like those in outstations throughout Sarawak, held positions of prestige and importance in local administration. They were the friends and advisers of the Resident in all matters, large and small. But in contrast to the Kuching Malay chiefs who served on the Rajah's Supreme Council at the capital, the Second Division Native Officers were far more than mere advisers. They continued to serve as subordinate commanders on punitive expeditions against Iban rebels. Even more important, they were often left in sole command of outlying Government stations, including the important border post at Lubok Antu. They received regular salaries, were termed Native Magistrates as well as Native Officers, and carried much of the burden of court work.

In the Second Division as elsewhere, the great majority of the Native Officers were Malays. It has been stated in an earlier chapter that the higher ranking Moslems had always been able to inspire a degree of awe among some of the Ibans, an aptitude which the Rajah found useful. By identifying the Malay aristocrats with the Government, he greatly enhanced their ability to command obedience and respect. He expected his Malay Native Officers

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Gould, a famous county historian and the author of several well-known hymns, including 'Onward Christian Soldiers'. His son, Julian Baring-Gould, was a member of the Sarawak Government service from 1897 to 1920, and served as Resident of the Third Division, a post once held by Bampfylde, from 1911 to 1920.

[1] Howell and Bailey, *A Sea Dyak Dictionary*, published in parts from 1900 to 1902.

[2] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, 1 329.

to be authorities not only on Islamic custom, but on the Iban language and customary law also, and he empowered them to hear and settle disputes among the Ibans and Chinese as well as among their fellow Moslems. During his reign they were always drawn from local families, and no Kuching Malay ever served at Simanggang.

At any given time, one Malay was always regarded as the Senior Native Officer in the Second Division. There were only four of them during the entire reign of Charles Brooke, and all were men he had known during his own service in the area. Out of a depth of experience they were able to educate any newly assigned Resident about local conditions. And there are indications that, when the Rajah intervened in Second Division affairs, he sometimes followed their advice rather than the advice of the British Resident.

Abang Aing, already mentioned frequently in earlier chapters, was Senior Native Officer from the time of the Rajah's own service at Skrang Fort until his death in 1884. He was a legendary figure among the Ibans of the Second Division, whose stories related that he could change himself into a pig 'to frighten the Dayaks', in spite of the fact that pigs are, of course, loathsome to good Moslems.[1] James Brooke had originally supported Abang Aing's father, Laksamana Minudeen, against the 'piratical Arabs' who had dominated Batang Lupar politics in the days before Brooke rule, as we have seen. But all three of Aing's successors were drawn from 'pirate' stock, for the Second Rajah believed that former adversaries, once tamed, were often the most valuable associates.

Pengiran Matali (Mohammed Ali) succeeded Abang Aing as Senior Native Officer and held the position from 1885 to 1898. The grandson of a Brunei *waẓir* or minister of state, he had fought with the 'pirates' against the Brookes in the 1840s before returning to Skrang Fort to serve the new Government.[2] Soon after he became Senior Native Officer the *Sarawak Gaẓette* commented: 'Full confidence is placed in this Pangeran, and he has always been considered the best leader of warlike expeditions, knowing the different tribes and their languages better than any other Malay in these parts.'[3]

After Matali's death the position passed to Tuanku (or Sharif) Putra, son of the First Rajah's bitterest enemy, the much-reviled Sharif Sahap. A. B. Ward, who first served with Sharif Putra in 1899, calls him 'an example of the Rajah's policy toward those who had once defied him'. Ward adds:

He was distinctly of the Arab type, and being a *Sharif*, claimed lineal descent from

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[1] From Benedict Sandin; see also Sandin and Harrisson, 'Borneo Writing Boards', p. 180.
[2] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 155 n.; obituary in *SG* 396 (3 Jan 1899).
[3] 'An Account of His Highness's Visit to the Outstations', *SG* 235 (1 Aug 1885).

the Prophet. Tall, with spindle legs and a Jewish nose, his nickname with us was 'The Camel' though his fine character had nothing in common with the animal.[1]

The fourth and final Senior Native Officer at Simanggang under Charles Brooke was Abang Haji Tamin bin Abang Haji Mohammed Ali. His father, usually known as Abang Chek, had been one of several hostages whom James Brooke had demanded from the Saribas Malays after the battle of Beting Marau in 1849. These young aristocrats had grown up at Skrang Fort under the Tuan Muda's watchful eye. Later they and many of their descendants, including Abang Haji Tamin, served as Native Officers at Simanggang and elsewhere in Sarawak.[2]

The Senior Native Officers were always 'gentlemen' in the Rajah's sense, men of unquestioned high rank in Second Division society. They were invariably members of the Council Negri, an assembly of native leaders and European officers from throughout Sarawak which met in Kuching every three years. Charles Brooke created this Council in 1867 to accord recognition to the outstation chiefs, none of whom were members of the older, smaller Supreme Council, the preserve of the Kuching Malays. The Council Negri possessed vague, purely theoretical legislative powers, but it served a more utilitarian purpose as well, enabling the native elite to exchange views on administrative problems, and serving as a magnificent backdrop for the Rajah's triennial speech on the state of the nation.[3]

A correct relationship with the native leaders was, in the opinion of Charles Brooke, absolutely essential to his kind of Government.

> Proper deference should always be shown to the chiefs, of whatever class they may be; and in any case of difficulty, more especially when an officer feels he has not sufficient experience to decide with safety, and even oftentimes in trivial affairs, it is as well to ask the advice and opinion of the headmen. It satisfies them and strengthens you, and a great object is to throw as much responsibility on the shoulders of the native chiefs as possible.[4]

In this passage, taken from his 'Hints to Young Outstation Officers', the

[1] Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 30.

[2] For Abang Haji Tamin's career and ancestry, see his obituary in *SG* 833 (1 Jan 1923); also Benedict Sandin, 'Descent of Some Saribas Malays (and Ibans)', pp. 512–13.

[3] The Council Negri, the ancestor of the current Sarawak Council Negri (which thus qualifies as the oldest legislature in Malaysia), is best described in T. Stirling Boyd, 'The Law and Constitution of Sarawak', pp. 33–8. The Rajah's speeches to the Council and records of attendance are included in a rare volume entitled *General Council 1867–1927* (Kuching?, 1927), a copy of which is in the Sarawak Archives. As the title indicates, the Council Negri was sometimes known as the General Council.

[4] 'Hints to Young Outstation Officers from the Rajah', appended to Ussher's Consular report of 1877, in St John, *Life of Sir James Brooke*, p. 399.

Rajah assumed that there was great diversity among the native elite and indeed nothing demonstrated this better than the variety of Malays in his service. Not all were gentlemen, like the Senior Native Officers. There was another less polished variety of Native Officer, not so much to be trusted or relied upon, often completely illiterate, but nonetheless useful for coping with a riot in the bazaar, and invaluable when there was a particularly nasty bit of expedition work in hand.

In the Second Division, a number of the Malay Native Officers in this rougher category were former Ibans of Banting, 'Balau Dayaks' who had become Malay (*masok Melayu*) by adopting Islam. One of them was Dagang, a fortman or salaried native sentry who had performed heroic services for Charles Brooke at the siege of Mukah in 1860.[1] Dagang's obituary in the *Sarawak Gazette* observed that he was

> ... about the last of the old class of Government men of that type, who differed considerably from the more modern class of Malays, as time and different surroundings always change characters from the simple to the more complex. He was a plucky follower in numerous expeditions both at sea and in the far interior, always proving himself a gallant leader and reliable soldier whenever he had duties to perform.[2]

Another well known Balau Iban convert to Islam was Police Sergeant Bakir, for many years a pillar of the Simanggang establishment. Speaking of him, A. B. Ward pointed out that it could be useful to have a policeman whose Malayness was only skin deep:

> His knowledge of everyone in this district was phenomenal and his advice in any matter was always reliable. Although he became a Mohammedan in order to marry a Malay woman he had two sides to his nature. He could behave with absolute decorum in Malay company and he could also associate with Dayaks as a Dayak. I have seen him after a service at the Mosque sedately sipping gingerbeer with the Malay officials, and then met him at a Dayak feast, joining in the incantations and getting so joyous with liquor that he had to be sat upon.[3]

Sindut, also a Balau Iban turned Malay, was in charge of the post at Lubok Antu on the Batang Lupar for many years. In 1900 the Rajah sorrowfully banished him from the Second Division for having exploited his official position to sell Chinese jars to the local Ibans at outrageous prices.[4] But long

[1] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 254 n.

[2] *SG* 691 (3 Jan 1916). The style of Dagang's obituary suggests strongly that the author was Charles Brooke.

[3] Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 55.

[4] Ibid., pp. 64–5; 'Jayer and Injer *v.* Sindut, Injer, Bujang, Pipeh', 26 March 1900, Simanggang CCB, SA.

before his final fall from grace, everyone had realized that Sindut was something of a ruffian. The Rajah had written in 1880,

With regard to the Malay Sindut in charge of Lubok Antu Fort. I have known him for the last 25 years; many years ago he was, for more than ten years, one of my fortmen or native soldiers, he has always borne a good and honest character, is most respectful and well mannered though not in any way of the birth or relationship of a chief. He has a thorough knowledge of all Dayaks and has always to my knowledge been much liked by them. He may perhaps have a little over stepped the bounds of his authority at Lubok Antu, but there is some excuse to be made in his favour, viz:—that the Dayaks are not always easy to manage, and a man has to be strict to maintain his position with them. I feel very sure it would be very difficult to get a man to give greater satisfaction. With regard to the two names Mr [F. R. O.] Maxwell [then Resident of the Second Division] has at different times called him 'Native officer in charge', and at other times 'head policeman'. I think he is entitled to either one or the other of these appellations; and he certainly cannot, as I understand the term applied to natives, be called a chief.[1]

Corruption was a problem to some extent with all classes of Native Officers, but perhaps especially with the less genteel class of Malays, not all of whom were converted Balau Ibans. The Rajah never forgot that even the aristocrats were former 'pirates', the products of a culture which condoned many unacceptable political practices. He employed them on the assumption that a British Resident would supervise their actions,[2] although in practice this was by no means always the case. He considered himself to be under no delusions about the nature of Malay rule in the absence of European control:

The Malay Rajahs are with scarce an exception all alike, and a just government from them is an impossibility. This is my opinion after more than thirty years experience among the Malays in this country, among whom are some of my best friends – they are good as subjects but grasping unjust and oppressive governors.[3]

Charles was certain, perhaps too certain, that his own long experience and

[1] Charles Brooke to C. Kater, Resident of Western Borneo, Pontianak, 6 Nov 1880, SA.

[2] 'There has been a tacit understanding on both sides that those qualities which alone can assure the *permanence* of good government in the State are to be found in the white man and not in the native; and the final control remains, therefore, in European hands, although every opportunity is taken of consulting the natives and of benefiting by their intimate knowledge of the country and of the people.' Emphasis in original: Ireland, *The Far Eastern Tropics*, p. 77. Alleyne Ireland, a British student of colonial administration, visited Sarawak in 1902–3 on a study tour of Southeast Asia sponsored by the University of Chicago, and wrote an admiring account of Sarawak, from which this passage is quoted. Rajah Charles was enormously proud that this 'expert' had judged his Government to be among the best in the Far East, and frequently referred to Ireland's work: see, for example, *Queries*, p. 4.

[3] Charles Brooke to Governor C. B. H. Mitchell, Straits Settlements, 5 Dec 1896, SA. The Rajah was anxious that the Governor, who was also at this period British Consul to Sarawak,

the quality of his British senior service, which he regarded as second to none, gave him the means to prevent his Malay officials from seriously abusing their authority among the pagan peoples. He was just as certain that his neighbors, the Dutch, were not capable of controlling their own Malay subordinates. He once protested to the Dutch authorities about a Malay who was probably no better and no worse than Sindut, and who held a similar position in predominantly Iban country on the Netherlands Indies side of the frontier: 'Haji Radin is much the same as most other Malays when placed in authority over Dayaks, i.e. that they squeeze as much as they can.'[1]

In fact the Rajah was obviously fond of some of the most palpable rogues in his own native service, and regarded them as necessary to the proper functioning of the Government. Only three years before he died, financial irregularities came to light at Kanowit, Third Division, a post then under the sole charge of a Malay Native Officer. Charles notified his treasurer,

> The Kanowit Receipts &c. must all be kept at Sibu [the headquarters of the Division] under Mr Bett's supervision and Kanowit – the whole of the Rejang River and tributaries – I can no more blame Abang Unit than I can one of my cats – knowing the class of men as I do – they are not responsible – and those are the very men – that we seek and can seldom find now – the modern good ones are useless with a sword in their hand or where real work is to be done.[2]

Under the Third Rajah, Vyner Brooke, the Sarawak Native Officer corps became an exclusively Malay preserve. As a matter of principle, neither Chinese nor the members of the various pagan groups were recruited into his service until only a few years before World War II. Under his father, however, while it is true that Malays dominated the service, there were few hard and fast rules, either written or unwritten, in this or any other respect. Rajah Charles recognized instinctively what was a fact: that the traditional local Malay aristocracies of the various rivers conceived of themselves as a natural ruling class, and that there were in general few pagans to whom the duties of arbitrator, magistrate and minor administrator came easily, as they did to the Malays. But where conditions varied from the norm, Charles was not averse to placing non-Moslems in positions of trust and responsibility, as the examples of two outlying rivers in the Second Division demonstrate.

In the Saribas area, the Second Rajah bestowed titles, salaries and other

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should forward a protest to the Dutch concerning misgovernment by a Malay raja in the Natunas Islands. Some of the people of Natunas, under Netherlands Indies rule, were related to the Kuching Malays, through whom they had complained to Brooke.

[1] Charles Brooke to the Resident, Pontianak, 26 May 1890, SA.

[2] Charles Brooke memorandum to Treasurer, 12 Dec 1914, 'His Highness the Rajah's Order Book', IV, SA.

signs of complete confidence on several Ibans. Although he also appointed Malay Native Officers to serve at Betong and elsewhere, it would be fair to say that in the Saribas he ruled through the senior Ibans in the same manner that he relied upon Malays in most other areas of the Second Division, and indeed throughout Sarawak. The two leading Iban families whose dispute the Government had exploited to establish its first outpost in the Saribas remained prominent in local affairs. These were Dana's sons, who had initially opposed the Rajah during the campaigns against Rentap, and the family of Bunyau and his son Bakir, who had assisted Charles to build Betong Fort in 1858. Dana's family was represented in the Government by his eldest son, Nanang, and his grandson, Insol, while Bunyau's family was represented by his nephew, Ringkai.

Nanang, whose key role at the time of the final Sadok expedition in 1861 has been described in an earlier chapter, received his father's old title, Orang Kaya Pamancha, from the Rajah at a ceremony at Betong Fort in 1882.[1] After Nanang's death in 1901, he was succeeded by his son Insol, who continued to serve until 1912. Both father and son were nominal Christians who readily attempted such untraditional activities as raising coffee, cattle, and rubber. Nanang was a member of the triennial Council Negri, evidence that the Rajah regarded him as belonging to Sarawak's native elite.

Ringkai represented the other great lower Saribas family, which remained pagan. The Rajah granted him the title *pengarah* at the same time that he gave Nanang his position in 1882.[2] Both of their titles were unique to the Saribas Ibans, and were not bestowed on any other Ibans elsewhere. Like Nanang, Pengarah Ringkai was a member of Council Negri. Touring Residents, who found that the Saribas Iban love of litigation created more court work than they could easily handle on their occasional visits to Betong, valued his talents as an administrator. 'Both Abang Aing and myself received much assistance from him in Dayak matters', Resident Maxwell wrote of him in 1881, 'and he keeps things straight in the Fort, being constantly there.'[3] Like Penghulu Dalam Munan of Sibu, an important Iban leader discussed at greater length in the next chapter, Ringkai was officially appointed to be a 'native magistrate', and received a salary from 1897 onwards, at a time when the ordinary Iban *penghulu* received only a commission on the taxes and fines which he collected.[4]

[1] *SG* 201 (2 Oct 1882). [2] Ibid.

[3] Maxwell Second Division report, 15 Sept 1881; *SG* 180 (1 Oct 1881).

[4] In 1900 Ringkai was listed among the Second Division 'chiefs' receiving salaries; all the others mentioned were Malays. His salary was $10 per month. Memo dated 6 March 1900, 'His Highness the Rajah's Order Book', II, SA. When Ringkai died on the Cholera Expedition in 1902.

In the Krian, at the Second Division outpost furthest from Simanggang, the Rajah also relied upon non-Moslems, but of a very different sort. For more than thirty years the rivermouth fort at Kabong, headquarters of this relatively prosperous but isolated district, was under the sole care of a mission-educated Chinese court writer. Residents rarely visited Kabong, and Charles may have felt it necessary to have someone there who was literate in English, as few Malays or Ibans of his era were. Simon Than served at Kabong from 1880 to 1887, after initial duty in Upper Sarawak. Ah Fook Cheyne, who succeeded him, worked at Kabong almost continuously until he retired in 1911.[1] Both men were Hakkas, born and reared in the First Division. Both wrote monthly reports on Krian affairs, which for years were printed in the *Sarawak Gazette*, together with the reports of the various British Residents throughout Sarawak. Several volumes of Cheyne's correspondence with his Resident at Simanggang have been preserved, and they show how completely he was, in normal times, the chief representative of Government authority in his isolated district.[2]

If the Rajah's salaried native service was informal, there were even fewer regulations of any kind applicable to the lowest level of Brooke Government, that of the community headmen. Whether they were Ibans, Chinese or Malays, their duties were in general to see that taxes were paid, to settle minor disputes among their own people, and to report any major infractions to the Resident. They were chosen or at least approved by their own people, and they did not receive salaries.[3]

With the exception of a few men such as Nanang and Ringkai, who were appointed to be salaried native magistrates, all the Iban leaders recognized by the Rajah were at the community headman level of Government. Their titles, exact duties, and the methods by which they were recruited varied over time and from area to area. In the early years of the Second Rajah's administration

his brother, Biju, assumed his *penghulu*ship, but never received the title of Pengarah or served on the Council Negri. For an interesting account of Biju's career, see 'A Link with the Past', *SG* 851 (1 Aug 1924).

[1] Records of Service of both men are given in 'Chinese and Native Employees Roll Book', SA.

[2] A three-volume series of letters from Cheyne to D. J. S. Bailey covering the years 1892–3 and 1895–8, discovered in the attic of the old fort at Kabong after World War II by District Officer Geoffrey Barnes, has been cited in this study as 'Kabong Letters', and is preserved in the Sarawak Archives.

[3] In certain areas where there were substantial settlements of Chinese cash-crop farmers, such as Upper Sarawak in the First Division, Chinese headmen had special obligations which included operating the opium, gambling and spirits farms: see, for example, the Order dated 4 March 1886, 'Relating to Kangchews', *Orders which have not since been cancelled . . . 1863 to 1890*, pp. 45–6. In the Second Division and other areas where most Chinese lived in bazaars of a few shophouses, Residents normally recognized an informal 'Capitan China', usually one of the wealthiest shopkeepers, whose duties were not spelled out in any regulation applying to all Sarawak.

they were known simply as *tuah*, a Malay (not Iban) word for headman. Later, in some areas, the term *penuroh*, a word originally used to designate the tax collectors of the Sultan of Brunei, was used for a time.[1] Still later the usual title for an Iban holding a position of trust from the Government was *penghulu*. The derivation of this term is uncertain, but Hugh Brooke Low, then Resident of the Third Division, was the first person to employ it officially, in 1883. The occasion was a visit by the Rajah to Sibu:

> At the Fort the Resident (Mr Low) had assembled all the Dayak tuahs who were now to receive the title of 'pengulu'. The Fort was crowded and H.H. the Rajah then addressed the meeting . . . he hoped that the Dayak chiefs before him who had for so long supported the government would continue to do so, not only in their own houses, but by all acting in concert, and by doing this should any disaffection arise they themselves could suppress it in the land.
>
> The 'titah' or commission of each pengulu having been given to him together with a Sarawak flag they then sat down to a banquet which had been prepared for them, after which a display of fireworks was given near the fort. These formed a startling novelty for the majority of the Dayaks.[2]

By 1885 the Government was naming Iban *penghulu* in the Second Division as well.[3]

The Iban *penghulu* was an invention of the Government, a not entirely successful effort by the Brookes to create a stable Iban political institution above the longhouse level. The highest traditional leader was the longhouse headman (*tuai rumah*), but a Resident could not hope to keep track of all the *tuai rumah* in a Division, and hence the search for some superior authority. Under the Second Rajah, the longhouse headman did not receive any formal recognition whatever, although his real influence over his people remained in most cases greater than that of the *penghulu*.

[1] The correct spelling in modern Malay would be *penyuroh*, meaning 'one who orders', i.e. on behalf of the Sultan.

[2] *SG* 212 (1 Sept 1883). The origin of the term *penghulu* is obscure. It was not a traditional term for headman in Sarawak, as it was in Malaya. The root form, *ulu*, has much the same meaning in Iban (head, upriver, or interior) as it does in Malay. The verb form in Iban (*ngulu*) means to lead, and Benedict Sandin states that the Saribas Ibans called the leaders of trading (or raiding) expeditions sailing toward Malaya and Sumatra *penghulu*. Voyage-leaders sailing toward Sabah were designated *nakhoda*. The term *penghulu* is never mentioned in the English literature on Sarawak prior to 1883, so far as I can determine. It is possible that Hugh Brooke Low was inspired to use it by his father, Sir Hugh Low, who by 1883 had been Resident of Perak (where it was a traditional term for headman) for more than five years. The Dutch never employed it among the Ibans of the Kapuas river system. They designated superior headmen *pateh* and a few paramount leaders *temenggong*, and this usage continues under the modern Indonesian Government.

[3] In 1885 H. F. Deshon reported that he had appointed two *penghulu* in the Krian, the first use of this title in the Second Division, but for a time it was used interchangeably with *penuroh*: Second Division monthly reports in *SG* 237 and 238 (1 Oct and 2 Nov 1885).

There were always certain *tuai rumah*, war-leaders or others, whose prestige and authority in any river segment was comparatively great. It was the Rajah's normal policy to select such men as *penghulu*, to bolster their authority in every way possible, and to encourage inheritance of the position within the same family, by brothers, sons or sons-in-law. But the fact that traditional authority and prestige in Iban society was, in most districts, wholly a function of individual charisma frequently doomed this effort to frustration. Charles Hose observed that among the people of the Baram, whose traditional gradations of rank included a ruling class, the *penghulu* were men of real authority. In contrast, Hose wrote,

> Among the Sea Dayaks [Ibans] the lack of authority of the chiefs, which is a characteristic feature of their social system, has rendered it impossible to secure for their *Penghulus* the same high standing and large influence; the result of which has been the creation of an unduly large number of these officers and the consequent further depreciation of the dignity of the office.[1]

The Government expected a *penghulu* to convey its wishes to the longhouses in his district, and to discourage his people from illegal migration and headhunting. The *penghulu* supervised the collection of the yearly family or 'door' tax, which will be discussed shortly, by distributing tax papers (*surat pupu* or *daun pupu*) to the longhouse headmen. The function of the papers was purely symbolic, since few headman could read or write and all were already well aware of the tax obligation. Sometimes the *penghulu* actually collected the tax and brought it to the fort, but more often the longhouse headman did this job. In either case, however, it was the *penghulu* and never the headman who received a commission of ten percent on all taxes paid, as well as on fines which he was empowered to levy for minor offenses. The *penghulu* saw to it that warriors turned out for military service at the appointed time, and in areas remote from Government influence he was expected to organize the defense of his people against hostile attack, and in some cases to lead retaliatory war parties against the attackers.

The powers of *penghulu* and *tuai rumah* to judge minor disputes within their own communities were never defined in writing during the Second Rajah's reign. Much depended on the policy of individual Residents, and the proximity of a given area to the nearest Government post. In the Third Division, far larger and more loosely administered than the Second, the *penghulu* were allowed wide latitude to levy fines, although real ability to do so depended on the individual. But in downriver areas of the Second Division, the Government encouraged the Ibans to bring all cases except the most

[1] Hose and McDougall, *Pagan Tribes*, II 274–5.

trivial before the Resident's court. Rajah Muda Vyner, urging the extension of this policy to certain areas of the Third Division in 1908, argued that although it would mean more work for the English officers, it would also increase Government revenue from fines, and would put some check on the 'unbridled peculation and bribery' which characterized the existing Third Division practice.[1]

Toward the end of Charles Brooke's reign he began to authorize the payment of small monthly salaries to certain Iban *penghulu*. In 1912 the Resident of the Third Division wrote:

> I would ask if all Dayak pengulus in this district might receive $10 per month wages and receive no commission on Dayak revenue. There has been considerable discontent amongst them as the Balleh Pengulus were given pay per mensem during Dr Hose's time [1904–7] and furthermore according to the present arrangement some pengulus receive much more than others owing to there being more people in their district and it is not always the best men who receive it.[2]

The Rajah noted on this letter, 'This I will consent to and the rule should be followed in Batang Lupar District' [i.e. in the Second Division].[3] But it was not until the reign of Vyner Brooke that salaries for Iban *penghulu* finally took the place of allowing them commissions on taxes and fines throughout both the Second and Third Divisions.[4]

The Resident of the Division appointed all *penghulu*, subject to the approval of the Rajah, normally after consultation with the various longhouse headmen. He tried to find a man both capable and popular, not always an easy or even possible task. Normally there were at least two *penghulu* for any important stream. In the entire Saribas River system, for example, there were in 1900 five *penghulu*: one for the Ibans living in the immediate vicinity of Betong,[5] one each for the upper and lower segments of the main Layar tributary, and one each for the Paku and Rimbas branches.[6] The number of

[1] Vyner Brooke to the Resident, Third Division, 27 Aug 1908, SA. The Second Division system had recently been adopted for the Bintulu River, which at this time was part of the Third Division, at the request of the large number of Iban migrants from the Second Division who had moved to that area after 1899: Ward Bintulu August report, *SG* 516 (16 Sept 1908). But there is no evidence that the Rajah Muda's recommendation was acted upon elsewhere.

[2] Letter from the Resident, Third Division, 7 May 1912, in 'His Highness the Rajah's Order Book', III, SA.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Announcements that all *penghulu* would receive salaries in lieu of commissions on taxes and fines are given in Hardie Second Division August report, *SG* 803 (16 Oct 1920); and Third Division January report, *SG* 870 (1 March 1926).

[5] This was Pengarah Ringkai, who as we have seen was in fact a salaried Native Officer, and therefore something more than a *penghulu*.

[6] Information on Saribas *penghulu* is from Benedict Sandin.

penghulu tended to increase over time, a process which has continued in the Saribas and elsewhere down to the present day. Under the Third Rajah, beginning in about 1925, *penghulu* were elected by the longhouse headmen at formal meetings presided over by the Resident, but were still subject to the Rajah's final approval.

Just as Charles Brooke viewed each Division as a political unit, or indeed as an aggregation of units, and was willing to vary administration to suit the needs of each, so he also viewed his outstation Governments as financially independent. Even the poorest was expected to pay its own way, and to submit at least a modest profit each year to the central treasury. The Rajah insisted on strict economy, and felt that proven methods were the least likely to result in undue extravagance. After examining the outstation accounts in 1880 he wrote:

> After close enquiry it seems to me the Simanggang station is conducted in a most economical way, and its state of efficiency has been proved of late by the active work which the inhabitants have had to undergo, in the defence of their district, in long and tiring expeditions, costing the Government next to nothing, the people there knowing they are expected to be called out when required, and being exempted yearly tax in consequence. I end my remarks by desiring officers not to make new precedents, if they can possibly avoid doing so, as it is apt to lead to confusion between one station and another, sometimes to discontent, and more often to an unnecessary outlay.[1]

Within the Second Division, accounts were maintained separately for each of the three river systems, Batang Lupar, Saribas and Krian. The Batang Lupar, the largest river but also the scene of interminable Iban unrest, frequently failed to show a profit, but the other two rivers were normally prosperous enough to enable the Resident to remit a modest yearly surplus to Kuching. During the years from 1890 to 1915 the Second Division lost money only in 1905–8, during the height of Bantin's rebellion, described at length in a later chapter.

The main sources of Second Division revenue were head and door taxes levied on the Malay and Iban population, spirits and gambling farms sold at auction in each Chinese bazaar of any size, light import duties levied on some items imported directly to Simanggang, including salt and Iban luxuries such as old jars and brassware, and a tax assessed on Chinese shophouses in the bazaars. The Government also took a traditional percentage of the birds' nests gathered by Ibans in the caves of the Klingklang Range, which formed the border with Dutch Borneo in the southwestern portion

[1] Charles Brooke to Treasurer C. S. Pearse, 28 Sept 1880, SA.

of the Division, and collected an inheritance tax from members of all the ethnic groups.[1]

The door and head taxes paid by the Ibans and by some Malays were more than a mere source of revenue. They symbolized the political responsibilities of these two groups within the Brooke State. Most Malays in the Second Division paid no direct taxes whatever. Instead they remained liable for Government service, including duty on punitive expeditions, which were frequent until about 1910. A typical call for Malay service was recorded on 30 March 1878, at a time when the frontier-dwelling Ibans of the upper Batang Lupar were, as usual, restless:

> The Resident [F. R. O. Maxwell] informs Abang Aing and Pengiran Matali that owing to the disturbed state of the upper River he has deemed it advisable to call out a strong force of Malays to guard the Batang Lupar frontier. Accordingly the Resident has ordered two boats from Rimbas, one from Lingga, four from Simanggang and that at Lubok Antu the Malay traders will be called out for service in any emergency.[2]

As late as 1912, 2100 out of an estimated 3000 Malay men in the Second Division paid no taxes and were subject to such calls.[3]

In more peaceful districts, however, the majority of the Malays paid an annual tax of two dollars per adult male, known as 'exemption tax' because it freed them from the obligation to serve on expeditions, and from all other unpaid Government service. This tax was first levied in 1861, when the senior Brooke officer in Kuching reported,

> The Rajah Muda [Brooke Brooke] like Herod has given out that 'all the world should be taxed' and you can't think how well the world has taken it. They really seem to be glad to be let off all 'bala' [military service] work for two dollars. The only fellows who grumble are fellows who live in out of the way places and always managed to shirk going on government service.[4]

For a time the Chinese also paid exemption tax, but during the majority of

[1] Divisional revenues were sometimes but not always detailed to a varying extent in annual reports, printed in the *Sarawak Gazette* from about 1895 to 1907, and in the *Sarawak Government Gazette* from 1908 until 1926. In 1900, out of the total Second Division revenue of $24,973, Iban door tax amounted to $9251 (indicating the same number of tax paying families); Malay exemption tax to $1591; gambling and spirit farms revenue to $2494; and certain import duties to $1855. The balance of $9782 was not accounted for: Bailey Second Division annual report for 1900, *SG* 422 (1 March 1901). Import duties on some items were levied in Kuching before reshipment to outstations, and the opium farm was likewise operated on a State-wide basis at this period.

[2] Notation dated 30 March 1878, Simanggang CCB, SA.

[3] Ward Second Division annual report for 1912, *SGG* (15 Feb 1913).

[4] Arthur Crookshank to Spenser St John, 16 Nov 1861, enclosed in St John to Foreign Office, 10 Feb 1862, FO 12/29.

Charles Brooke's reign they paid no direct taxes at all, except for a modest assessment on their shophouses.[1] As a general rule, the Government respected the exemption from service which payment of this tax provided. In the Second Division, where some Malays paid the tax and others did not, the Residents knew that they could not demand labor from taxpayers without giving them wages. In 1898 the Rajah advised an officer newly posted to Lundu in the First Division, 'The inhabitants may occasionally be called upon to assist [in making paths and roads] though this is rarely to be done as they pay their yearly tax.'[2]

In later years most of the pagan tribes except the Ibans (including Kenyahs, Kayans, Land Dayaks and many Melanaus) also paid the exemption tax of two dollars per year. Although there was a general trend toward standardization through the years, the details of taxation continued to vary somewhat from district to district. For some reason the Land Dayaks of the Sarawak River, the people James Brooke had allegedly saved from Malay 'oppression', submitted to two increases in taxes, until they were paying three dollars a year per adult male, more than anyone else in the country. Then in 1885 the Rajah reduced their rate to conform with the exemption paid by others.[3]

The majority of the Ibans, including all those in the Second and Third Divisions, received special treatment. They paid a 'door tax' of one dollar per family (*bilek*) per year, less than half the exemption tax rate, but they were still obligated to serve on Government expeditions. 'This they would I imagine rather regard in the light of an amusement than a burden', the first British consul posted to Kuching observed with some reason in 1864.[4]

The Iban door tax was originally set at one *pasu* of *padi* per year. According to a somewhat vague tradition already mentioned, Brunei-sanctioned chiefs had levied this amount in the days before Brooke rule. By 1870, or

[1] In a report dated 25 Sept 1864, Consul G. T. Ricketts wrote that the Chinese paid exemption tax: FO 12/32A. For evidence that they no longer paid it by 1877, see Ussher's consular report for that year in St John, *Life of Sir James Brooke*, p. 390. The reason for the change is not clear. There is no indication that the Chinese were ever called upon for military or other service at any date.

In 1900 the Chinese of Simanggang paid a shop assessment of thirty cents per month. (Bailey Second Division March report, *SG* 412 (1 May 1900).) In 1915 the Government for the first time standardized the shop-assessment rate in all outstations at 4½ percent of fair annual rental value, or a minimum of $4 per year: *SGG* (16 March 1915).

[2] Charles Brooke to Harry Day, 27 Jan 1898, SA.

[3] Noel Denison, *Jottings Made During a Tour amongst the Land Dyaks of Upper Sarawak, Borneo, During the Year 1874* (Singapore, 1879) n.p. The Order lowering the Sarawak River Land Dayak tax to $2 per married man or bachelor over seventeen years of age is dated 14 Aug 1885, in *SG* 236 (1 Sept 1885).

[4] G. T. Ricketts report, 25 Sept 1864, FO 12/32A.

perhaps somewhat earlier, an Iban family could pay the cash equivalent of one *pasu* of *padi*, originally calculated to be eighty cents.[1] By 1880 the price of *padi* had gone up, and the cash equivalent was raised to one dollar per door.[2] Soon after this date the Resident of the Second Division decreed that in future the door tax could be paid in cash only.[3] Although the dollar price of rice continued to rise, the yearly tax remained fixed at one dollar per door down to the end of Brooke rule and beyond. In later years the in-kind origin of this tax was completely forgotten. Although it was not uncommon, especially in times of hardship, for Ibans to pay in goods or labor, their tax was always computed in terms of dollars, never in terms of the far more valuable *pasu* of *padi*.

Soon after the Trusan River became part of Sarawak in 1884, the local Muruts, who had learned that the Ibans paid only one dollar per year, objected to paying the two-dollar exemption tax themselves. On the Rajah's next visit to the Trusan, he gave them a lecture on the theory behind Sarawak taxation:

> He heard that they had been informed that the Dayaks of Sarawak pay only $1, but those were only in particular districts where those Dayaks were liable to be called out at any time to go on the warpath, to find timber for buildings and do any other work the Gov't thought fit to call upon them to do –, but that all others paid $2 per married man however as they [the Trusan Muruts] were new people and at present not very well off His Highness stated that for this year only $1 per family should be paid; provided that it was paid in within the next month and if not $2 must be paid in.[4]

Ibans migrating to areas beyond the Second and Third Divisions sometimes had to pay the higher exemption tax. In 1891 the Rajah founded an Iban colony in the Baram, in order to have a source of military manpower close to Brunei Bay. By 1908, however, there was no longer any likelihood that Iban warriors would be needed in this area. The Resident of the Fourth Division concluded that there was no reason why the contentious

[1] For the Krian in 1871 the Resident reported that 1 134 Iban families were liable to pay tax. Of these 543 paid in *padi* and 585 paid in cash at the rate of eighty cents per door, while six were excused on account of illness: T. S. Chapman, Second Division (Krian) report for October to December 1871, SA.

[2] Order dated 22 April 1880, in *Orders which have not yet been cancelled . . . 1863 to 1890*, p. 29.

[3] Maxwell Second Division report, 1 Aug 1881, *SG* 179 (1 Sept 1881).

[4] Entry for 3 March 1887, 'Mr [O. F.] Ricketts Trusan Diary', SA. The Trusan, in what is now the Fifth Division, was acquired from Brunei in 1884. Large numbers of Second Division Ibans were in the habit of traveling to this area to work jungle produce, which is presumably how the Muruts had learned that they paid a lower tax: see ch. 6 for Iban voyaging of this kind. In this passage 'Sarawak' refers to the whole State, not just to the Sarawak River.

newcomers should continue to pay at only half the rate demanded of the original inhabitants of the Baram. 'They certainly cause the government more trouble than all the Kayans put together', he observed.[1] He eventually raised Iban taxes to the two-dollar level, drawing angry protests from the Baram Iban *penghulu*, whom the Rajah dismissed on his next visit to the Fourth Division.[2]

Upriver Ibans have traditionally displayed acute sensitivity on the subject of taxation, rather like the Scotch-Irish mountaineers of America's Appalachian highlands. In later years they were prone to view with deep suspicion any attempt by the Government to alter what they had come to regard as the customary door tax rate of one dollar per year, and misunderstanding over taxes was a major cause of the Asun unrest which commenced in 1931.[3] By paying their door taxes, the Ibans were acknowledging the sovereignty of the Rajah, a fact which was well understood by all. Those who failed to pay were by definition in a state of rebellion, a not uncommon situation in upriver areas of both the Second and Third Divisions, as we shall see.

In addition to the taxes and other revenues which it collected, the Government depended heavily on contributions of labor and services from the population. In any year when expeditions did not take place, Residents would normally 'call out' the Ibans to build and repair footpaths. In many low-lying areas of the Second Division these consisted of logs laid end to end over mud, continually rotting away or being rooted up by wild pigs. The people also provided materials and labor for the construction of Government buildings. In 1894, when the fort at Kabong needed rebuilding for the second time in thirty years, the Krian Ibans supplied all the timber and shingles, and the Kabong Malays (who did not pay exemption tax) supplied unskilled labor. The total expense to the Government was $307.94, of which $185.92 went to pay the wages of Chinese carpenters and $122.02 was expended on nails and other hardware.[4]

Chinese traders carried the mails in their sailing boats between Kuching and Simanggang free of charge, and handled small quantities of Government freight gratis without complaining. To communicate with the interior Residents depended on the *tongkat* system. A *tongkat* (literally meaning

[1] R. S. Douglas Fourth Division May report, *SG* 511 (1 July 1908).

[2] R. S. Douglas Fourth Division May report, *SG* 558 (1 July 1910).

[3] The Asun rebellion is mentioned in ch. 10. Under Vyner Brooke, the various Sarawak capitation taxes were gradually standardized. Malay service was completely abolished by 1924, and thereafter all Malays paid tax at the rate of $2 per adult male. Likewise all non-Moslem natives (not just Ibans) eventually paid at the somewhat lower rate of $1 per family. This system remained in effect until the inauguration of Local Authorities after World War II.

[4] Cheyne Ah Fook to D. J. S. Bailey, 18 Sept 1895, 'Kabong Letters', SA.

'stick') was a section of Malacca cane, capped by a brass head with the Rajah's seal, which accompanied any official verbal summons. A longhouse receiving one had to provide a messenger to convey the *tongkat* and the message to the next longhouse, and so on until it reached its destination. Special indicators on the *tongkat* signified real urgency. A bit of charred wood symbolized the fire of a torch, meaning that it must be passed by day or night, while a tuft of feathers, representing flight, conveyed the same meaning. A string with a certain number of knots (*temuku tali*) might be attached to tell in how many days a man being summoned should appear at the fort. To keep track, he untied one knot each day.[1] Delaying or misdirecting a *tongkat* was one sure way to draw a Resident's wrath. A Chinese trader whose boat had overturned on its way up the Batang Lupar was still punished for not delivering his *tongkat*: 'The defendant had no business to play the fool with Gov't summons and he is fined $10.'[2] A Government spear, dispatched in the same way as a *tongkat*, remained the signal for the loyal Ibans of the Second Division to gather at Fort Alice prepared for up to a month of military service.[3]

Owing in part to continued reliance on local skills and labor of all sorts, the Sarawak Government learned to live within its limited means. In 1880 a Singapore newspaper observed with wonder that the Brooke administration spent less than one dollar per year per head of population, compared to figures ranging from $6 to $19.46 for the various states of Malaya.[4] It should be borne in mind, however, that the Rajah made no effective effort to exert himself in numerous fields which were already the ordinary business of Government in Malaya. Epidemics of smallpox and cholera continued to take a heavy toll of lives in Sarawak. When smallpox threatened, the Government ordered Malay vaccinators to work, and missionaries cooperated in treating the downriver people, but their combined efforts were crude and ineffective. 'The smallpox continues to hang about and there were outbreaks in various places during the month', Bailey reported from Simanggang in April 1905, adding that a police constable, a Sarawak Ranger, and various Chinese and Malay children had been among the fatalities. His report continued:

I place little reliance on vaccinating as carried out by the different Malays who were told off for this work. They are more keen to collect their fees than to do their work

[1] Information on the use of *tongkat* is from Benedict Sandin.

[2] 'Government *v.* Go Ah Ka', 1 June 1897, Simanggang CCB, SA.

[3] A missionary once witnessed the excitement generated in a downriver Iban village by the arrival of a Government spear to summon the men on expedition service during the period of Bantin's rebellion (described in ch. 7): Edwin H. Gomes, *Seventeen Years among the Sea Dyaks of Borneo* (London, 1911) pp. 77–8.

[4] Reprinted in *SG* 164 (30 April 1880). Based on the 1877 'census', which estimated Sarawak population to be 222,000, and the Government's expenditure of $197,150 in 1878

honestly and conscientiously. The system of obtaining fees is a wrong one and offers too much temptation to the ordinary Malay.

Were it not for the assistance offered by the Revds W. Howell and G. Dexter Allen [both S. P. G. missionaries] the number of persons who are properly vaccinated in this Division would be very small.[1]

There was no trained Government medical staff beyond Kuching, nor did the Rajah feel an urgent need for any. In 1903, only a year after the most infamous cholera epidemic in Sarawak history had killed more than a thousand persons in the Second Division alone, he informed the Anglican Bishop that he saw no reason to station a mission doctor in that district: 'I don't see what work he could find as a medical man alone – I don't think he would get a dozen patients a year in a healthy region such as Simanggang.'[2]

By the turn of the century the institutions of outstation government, blending Brooke innovation and local custom, had themselves become part of the fabric of local custom. Except in times when epidemics raged or punitive expeditions scoured the upriver country, life for the British officers resolved itself into a routine. Daily, weekly and yearly events assumed the nature of minor rituals, giving a regular rhythm to existence. Every day at Simanggang the Resident presided over the law court and corresponded with his brother Residents about such problems as absconded Chinese coolies and wandering Ibans who had deserted their families, while his most junior British assistant sold stamps and dispensed harmless medicinal concoctions to the people for two cents a dose. Every evening the officers entertained each other at their quarters in Fort Alice, where all of them lived, and sometimes spent long hours chatting with visiting Iban or Malay headmen. Every night at eight o'clock the Iban corporal of the guard raised the drawbridge over the *cheveaux-de-frise* which surrounded the fort, to the following long-drawn chant:

Pukul delapan uduh bebunyi, tangga udah tarik, pintu udah kunchi, orang enda tau niki agi-i-i-i.

'Eight o'clock has sounded, the bridge is raised, the gate is locked, no one can come up any more.'[3]

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[1] Bailey Second Division April report, *SG* 473 (1 June 1905); for another account of vaccination efforts under the Second Rajah, see Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 96.

[2] Charles Brooke to Bishop [G. F. Hose], 15 July 1903, SA. The cholera epidemic of 1902 is mentioned in ch. 7, after the account of the Cholera Expedition of the same year. The Rajah's letters reveal that he was frequently on bad terms with the Anglican Mission for a variety of reasons, and his outright rejection of the Bishop's suggestion may have been a reflection of this hostility. But it seems more likely that he was simply reluctant to admit that anything could ever be seriously wrong with his beloved Second Division.

[3] Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 37.

In earlier, more dangerous times, this had signified that the British officers were locked up for the night, safe inside the fort, but by 1900 it was pure ritual.

Every Sunday the junior officer inspected the jail, the squad of trained Sarawak Rangers,[1] and the few other Government buildings. Then the Resident and his men paid an official weekly visit to the Chinese bazaar, just down the grass-covered slope from Fort Alice:

> Bailey went ahead carrying a long staff like a drum major, B. G. [Baring-Gould] and I followed, while the Corporal of the Guard, and a policeman, brought up the rear. We perambulated the whole length of the bazaar, the Chinese shopkeepers standing in their doorways to salute the procession. Every now and then Bailey stopped to ask, 'How is trade now?' or, 'What is the price of gutta?' If any dirt was found the unfortunate shopkeeper had to sweep it up before the Resident's eyes.[2]

Every spring Fort Alice, always kept in immaculate condition, received an especially vigorous cleaning and a new coat of whitewash. Every summer all the British officers went to Kuching for Race Week, a time for letting off steam, contact with brother officers, and civilization. There was even a triennial ritual, the meeting of the Council Negri, when not only the senior British officers but the principal natives as well gathered at the capital to hear the Rajah's speech on the state of the country, to confer with each other, and to celebrate.[3]

The three British officers who were normally stationed at Simanggang by the turn of the century spent a great deal of time on tour; only rarely were they all together at Fort Alice. On their travels they met with local leaders, heard the news of the other rivers in the Division and collected tax receipts. Above all they settled court cases, sometimes in the various other forts, but also frequently in boats, in the 'five-foot way' of Chinese bazaars, and on the

[1] The Sarawak Rangers, the only trained military force in the country, was a company-sized unit of not more than 400 men, recruited mainly from the Ibans of the Undup River, Second Division. Based in Kuching, the Rangers were available for emergency service elsewhere in the country, and frequently served as a dependable nucleus among undisciplined Iban levies on punitive expeditions. A squad of Rangers was normally posted to Simanggang, but in most outstations locally recruited 'fortmen', who were not trained, manned the forts. It is easy to confuse the two types of native troops, since before 1872 the Rangers were known as the Sarawak Fortmen: see *SG* 48 (2 Sept 1872). For a description of the Sarawak Rangers, see Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*. p. 376; Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, p. 147. The unit was disbanded in 1932 and replaced by a field force of the Sarawak Constabulary. It has recently been revived as the Malaysian Rangers, Sarawak's (and Sabah's) contribution to the Malaysian armed forces.

[2] Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 56.

[3] A typical Council Negri meeting is described in ibid., pp. 142–4.

child- and chicken-covered verandahs of Iban longhouses. The Rajah refused to pay his men any extra allowance for travel in their own district. He knew that in general the local people considered it a pleasure to entertain them and to hear the news of the outside world. 'I have had about ten years and more of outstation experience', he wrote in 1911, 'and I can safely say that it never cost me anything extra and then I lived on a very limited salary.'[1]

On a typical tour of the Second Division an officer first proceeded from Simanggang to Betong, traveling up the Skrang River by boat, then overland by trail. At Betong, on the Saribas, he lived in the dovecote-like attic above the main roof of Fort Lili, sweltering when the sun beat down on the ancient shingle roof. After a busy few days of hearing cases among the argumentative Saribas Ibans, he went downriver to Pusa, a low lying, mosquito-plagued Malay settlement. After finishing there he continued by river and sea to Kabong, built over the mud flats at the mouth of the Krian, passing by the site of the 1849 Battle of Beting Marau on the way. His final stop was three hours' paddle up the Krian River at Saratok, again in Iban territory. The entire tour took as much as a month to complete, depending on the amount of work encountered.[2]

Of all the recurring events that marked the passage of time in the Second Division, certainly none was more exciting than the annual visit of the Rajah. At least once a year Charles Brooke came back to Simanggang, where he maintained a small bungalow, known, like its big brother in Kuching, as the *astana* (royal residence). There was a nervous flurry of activity in Fort Alice as the Rajah's boat, flying his unique and famous swallow-tailed ensign and paddled by a crew of yelling Malays, swept up the river. The sovereign's naval background and his keen instinct for political symbolism both prompted him to insist that the ancient and undependable battery of muzzle-loading cannon should render him the correct salute. A. B. Ward describes the resulting scene, as of about 1900:

> Those old cannon were possessed of devils. They jibbed, they spat, they misfired, they recoiled on to their sides. The gunners got rattled and tried to blow themselves up. The fort was filled with black smoke and blacker language. Then when it was all over the Rangers snatched up their rifles and tore down to the landing stage to form a guard of honor, everybody hot, wet and worried, just in time to receive the Rajah as he stepped ashore.
>
> 'Ah! How many guns did you fire, Ward?'
>
> 'Twenty-one, Rajah.'

---

[1] Charles Brooke to Treasurer [F. H. Dallas], 12 July 1911, SA.

[2] Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, pp. 44–54.

'Well, I only counted twenty; are you sure you are right?' And the old man's eyes twinkled wickedly.[1]

Charles Brooke paid frequent visits to all the outstations, but for him Simanggang held a special significance, and his stays there were charged with emotion. In the place where he once expressed a wish to be buried, he reverted to his old role as Resident of the Division:

Every morning the Rajah came over to the Fort and sat in the court room to hear personal petitions from a crowd of Dayaks assembled from all over the district. There they sat, squatting on their haunches, their jaws working on a quid of betel-nut, their eyes concentrated on the little person of the great White Rajah. The chiefs picked their way through the mass to touch his hand, beaming with delight when he addressed a few words to them. He never forgot a face and knew everybody's family history.[2]

During three days in 1899 the Rajah settled twenty-two court cases at Fort Alice, including nine land disputes, four divorce and desertion cases, three inheritance quarrels, one application for a gun license, one application for a permit to work alluvial gold, one dispute over a boat, and one slander case (calling someone a slave).[3] The following samples of his justice, taken verbatim from court records, were all Iban cases:

[No title]

Sa'an had not paid his tax for five years. Kumpang Pali [the *tuai rumah* of a longhouse near Betong, and a well known Saribas Iban leader] says he is one of his '*anak biak*' [an inhabitant of his longhouse] and does not understand working.

H.H. the Rajah orders him to enter the steamer and go down to Kuching for a little work.[4]

A notation indicates that Sa'an then paid his tax and was promptly released.

In a typical Iban paternity case the Rajah imposed a fine of thirty katties of brassware, or the equivalent $21.60 in cash, in accordance with customary law:

Kudai (female) *v.* Lanyau (Balau Dayaks)

Plaintiff states that she is enceinte by defendant. They have not *mlah pinang* [performed the Iban marriage ceremony] yet. She wishes him to marry.

Defendant denies that the woman is enceinte by him.

Penghulu Dundang states that he does not know that these people were together.

Banum [who was probably the *tuai rumah*] states that the Defendant went with plaintiff three times.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 63. [2] Ibid., p. 64. For the Rajah's wish (never fulfilled) to be buried at Simanggand, see ibid., p. 146.

[3] Various cases, 3–5 July 1899, Simanggang CCB, SA. [4] 23 May 1889, Betong CCB, SA.

Pengiran [Matali] is of opinion the case is proved.

H.H. the Rajah orders defendant to pay ten katties to Government, ten katties to plaintiff, and if the child is born alive, ten katties additional to plaintiff.[1]

On another occasion the Rajah tried to restore domestic tranquility to an Iban family:

Panting *v.* Renda (female) (ulu Undup)

Plaintiff says that his wife ill-treats his child and he doesn't wish to live with her anymore.

Defendant will not agree to being divorced.

H.H. the Rajah orders the husband to receive his wife and she is not to be ill tempered.[2]

But in spite of her sovereign's best efforts, a later entry in the court records reveals that Renda's husband still refused to receive her.

Such cases indicate how thoroughly the Second Division Ibans availed themselves of the Resident's court, a point discussed at greater length in the following chapter. More than the members of any other cultural group, the Ibans regarded their Rajah with complete familiarity. They were as ready to bring their most trivial disputes before him as they would have been had the most junior of cadets been presiding over the court.

The people knew that their right of appeal to the Rajah in all matters did not end when he left the Division. Confusion sometimes resulted, as he did not hesitate to answer petitioners on the spot, without necessarily consulting the Resident. He did not, in other words, believe in the sanctity of proceeding through administrative channels. On one occasion an Iban well known for his love of legal disputes appeared before the Resident, A. B. Ward, having obtained a letter from the Rajah stating that he was personally acquainted with the man's father and grandfather, and felt sure that the land he claimed was rightfully his. Two days later the opposing party in the dispute arrived from Kuching 'with a similar smirk and an identical letter'. Secretly delighted, Ward referred both letters to the Rajah, who replied in some annoyance, 'Do what you like with them.'

'I settled the land question', Ward relates, 'and then had the supreme pleasure of fining both parties for taking an undue advantage of His Highness.'[3]

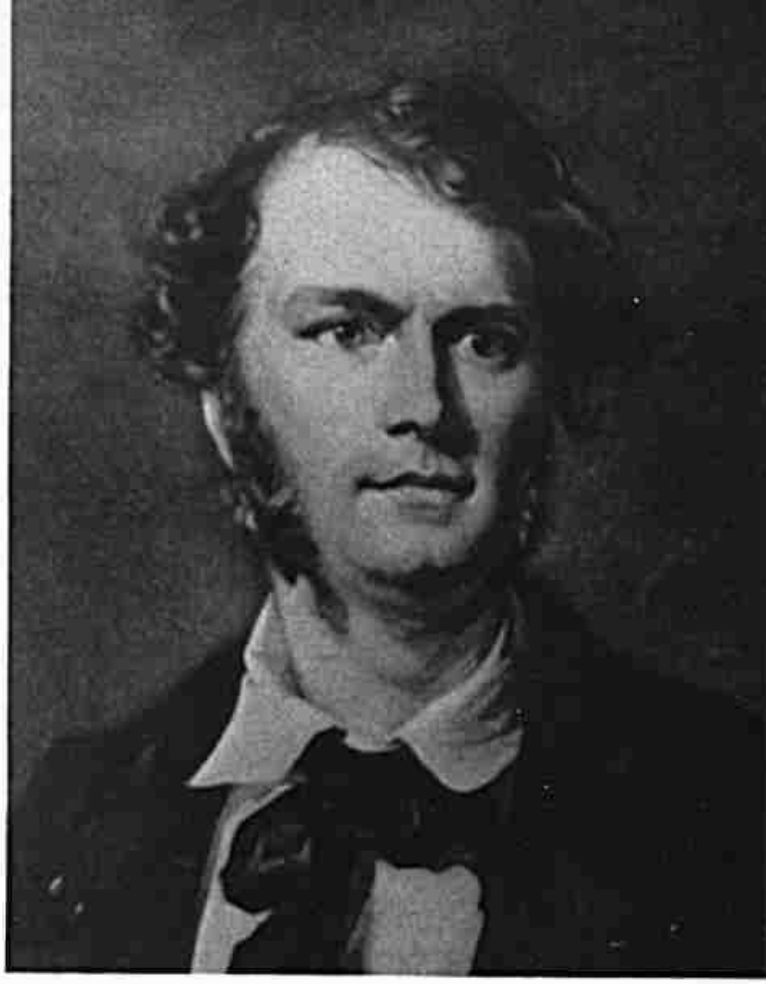
Even when the Rajah was not personally involved in its day-to-day

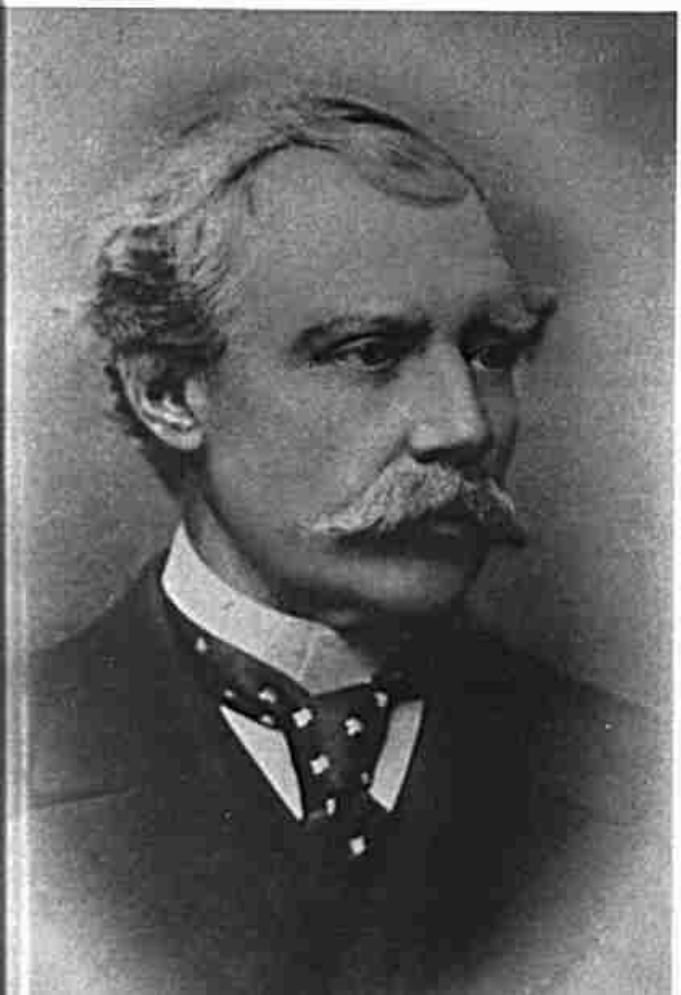
[1] 17 Feb 1897, Simanggang CCB, SA. Iban fines were often expressed in weights (*katis* or *pikuls*) of brassware. There were forty *katis* in one *pikul* (133⅓ pounds). By this date, such fines had fixed cash equivalents: a *pikul* was $28.80; five *katis*, the lowest fine commonly used, was $3.60. A. J. N. Richards, *Dayak Adat Law in the Second Division* (Kuching, 1963) p. 35.

[2] 18 Feb 1897, Simanggang CCB, SA.

[3] Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 129.

Sir James Brooke, First Rajah of Sarawak, ruled 1841–68





Sir Charles Brooke, Second Rajah of Sarawak, ruled 1868–1917

Francis Richard Ord Maxwell, Resident, Second Division, 1872–81

Demetrius James Sandford Bailey, Resident, Second Division, 1890–1908

Two Iban Longhouses

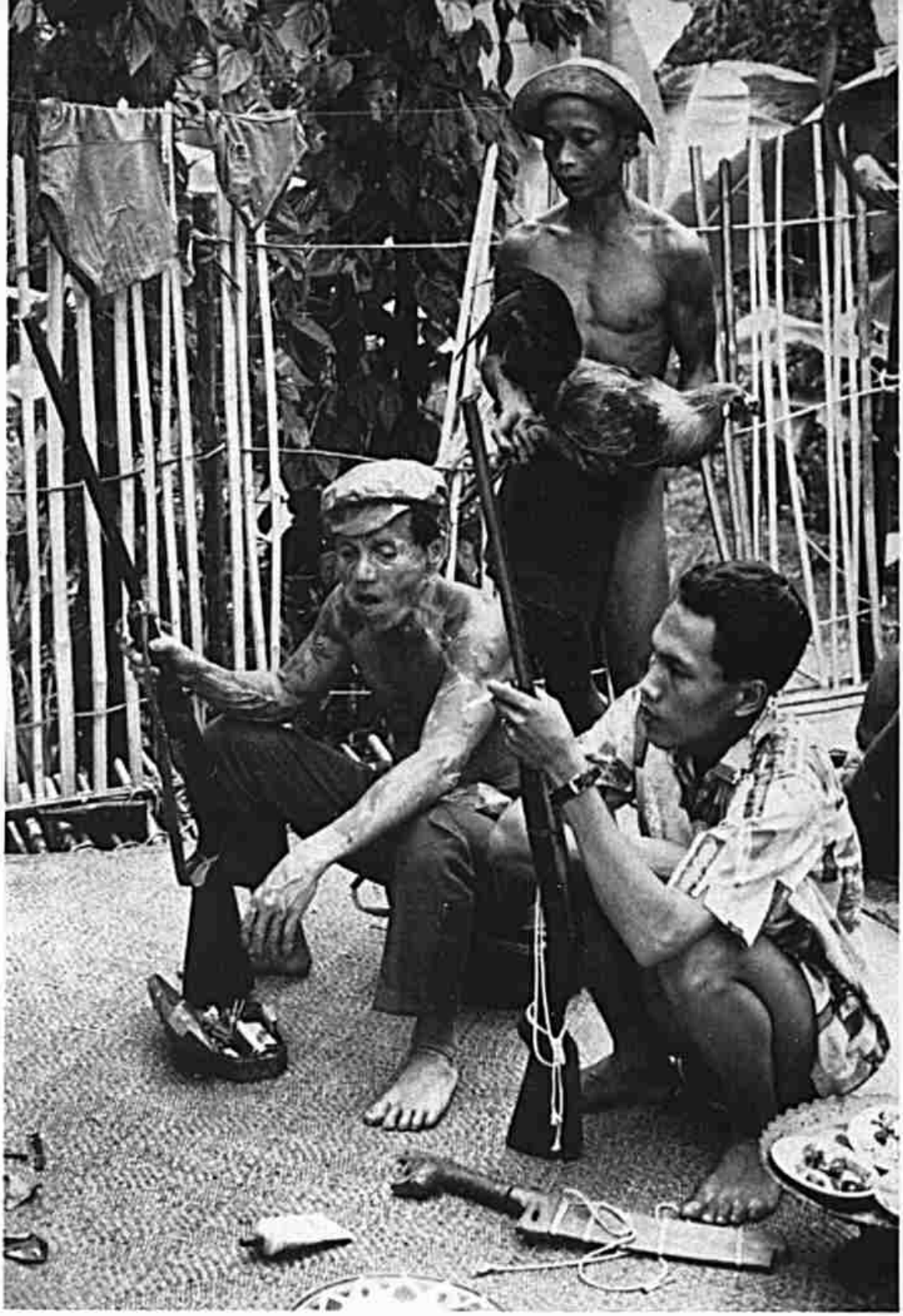
Entanak longhouse, within walking distance of the Saribas District Headquarters at Betong, is representative of the substantial Saribas style reflecting the advent of rubber cultivation and peaceful conditions, unique to this portion of the Iban country in the Brooke era (Chapter 6). Such houses may include glass windows, solid hardwood pillars and floors, and Western-style attic staircases.

This five-door longhouse on the main Rejang River above Pelagus Rapids, Third Division, is typical of the more impermanent structures still to be found wherever shifting cultivation is the mainstay of Iban life

Two views of a Typical Outstation

The view upstream from Fort Alice, Simanggang, headquarters of the Second Division, looking beyond rows of Chinese bazaar shophouses toward hills that mark the border with Indonesia (formerly Dutch Borneo)

Looking downstream toward Fort Alice over Batang Lupar mud flats, exposed at low tide. Simanggang was the setting for two of Somerset Maugham's short stories, 'The Outstation' and 'The Yellow Streak'; the latter is based on his 1921 adventures with the Batang Lupar's powerful tidal bore.



The warrior tradition is far from dead in the Iban country

In 1965, during the period of 'Confrontation' with Indonesia, these two men from the upper Entabai, Kanowit District, Third Division, were among the many who enrolled in border scout units formed to police the long land frontier. Here they participate in a departure ceremony presided over by a veteran (in jungle hat) who had served as a tracker with British forces during the post-war anti-Communist 'Emergency' campaigns in Malaya.

Asun of Entabai, last of the famous Iban rebels (Chapter 10), photographed in about 1955

A modern family of Ibans ascends the Paku branch of the Saribas River, Second Division, near sites where their 'pirate' forefathers resisted Royal Navy expeditions in 1843 and 1849 (Chapter 3)

In later years the Saribas Ibans accepted Christianity in large numbers, profited from mission education, and were pioneers in the cultivation of coffee and rubber (Chapter 6). The scene is Karangan Pinggai, just below the longhouse home of Benedict Sandin, Curator of the Sarawak Museum.

Iban padi paya *or swamp rice at Stambak Ulu, Saribas, Second Division*

The Christians of this community were the first Saribas Ibans to plant rubber in quantity (Chapter 6). Note the dormer windows on their longhouse, which has been in continuous use for more than forty years.

Site of an Iban hill rice (padi bukit) *field, Engkari River, upper Batang Lupar, Second Division*

Cassava plants may be seen growing in the badly depleted soil a year or so following a rice harvest

operation, the Resident's court remained the political heart of the Second or any other Division. The court offered the only social service which the Brooke State consistently provided: access to a rough but comprehensible form of justice. The First Rajah had ruled that Sarawak magistrates should base their decisions on the 'grand foundation' of English law, stripped of formal rules and technicalities,[1] and Charles Brooke continued this policy.[2]

Common sense was always a Resident's principal guide when dispensing justice, and the Second Rajah's men took aggressive pride in their informal methods. Sarawak, they were fond of saying, was the home of much justice but little law.[3] Lawyers were not admitted to plead before Sarawak courts, and until 1928 there was no trained legal officer in the administration.[4] The only regulation on judicial procedure was the Courts Order of 1870, slightly over one printed page in length, which remained in force for fifty-two years. It established a system of four courts, all of which theoretically met both in Kuching and in the more important outstations. There was a Supreme Court 'for the trial of serious criminal and capital cases, or for the decision of any serious cases of slavery'; a Police and General Court for the settlement of simple criminal and civil cases, a Court of Requests for debt cases, and a Native Mohammedan Probate and Divorce Court.[5]

At Simanggang, however, as at most if not all other outstations, the first three of these courts were really all the same institution, designated by different names and meeting on different days of the week, always under the supervision of the Resident or one of the junior British officers. Toward the end of Charles Brooke's reign it became apparent that this informal system was no longer altogether adequate. A. B. Ward writes:

The courts at this time [about 1910] had not been properly defined, so the harassed Resident was expected to do all the magisterial work from fining a coolie a dollar, to holding a murder trial. At Simanggang the court sat every morning with orderly

[1] 'Observations' by James Brooke for the guidance of magistrates, upon his departure from the country in 1850, Templer, *Letters*, II 327; Boyd, 'The Law and Constitution of Sarawak', p. 22.

[2] 'In thinking over whether to be under the Indian or English code of laws I prefer the latter which we have always looked on heretofor as our precedent.' (Charles Brooke to Gribble [Sarawak's legal agent in London], 24 May 1907, SA.) Nevertheless T. Stirling Boyd notes that even before the Courts Order of 1922 officially adopted the Indian Penal Code for Sarawak use, Residents sometimes relied on it as well as on certain English law books: 'The Law and Constitution of Sarawak', p. 82.

[3] Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 203.

[4] Boyd, 'The Law and Constitution of Sarawak', p. 1.

[5] Order dated 14 Nov 1870, in *Orders which have not since been cancelled . . . 1863 to 1890*, pp. 11–13.

and dignified procedure, but in the sub-stations it became a promiscuous sort of affair.[1]

The Supreme Court met on Mondays, on the rare occasions when there was business for it. The 1870 Courts Order specified that all capital crimes, which included murder and leading a Chinese Secret Society, had to be tried by a 'mixed jury' made up of members of more than one ethnic group. Juries included Chinese and Malays, and sometimes Ibans.[2] The jury requirement was not popular with Residents, who often found it exceedingly difficult to obtain a conviction in capital cases. Bailey complained that Malays in particular failed to understand the whole idea:

He [the Malay] considers that it is the duty of those governing to see to and settle cases, and to exercise the rights of governing, and he fails to understand why he should be dragged out of his own groove of everyday life to assume the position of a judge of fellow men, for which role neither his head nor heart are fitted.[3]

The Resident could, however, simply refuse to accept an acquittal,[4] and in any event all decisions by an outstation Supreme Court were subject to review by the Rajah. He was never unduly concerned about such concepts as double jeopardy. In 1910, after a Simanggang jury had acquitted four Chinese who in the opinion of the Resident were undoubtedly guilty of murder, the Rajah put them all in jail for a year and then banished them from the country.[5]

The Police and General Court took up most of the Resident's time. Any dispute, no matter how small, was grist for this mill, from Iban marital infidelity to a riot in the bazaar. At Simanggang, late nineteenth-century cases included one for the theft of a handkerchief, disputes over the ownership of cats and pigs, and innumerable Iban quarrels about land, fruit-trees, boats, and heirloom jars and brassware. The court was the Resident's chief weapon against all classes of offenders and undesirables. Bailey once imposed

[1] Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, quotation from p. 135; pp. 202–3. Ward was the author of the Courts Order of 1922, which eventually replaced the 1870 regulation.

[2] Third Division court records from the 1870s prove that Ibans were employed for jury duty even in that relatively turbulent region: see, for example, 'Government *v.* Nanang and Blakas', 4 Sept 1877, Sibu CCB, SA.

[3] Bailey, Second Division March report, *SG* 496 (3 May 1907).

[4] After failing to obtain a conviction in a murder case at about this time, Bailey told a Simanggang jury: 'He does not accept this ruling and will reopen the case before a fresh jury at Saratok or Kabong.' (9–10 Jan 1907, Simanggang CCB, SA.) The case was apparently the same one which prompted him to complain about the unsuitability of Malays for jury service.

[5] Ward, who was the Resident in question, comments, 'The sentence may not have been in accordance with the canons of English law, but it satisfied everyone and emphasized the advantage of a personal despotism.' (*Rajah's Servant*, p. 137.)

a $20 fine on the bazaar shopkeeper who catered to the Fort Alice mess for the heinous offense of running out of soda water.[1]

The Court of Requests, which according to the 1870 Order met on Wednesdays, could and frequently did send debtors to jail for a period of up to five years. The Native Mohammedan Probate and Divorce Court, exclusively concerned with Malay domestic cases, met under a senior Native Officer or mosque official twice a week, or when necessary. There was no equivalent court for either Chinese or Ibans, but the customary law of both was recognized, as interpreted by Native Officers and community headmen, subject to the Resident's discretion.[2]

The customary law (*adat*) of the various ethnic groups was the third foundation of the Sarawak legal system, the first two being common sense and a vague adherence to English legal principle. Like everything about the Government of Charles Brooke, acceptance of local *adat* grew quietly and naturally from his early outstation experience, reinforced by the theories of his uncle.

During his first ten years in the Second Division, Charles could not have hoped to impose any drastic change on the Ibans, and in the process of learning to live with their customs he also learned to respect and even to enforce them. In his own outstation days he had sometimes carried this practice to unusual extremes. In about 1854 some Skrang Ibans had brought a case before him in which a man had violated custom by marrying again after the death of his wife without going through the ritual necessary to break the period of mourning (*ngetas ulit*). Charles had written,

> Properly speaking, he should have given a feast in the first instance, and afterwards awaited the arrival of an enemy's head, by which the spirits of death would have been appeased. The chiefs brought the complaint of this man's disobedience to me;

[1] 'Government *v.* Seng Kim', 17 Nov 1907, Simanggang CCB, SA. 'A jovial soul, Seng Kim, was purveyor by appointment to Fort Alice mess. It would be beyond me to say how many bottles of whisky and gin he had supplied during the course of many years, or how many tins of dubious fish had found their way from the shelves of Chop Seng Kim to the mess table; it must have amounted to vats and mountains.' (Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 29.)

[2] In 1911 the Rajah inaugurated a Chinese Court in Kuching. It was empowered to hear Chinese domestic and civil cases, and was also expected to provide advice to magistrates throughout Sarawak on cases involving Chinese custom. (No similar courts were ever contemplated for the outstations.) The Rajah intended the court to express his growing admiration for the Sarawak Chinese, and his feeling that they should be more closely associated with the Government. See his remarks reported in *SG* 578 (17 April 1911); also 'A Chinese Court', in *SG* 582 (16 June 1911). He built a handsome new building to house the court: *SG* 608 (16 July 1912); but the Chinese community took little interest in the institution, just as it took little interest in the Rajah's efforts to promote Chinese education in Mandarin. The court ceased to function early in the reign of Vyner Brooke, soon after the death of its first and only president, Ong Tiang Swee. Today the original court building houses the Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

and on hearing the pros and cons, one good natured old chief exclaimed, 'What matters! Let us follow the customs of the white men, who are never "Ulit".' However, as the majority of the party were for the support of their forefathers' customs, I sided with them and the man was punished according to Dayak law, and had to pay one fowl, one pig, and a small piece of iron.[1]

The future Rajah had merely noted that the customary requirement for a head was likely to prove troublesome 'after all their enemies had been conquered'.[2]

Slowly and cautiously Charles had moved to eliminate some aspects of local custom, both Iban and Malay, which he considered bad, and this process continued down through the years under his officers. In the Second Division, he did not take the first major step until after the period of the Malay Plot and the final defeat of Rentap. Then, in about 1863, he gathered the Saribas Ibans and Malays and, after discussion, achieved agreement on what he called 'preliminary reforms in the social system'. In future, weights and measures were to be used in all trade transactions. It was decided to ban the Iban custom of prohibiting all traffic on an entire river after the death of a great leader. Finally, the headmen agreed that the fines which they imposed were to be limited in size, and 'their customs to be regularly in accordance with their forefathers' practices'.[3] Ample room was left here for interpretation by future Residents.

Down through the years Brooke courts recognized and enforced Iban *adat*, but under the Second Rajah no attempt was made either to embody it in a written code, or to eliminate the variations which existed from river to river. It was apparently recognized that either course would tend to violate the subtle, flexible spirit of customary law.[4] In 1890 the Government sponsored two meetings of Iban leaders in the Second and Third Divisions, of which the *Sarawak Gazette* reported,

We believe that we are correct in stating that these meetings of all the principal Dayak chiefs in the different capitals of their Divisions were only recently determined on by His Highness, who desires that there should be more intercourse between the chiefs, and various 'adats' which in some places differ, should be talked over by these chiefs, and uniformity properly established; this latter work will of course be arduous, and must take much thought and time. . . .[5]

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[1] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak* I 128–9.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., pp. 309–10.

[4] A modern scholar of Sarawak *adat* has written, 'The customary law is alive and always changing; it lives by the spirit, and not by the letter. If it is put into the strait-jacket of statutory form it will perish or, if it lives, it does so by disregarding the statute.' (Richards, *Dayak Adat Law in the Second Division*, p. 5.)

[5] Editorial, *SG* (1 Dec 1890).

The article went on to hint that in future grand councils of Iban leaders from throughout the State might be held every three or four years. But evidently the Rajah thought better of this idea, which came to nothing. In 1910, when A. B. Ward suggested that Iban customary law in the Krian should be altered in certain respects to conform with practice elsewhere in the Second Division, the Rajah's son and heir stoutly defended diversity:

> I am told to inform you that the customs and 'adat' amongst the Dayaks are not to be altered.
>
> As His Highness rightly observes the Dayaks observe different customs in different districts. . . .
>
> Kindly see that no alterations are made in the Dayak 'adat' and that the 'adat lama' be recognized and continued. . . .[1]

Even in a region where the pace of change was slow and administrators remained at their posts for long periods, officers must have frequently wished for some more concrete guide to the complexities of Iban *adat* than the advice of the *penghulu* and Native Officers, who were always consulted as customary legal authorities. In 1915 the Resident of the Second Division compiled a list of Iban offenses and fines which, although merely intended to serve as a guide to magistrates, nevertheless probably had the effect of fixing the *adat* to some extent.[2]

The Rajah's respect for custom was rooted more in practical than in philosophical considerations, although it was reinforced by idealism. His officers were careful to point out that while the maintenance of *adat* might be repulsive to European feelings, it was necessary from the Iban point of view, and hence necessary for the orderly operation of the Government. In an

[1] Vyner Brooke to the Resident, Simanggang [A. B. Ward], 3 Jan 1910, SA.

[2] A. B. Ward, 'Notes on Certain Sea Dayak Fines and Customs Recognized in the Court at Simanggang', in Richards, *Dayak Adat Law in the Second Division*, pp. 88–113. This version includes annotations added to Ward's list by officers who served at Simanggang after 1915. Another version, without the annotations, is given in *SMJ* x 17–18 (July-Dec 1961) 82–102.

Iban *adat* was not formally codified until 1932, during the reign of the Third Rajah, and then only for the Third Division. In that province, disputes between Ibans who had migrated in from many different areas of the Second Division proved difficult to settle when the disputants adhered to different customs. Those who were not satisfied with case decisions accused the Government of violating *adat*, and resulting rumors to the effect that the Brookes were flouting custom were a factor in the Asun unrest which broke out in 1931 (see ch. 10). To eliminate disagreements, Iban customary law in the Third Division was standardized, after consultation with all the *penghulus* and published in romanized Iban and in *jawi* script in Malay (for the guidance of Native Officers): *Tusun Tunggu Daya (Iban) di Third Division di Baroh Pegai Prentah Sibu* (Kuching, 1932). Revised editions were published in 1941 and 1955. The Iban customary law of the Second Division, where the confusion created by a mingled population originating in different river systems did not exist, was not codified until 1961 (published in the 1963 version edited by A. J. N. Richards, cited earlier in this note).

incest case heard at Simanggang in 1895 the magistrate recorded, 'A *pemali benoa* [propitiatory sacrifice] of one pig only is to be given and the people are informed that it is not because the Court believes that their paddy crop is a failure because of this offence that the pig is [ordered to be] given but because it is their custom.'[1] Just before he attended a celebration with some recently rebellious upriver Ibans in 1905, Bailey wrote:

> I hope the peace makings will come off successfully this afternoon. We have to entertain them at a 'drunk' this evening in the Fort. A nuisance but one must follow out some of these (horrid) old customs however much one may personally object to them.[2]

Even when the Rajah was in fact quite obviously acting to alter the customs of the country, he preferred to see himself as working within a traditional framework. In an 1868 circular on slavery he wrote, 'The following regulations are not to be considered at present strictly as Law, but may simply afford assistance to those in charge of [out]Stations, and after a certain time may become *custom*.'[3] Like his uncle, Charles was fond of pretending that a reform was not a reform at all, presenting it instead as reversion to some older, purer tradition. In the circular just quoted, for example, he refused to recognize the right of a master to sell an outdoor slave (*ulun diluar*), arguing that such dependants were not originally 'bona fide slaves' at all, but 'might be looked upon much in the same way as the lower class people of England in Feudal times'. Thus it was that 'despotic and oppressive' chiefs who in former times had sold such people had been acting contrary to their own custom, Charles Brooke said.[4]

He further softened the already mild character of Sarawak slavery by outlawing the ill-treatment of slaves, forbidding them to be transported in or out of the country, and requiring that any transfer in slave ownership be registered in court. He also directed that any slave should be able to purchase his freedom for a maximum price fixed by Government.[5] In 1883 he discussed with the members of the Supreme Council in Kuching a measure for the

[1] 'Dembok *v.* Mambang', 18 March 1895, Simanggang CCB, SA.

[2] D. J. S. Bailey to F. A. W. Page-Turner, 7 April 1905, 'Bailey Letters', SA.

[3] Emphasis in original: 'Proceedings of the Supreme Council, June 24, 1868', in *Orders which have not yet been cancelled . . . 1863 to 1890*, pp. 114–15.

[4] Ibid., pp. 115–16. James Brooke, in introducing the first code of laws in Sarawak Proper in 1842, had also presented it as a return to Malay custom: see ch. 3.

[5] Ibid. See also Order dated 14 Nov 1882, ibid., p. 119. Residents regularly recorded slave transferrals together with other court cases: 'Copy-Certificate of Tanjong's sale to Saat. Rejang. This is to certify to whom it may concern that Tanjong indoor slave of Barendam of Blawai has this day been purchased by Saat also of Blawai for the sum of three piculs of guns duly paid in my presence. Signed H. B. [Hugh Brooke] Low, Resident-in-charge.' This is a Melanau case from the Third Division: 17 Oct. 1877, Sibu CCB, SA.

abolition of slavery, to be implemented at some later date, but three years later he withdrew the measure on the grounds that domestic slavery had become 'practically a thing of the past'.[1] The institution was not formally abolished in Sarawak until 1928.[2]

Although slavery was practiced by Ibans and other pagans as well as by Malays, it was a sensitive issue in the eyes of both James Brooke and his nephew because they assumed that any direct attack on it might particularly offend the Moslem aristocrats, whom they always regarded as the single most critical political element in the State. The Second Rajah's cautious approach to this key problem was broadly typical of his statecraft in general. His Government perpetuated a blend of tradition and mild innovation which, over decades, put powerful roots into the Sarawak soil. Because the Government addressed the people in terms which they could understand, they never failed to have definite ideas about their own relationship with the Brooke regime. In the next two chapters this proposition will be examined at length, with regard to the upriver and downriver Ibans of the Second Division.

[1] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 318.
[2] Order S–2 (Slavery), *SGG* (16 July 1928).

6 | Charles Brooke and the Downriver Ibans

At one level of his complex personality, Charles Brooke became an Iban. 'You must remember', he once wrote to the Bishop of Sarawak, 'I know the Dayak mind and feeling much better than I do my own brothers [and] countrymen – "A hundred times better" – and this is part of my nature now, and will be for all my time.'[1] Not surprisingly, there was a quality of intimacy between the sovereign and his Iban subjects for which it would be difficult to find any parallel in the colonial history of other Southeast Asian states.

The story of a long and bitter feud between a famous Resident and the Rajah's most trusted Iban warrior will serve to illustrate the point. The Resident was Demetrius James Sandford Bailey, ruler of the Second Division for eighteen years from 1890 to 1908. The Iban warrior was Penghulu Dalam Munan, son of Minggat. The quarrel between the heavy-set English official and the wiry Sea Dayak chief,[2] which broke out shortly before the turn of the century, is still remembered in Sarawak.

Munan's father, Minggat, had long served as a Government war-leader, and his name is mentioned frequently in *Sarawak Gazette* accounts of the various campaigns against Iban rebels in the upper Katibas and Batang Lupar Rivers during the 1870s and 1880s. Minggat was originally from the Paku branch of the Saribas, but had migrated, together with his family, to the Awik tributary of the Krian, which then became the family home. By 1890 he was old, wealthy and laden with prestige won in battle. He decided to go on a trading voyage, of the kind which had recently become fashionable among the Krian and Saribas Ibans. He let it be known that he already had

[1] Charles Brooke to Bishop [W. R. Mounsey], 20 Dec 1909, SA. It should be noted that the Rajah wrote this letter from his country home, Chesterton House near Cirencester, where in his later years he normally retired during the winter months to lead the supremely English life of a country squire. He was passionately fond of fox hunting: Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, p. 220.

[2] Bailey, a legendary character in the eyes of later Sarawak officers, weighed sixteen stone five pounds (229 pounds): note dated 4 Dec 1905, 'Bailey Letters', SA. For his photograph, see plate between pp. 170 and 171. Munan is pictured in full war regalia in Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 23. For genealogical details on Minggat and Munan, see Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, pp. 106, 112.

plenty of money; what he would seek was a certain type of extremely rare and valuable old Chinese jar; so exceedingly rare, in fact, that there is some doubt as to whether any jar of such size and form exists at all.[1]

Minggat collected his followers, including his son Munan, and their departure was duly recorded by the Resident of the Second Division in his monthly report for October 1889:

> At the end of the month Minggat and Munan headed a party of nearly two hundred Dayaks on a trading venture and in search of work, jungle produce &c. They left Kabong taking with them upwards of $10,000 but owing to Minggat falling ill and being laid up for a few days in the Kuching hospital a number of them returned to Kalakka [Krian]. Subsequently however Minggat and Munan with 105 followers and $4500 sailed by the steamer *Normanby* to Singapore.[2]

The Government knew that they were interested mainly in accumulating old ceramics, and that their destination was Sumatra.

The party proceeded to Panai on the east coast of Sumatra, where, according to the Iban version of events, Minggat went to see a local raja, carrying a letter from Charles Brooke, and wearing a grand uniform decorated with gold braid which the Sarawak ruler had given him. The Panai raja received him like visiting royalty, after which Minggat began to look for old jars. But after spending a few months at Panai and purchasing many things, he fell ill and died.[3]

Munan and the rest of the party returned to Sarawak by early 1892.[4] A dispute promptly arose over who was to succeed Minggat as *penghulu* of the Awik. Munan, as eldest son, felt that he should follow his father, or at the very least that one of his three brothers (Rantai, Antau and Enggah) should hold the position. His mother, Indai Runai,[5] who was herself a powerful figure in local affairs, agreed with him. But in July 1892 Charles Brooke visited the district in person and presided over the selection of a man named Ampan.[6]

[1] Minggat said he was seeking a *guchi* jar the size of an eggplant. But an ordinary *guchi*, one of many types of old Chinese jars recognized by Ibans, is at least two feet tall. From Benedict Sandin.

[2] Deshon Second Division October report, *SG* 288 (1 Jan 1890).

[3] From Benedict Sandin. See also 'Iban pegika Sumatra, Jawa enggau ka Malaya', in Benedict Sandin, *Peturun Iban* (Kuching, 1967).

[4] Cheyne Ah Fook to D. J. S. Bailey, 16 May 1892, 'Kabong Letters', SA.

[5] This teknonym means 'mother of Runai'. Runai was Munan's eldest sibling, a sister. According to Iban custom, parents are addressed in polite conversation as mother or father of the eldest child, regardless of its sex.

[6] According to Bailey's report, the Rajah assembled the Ibans, who chose Ampan and three other *penghulu* 'by free election'. See his July Second Division (Krian) report in *SG* 320 (1 Sept 1892). It was more common at this period for the Resident to select a new *penghulu*, subject to confirmation by the Rajah, after consultation with the heads of longhouses.

Although Ampan was married to Munan's niece, and although Munan's brother Antau was simultaneously appointed to be *penghulu* of the nearby Seblak stream, Munan and his entire immediate family were much annoyed by the selection of Ampan. The contemporary *Sarawak Gazette* account states that the Ibans themselves made the decision, but Munan's descendants have to this day placed the blame on the senior officer in the Division, D. J. S. Bailey.

A tremendous family quarrel rapidly developed between Munan, backed by his powerful relatives, and Ampan, the new *penghulu*, backed by the Resident. The first major crisis involved a dispute over an area of virgin jungle in the upper Awik. Munan and his party argued that before his death Minggat had, according to Iban custom, reserved this area as a place where future generations might procure timber and other materials for house-building.[1] It was not to be felled for farming. But Ampan proceeded to ignore this restriction, distributing the land to his followers to farm. Munan, outraged, immediately went to the Saribas, where he sought the advice and assistance of the chiefs in the Paku, his father's place of birth. According to the version remembered by his relatives, he was merely seeking support for his interpretation of the *adat* governing such restrictions on old jungle. But Ampan promptly went to Bailey, and told him that Munan was in the Saribas visiting people with the object of stirring up rebellion.

Bailey was already angry with Munan for his apparent inability to decide where he was going to live. Munan had recently married Subang, a step-granddaughter of the famous rebel Rentap, whose home was on the Julau, a nearby tributary of the Kanowit River, Third Division. He kept moving back and forth between the longhouse of his new wife and his mother's home on the Krian. The annoyed Resident was willing to believe the worst of this ambitious young leader. After receiving Ampan's report he visited the Krian and ordered Munan to go back to his wife's home on the Julau. Bailey reported: 'He received my note at Saratok in the bazaar and publicly refused to do so. I had no option therefore but to arrest him and send him to Kuching for Your Highness to deal with as you saw fit.'[2]

The Iban version of this confrontation is considerably more dramatic. Munan, who had received a summons stick (*tongkat*) from the Resident calling him to the meeting, armed himself with a sword and came downriver in a boat manned by his bravest warriors. At the landing-place he saw Bailey

[1] An area reserved in this fashion is known as *pulau*, which can also mean an island, as in Malay, or any isolated, unfelled patch of jungle. The Ibans call a reserved area *pulau papan*, *pulau baan*, *pulau rutan*, *pulau danan*, i.e. an island for boards, an island for building, an island for rattan. Normally only very great leaders (such as Minggat) have the authority to impose such restrictions. From Benedict Sandin.

[2] Bailey Second Division June report, *SG* 331 (1 Aug 1893).

standing with a brace of pistols in his hand. A fight nearly took place. One of Munan's followers restrained him, saying 'If he kills you, we will have to kill him; many would be killed.' At the same time, Pengiran Matali, the Senior Native Officer from Simanggang, who was with Bailey, advised the Resident that he should not try to force Munan to come ashore from his boat. Instead, Pengiran Matali offered to conduct Munan to Kuching himself for judgement before the Rajah.[1]

Bailey's report confirms that Pengiran Matali did accompany Munan to Kuching, where the Iban was put in jail. The *Sarawak Gazette* reported, 'Of late, contrary to strict orders, this chief has been holding meetings, and sounding the people with his agreeable manner and fascinating way of speaking, with a view to building up an Eldorado, in which he was to be chief and legislator.'[2]

The Rajah immediately traveled to the Krian, where on 25 June 1893 he met with 300 local Ibans at Saratok and told them that Munan was an ambitious mischief-maker who interfered in the affairs of rivers where he had no authority. He blamed much of the trouble on Munan's formidable mother, Indai Runai, and directed that her large longhouse should be broken up within six months. He ordered Munan's brother, Antau, deposed from his position as *penghulu* of the Seblak tributary. Finally he made Munan's family deposit a pledge of ten old jars valued at $1500, which would be forfeited to the Government if they misbehaved in future.[3] The Rajah explained, somewhat prematurely as things turned out, that fighters like Munan were no longer what Sarawak needed:

> The days of warlike expeditions were past and the people must now turn their minds to useful occupations; what he [the Rajah] wanted now were communities who would cultivate the soil and make themselves useful members of society generally; he no longer required that they should be great warriors.[4]

Bailey appeared to have won the battle, but, like most disputes in which Ibans are involved, this one did not end quickly. Munan spent a few months in

[1] From Benedict Sandin, who is certain that the incident took place at Kabong, not Saratok as implied in Bailey's report. See also Sandin, 'Iban pegi ka Sumatra, Jawa enggau ka Malaya', in *Peturun Iban*.

[2] *SG* 330 (July 1893). A later article in the *Gazette* accused Munan of having preached 'home rule' to the people of the Krian: *SG* 336 (2 Jan 1894).

[3] The pledge, or conditional fine, was a favorite device of Residents for dealing with particularly remote or troublesome subjects, usually Ibans. A potential future offender would be required to place valuable property, usually old jars or brassware, in the fort. This wealth would be returned to the owner only after a certain period of good behavior, or if certain conditions were observed. This was a stock method of attempting migration control.

[4] *SG* 330 (1 July 1893).

the Kuching jail, where he had a number of important dreams auguring future success as a war-leader. The Rajah, despite his remarks about a need for peaceful cultivators of the soil, remained aware that Munan's great skill as a fighter might prove useful in the future. The Iban leader had first performed heroic service for his ruler fully thirteen years earlier, when he was still a very young man serving under his father, Minggat, during a Government campaign against dissident Ibans in the upper Rejang. Although wounded in previous fighting, Munan had served as an emissary to the hostile party, and, at the special request of the Rajah, remained as a hostage in their hands when their leader came down to Kapit to parley with the Government.[1]

At the end of the summer of 1893 the Rajah released Munan from his brief imprisonment on the condition that he should migrate to Sibu, the headquarters of the Third Division on the lower Rejang, and henceforth stay out of Krian affairs.[2] His mother remained in the Krian, convinced that her family had been unfairly humiliated,[3] but Munan himself moved to Sibu as ordered, and established a longhouse close by the Government fort. For three years he stayed away from his old home, and he had no further trouble with Bailey during this period.

Throughout these years Munan's fame, wealth and prowess were increasing, for he became the mainstay of any Government-sponsored war expedition operating in the Third Division. In February and June of 1895, for example, he twice led picked forces of Ibans against Kenyahs in the far interior of the Rejang who were accused of murdering a Malay, a Chinese trader, and some Saribas Ibans.[4] No British officer accompanied these expeditions, which were of a type not uncommon at this period in Sarawak history.

Early in 1897 Munan's feud with Bailey resumed under changed circumstances. Munan was older and no doubt far more self-confident as a result of his exploits in the Rejang, while Bailey was now plagued by a stubborn Iban rebellion in the headwaters of the Batang Lupar in his own Second Division. This rebellion, led by Bantin, is described at length in the next chapter. Bailey's management of the situation did not meet with the approval of the Rajah, who at first accused him of being too harsh with the rebels, but later decided that more stringent military measures were called for. The Rajah devised a plan for a pincers movement against Bantin. One pincer would consist of a Government force moving up the Batang Lupar from Simanggang, in

[1] *SG* 178 (1 Aug 1881). See ch. 8 for the background to the upper Rejang (Balleh) unrest of 1880–1.

[2] Cheyne to Bailey, 4 Sept 1893, 'Kabong Letters', SA.

[3] Cheyne to Bailey, 10 March 1896, 'Kabong Letters', SA.

[4] Bampfylde Third Division February report, *SG* 351 (1 April 1895); *SG* 366 (1 July 1896).

the time-honored manner followed since the days of the Sadok expeditions. The other pincer would be made up of Ibans led by Munan, who would cross from the Rejang watershed, marching over the tangle of jungled hills between the Second and Third Divisions, in order to attack the rebels from the very headwaters of their own river.

It was shortly before this campaign that Munan renewed his bid to regain his lost following in the Krian, attempting to lure the population away with him to the Third Division, and thereby arousing the intense hostility of Bailey. On 25 May 1897 Munan's brother Rantai appeared in the Krian, bearing a letter in English which the Rajah had given to Munan in Sibu. It was dated 13 February 1897 and read as follows:

> Munan asks permission to go to Kalakka [Krian] to arrange that his mother and some of his relations shall join him in the Rejang.
>
> This permission is granted.
>
> C. Brooke[1]

Cheyne Ah Fook, the Chinese court writer who was in sole charge of the principal Krian Government post at Kabong, did his utmost to defend the interests of his Resident in Simanggang. He told Rantai that the Rajah's letter, which was nothing if not ambiguous in wording, meant only that Munan could remove his mother, Indai Runai, and other close relations, and not everyone who might claim some degree of relationship with him. But in spite of Cheyne's warnings, Rantai's arrival threw the entire Krian Iban population into an uproar. The excitement increased when Munan himself appeared in June, promising that he would lead any who might choose to follow him to new homes on the Bintulu River, an area which was just becoming popular as a destination for Iban migrants from the Second Division. Exercising his considerable oratorical powers before excited public gatherings, Munan denied that there was any limit to the number who might accompany him.

Cheyne reported to Bailey that more than 400 families were preparing to migrate, some even cutting down their valuable illipe nut (*engkabang*) and jelutong trees to make boats in preparation for the exodus. He wrote:

> It is said that three-quarters of the Awik and one-half of the Krian are removing – the result of these visits [of Rantai and Munan] are that [on] their return, some went to buy boats, some making them using their *engkabang* trees, and others downriver are using their *jelutong* wood. It is better for them to destroy their fruits by making boats out of it than leaving them to be eaten by others who stay behind.[2]

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[1] The text of the Rajah's note is enclosed in Cheyne to Bailey, 25 May 1897, 'Kabong Letters', SA.

[2] Cheyne to Bailey, 7 June 1897, 'Kabong Letters', SA.

After a visit to the Krian, Bailey wrote to the Rajah and asked him to clarify his instructions to Munan.[1] The Rajah then sent two of his most trusted officers, C. A. Bampfylde and F. H. Deshon, to investigate the situation and to bring Munan back to Kuching. After traveling to the capital with them, Munan returned to the Krian on 23 June with definite permission from the Rajah to take thirty families with him to the Rejang.[2] But neither Munan nor Bailey was satisfied with this compromise solution.

Early in the new year, 1898, Munan again appeared in the Krian. This time he informed the people that the Rajah had just authorized him to lead a war party against Bantin's rebels in the upper Batang Lupar, while another expedition advanced up the same river from Simanggang. He recruited a number of the Krian Ibans to accompany him on his mission. After it was over, he said, his rival, Penghulu Ampan, would be dismissed and his own brother, Rantai, would be installed in Ampan's place. The pledge of ten old jars taken from Munan's family in 1893 would be restored, and anyone who wished to migrate with him to the Rejang would be allowed to do so. In conclusion Munan claimed that the Rajah had told him in Kuching, 'I am sending Tuan Bailey back to Europe and replacing him here with my son.' The horrified court writer, Cheyne Ah Fook, reported all of Munan's statements to Bailey.[3]

The Resident was skeptical when this extraordinary news arrived from Kabong. In his monthly report, published in the *Sarawak Gazette*, he wrote,

> On the 10th February I received information from the Kalakka [Krian] that certain Dayaks were being called over to Rejang to take part in an overland expedition against the upriver Dayaks at the head of this river [i.e. the Batang Lupar], but the statements made were of so incredible and monstrous a character that I refused to believe them and put the whole story down as the usual Dayak invention.[4]

But the 'monstrous' information from Cheyne turned out to be altogether accurate. Munan's expedition against Bantin, which the Rajah had planned without informing Bailey, took place toward the end of February and was judged to have been a great success. Munan's party of picked Iban warriors completely surprised the enemy, burned twenty longhouses, killed eighteen of Bantin's followers, and took one captive.[5] The proposed second part of

[1] Bailey to Charles Brooke, 28 May 1897, copy in 'Kabong Letters', SA.

[2] Cheyne to Bailey, 24 June 1897, 'Kabong Letters', SA.

[3] Cheyne to Bailey, 7 Feb 1898, 'Kabong Letters'. Cheyne quotes Munan as repeating the Rajah's alleged statement in Iban: '*Tuan Bailey di buai aku ka Europa anak aku ganti ditu.*' *Di buai* means literally 'to be thrown out'.

[4] Bailey Second Division February report, *SG* 387 (1 April 1898).

[5] The expedition is fully described in 'The Expedition from Rejang to Batang Lupar', *SG* 387 (1 April 1898). Before the news of Munan's success was received, the Rajah wrote to H. F.

the pincers movement, an expedition from Simanggang, never took place, perhaps because the Rajah deemed it no longer necessary.

Bailey first learned of the Rajah's plan when Munan's force of 430 warriors, bearing freshly taken heads, appeared before the Government post at Lubok Antu on their victorious progress down the Batang Lupar.[1] But if he was shocked by this unexpected development, there was worse news in store for him the following month. The Rajah, long dissatisfied with his handling of the Bantin rebellion, wrote a curt letter ordering him to proceed to Europe on furlough immediately.[2] The following month the ruler sent his son, Rajah Muda Vyner Brooke, and another European officer to Simanggang, where they took Bailey's place. Munan's public boast made in the Saratok bazaar less than two months previously was thus completely fulfilled.

It would be an exaggeration to say that Bailey had been sent home in disgrace. The Rajah preferred strong-willed men in his service, and although he sometimes clashed with them violently, he usually forgave them later. So it was with Bailey, who returned to Simanggang after six months in England, and served again as officer in charge of the Division until 1908,

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Deshon, Resident of the Third Division, scolding him for having allowed news of the operation to leak out before the event, and explaining why he had not confided in Bailey:

'No news of the force yet – I must write a few words to you on this score – I complemented you much in the way you managed all the preparations of the start – but one part you have not carried out according to my instructions – viz. the secrecy to be kept – You write and tell [C. S.] Pearse [Treasurer of Sarawak] of the force when it is a secret in Kuching – not a soul knowing anything about it except myself and now – [Q. A.] Buck mentions it all to me, and Dr Hiller at another time – showing me that it must be the common talk of the Sibu bazaar. I have done my best to hush them, and when I left Simanggang not a word was known by Bailey or others except the Rajah Muda whom I confided in strict secrecy – giving him a letter to give Bailey should Munan come through –

'It may be difficult to keep secrets, but it is the recognized rule in services that there is a time when mouths and pens should be silent – especially when the success of an expedition and the lives of hundreds depends upon it – You must know as well as I do – that once known in Simanggang that the news would fly upriver like an electric spark and cause a *balla* [Iban force] of thousands to stand against the approaching force.' (Charles Brooke to H. F. Deshon, 22 Feb 1898, SA.) But Cheyne's letter of 7 February from Kabong proves that Munan himself had already told everyone in the Krian about the proposed raid well before it took place, and that it had immediately become the talk of that river, and probably of the entire Second Division.

[1] Bailey Second Division February report, *SG* 387 (1 April 1898).

[2] 'I have just received your letter and by it have come to the conclusion that you do not intend to follow my instructions . . . and now in consequence I direct you to hand over the affairs of the station to H.H. the Rajah Muda and Mr Kirkpatrick – and I shall be obliged if you will proceed on your furlough to Europe without delay as your remaining in the Batang Lupar will only tend to defer the settlement of the affairs in the upper waters.' (Charles Brooke to Bailey, 16 March 1898, SA.)

when he went home to die, exhausted by his never-ending campaigns against Bantin and the upper Batang Lupar Ibans.[1]

Munan went on to even greater warlike exploits in the Rajah's service. In the councils of the Government he achieved a position of trust never matched by any other Iban in all the years of Brooke rule. Charles Brooke acknowledged his unique status in 1900 by granting him a special title, *Penghulu Dalam*, meaning the *penghulu* who is in the ruler's inner circle, upon whom the sovereign most depends.[2] He was henceforth recognized as the senior Iban leader in the Rejang. He held a seat on Council Negri, and, like Pengarah Ringkai of Betong, was one of the few Ibans who received a regular salary from the Government as a native magistrate authorized to hear cases in court. He was one of the first Ibans in the Third Division to begin planting rubber, and the Government sought his advice when establishing its own experimental rubber plantations at the Matang estate near Kuching in 1903.[3] By the same period Munan owned the first brick shophouse ever constructed in the previously all-wood Sibu bazaar, as well as two other

[1] There is no truth in Robert Payne's allegation that Charles regarded Bailey as a third-rate officer and tolerated him only for lack of better material: *The White Rajahs of Sarawak* (London, 1960) pp. 149–50, nor is there any shred of evidence that Bailey was a doddering, drunken incompetent, as Payne also suggests. Charles violently disapproved of his officers drinking to excess, and it is inconceivable that he would have left a man whom he did not basically admire in charge of his favorite Division for almost twenty years. After Bailey's death, the Rajah several times paid tribute to his long and valued service, and in 1911 he gave his old Resident's surviving brother permission to fly the Sarawak flag over the family home in Kent, a unique and unmistakable gesture of the highest royal esteem: Charles Brooke to the Resident of Western Borneo, 16 May 1910; Charles Brooke to Col Bail. y of Ightham, June 1911, SA. Payne apparently picked up his information directly or indirectly from Vyner Brooke, who evidently never forgot hardships suffered under Bailey's strict discipline during his outstation duty as Rajah Muda: Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 35.

[2] Charles must have originated the title *Penghulu Dalam*; certainly there is no precedent for it in Iban custom. But in Malaya, *dalam* means a royal residence. As part of a title it signifies 'such offices as are attached to the Sultan's actual residence': cf. *bentara dalam* (court herald); *biduanda dalam* (court messenger). As a category, *orang dalam* are 'people who have entrée to the palace': R. J. Wilkinson, *A Malay-English Dictionary* (Mytilene, 1932) 1 250–1.

The proclamation granting the title is recorded in the Rajah's letter book, SA: 'Know ye all men that MUNAN Dyak of Rejang has my authority to enter the Government Service, with the title of Penghulu Dalam, to assist with the settlement of Dyak cases in the Sibu Courts or whenever ordered – the appointment to hold good from 1 November 1900 for three years when it will be renewed or not as the government may see fit. Under my hand and seal this 1st day of December, 1900. (signed) C. Brooke, Rajah.' After Munan's death in 1914, there was no *Penghulu Dalam* until 1931, when the Third Rajah bestowed the title on Tuai Rumah Ujang, a lower Rejang (Bawang Assan) man of Skrang origin: *SG* 932 (1 May 1932). According to Benedict Sandin, Ujang held the title for a short time only.

[3] *SG* 448 (2 May 1903). Munan's earliest gardens were of the local *getah rian* (*Isonandra gutta*) with which the Government was also experimenting at this time. He later planted plantation rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*) as well.

shops upriver at Kapit, and was a famous figure in Sarawak. The *Gazette* observed in 1903:

> Munan, the Dayak chief who was wounded in the late expedition by a spear through his leg, is now able to walk and called on the Rajah at Sibu. A conversation with this intelligent individual always leads to a lot of useful information, whether to do with politics, planting manufacture [*sic*], or which is most useful, the characters good or bad of his own countrymen. He is a rich man and now owns the best brick shop in the Sibu bazaar, and he is a just and generous man to his own people and is trusted by them.[1]

After the events of 1898, described above, Munan never revived his conflict with Bailey. He was content to remain at his adopted home in Sibu.[2] He died there in 1914, wealthy in money, in prestige, and in human head trophies, all of them taken loyally fighting for the Government.[3] According to tradition in the Krian, everyone who had wished to follow him to the Rejang in 1897 eventually did so. But although his old rival for the Awik leadership, Ampan, was eventually dismissed for taking bribes, no close relative or direct descendant of Munan ever regained any position as a senior Iban leader in that river.[4]

The saga of Munan's long struggle with Bailey throws light on several of the more unusual features of Charles Brooke's rule. To a student of orthodox colonial governments it might appear bizarre in the extreme that the chief of state should trust an illiterate if able Iban war-leader over a senior English member of his service, and yet this is what the Rajah did at the height of the crisis. Not only did he authorize Munan to organize and execute an unprecedented military action without any immediate European supervision; he deliberately neglected even to inform the officer in charge of the district involved. Written sources prove that he went so far as to tell Munan that Bailey was going to be sent home before Bailey himself knew of his impending downfall. The Rajah was well aware of the old ill-feeling between the two men and should have known that Munan, even though he might have been pledged to silence, would not be able to resist using his knowledge to discredit his opponent. There are few secrets in Iban longhouses.

If the supremely personal and sometimes very unorthodox methods of

[1] *SG* 448 (2 May 1903). The expedition mentioned, on which Munan had been wounded, was against Bantin in the upper Batang Lupar in March 1903. It was the last one which the Rajah led in person. See ch. 7.

[2] For many years Munan's longhouse was located on Pulau Kertau, an island in the Rejang, now uninhabited, which faces the site of the Government fort in Sibu.

[3] Munan's obituary is in *SG* 666 (16 Dec 1914).

[4] From Benedict Sandin. Dampa, a grandnephew of Munan, is presently (1966) *penghulu* of one portion of the Awik.

Charles Brooke must have occasionally vexed his subordinates, his officers also realized that they were the basis of a valuable bond between his Government and the people. The ruler's trips to areas like the Krian, his periodic appearances in outstation courtrooms, and above all the well-known right of final appeal to him in any dispute, all helped to make him a familiar and comprehensible figure. The Ibans could and did understand him, in a way they could never have comprehended a chartered company, or some more distant monarch.

Nevertheless they understood him on their own terms. They did not always accept the policies imposed by his Residents, as the long record of Iban rebellion makes clear. The more remote upriver people, loath to abandon their freedom to fight and migrate as they saw fit, often found it more agreeable to comprehend him as an enemy, the greatest of all enemies, than they did to obey his commands. Even the more accessible downriver Ibans who followed the Rajah on expeditions, of whom Munan was a prominent example, instinctively tended to regard the Government as an antagonist.

In its comparatively frequent dealings with the downriver Ibans, the Government was normally represented not by the Rajah, but by his subordinates: Residents like Bailey, Native Officers like Pengiran Matali, and court writers like Cheyne Ah Fook. In the Iban view of things, the more important officials like Bailey were natural opponents to men of stature like Munan. They saw the conflict between the two as a highly entertaining contest between rival giants, with the Rajah on another, even more exalted plane. Munan's victory (and there was no doubt in Iban minds that it was a victory) proved that even Residents could be defeated, sometimes by an appeal to the Rajah himself, if one were crafty or persistent enough. 'Clever mousedeer' (*pelandok*), the cunning little animal who outsmarts his powerful enemies, is a popular figure in Iban as well as in Malay folklore.[1] As we shall see, Ibans everywhere stubbornly resisted Brooke efforts to control migration, and were frequently successful.

Yet while the downriver Ibans often regarded the Government as an adversary, this did not prevent them from seeing themselves as participants, in various ways, in the functioning of the Brooke State. They viewed it as wholly natural that an outstanding leader like Munan should be a confidant of the Rajah, accepted by him on equal terms with Bailey. In later years, and today in retrospect, some have come to resent the privileged political position

[1] For Iban *pelandok* stories, see Benedict Sandin, 'The Animals Go Tuba Fishing', *SMJ* VII 8 (Dec 1956) 326–34, and the commentary in George Jamuh, Tom Harrisson and Benedict Sandin, '"Pelandok", The Villain-hero – In Sarawak and Interior Kalimantan (South Borneo)', *SMJ* XI 19–20 (July–Dec 1962) 529–33.

which was in general accorded to Malay Native Officers. But there is no evidence that they felt this way during the years of the Second Rajah. If they recognized that their own leaders occupied inferior political positions, with a few notable exceptions, it was certainly more important to them that they were frequently called upon to man expeditions, to fight and to take heads in the service of the Rajah.

The close contact which Brooke officers maintained with the people and their habit of taking native mistresses enabled the Ibans to assume much the same attitude of familiarity toward Residents as they did toward their own war and migration leaders. The British officers were not regarded as common men, of course; they were epic figures. Ibanized versions of their names appeared in songs and stories, and are recalled to this day. Bailey was 'Tuan Bili'. Deshon (a particularly hard name for Ibans to pronounce) was 'Tuan Lengsong'. Page-Turner, a veteran Second Division Resident under both Charles and Vyner Brooke, was 'Tuan Starna'. F. R. O. Maxwell, in command at Simanggang from 1876 to 1881, was immortalized as 'Tuan Suel'. Many Iban children were named Suel after him, and years after his death in 1897 one of them was a well known *penghulu* of the Lemanak River. The Rajah, 'Tuan Raja', and his armed yacht *Zahora*, 'Johora', with its famous swallow-tailed flag, are likewise still remembered.[1]

Residents, who were frequently very young men, may not have regarded their Iban mistresses as wives, or the offspring of such unions as legitimate. A casual but wholly natural attitude is evident in a private letter written by a young Brooke officer at the turn of the century: 'I am a bachelor as my bitch has gone on "permisi" [vacation] whoreing, I expect.'[2] But a long-standing relationship between an English officer and a local girl did not violate the Iban concept of marriage, even when, in the final years of his service, the officer returned from furlough accompanied by a new British wife, as not infrequently happened. The children of such matches, fully accepted and cherished in the longhouse, could be proud of their unusual ancestry. The name of F. R. O. Maxwell, youngest son of a famous British family in Malaya, appears on one Saribas genealogy which commences fourteen generations earlier with another prestigious forebear, who had originally migrated from Sumatra in search of a wonderful mango tree said to be growing in the navel of the sea, and who married the youngest sister of the Pleiades.[3]

[1] Information in this paragraph is mostly from Benedict Sandin.

[2] Miscellaneous papers, SA.

[3] Genealogy 6 in Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, p. 101. F. R. O. Maxwell was the youngest son of Sir Peter Benson Maxwell and a brother of Sir William Maxwell. He joined the Sarawak service in

Relationships with local women sometimes complicated the involvement of Government officers in local politics, as viewed from the Iban side. Thus in 1886 H. F. Deshon named a separate *penghulu* for the upper Paku River, although previously the entire river had been under one *penghulu* only. This appointment naturally generated resentment among the relatives of the existing *penghulu*, Garran, whose territory was reduced to the lower river only. They remained convinced that the new man owed his elevation to the fact that he had supplied Deshon with an Iban wife.[1]

It was the Resident's court, more than any other Brooke institution, that enabled those Ibans within its reach to feel that they were participants in Government, not mere spectators, much less submissive subjects. Fond of argument and oratory, they were natural litigants,[2] and since the courts recognized their own unwritten *adat* they were never at a loss for words. Successful pleading became a prestige activity, and the courts were an endless source of gossip and entertainment, almost as amusing (and viewed in much the same light) as the traditional Iban sport of cockfighting. Friends and relatives of disputants even gambled on the outcome of court cases.[3]

A. B. Ward, who served in the Second Division for more than eight years, describes the Resident's court meeting at Fort Alice in about 1900:

Early each morning the Court room began filling up with a chattering crowd of Dayaks, Malays and Chinese; some concerned with litigation, some paying in their trivial taxes, others merely moved by idle curiosity to see what was going on; they came up to the fort to while away an odd hour or so, as we might call in at a picture palace.

At about ten there was a great stir. Police arranged wooden benches before the Court table; Dayaks squatted on the floor chewing betel nut; then as B.G. [Julian

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1872 and served almost continuously in the Second Division until 1881, when he left Simanggang for Kuching to become the Resident of the First Division, the highest post under the Rajah. In February 1886 the *Sarawak Gazette* announced his marriage while on furlough to a British woman, who subsequently returned with him to Sarawak. He retired in 1894: for his career, see *Sarawak Civil Service List, 1925*, pp. 74–5.

[1] The new *penghulu*, Kedit, had been the first Saribas Iban to voyage in search of old jars, as related below. Information is from Benedict Sandin, who is the grandson of Garran, the Paku *penghulu* whose domain was reduced. Kedit's appointment is recorded in *SG* 248 (1 Sept 1886), with the comment, 'Penghulu Garam [Garran] of Paku was present and was informed that this new appointment would make no difference in his tuahship.' But apparently Garran's family did not see it that way.

[2] Spenser St John had said of the Ibans, 'The Dayaks are very litigious, and few would have the patience to investigate one of their cases. The amateur lawyers of a tribe are acute in inquiry, quick in making retorts, and gifted with wonderful memories, generally referring to precedents of the customs of their forefathers in the settlement of fresh cases.' (St John, *Forests*, 1 65).

[3] Ward Second Division September report, *SG* 543 (1 Nov 1909); Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 129.

Baring-Gould] and I retired behind the scenes, the Native Officers solemnly took their places. The stage having been set, we followed Bailey into the room with proper dignity, seating ourselves at the green baize table. The Resident's Court was sitting.

Cases were of all kinds, criminal and civil, the latter chiefly concerned with disputes over farming land, or the division of inherited property. The two protagonists occupied the front bench arguing their case in their own language. The Resident did all the cross-examining, writing out a synopsis of the matter as he proceeded, and if either of the parties wandered from the subject, as usually happened, he received a dig in the ribs from the police behind. Witnesses when called also huddled on the front bench; it was all delightfully free and easy with no trappings, barrier or dock.

All Dayaks have the gift of gab, putting their case forward in the most plausible way, but a few direct questions usually found out the party in the wrong and the Native Officer or Dayak Penghulu knew the affair from A to Z, so as a rule it was all plain sailing; there were no lawyers, thank goodness, to complicate the point at issue; judgement was given and the litigants slid off their seat to give way to the next on the list. Sometimes in a communal action things got lively, recriminations followed arguments, partisans squatting on the floor put in their lurid opinions; the police made more noise enforcing order and it really looked as if a deadly feud was in the making; but it was all part of the game. Many times I have seen Dayaks who had spat at each other in court having a glass of 'arak' [distilled spirits] together in the bazaar before proceeding upriver in the same boat.[1]

As noted in the previous chapter, the Rajah encouraged maximum use of the courts in the Second Division, where a relatively peaceful and accessible downriver population made this possible. But Residents often felt that the Ibans were inclined to make too much of a good thing, especially when it came to quarrels over land and fruit trees. Maxwell complained in 1880 about the Saribas Ibans 'preferring to bring all their cases even the most trivial into the fort to having them settled by their own chiefs or by the Malays'.[2] Deshon observed that the Malays did not, in general, share the Iban love of argument:

This is the '*musim babas*' [the season when secondary jungle is being cleared for hill rice farms] – the *babas* season in the Simanggang Court and the mornings are to be found scarcely long enough! It is noticeable that the Malays hardly if ever bring their land cases before the court – the Dayaks always.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 36.

[2] Maxwell Second Division report, 8 Sept 1880, *SG* 169 (2 Nov 1880).

[3] Deshon Second Division report, *SG* 295 (1 Aug 1890). *Babas* or land already farmed at least once previously, hence covered with young second growth, is the subject of most Iban land disputes. See p. 192, nn. 3, 4.

Bailey discovered that Iban women were sometimes among the most contentious pleaders:

Indai Nyanggau, perhaps the most litigious person in the Skrang River (and a worthy successor to her brother the late Sobat who, in his day, attained notoriety for so frequently troubling the land courts) made up her mind to seek a new country but the omens encountered were unpropitious, and, it is reported, that she will not attempt to move until next year. However many persons would gladly subscribe to the required 'sacrifice' (to avert the supposed evil) could they be certain that this extremely objectionable party would take herself off.[1]

In Iban eyes no case was ever really closed, one aspect of the native legal genius which Residents found particularly irritating. After hearing a dispute that was sixteen years old, Bailey protested:

An example is required in this river [the Krian] where finality, in cases that have been fully enquired into, merely seems to imply (from the Dayak point of view) that after a lapse of some years, when certain chiefs and people are dead, those who formerly lost their suits can try again. Fining is an inadequate punishment, in my opinion, for such perversity and low cunning. Appeals such as these add to the Magistrate's work and are nothing more nor less than attempts to discredit the rulings given by his predecessors.[2]

Residents of the Second Division believed that the decreasing supply of virgin jungle preferred by the Ibans for hill rice farming was one major cause of what seemed to be an increasing amount of litigation over already cleared land.[3] J. D. Freeman's modern anthropological research among Ibans in a part of the Third Division where unfelled jungle was still plentiful would seem to support this conclusion.[4] A. B. Ward thought that the end of the Bantin rebellion in 1909 further stimulated the downriver Ibans, who were no longer as frequently called out on expedition service, to plague the courts, which provided 'the next best excitement'.[5] The Government attempted various remedies without much success. In 1890 the Rajah ruled that at Simanggang land cases would only be heard during three months out of the year,[6] but this regulation was not subsequently enforced. Resurrecting

[1] Bailey Second Division September report, *SG* 406 (1 Nov 1899).

[2] Bailey Second Division June report, *SG* 451 (4 Aug 1903).

[3] 'No one fells old jungle now consequently there is more litigation about cleared lands.' (Bailey Second Division August report, *SG* 477 (3 Oct 1905).)

[4] Freeman noted that land disputes were rare among the Balleh Ibans, Third Division, where there was still plenty of 'old', i.e. unfelled, jungle at the time of his research (1949–50): *Iban Agriculture*, p. 22.

[5] Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 128.

[6] Deshon Second Division August report, *SG* 297 (10 Oct 1890).

ancient cases was a finable offense, but, as Bailey observed, and as numerous old court records testify, fines were not a sufficient deterrent.

The Ibans of the lower and middle Saribas river system, together with certain of their relatives (like Munan and his family) who had migrated to nearby areas of the Krian, were among those who made the most enthusiastic use of the Brooke courts, gaining a particular reputation for sea (Dayak) lawyer-like behavior:

> Court work at Betong was always strenuous, the Saribas Dayak was a born contentious litigant. Morning and afternoon the Court would sit, and until late at night people invaded our quarters to bombard us with questions, appeals and applications. Touring the district was not a holiday jaunt.[1]

But in the case of the Saribas folk and their Krian relatives, love of courtroom litigation was only one aspect of a more general enthusiasm for certain types of change, a willingness to take advantage of new conditions brought about by the coming of Brooke rule. The Saribas people were the first Ibans to adopt Western dress, to welcome Christianity without necessarily abandoning Iban beliefs, and to try out new crops, including coffee and later rubber. They were the only Ibans who sought out mission education even before it was available in their own home area. This pattern of behavior set them apart not only from the Ibans who lived along the lower reaches of the other river systems of the Second Division, and from nearly all those in the Third, but also from some who inhabited the headwaters of the Saribas itself, and who remained adamantly traditional in outlook until well after the end of Brooke rule.

The first symptom of the Saribas progress syndrome was the commencement of trading voyages, such as the voyage of Munan and Minggat to Sumatra, described at the beginning of this chapter. The *Sarawak Gazette* had noted that this 1889 venture was part of an already well-established trend:

> The Dayaks of Saribas, the great head hunters of former times, now give their attention to hunting for jungle produce as a means whereby they may become rich enough to acquire the old jars they so highly prize. A party of 31 of this tribe left here on the 1st June by the s.s. *Normanby* for Sumatra via Singapore. There they intend to look for gutta, and speak of Menangkabau as the place from which to start. Another party of the same tribe will follow shortly, headed by Minggat and his son, their head chiefs, who are rich and will take funds to buy up old jars. This tribe of Dayaks has been almost round the island of Borneo and has nearly worked out the produce of the jungles, as far as they were able to penetrate, i.e. through all the region of the British North Borneo Company's territory, through the new

[1] Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 46.

cession of Sarawak territory, and through the southwestern and eastern parts of Dutch territory. The Saribas Dayaks are firm, able bodied men and can well afford to trust to strength of limb and endurance in any climate; and should these meet with success in their venture, some thousands of their fellow tribesmen are ready to make a rush for Sumatra.[1]

Charles Brooke was not surprised by such developments. In his own book, published in 1866, he had testified to the unusual strength and vitality of the Saribas Iban community.[2] Having regarded these people as the most pernicious of 'pirates', he found it logical to assume that they might also excel at more civilized pursuits. In 1870 he wrote:

Saribas was the most troublesome and toughest in holding out, although its inhabitants were from the first the most energetic traders, and as a rule, I shall not make an exaggerated assertion when I say that among the Dayaks the best headtakers are in nearly all cases the best traders; possessing energy for the one work, they are always ready to turn it to account in the other.[3]

According to Benedict Sandin, a Saribas Iban named Kedit apai Enggang led the first long-distance trading voyage, perhaps only a few years after the Tuan Muda had finally conquered Rentap and his hostile faction on Mt Sadok in 1861.[4] The voyagers took rice, brass guns and gongs with them to trade, plus a few silver dollars one of them had earned working as a Sarawak Government fortman at Betong. Using their own boats, they sailed up the coast as far as Putatan, near modern Jesselton in Sabah. The country was disturbed and they were afraid to go far into the interior, but they were able to meet with Dusuns, Illanuns, Bajaus, Sulus and others. Eventually they traded all their goods and returned to their homes on the Paku branch of the Saribas with sixteen old jars.

The story relates that the Paku people greeted Kedit and his returning voyagers with shouts of admiration and surprise. After this, all the young men wanted to go on similar voyages. Almost overnight, cruising in search of ceramics became the latest fashion, among a highly fashion-conscious people. In later years it became the accepted pattern for parties of Ibans to proceed to some distant river, in places as far away as Sumatra, Malaya and

[1] Editorial, *SG* 282 (1 July 1889). The 'new cession' of Sarawak territory may refer to the Limbang River, although it did not officially become part of the State until the following year, or it may refer to the Baram and Trusan Rivers obtained from Brunei in 1882 and 1884 respectively.

[2] See ch. 2, esp. p. 51, n. 4.

[3] Charles Brooke letter to the *Sarawak Gazette*, *SG* 20 (1 July 1870).

[4] From Benedict Sandin; see also his *Pegi Ngiga Pesaka, Peturun Iban*. The story mentions that the Rajah's territory already included Mukah which would put the date after 1861. Kedit is the same man who later became *penghulu* of the upper Paku, allegedly as a reward for supplying Deshon with a wife.

Mindanao, often by commercial steamer. Sometimes they would procure advances of food and supplies from the nearest bazaar, promising to repay the debt in jungle produce. Then they would make small boats and go into the interior in search of produce, most often wild rubber, the sale of which financed their purchases of old jars.

Plainly these voyages were more than mere commercial ventures. They were one more expression of Iban restlessness, a symptom of the wandering (*bejalai*) ethic, and a transmutation of the old habit of coastal raiding. They were sometimes a prelude to Iban migrations into territory recently acquired from Brunei, a point discussed at greater length in another chapter. In the early days the areas to which some 'traders' sailed were unsettled enough to be happy ground for ambitious young headhunters. This was particularly true of the districts around Brunei Bay, still nominally in the power of an ever-weakening Sultanate, but torn by unrest, stimulated in part by rivalry and intrigue between the Chartered Company, the Sultan and the White Rajah. The Ibans undertook their voyages somewhat in the spirit of the medieval European quest, seeking old Chinese jars, sometimes imbued with magical powers, instead of the Holy Grail or fragments of the True Cross. They encountered plenty of danger, including disease which killed many, but they also met with adventure and reaped glory, and those who returned home with fresh and exciting tales of obstacles overcome enjoyed success with the young ladies.

A later group of Saribas Ibans who followed Minggat's example and went to Sumatra became involved in the Acheh War. At one point, as the story is now told, they escaped with their lives only by exercising magic powers of invulnerability.[1] When local Murut tribesmen murdered sixteen Saribas Iban jungle produce collectors in the Trusan River in December 1884, the Sarawak Government used the incident as a pretext to demand the cession of that river from Brunei.[2] On this occasion the Saribas taste for progress may have had fatal consequences. The murdered men were wearing trousers instead of the traditional pagan loincloth, which may have led the Muruts to conclude that they were a party of hated Brunei Malays.[3] Other Saribas

[1] Benedict Sandin, 'Iban pegi ka Sumatra, Jawa enggau ka Malaya', in *Peturun Iban*.

[2] Four Sarawak Malay traders were killed, in addition to the Ibans: F. R. O. Maxwell to Committee of Administration, 3 Jan 1885, in *SG* 228 (3 Jan 1885). Benedict Sandin's 'Utik Alah di Trusan' in *Peturun Iban* tells the story of the ill-fated party, which was led by Utik of Paku, Saribas. For the Rajah's subsequent efforts to make peace between the Saribas Ibans and the Trusan Muruts, in order to allow the former to continue working jungle produce in the Trusan, see ch. 8.

[3] W. H. Treacher, 'British Borneo: Sketches of Brunei, Sarawak, Labuan and North Borneo', *JSBRAS*, No. 21 (June 1890) 20–1.

wanderers, who visited Malaya at a somewhat later date, served as irregular soldiers under Hugh Clifford during the Pahang Revolt.[1]

By far the favorite destination of Iban adventurers in these years was Brunei Bay and beyond. More than once the Sultan of Brunei commissioned bands of young 'Dayak' wanderers to take the heads of dissident subjects in his shrinking domains.[2] In British North Borneo, the Chartered Company employed Sarawak Ibans for many years both as irregular troops and later as police. Quite a few settled down in Sabah, married local women, and never returned to Sarawak. Not long before 1890 an Iban of Saribas descent from the Krian sailed to North Borneo, where he worked jungle produce for four years. With the money thus earned, he paid for a mission education and remained in North Borneo. He became a clerk for a local village headman in the Kudat area, married the headman's daughter, became a Moslem, and replaced the headman when he died. In later years he rose to the position of Deputy Assistant District Officer at Ranau in the Chartered Company administration. After retiring in 1921, he went back to his original home in Sarawak, where he became a Christian, but retained the Moslem name Orang Kaya Kasim.[3]

So persistent and numerous were such ventures to North Borneo that Sarawak Ibans there became known as a race of 'traders', a reputation which they have never enjoyed in their own native land.[4] The Rajah was happy to

[1] Benedict Sandin's uncle, Uyut, was among those who fought in Pahang: see 'Iban Pegi Ka Pahang' in *Peturun Iban*. Another source mentions that the 'Dayaks' who served under Clifford suffered several casualties: W. Linehan, 'A History of Pahang', *JMBRAS* xiv 2 (June 1936) 164–6.

[2] See, for example, the incident mentioned in *SG* 224 (1 Sept 1884).

[3] This account is mainly from Kasim's son, Inspector John Nichol Kasim, who was reared in Sarawak as a Christian Iban, was among the first educated Ibans to be recruited to the inspectorate of the Sarawak Constabulary under the Third Rajah (see p. 341, n. 5), and as of 1966, served as Aide-de-camp to the late Governor of Sarawak, Dato Abang Tun Haji Openg bin Abang Sapi'ee. See also 'A Sea-Dayak D.A.D.O.', reprinted from the *British North Borneo Herald* in *SG* 816 (1 Sept 1921).

[4] As used in Sabah by Owen Rutter and other British writers, the term 'Dayak' usually meant Sarawak Iban, and except in the very earliest years of Chartered Company rule was rarely if ever applied indiscriminately to all inhabitants of the interior. Rutter comments, 'There is one other race of immigrants not so settled – the Dayaks. In the old days it was usual to call many of the upcountry tribes loosely by the name of Dayak, but the Dayaks proper are a totally distinct race, only to be found within the borders of Sarawak. Those who have settled in North Borneo are mainly small traders or collectors of jungle produce, many of them ex-policemen who have served their time; in former years when they were more numerous than they are now, they rendered valuable assistance to the Government on punitive expeditions, for they are a warlike people and dearly love a fight. As a rule they are law-abiding and well-behaved, but, like the little girl in the nursery rhyme, when they are naughty they are horrid, and no more undesirable native could be found than a free Dayak who has "got above himself". They are a race of wanderers, ranging through the jungle and travelling from river to river, and the only Dayak village in the country

see the Ibans taking to 'trade', in part because the traffic in jungle produce which resulted helped newly acquired Sarawak outstations in the Fourth and Fifth Divisions to achieve economic self-sufficiency. But he was not at all pleased about certain other aspects of the voyaging phenomenon. The wanderers often deserted their own families and intermarried with Muruts, Tagals, Dusuns and others in the rivers around Brunei Bay and beyond. They frequently caused trouble in their adopted communities, sometimes by inciting their new in-laws to raid neighboring tribes, while their abandoned wives in Sarawak created headaches for the Residents there.[1]

Above all Charles Brooke did not approve of other governments using Sarawak Sea Dayaks – his Dayaks – for what he chose to regard as unjust, unwise or lawless political ends. He was repeatedly offended by the Chartered Company's practice of recruiting Ibans for police and militia work. In 1885 his Government ordered that no Ibans would be allowed to take employment under that regime.[2] Four years later he protested both to the North Borneo Government and to the Foreign Office over the use of Ibans in the Padas Damit dispute:

For years past the Sarawak Dayaks have gone to North Borneo which is governed now by the British North Borneo Company, for the purpose of working jungle produce, such as rattans, gutta percha and other commodities for the market, taking out passports from our posts to carry on this trade – which has been unquestionably a benefit to both North Borneo as well as Sarawak.

From time to time the British North Borneo Company have entered these men into their military force and employed them on several warlike expeditions.

Your Lordship will understand that these wild people have, if I may so call it been reclaimed by the Sarawak Govt and formed after a long course of years into peaceful subjects, and what I object to most is that these people are being called out to fight against tribes and classes who are friendly to Sarawak as is now the case with Pengiran Shahbandar of Padas Damit, who is represented as a savage, but is really a highly intelligent individual.

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is at Paal, a few miles south of Tenom.' (Owen Rutter, *British North Borneo* (London, 1922) p. 80.)

Elsewhere the same author blames 'wandering Dayak and Arab traders' with having introduced syphilis among the Muruts (ibid., p. 72) and the index to his *The Pagans of North Borneo* (London, 1929) includes five references to 'Dayaks as traders'. Dayaks, meaning Sarawak Ibans, were listed in census returns for North Borneo from 1891 to 1921, 135 being reported in the 1891 census: L. W. Jones, *North Borneo. Report on the Census of Population taken on 10th August, 1960* (Kuching, 1962) pp. 24, 43.

[1] In 1891 Bailey reported that a Krian woman, Munah, wished to divorce her husband, Entimun, who had been away gutta-hunting in Sabah for ten years: Second Division report, *SG* 313 (1 Feb 1892). Court records contain many similar cases.

[2] Report of Committee of Administration meeting, 28 Feb [*sic*] 1885, in *SG* 229 (28 Feb 1885).

. . . I do not approve of Sarawak Dayaks being called out to fight against people who are on friendly terms with us, and thereby bringing the onus of enmity from the native community upon the name of Sarawak, these same Dayaks having all their relations, mothers, sisters, wives, in Sarawak, and who have been known to me for the last thirty years, and are now allured away from trading pursuits by high wages and for the sake of excitement and plunder to be gained in war.[1]

Unfortunately, the Sarawak Government was far from able to control all the Ibans within its own borders at this period, despite the Rajah's implied claim to the contrary, much less to prevent them from going to Sabah.

There was further heated correspondence on the same subject eight years later, at the time of the serious Mat Salleh revolt in North Borneo. First the Rajah took violent exception to a proposal advanced by Governor Beaufort of North Borneo, who wished to form a military colony of 250 Sarawak Ibans on the Inanam River. 'I feel sure these young Dayaks will within a month of being placed in such a locality . . . join Mat Salleh and become an extra danger in your possessions.'[2] Only a month later, in December 1897, he issued a proclamation declaring that all the Ibans being employed by the Chartered Company to fight Mat Salleh would be declared outlaws unless they returned home immediately.[3]

Such incidents were more a symptom than a cause of the Rajah's hostility toward the Chartered Company, which was rooted in rivalry and fundamental ideological disagreement over the role which European capital should play in the East. But they also reflected Charles' jealous conviction that only he had the knowledge and experience necessary to manage Ibans. On at least two occasions he rebuffed queries from Malayan authorities who were

[1] Charles Brooke to Foreign Office, 16 Jan 1889, SA. See also Charles Brooke to the Governor of North Borneo, 28 Dec 1888, SA.

[2] Charles Brooke to Governor Beaufort [of North Borneo], 2 Nov 1897, SA. The Chartered Company had just acquired from Brunei sovereign rights to the Inanam and Mengkabang Rivers after Mat Salleh had incited Bajau inhabitants of these two districts to sack the Company's station on the island of Gaya in 1896: K. G. Tregonning, *Under Chartered Company Rule* (Singapore, 1958) p. 43.

[3] Proclamation dated 10 Dec 1897, in *SG* 384 (3 Jan 1898); Charles Brooke to Governor Beaufort [of North Borneo], 13 Dec 1897, SA. Tregonning writes, 'Practically all of them [the Ibans] were serving in the police, and this incitement to them to desert at a critical moment did little to improve relations between the two states.' (*Under Chartered Company Rule*, pp. 202–3.) Spenser St John, who was always inclined to be critical of Rajah Charles' foreign policy, called the recall order a mistake: 'They [the Ibans] would be equally useful to the North Borneo Company, which is combatting lawlessness as much as the Sarawak Government, and among a far more dangerous population.' (*Rajah Brooke: The Englishman as Ruler of an Eastern State* (London, 1899) p. 213.) For an Iban account of service against Mat Salleh, see Benedict Sandin's 'Pengachau di *saba*' in *Peturun Iban*. There are frequent references to Ibans in two accounts of the rebellion: Rutter, *British North Borneo*, pp. 188–210, and K. G. Tregonning, 'The Mat Salleh Revolt (1894–1905)', *JMBRAS* xxix 1 (May 1956), 20–36.

interested in recruiting Ibans for police work. They were, he explained to Sir Frank Swettenham, 'far too excitable, unsteady and easily led away; and they are never for this reason employed as police in the Sarawak territory'.[1] This was not absolutely true, for the Sarawak Government did make extensive use of Ibans as fortmen, locally recruited in outstations, and they formed the majority of the country's one trained military unit, the Sarawak Rangers. The Rajah's letter to Swettenham did not elaborate on the subject of Iban levies as they were habitually employed in Sarawak.

The Saribas Ibans were not the only ones to voyage in search of jungle produce, although they were among the earliest and most persistent. By 1890 Ibans from many other rivers were engaged in this activity, which so nearly resembled the old 'piratical' pursuits. However, certain other aspects of Saribas Iban behavior were quite unique, including their early partial conversion to Christianity, their efforts to achieve education, and their willingness to grow new cash crops at the urging of Government officers and missionaries.

In the early years of Brooke rule, S.P.G. (Anglican) mission efforts in the Second Division were greatly hindered by the constant warfare and unrest. The final defeat of Rentap in 1861 brought relative peace to the downriver areas, as we have seen. For the first time, Brooke authority was firmly established. Two years later, in 1863, the S.P.G. gained a key Saribas convert to Christianity. Buda was the youngest son of the Orang Kaya Pamancha Dana (Bayang), the great raider of pre-Brooke days. He was also the brother of Nanang, whose defection from Rentap at a critical moment had clinched the victory for Charles Brooke in 1861, and who subsequently enjoyed the confidence of the Government to an unusual degree. In short, Buda was a member of the single most important family of the Saribas. The dramatic story of his conversion, retold many times in the mission literature, was a source of great encouragement to the underpaid, understaffed S.P.G. at a time when progress among the Ibans seemed to be slow indeed.[2]

One day in 1863 the Rev. W. R. Mesney, of the mission station at Banting on the lower Batang Lupar, was teaching his tiny class of Balau Iban pupils

[1] Charles Brooke to Sir Frank Swettenham, 19 July 1897, SA. In this letter the Rajah said that he had once rejected a similar query from Governor Sir Cecil Clementi Smith of the Straits Settlements. An item in the *Sarawak Gazette* of 1 Dec 1913 gave a similar evaluation of Iban character in warning North Borneo estates not to hire Ibans as overseers or police, but admitted that 'in a very few exceptional cases' the Sarawak Government did employ them as police.

[2] The first significant Anglican mission success among the Ibans was the baptism of Orang Kaya Jugah of the Sebuyau Ibans of Lundu in the First Division, the same man who had welcomed James Brooke in 1839 (see the beginning of ch. 1): W. H. Gomes, Lundu report for 1862 in S.P.G. Archives, London. But the Lundu Ibans were an offshoot isolated from the main areas of Iban settlement to the east, as noted earlier.

when a strange visitor appeared at the foot of the mission house steps, dressed in the distinctive style of the Saribas. The schoolboys were frightened, for the Balau and Saribas Ibans were traditional enemies. They quickly recognized Buda, a prominent enemy who, together with his brother Nanang, had only recently fought against their own people and the Brookes during the campaigns against Rentap. Even the English missionaries still regarded the entire Saribas as dangerous and unsettled. After the excitement created by his arrival had subsided slightly, Buda observed the lesson in progress, and expressed particular curiosity about the writing paper being used.

Mesney's account continued:

> The next day he made his appearance again and listened while the boys had their lesson. . . . The reading was the attraction to him, and he said that he would like to be able to read; might he stay at Banting and come up to the Mission House for lessons?[1]

The upshot was that Buda learned to read and write, became a Christian, and worked for years as a mission catechist. He made frequent trips back to the Saribas. As a result, when a European missionary finally dared to visit that river in 1867, he found 180 more Ibans 'so well instructed and desirous to become Christians that he felt it his duty to baptize them all.'[2] Among Buda's converts was his own brother, Nanang, designated by the Rajah as the leading Saribas Iban in succession to his father in 1882.[3] Three years later a missionary observed, 'At Saribas more than anywhere else the seeds of Christian truth spread of themselves, and before the arrival of the authorized teacher.'[4]

It was not a clean sweep for Christianity. Many lower Saribas Ibans remained pagan, and indeed traditional religious beliefs continued to flourish among the people of this river system with a richness and depth unmatched in other areas. But in distinct contrast to the other Iban rivers of the Second Division, a substantial and influential Christian community did come into being along the lower and middle Saribas, and the converts were later instrumental in introducing additional elements of change.[5]

[1] Quoted in Gomes, *Seventeen Years among the Sea Dyaks*, p. 118. The date of Buda's conversion is given in Pascoe, *History of the S.P.G.*, II 686.

[2] Pascoe, *History of the S.P.G.*, II 686.

[3] See p. 155, n. 1.

[4] Pascoe, *History of the S.P.G.*, II 691.

[5] There were, of course, numbers of Christian converts in other Second Division districts, most notably in the vicinity of the mission stations at Banting and Sabu (on the lower Undup near Simanggang) which had been established in the days of the First Rajah. But the Christian Ibans of these areas did not, during the reign of Charles Brooke, play a vigorous and prominent role in local affairs, as the Saribas Christians did.

As the story of Buda indicates, conversion to Christianity was linked to interest in education, and undoubtedly to the conviction that writing was somehow the key to European power, which the Rajah had made evident by his recent victories over Rentap.[1] There was no mission school on the Saribas itself until 1921,[2] but an unusually large number of Saribas children left their longhouses to attend the tiny S.P.G. boarding schools which operated at various times on the Krian, at Banting on the lower Batang Lupar, and at Sabu on the Undup near Simanggang. The Rev. E. H. Gomes, in charge of the Krian school for many years, remarked, 'My schoolboys came from different Dayak villages, but the majority of them were boys from the Saribas. The Dayaks from that district are more anxious to improve themselves than other Dayak races.'[3] He related an incident illustrating how eager they were to learn:

A party of Saribas Dayaks going on a gutta hunting expedition asked for a copy of the first Dayak reading book, because one of them could read, and thought he would teach the others in the evenings when they were not at work. And this is indeed what did happen, and when the party returned most of them were able to read. The Saribas women were just as keen as the men, and many of them have been taught to read by some Dayak friend. I have myself noticed, when holding services for some Christians in villages in the Saribas, how many of those present were able to use the Dayak Prayer-Book and follow the service and read the responses.[4]

Government officers also wondered at the fact that, in the Saribas, even those who did not go to school often contrived to educate themselves:

I one day inadvertently left my notebook on the floor of the 'ruai' [longhouse verandah] while engaged in conversation in another part of the house. On returning to pick it up, I found several youths amusing themselves by writing in it in English characters. One young hopeful, perhaps more precocious than his companions, having noticed that just before I had taken down a census of all the males in the house, took upon himself to correct the very palpable deficiency in my returns, by putting down the names of the fair sex in the house. At the suggestion I believe of his companions a few comments were added to some of the names, alluding in the

[1] In Benedict Sandin's opinion, the desire to become literate was the primary if not the only motive behind the Saribas conversions.

[2] St Augustine School at Betong opened under the Rev. Ralph Linton only in 1921: see *SG* 815 (1 Aug 1921). Although the Saribas was a major source of Christian converts, it lacked a resident priest as well as a school before Father Linton's arrival. Prior to 1921 a missionary from one of the older S.P.G. stations would tour the area holding services when his duties permitted. At one time at the turn of the century there was only one Anglican priest, the Rev. William Howell, in the entire Division: see *SG* 461 (4 June 1904).

[3] Gomes, *Seventeen Years among the Sea Dyaks*, p. 107.

[4] Ibid.

briefest terms to the personal charms or virtues of the ladies, and in some cases (alas!) casting reflections on their delinquencies.

Although this house had never been visited by missionaries, a considerable number of the youths were able to read and write fairly. Some exception might possibly be taken to their spelling by School Boards, &c., but to advocates of the 'fonetik' system it would probably be interesting, if not instructive.[1]

The same Saribas Ibans who pioneered in search of jungle produce and who sought out Christianity were also the first to plant new crops at the urging of the Government. Charles Brooke did a great deal in his small-scale way to stimulate smallholder cultivation in Sarawak. He wrote letters to botanists and planters around the world seeking information on new cultures, and maintained several experimental plantations at a considerable financial loss.[2] He expected his officers to maintain smaller experimental gardens near their posts, and to encourage the people to take up new crops.[3] Sometimes Residents distributed seeds or cuttings free of charge; more often they sold them for a small fee, for it was believed that the natives did not appreciate something received for nothing.

D. J. S. Bailey, proud of his reputation as a man with a green thumb,[4] introduced the Saribas Ibans to coffee planting early in 1889. Several leading families, including that of the Orang Kaya Pamancha Nanang, quickly took up the new culture.[5] In the years that followed, Bailey sold them seeds from the garden which he maintained at Simanggang, gave them advice, reported with pride when their gardens flourished, and fretted when the coffee trees suffered from lack of shade or improper manuring. Coffee growing gained modest momentum through the early 1890s. In 1892 Bailey wrote, 'Some more Dayaks are taking up coffee, and if they are content with small gardens they should do well enough for they can look after themselves [*sic*] without much expenditure on outside labour.'[6] In the same year Kedit of Paku, who had earlier been the first Iban to go voyaging in search of jungle produce,

[1] Letter signed 'O' in *SG* 239 (1 Dec 1885). The author did not say exactly where in the Saribas the house was located.

[2] In the late 1880s the Rajah lost $60,000 in an effort to grow tobacco at Lundu: *SG* 301 (2 Feb 1891). Experimental coffee estates on Matang Mountain and Satap, both near Kuching, had cost the Government $176,000 by 1901: Treasurer's annual report for 1901 in *SG* 435 (1 April 1902). For the history of the Matang estate, a financial burden until its demise in 1912, see Loh Chee Yin, 'Matang Coffee Estate', *SG* 1291 (30 Sept 1965).

[3] When the Government coffee garden at Simanggang failed in 1896, apparently because of soil exhaustion, Bailey observed that it made no difference: 'The garden has done what was required of it viz: assisted to introduce planting amongst the natives, and it does not matter much if it be now abandoned.' (Bailey Second Division annual report for 1896, *SG* 373 (1 Feb 1897).)

[4] Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 29.

[5] Bailey Second Division November report, *SG* 277 (1 Feb 1889).

[6] Bailey Second Division August report, *SG* 321 (1 Oct 1892).

was 'elated' with the first fruits of his coffee garden, which netted $84.15 on an investment of only $40.[1]

Coffee prices continued to rise for six years, and some Saribas Iban planters began to show signs of real prosperity. The Resident reported that Budin (Grasi), the headman of Stambak Ulu longhouse below Betong, owned 800 trees and employed Iban labor to look after them; moreover, 'His paddy farm this year was made for him by Malays on wages.'[2] Saribas coffee exports climbed steadily from 19 pikuls in 1892 to 397 pikuls in 1896.[3] Unfortunately the same high prices which encouraged the Ibans also led to world overproduction in 1897. The bottom dropped out of the market, and coffee-growing soon came to a complete halt. But in 1966 a visitor to the Saribas might see old Brunei cannon, purchased with the proceeds of this first venture into cash cropping, still displayed on the verandahs of longhouses.

The Saribas Ibans were apparently not disheartened. At any rate, they were among the first people in the State to take up the planting of plantation rubber a few years later. According to local tradition, people began to plant rubber on the advice of a mission-educated Iban named Lumpoh, who had traveled to Japan and later worked as a clerk for the Straits Settlements Government. His father, Budin (Grasi) of Stambak Ulu, was a veteran of the Sadok wars against the Rajah, a notorious litigant in the Betong court, and the former coffee planter. In about 1909 Budin was the first Saribas Iban to begin planting rubber on a large scale, putting in at least 4000 young trees.[4] Other early planters, all Christians, included Insol, son of the Orang Kaya Pamancha Nanang, and Thomas, who was a grandson of the first convert, Buda. While the mission encouraged Christians to plant rubber, most pagans were for many years inhibited by a widespread belief that the spirit of rubber would drive away the supremely important spirit of *padi*.[5]

[1] Bailey Second Division October report, *SG* 323 (1 Dec 1892). Some Saribas Ibans were also planting pepper at this period, but the crop was a more difficult one, and it never became as popular with them as coffee at this time or rubber later.

[2] Bailey calls Budin 'Gergasi' in this report: Second Division May report, *SG* 354 (1 July 1895).

[3] Bailey Second Division annual report for 1896, *SG* 273 (1 Feb 1897). A pikul is 133⅓ pounds.

[4] The story of Lumpoh is from Benedict Sandin. A. B. Ward reported in 1912 that Budin's 4000 rubber trees at Stambak were about three years old: Second Division June report, *SG* 609 (1 Aug 1912). A brief account of Budin's career appeared in the *Gazette* at the time of his death: Page-Turner Second Division August report, *SG* 730 (1 Oct 1917).

[5] From Benedict Sandin: see also his '*Kebun Getah*' in *Peturun Iban*, which lists the names of many other early Saribas rubber planters. Freeman writes that the Balleh Ibans of the Third Division had planted rubber before 1924, but the story that the spirit of rubber would drive away the spirit of *padi* (which Sandin reports for the Second Division, and which Geddes encountered among the Land Dayaks of the First) caused many of the Balleh people to cut down their trees – a move which they later regretted: *Iban Agriculture*, p. 105.

The Ibans say that Budin grew the first rubber trees from seeds which his son Lumpoh brought back with him from Singapore, but there is little doubt that Charles Brooke played a considerable part in the further spread of this culture. The first significant number of plantation rubber trees (*Hevea brasiliensis*) to reach maturity in Sarawak grew on one of the Government estates near Kuching.[1] By the summer of 1909 the Rajah was indirectly supplying young plants to smallholders, first selling them to Chinese merchants in Kuching, who then distributed them through their business connections in the outstations.[2] Charles deplored the speculative 'rubber fever' that was sweeping the East, but took pride in the fact that he was 'spreading the cultivation among the inhabitants in a humble way hoping that they will make a genuine concern out of its small profits'.[3]

In 1911 the Resident of the Second Division, A. B. Ward, began to sell rubber seeds directly to his people.[4] At about this time he reported,

> Saribas people, especially Dayaks, show considerable enterprise in planting, and most Dayak houses in the main river and the Paku can boast of small para rubber gardens. Round Betong there are two or three of these gardens that show signs of careful attention.[5]

In the prosperous years that followed, the Saribas Ibans began to grow wealthy on the new crop. This was not in general true of the Saribas Malays, who were more often located on swampy, low-lying ground less suitable for rubber cultivation, and who did not display the same enthusiasm for planting as the Ibans.[6] Ward, who was certainly not biased in favor of Ibans, observed

[1] A thousand of the Government trees were ready for tapping by 1908. The Rajah, noting that they were 'the first in this country', wrote to the famous 'Rubber Ridley' of the Singapore Botanical Gardens for information on tapping procedure: Charles Brooke to H. R. Ridley 26 June 1908, SA. There had been isolated *Hevea brasiliensis* specimens in Sarawak as early as 1881 – indeed there were stately para rubber trees lining the sides of Sekama Road in Kuching – but no serious attention was paid to them until the rubber boom developed after 1900: see R. E. Tremeer, 'The early History of Rubber Planting in Sarawak', *SG* 1273 (31 March 1964).

[2] 'Keep up the sale and supply of rubber plants, 50,000 a year I think we could manage. . . .' (Charles Brooke to R. Bradford, Public Works Department, 11 Aug 1909, SA.)

[3] Charles Brooke to 'My Dear Harry' [Brooke], 5 March 1910, in Appendix A. However Charles soon began to worry about the fact that so many people were deserting the traditional Sarawak crops (*padi*, pepper and sago) to grow rubber, the market for which he was sure would collapse sooner or later: see Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, pp. 145–6. Under Vyner Brooke (1917–46) the Government continued to urge the people not to put all their trust in rubber, although this advice was never heeded when rubber prices were high.

[4] Ward Second Division February report, *SG* 577 (1 April 1911).

[5] Ward Second Division January report, *SG* 575 (1 March 1911).

[6] It is pertinent to note that Budin (Grasi), an Iban, planted the first rubber in the Saribas on land at Stambak Ulu (below Betong) which experts from the Agriculture Department today (1966) condemn as far too swampy for such use. Ironically enough, the result of this judgment

bluntly in 1914: 'The Saribas Dayaks have continually given proof of their enterprise and industry as planters, and deserve encouragement: the Saribas Malays on the other hand have no ambitions beyond the plot of farming land cleared for them by their ancestors.'[1] It became the pattern for some Saribas Ibans to employ local Malays, as well as Ibans from other rivers who possessed no rubber of their own, to tap their trees for them.[2] It is not at all clear who, if anyone, was exploited under this arrangement. The tappers always worked on shares, sometimes according to the *bagi dua* (literally 'divide in two') system, under which they split the yield of the garden with the owner. Under another system known as *pajak* (from the Dutch *pacht*, meaning rent) the tapper rented the garden for a fixed fee and kept all the rubber. Under either system the tapper made as much money as the owner, who was relieved of doing any work but who frequently paid the price of having his trees mutilated and perhaps destroyed by bad tapping methods.[3]

The Paku branch of the Saribas, stormed by Rajah Brooke's expeditions in 1843 and 1849, became the outstanding area for rubber. 'The Paku Dayaks are very wealthy and industrious', reported the Resident in 1920. 'They nearly all have para rubber plantations which are tappable and with the proceeds intend to fell large stretches of jungle for planting sago.'[4] The sago never materialized; the Paku Ibans kept on with rubber instead. Early in the same year, shortly before a sharp but temporary slump in the market, some of them were earning as much as $15 a day from their holdings.[5] A few years later they began the practice of building new longhouses from ironwood planks, machine-milled in some cases, supported by enormous round posts. These structures, many of which are still being lived in after decades of use, were as solid as traditional Iban houses tailored to the needs of the shifting cultivator were flimsy. The Government did not always view such progress

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is that Budin's descendants cannot obtain even the lowest type of Government subsidy to replace their overage rubber trees, which, swampy soil or not, helped to make this Iban community among the wealthiest and most advanced in Sarawak in an earlier era. Many Foochow Chinese of the lower Rejang likewise became prosperous growing rubber on 'unsuitable' land, in a less complicated age. (Information from interviews at Stambak Ulu, April 1966.)

[1] Ward Second Division October report, *SG* 665 (1 Dec 1914). For similar observations, see Page-Turner's Second Division annual report for 1917 in *SGG* (1 March 1918).

[2] As early as 1917 there were upper Batang Lupar ('Ulu Ai') Ibans working as 'coolies' tapping Saribas Iban rubber: Page-Turner Second Division February report, *SG* 718 (2 April 1917).

[3] For a discussion of tapping rubber on shares in the Saribas and elsewhere, see A. J. N. Richards, *Sarawak Land Law and Adat* (Kuching, 1961) pp. 52–4.

[4] Page-Turner Second Division December report, *SG* 788 (1 March 1920).

[5] Page-Turner Second Division March report, *SG* 792 (1 May 1920).

as an unmixed blessing. 'This, it would seem, is the new sport in the Paku', complained one officer after a tour of the river in 1927, 'since Luta built his, to outdo the last man in the magnificence of one's new house, but it is a little extravagant with the limited supply of *belian*' [ironwood].[1] And another British observer commented wryly in verse on the impact of rubber cultivation on the Iban way of life:

> Now all is changed great peace and quiet
> The sharp edged sword becomes the tapper's knife,
> The spirit of the grain that made the song of victory and of life,
> Is changed for coffee.[2]

All of the activities described in the preceding portions of this chapter were in varying degrees alien to the traditional Iban culture, which centered around the shifting cultivation of rice. All were part of a response to new opportunities brought about directly or indirectly by European rule. The Saribas Ibans were not the only people in Sarawak to avail themselves of new opportunities in this way, but the speed and consistency with which they seemed to seek out change set them apart from other Iban communities. As the preceding account has already demonstrated, both missionaries and administrators recognized this fact. Bailey, visiting the lower Batang Lupar River in 1896, remarked on the total absence of planting activity among the Ibans of that area. 'Were there Saribas Dayaks living here the best part of the country would be under coffee', he wrote, 'but these Dayaks are the slowest of the slow to improve themselves.'[3] He was equally critical of the progress made by the Balau Ibans of Banting, the earliest Brooke allies in the period of 'piracy'. In contrast to the Saribas, which lacked any permanent mission facilities, the Balau longhouses were clustered around the oldest church and school in the Second Division, continuously in operation since 1853. Yet, Bailey observed, 'These Dayaks who at one time were said to lead the van of civilization in the Batang Lupar now lag far behind the more enlightened Dayak planters in other parts of the country.'[4]

An early thirst for education was one of the most striking aspects of Saribas behavior, for in some areas of Sarawak, including some remote upper branches of the Saribas River system itself, it was not until long after World War II that the Iban population began to regard education as anything more than an unwelcome attempt by the Government to wean them

[1] Second Division April report, *SG* 884 (1 June 1927).
[2] 'A Dayak House, 1925', in *SG* 859 (1 April 1925).
[3] Bailey Second Division August report, *SG* 369 (1 Oct 1896).
[4] Bailey Second Division December report, *SG* 373 (1 Feb 1897).

away from their habitual way of life, and an excuse to raise the traditional tax of one dollar per family per year. In 1961 District Officer Hermanus Assan, himself an Iban, noted with regard to one area on the upper Layar (Saribas):

> There are encouraging signs here in this area of the people beginning to realize the value of education and agreeing to have schools. Hitherto, they had viewed the Education Rate with great disfavour and had preferred not to have schools.[1]

There is no single obvious explanation for a divergent attitude toward social change among the Ibans of one area out of many. Observers in Sarawak today often attribute past Saribas progress to mission influence, and greater resulting opportunities for education. But as we have seen, other Iban communities in the lower Batang Lupar and its tributaries had access to mission schools long before there were any such facilities in the Saribas.[2] Moreover the history of Buda's conversion and the subsequent response of the Saribas to Christianity makes it apparent that conversion was only one symptom of an entire pattern of behavior, rather than an underlying cause of the Saribas response. Capable individuals, men like Nanang and Ringkai, who it may be recalled remained a pagan, undoubtedly helped to encourage innovation. Charles Brooke had recognized something special about the Saribas Iban leaders as far back as the days of 'piracy', and by placing some of them on a political par with the Malay chiefs he had undoubtedly further strengthened their position in the community.[3]

The fortunate geographic location of the Saribas may have done more than anything else to permit change and development. This river system is relatively isolated by rugged hills from what were the most chronically disturbed areas of the Second and Third Divisions, the upper Batang Lupar and Kanowit Rivers. Isolation gave the people a degree of peace and quiet during the decades down to 1920, when even downriver Ibans in many other districts were exposed to intermittent attack by headhunting rebels, and were constantly excited by the presence of tribal enemies in the headwaters of their own rivers. This unrest, and the Government's involvement in it, is discussed at length in the following chapter.

[1] Résumé of Saribas District annual report for 1961, *SG* 1255 (30 Sept 1962).

[2] It might also be noted that the Catholic mission began a school at Kanowit in the Third Division in 1883 (see p. 140, n. 5), almost forty years before the first Saribas mission school, but for decades it had little visible effect on the socially conservative and warlike Kanowit Iban population.

[3] The special political position of certain Saribas Iban leaders is discussed in ch. 5. Two other exceptional Iban leaders of the Charles Brooke era, Minggat and his son, Penghulu Dalam Munan, were also originally of Saribas (Paku) origin, although they migrated to the Krian, and Munan lived during his later years in Sibu.

In more disturbed areas, the warrior virtues naturally remained preeminent. Prevailing insecurity encouraged people to fall back on the traditional solution to the problem of shifting cultivation, which was migration, while it effectively prevented them from developing any interest in more sedentary forms of agriculture, such as coffee and rubber. The effects of unrest and migration were obvious among the Ibans of the Skrang River, to cite just one example. Owing to geography, they were much more frequently involved in the raids and counter-raids which grew out of conflict originating in the upper Batang Lupar. At least partly as a result, they shared virtually none of the early Saribas penchant for change described in this chapter, although it will be remembered that they had been the old allies and companions of the Saribas people in the days of 'piracy'. Virtually all of the more important Skrang leaders migrated to the Rejang during the decades after the final defeat of Rentap, and today the Skrang River lacks the quality of community and continuity which is still powerfully evident in the Saribas. There was migration away from the Saribas as well, but its effect on the leadership in the home area was insignificant by comparison.

Although the Saribas Ibans gained a reputation among European observers for social progress, it is an interesting fact that by the turn of the century they had lost their older reputation for exceptional bravery. Quite unjustly, perhaps, they had become, in the minds of some Government officers, not quite Iban:

> In those times when piracy flourished, the Saribas Dayaks were the most pugnacious fighters in Borneo. Since civilization has arrived they have become commercialized. They take more care of their dollars than of their weapons. When the Rajah had to organize an expedition, the Saribas were the first to clamour for a part in it. On active service however we found them unreliable, pusillanimous in front of the enemy, with an eye only to loot. Nevertheless their way of life was more enlightened than other tribes.[1]

The characteristics which marked them as enlightened in an earlier era, including the desire for education and the ability to plant rubber, have in later years spread to most other Iban communities throughout Sarawak. The Saribas Ibans may no longer be exceptional. Nevertheless the head start which they obtained during the reign of Charles Brooke served to give them an importance out of all proportion to their numbers in the first generation of administrators and politicians to emerge as Sarawak moved toward independence within Malaysia. Individuals of Saribas descent, including the closely related portion of the Krian population and migrants to other dis-

[1] Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 46.

tricts, probably make up no more than 15 per cent of the total Iban population.[1] Yet the first man to serve as Chief Minister of Sarawak, Dato Stephen Kalong Ningkan, is a Saribas Iban. So are the first Sarawak-born State Secretary, Gerunsin Lembat, the first local Curator of the Sarawak Museum, Benedict Sandin, and the first Iban Resident of a Division, Peter Tinggom. The preponderance of Saribas-Krian staffing in certain departments of the State Government, such as Radio Sarawak, has from time to time generated mild resentment among Ibans from other areas. Nevertheless all would agree that had it not been for the Saribas community, the Ibans would have encountered far more difficulty than has been the case in assuming their fair share of power and responsibility in the new era.

[1] Estimated from Jones, *Report on the Census . . . 1960*, esp. pp. 121, 152.

7 Bantin's Revolt: Charles Brooke and the Upriver Ibans

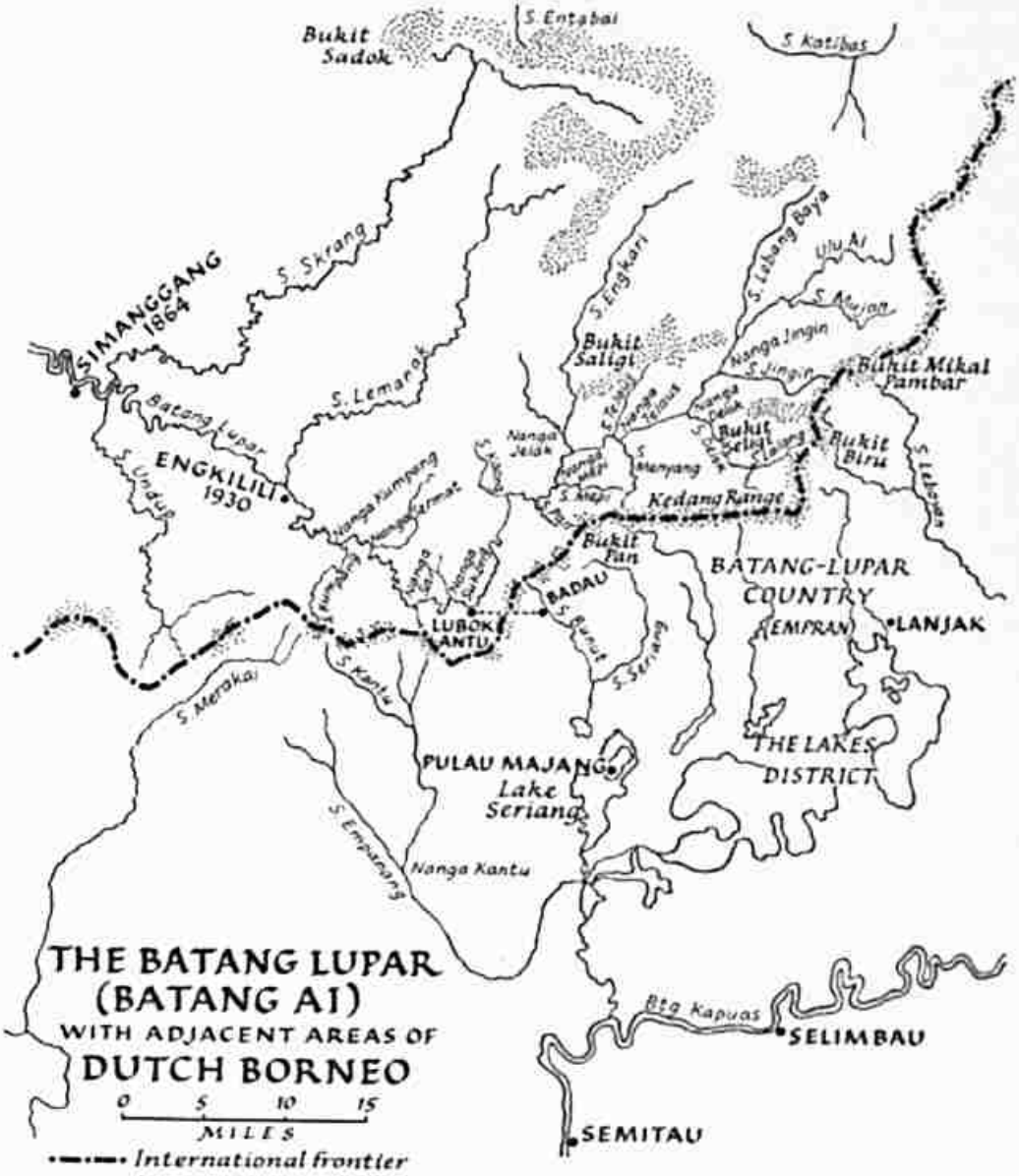
THE Batang Lupar River is not an imposing stream by Sarawak standards. At the modern highway crossing near Engkilili it is perhaps fifty yards in width, muddy brown in color and slow-moving except when swollen by recent rains. From this point the traveler in a longboat propelled by a forty horsepower outboard motor can reach the last Government station and Chinese bazaar at Lubok Antu in only two hours. It is a pleasant ride up the meandering, tree-lined river, still subject to tidal fluctuations for about one-third of the distance. The flat banks are lined with straggling corn fields and groves of fruit-trees. Every now and then a longhouse landing-place slides by, crowded with splashing brown urchins and Iban housewives doing the family wash. It is hard to imagine the Rajah of Sarawak leading flotillas of ten thousand and more warriors up such an altogether ordinary river.

From Lubok Antu it is only two and a half miles over flat ground to the Indonesian frontier. From there an equally easy route leads southwards toward the nearby great lakes of the Kapuas River. At few other points in Sarawak is it so simple to reach and cross the frontier, which here as everywhere follows the divide between two rivers, in this case the Batang Lupar and the Kapuas. Even today the border is far from clearly defined. Military maps of 1966 show two dotted lines which only rarely coincide, one derived from Indonesian (Dutch) sources and one from British maps.[1]

Lubok Antu marks a distinct social and geographic division between

[1] When I visited Lubok Antu, in October 1965 and April 1966, it was in a state of siege owing to 'Confrontation' with Indonesia. There had been several Indonesian attacks across the border in recent months, and the post, protected by artillery and fortifications, was garrisoned by British and Malaysian troops. It was impossible to visit nearby areas of Indonesia, and travel up and down the Batang Lupar, which flows very close to the frontier for some distance on either side of Lubok Antu, was considered somewhat unsafe in view of the chance of raids from nearby Indonesian territory. Certain historic parallels will become apparent in the course of this chapter.

The name Lubok Antu means 'pool of ghosts' in Iban.


THE BATANG LUPAR
(BATANG AI)
WITH ADJACENT AREAS OF
DUTCH BORNEO
0 5 10 15
MILES
International frontier
Bukit Sadok
S. Entabai
S. Katibas
SIMANGGANG 1864
S. Skrang
S. Lemarok
Batang Lupar
ENGKILILI 1930
S. Undup
S. Engkari
Bukit Saligi
S. Lubang Baya
Ulu Ai
S. Mujan
Nanga Jingin
S. Jingin
Bukit Mikal Pambar
Bukit Biru
S. Lebuas
Nanga Jelak
Kedang Range
Bukit Fun
BADAU
LUBOK ANTU
S. Kantu
S. Merakai
S. Seriang
BATANG-LUPAR COUNTRY
(EMPRAN)
LANJAK
THE LAKES DISTRICT
PULAU MAJANG
Lake Seriang
S. Emparang
Nanga Kantu
Btg Kapuas
SELIMBAU
SEMITAU

upriver and downriver territory on the Batang Lupar. Above this point the character of the stream soon changes completely. The water loses its muddy hue and becomes sparkling clear, except after periods of rain. Rugged hills descend steeply to the water's edge on either side. There are some Iban longhouses along the main river, but more lie inland, along the banks of narrow, twisting side streams, filled with rapids. The surrounding hills, sometimes deserts of scrub and weeds, have been farmed by generations of shifting cultivators. There is no virgin jungle remaining here, as there still is along some rivers in the Third Division, nor has there been for many decades. It is a poor area, where the Ibans frequently fail to harvest enough rice to feed themselves. In any longhouse, a quarter or more of the men are likely to be away working elsewhere, in Malaya, at the oil fields in Miri and Brunei, or at the timber camps in Sabah.

Only a few minutes journey above Lubok Antu the first rapids appear. Henceforth there are many places where, in periods of low water, rocks and gravel beds hinder navigation. But the Batang Lupar has no perils to match the roaring cascades common in the upper Rejang River system, or the Baram and its tributaries. Nor is it a long river, as Borneo rivers go. When the water level is just right the modern traveler may reach the furthest inhabited reaches of the main stream in a day's travel from Lubok Antu.[1] Yet the upper portion of this unspectacular stream was the source of endless political unrest throughout the era of Charles Brooke. In part because it was the home of the most conservative Ibans in the country, naturally inclined to resist authority, in part because it runs nearly parallel with an artificial political frontier, the upper Batang Lupar was never under effective Government control until the second decade of the twentieth century.

Even today the people of the upper Batang Lupar live close to a turbulent past. Famous throughout Sarawak for adherence to the traditional Iban virtues, they are hot tempered and proud of a warrior heritage.[2] Many served

[1] Before outboard motors, the same journey might have required a week of paddling and poling. The point here is that relative to other rivers in Sarawak, the Batang Lupar is not particularly long or hard to navigate.

[2] British social anthropologist E. R. Leach, who visited Sarawak in 1947–8, wrote, 'The Iban area where the pre-Brooke social structure is preserved in its greatest purity is probably the Ulu Ai [i.e. the upper Batang Lupar], but the attractive primitives of this area are scarcely typical of the present day Iban.' (*Social Science Research in Sarawak* (London, 1950) p. 48.) It may be wondered whether 'primitives' was an apt characterization in 1948; Leach visited the Second Division, but he never reached the upper Batang Lupar (ibid., pp. 18–19). It is certainly not apt today, but the 'Ulu Ais' are still *relatively* traditional in social outlook, compared to Ibans in general.

As a result of Leach's recommendations, contained in his survey just cited, the Colonial Office sponsored J. D. Freeman's research among the Balleh Ibans, whom Leach regarded as more representative of modern (1948) Iban society.

as trackers with the British Army during the post-1948 Communist insurgency in Malaya. Twice since World War II minor incidents have almost resulted in fighting between Sarawak Batang Lupar Ibans and other Ibans living nearby on the Indonesian side of the border. (The incidents grew out of purely local quarrels, and took place well before the 1963–6 Indonesian-Malaysian 'Confrontation'.) For many people here migration remains a cherished goal. In recent years large numbers have continued to leave this infertile, farmed-out area to seek new homes in other districts of Sarawak, sometimes with Government encouragement. It is only very recently that almost all have recognized the value of rubber gardens and the desirability of education. In short, the outlook on life which prevails in the upper Batang Lupar has been worlds apart from that which typifies the Saribas, although the Ibans of these two Second Division districts speak the same language and share most other features of Iban culture.[1]

There are two reasons why the history of the upper Batang Lupar is worthy of special attention. By any yardstick it is the most important single upriver area in the Second Division. More important, the tactics which the Second Rajah and his men here employed, and the opposition they encountered, well illustrate the kind of relationship which came into being between the Brooke Government and the upriver Ibans in general. In the next chapter something will be said about the Balleh tributary of the Rejang, a major upriver Iban district of the Third Division, where differences in terrain and historical circumstances led to an interesting variation on the theme of Brooke–Upriver Iban relations. The present chapter tells the story of the Batang Lupar during the years between 1896 and 1908, when a war-leader named Bantin led the longest and most aggravated rebellion in Sarawak history.

The Batang Lupar is a key river in any study of traditional Iban culture or pre-Brooke Iban history. Virtually all Ibans in Sarawak trace their descent to people who at one time or another lived somewhere along this stream. Their name for it is the Batang Ai, which simply means 'the river'.[2] Chapter 2 described how the lower reach of this river, roughly the area from Lubok

[1] This paragraph is based on my own travel in the upper Batang Lupar and on interviews with Government officers past and present (1966). For a glimpse of the upper river in modern times, see 'Report on visit to the Ulu Ai by Divisional Medical Officer from 6 to 9 November 1956', in *SG* 1187 (31 Jan 1957), or any of the postwar Lubok Antu District reports published from time to time in the *Sarawak Gazette*. The most recent is an excellent example: *SG* 1335 (31 May 1969).

[2] *Batang*, literally trunk or stem, designates the main portion of any stream. *Ai* is the Iban word for water, but it is also a general term for stream. Sarawak administrators frequently anglicized this latter usage, and would speak of people living 'in Rejang waters'. For an example, see the Charles Brooke letter quoted on pp. 218–19.

Antu to the sea, served as a highway for the earliest Iban pioneers, who migrated from the Kapuas and settled along various rivers of the Second Division, including the Skrang, the Saribas and the lower Batang Lupar itself. It is not yet clear how these traditions relate to the people of the upper river, the area above Lubok Antu. In this region, the setting for Bantin's insurgency, the Ibans claim to be the original population. They are the only major Iban group in Sarawak whose folklore does not emphasize the theme of ancestors migrating from elsewhere and displacing some older, non-Iban, aboriginal group. The upper river, they insist, was their homeland (*asal menoa*), although they do not maintain that it was the homeland of all Ibans.

It is certain that this upriver area, known to the Ibans as the Ulu Ai,[1] was the source of a vigorous later wave of migration which was still gathering momentum when James Brooke arrived in Sarawak. Beginning not long after 1800, the upper Batang Lupar Ibans began to migrate, both into nearby areas of Dutch Borneo, and into the adjacent headwaters of the Katibas, a tributary of the Rejang in Sarawak's Third Division. These movements were mingled with headhunting raids directed against the previous inhabitants of both regions: Bukitans, Ukits and other jungle nomads in the Rejang drainage, Maloh Dayaks in the tributaries of the Kapuas north and east of the lakes region, and Kantu Ibans in the region west of the lakes.[2] But not all the aggressive energy of the upper Batang Lupar was directed against the people of other rivers. They also became involved in sporadic warfare with the Ibans who lived on the lower Batang Lupar, at various places downstream from Lubok Antu.[3] This pre-Brooke tradition of enmity between the upriver and downriver populations has no counterpart in the histories of other Second Division rivers. It was to be an important factor in events after the Rajah established a presence in the area.

The first Brooke ruler had little contact with the Batang Lupar. Even the people of the lower river played no part in the early warfare between the

[1] The phrase 'Ulu Ai Ibans' or 'Ulu Ai Dayaks' is still most frequently employed to specify the people of the upper Batang Lupar (see the quotation from Leach on p. 212, n. 2 above) but the Brookes sometimes used it to mean upriver Ibans in general, in both the Second and Third Divisions. The latter usage was followed by Baring-Gould and Bampfylde in 'The Sea-Dayaks', ch. 14 of their *History*, an account of upriver Iban insurgency down to 1908.

[2] The Batang Lupar to Katibas migrations took place by way of the Kanyau (Embaloh) River in Dutch Borneo. For further discussion of this movement see the beginning of ch. 8.

[3] Tradition states that the feud first broke out between people of Kumpang, a branch stream which enters the main river just above modern Engkilili, and inhabitants of Lobong Baya in the extreme headwaters. Many others became involved in the conflict, which stimulated early migrations to the Kanyau (Embaloh): see 'Enmity in the Batang Ai', in Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, pp. 82–9.

Brookes and their 'pirate' foes. Unlike the Ibans of the Skrang (geographically a tributary of the Batang Lupar, but socially distinct) and Saribas, the lower Batang Lupar Ibans were not accustomed to venture into coastal waters to raid the people of other districts. Unlike the Undup and Balau Ibans, who were traditional enemies of the Skrang and Saribas people, they did not actively join the struggle on the Rajah's side. James Brooke classified these people of the lower river as 'non-piratical' and regarded them as his friends.[1] He apparently had no knowledge whatever of the people of the upper river, who were to become more than familiar to his nephew, and he never referred to them at all in his writings.

Early in 1852, two years after the Brookes built a fort on the Batang Lupar at the mouth of the Skrang River, but a year before Brunei ceded the entire area to Sarawak,[2] the intrepid Victorian lady traveller Ida Pfeiffer was the first Westerner on record to get as far upstream as the later site of Lubok Antu. She continued overland to the lakes region, descending the Kapuas to Pontianak, where her unexpected arrival astonished the Dutch. At this time they had not yet established any outpost above Pontianak. The success of her venture, together with fear of expanding Brooke influence, stimulated them to found their first permanent interior station on Borneo's greatest river at Sintang in 1854.[3]

For almost a decade no one attempted to improve upon Miss Pfeiffer's feat. They in 1861 Charles Brooke finally penetrated all the way to the headwaters of the Batang Lupar. The period of the Malay Plot and the campaigns against Rentap had just ended. The future Second Rajah was now anxious both to demonstrate his Government's ability to reach the most inaccessible area of the Second Division, and to familiarize himself with a hitherto

[1] A year after the establishment of Skrang Fort James Brooke wrote 'The Dayaks of Batang Lupar are very numerous, and not *piratical, therefore I have never attacked them and we are excellent friends.*' Emphasis in original: James Brooke to Templer, 31 March 1851, Templer, *Letters*, III 57. See also Keppel, *Maeander*, II 102-3, and the James Brooke letter quoted on p. 88 above.

[2] For details on the 1853 cession, which included the Batang Lupar and the entire Second Division, see the end of ch. 3, esp. p. 94, n. 1.

[3] Ida Pfeiffer, *A Lady's Second Journey around the World* (London, 1855) I 53–174. The Rajah's officers, including Alan Lee (then stationed at Skrang Fort), provided Miss Pfeiffer with a Malay guide and a Sarawak flag only after doing their best to dissuade her from what they clearly regarded as a suicidal undertaking. Lee himself was killed by Rentap's Skrang Ibans the following year, as described in ch. 3 above. But the Ibans of the lower Batang Lupar whom Miss Pfeiffer encountered were for the most part very friendly; they willingly helped her collect insect specimens, and she found their air of cheerful independence preferable to the servility of the middle Kapuas 'Dayak' tribes whom she later visited, who were nominally subject to various Malay rulers.

For the Dutch reaction to her arrival at Pontianak, see H.A.A.N., 'Batang-Loepars. – Verdelgings-oorlog. Europeesch-Dajaksche sneltocht', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch India*, I (1887) 35.

unknown corner of his territory.[1] On his initial meeting with the Ibans of the upper Batang Lupar he expressed a hope which was not to be fulfilled:

> I am not sufficiently acquainted with these people to take any special interest in them; they have been shy heretofore, and few had ever been so far as Skrang Fort until lately but this visit will be the means of opening a freer communication and more extended traffic, and if we can manage to keep them friendly, and to make them refrain from indulging in intertribal warfare, a great point will be gained. Friends or no friends, their mouths must be bitted sooner or later, and I am in hopes these people mustering many thousands will not require the same amount of scouring out that the Skrangs and Saribas have undergone.[2]

On this same journey the future Rajah and a handful of native companions continued across the rugged hills at the headwaters of the Batang Lupar and into the Katibas drainage, where they met many Ibans who were themselves recent migrants from the Batang Lupar. These were the people who urged Charles to undertake the Great Kayan Expedition, launched less than two years later in 1863, and who followed him on that campaign together with many other Ibans. However, the Katibas Ibans proved to be most uncontrollable allies, and between 1868 and 1876 Charles sent four expeditions to punish them. Many were driven into adjacent areas of Dutch Borneo. The rest agreed in 1876 to vacate the Katibas and move down to the main Rejang River, where they would be more accessible to the Government.[3] It is probably no coincidence that the first collision between the Sarawak Government and the Ibans of the upper Batang Lupar took place at the same time as the Katibas campaigns, which were directed against their recently migrated relatives.

In 1868, the year he became Rajah, Charles Brooke led the first Government expedition against the upper Batang Lupar, intending to punish a famous war-leader named Ngumbang who, together with his followers, refused to pay door taxes and continued to take heads from his neighbors.[4]

[1] The future Rajah describes the purpose of the trip in *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 158.

[2] Ibid., II 167–8.

[3] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 381.

[4] Ngumbang, whose praise-name was Brauh Langit (Roaring Sky), is regarded by the upriver people as the greatest warrior in their history, far greater than Bantin. He was born along the upper Batang Lupar's Menyang tributary, which flows down from the border range. He led innumerable war parties against Maloh Dayaks and Kantu Ibans in Dutch Borneo, as well as fighting the Rajah of Sarawak. The fact that he supported the Rajah between 1886 and 1902 is not today held against him. Like a surprising number of great Iban warriors (including Penghulu Dalam Munan), Ngumbang was childless, but he adopted a daughter. He died in 1914 on the same stream where he was born, and the people of the area say he is buried in a cave along the border range, guarded by a clouded leopard. His name is spelled in infinite variety in the *Sarawak Gazette*, 'Mumbang' being one of the commoner variants. The Rajah described the first expedition against him in a diary entry for 7 July 1868: 'Extract from the Diary of Charles Brooke'.

It is not clear whether, prior to this expedition, the upriver people had ever paid taxes to the Brooke Government or anyone else, although it seems most unlikely. In any event, the Government's attacking force of downriver Ibans strayed across the frontier and burned longhouses belonging to certain people whom the Dutch considered friendly. There were protests and recriminations from the Dutch Resident in Pontianak.[1]

From this time onwards the border-dwelling Ibans of the Batang Lupar were the cause of constant irritation between the two Governments. At about the time of the 1868 expedition the Rajah established a fort at Lubok Antu, and not long afterwards Ngumbang and his followers attacked it with the help of their relatives living under nominal Dutch jurisdiction north of the Kapuas lakes, adjacent to the frontier.[2] This attack is not mentioned in any Sarawak source, but it is remembered by the upper Batang Lupar people, who go further than the Dutch written account and claim that Ngumbang succeeded in burning the Rajah's outpost.[3] It is certain that affairs remained unsettled. The Rajah's concern prompted him to deliver a protest to the Foreign Office in January 1870, in which he indirectly accused a hostile British Governor of Labuan of having conspired with the Dutch to arouse the border Iban tribes against Sarawak.[4]

In October and December 1875 the Rajah sent two more full-scale punitive expeditions into the upper Batang Lupar, without achieving any permanent results.[5] Two years later the Dutch official stationed at Sintang took similar measures against Ibans of Batang Lupar origin living within his jurisdiction.[6] In 1880, as the unrest along the border continued, representatives of the Dutch and Sarawak Governments met at a Dutch outpost in the lakes district to discuss the problem. Each party accused the other of tolerating headhunters within its territory. The Dutch believed the Sarawak authorities had listened

[1] C. Kater, 'Iets over de Batang Loepar Dajakhs in de "Westerafdeeling van Borneo",' *De Indische Gids*, 1 (1883) 9–10. The author was Resident of Western Borneo at a later date.

[2] Ibid., p. 10.

[3] This information is from Balai (Bantin's son-in-law) and Penghulu Ngali of Delok, interviewed at Nanga Delok in April 1966. I obtained additional information for this chapter from retired Penghulu Ningkan of Pudai. All three men are recognized by their own people as authorities on upper Batang Lupar history.

[4] Charles Brooke memorandum, 16 Jan 1870, FO 12/36. The Governor in question, John Pope-Hennessy, was also British Consul at Brunei. He had, since 1868, opposed the Rajah by supporting the Sultan's refusal to cede the Baram River to Sarawak: Irwin, *Nineteenth Century Borneo*, pp. 191–3; see also p. 119, n. 2.

[5] Details of the two expeditions are given in *SG*s 112 and 115 (3 Nov 1875 and 3 Jan 1876).

[6] H.A.A.N., 'Batang-Loepars', p. 50.

to lies and rumors about Dutch actions from Ibans who should not have been trusted, and vice versa.[1]

In 1882 the Dutch Resident of Western Borneo charged that 'Sarawak has in the last few years exercised an evil influence over our border Dayaks.' He continued:

In English writing on Sarawak much stress has been laid on the high moral influence which the English there have exerted over the Dayaks, and I confess that in Kuching, the capital, and the surrounding area they have brought about a situation which may well compare with our main settlements on the west coast; the Sea Dayaks there have been transformed from pirates and murderers to peaceful subjects. But little or nothing has been done about headhunting in the interior. . . . It would be very much in the interest of Sarawak if the Rajah would cooperate with us against headhunting, but I am sorry to say that while in other matters, such as receiving criminals, his attitude is most cooperative, an attempt to suppress headhunting receives no support from Sarawak. Is it the aim of Sarawak to get these Dayaks back? One could think so, for since we have taken stronger measures to protect our peaceful subjects against headhunting of the Batang Lupars, a number of them have moved to Sarawak. There would be nothing wrong with that, if Sarawak stopped them from coming into our territory to take heads, but such is not the case, and they are constantly attempting to involve our Dayaks in their headhunting parties.[2]

The *Sarawak Gazette* replied that the 'whole root cause' of the trouble was fussy and legalistic Dutch insistence that no Sarawak Government punitive force should cross the frontier, an attitude which dated back to the incident of 1868.[3] The Rajah now proposed to the Dutch that international legal proprieties should be waived, and that either one Government or the other should be allowed to campaign on both sides of the watershed. He estimated that Ngumbang's strength only amounted to four or five hundred fighting men, who took advantage of the frontier to conduct raids on either side. He wrote:

The Kedang Range is supposed and is practically the boundary line, as near as can be roughly estimated, and the Dayaks living on it drink both Sarawak and Kapuas waters. There are other Dayak houses in Lanjak [a stream flowing south from the

[1] Charles Brooke to C. Kater, Resident of Western Borneo, Pontianak, 7 June 1880, SA. Attached to this letter is a long report by F. R. O. Maxwell dated July 1879, reviewing the entire history of the Second Division frontier Iban problem and relations with the Dutch.

[2] Kater, 'Iets over de Batang Loepar Dajakhs', pp. 9–10. The author assumes, as the Dutch always did, that the warlike Ibans who lived in Dutch territory were all fairly recent emigrants from Sarawak, specifically from the Batang Lupar River, as indeed many of them were: see the beginning of ch. 8.

[3] Editorial, *SG* 207 (2 April 1885).

border range into one of the Kapuas lakes] who are really living in Netherlands country, who are enemies and always join in these headhunting excursions. There are also Dayaks living in Delok stream which belongs to Batang Lupar, who are also troublesome enemies, and should be punished.

What I propose is this; – That an attack shall be made on the whole extent of country, and lay it waste as far as it lays in our power. The people are poor and have little to lose, and their houses are worth next to nothing, so in order to punish them effectually they must be driven and pursued and the only force to do this thoroughly is one formed of Dayaks and in considerable number.

I further propose that either the Netherlands Government undertake to do this whole work or that the Sarawak Government force shall do it. . . .

I may add that I consider the force I have at hand is more adapted to the style of work than that of the regular force of the Netherlands Government.[1]

Reluctantly and after much debate among themselves the Dutch authorities agreed to let the Rajah's Iban levies cross the border. They stipulated that only certain areas in their territory should be attacked, and requested sufficient advance notice of the campaign to enable them to protect law-abiding longhouses from indiscriminate attack.[2] As a result of this agreement, in March 1886, a Sarawak force of more than 10,000 Ibans swept across the upper Batang Lupar and adjacent areas of Dutch Borneo on the slopes of the border range, destroying at least eighty longhouses, but killing only about twenty hostile Ibans.[3]

Charles Brooke was more than satisfied with the results of this action. The leading dissidents agreed to pay their door taxes and to move down from the border range, which was declared closed to settlement, to live along the main Batang Lupar River.[4] A short time later the Resident of the Second Division, H. F. Deshon, reported that Ngumbang's power was 'utterly broken'. He was even able to enlist Ngumbang's help in burning the longhouses of a few of his own followers who had stubbornly refused to leave the hills.[5]

The Dutch, however, were less pleased by the expedition. They claimed that the Rajah had not fulfilled his pledge to give them timely warning of the approach of his levies. They had not been able to station the necessary patrols. As in 1868, longhouses belonging to innocent, friendly people living

[1] Charles Brooke to Colonel Hagga, Civil and Military Commander of Western Borneo, Pontianak, 12 June 1885, SA.

[2] Col Hagga to Charles Brooke, 3 Oct 1885, quoted in J. L. Burgemeestre, 'Onze verhouding tot Sarawak en de Batang Loepar bevolking', 1934, Memories van Overgave series, Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, pp. 10–11.

[3] 'The Kedang Expedition', *SG* 243 (1 April 1886).

[4] Deshon Second Division report (no date), *SG* 244 (1 May 1886).

[5] Deshon Second Division report, 30 Dec 1886, *SG* 252 (3 Jan 1887).

in Dutch territory north of the Kapuas lakes had been destroyed, they said.[1] Never again did the Dutch give a Sarawak force permission to cross into their domain.

For ten years after the great expedition of 1886 there was comparative peace along the border. Ngumbang and the other principal upriver leaders remained on good terms with the Rajah, who hoped that their influence would be sufficient to keep their more restless followers in line. But those who preferred to fight soon found a new leader, a young warrior named Bantin. Also known by the praise-name Ijau Layang ('The Green Swallow'), Bantin was born near Nanga Delok, where the Delok stream meets the upper Batang Lupar, in about 1855 or 1860. He first distinguished himself in battle against the Rajah's forces at Seligi Hill during the two expeditions of 1875. His name appeared in the *Sarawak Gazette* as early as 1887, when he was listed among the leaders participating in a peacemaking organized by the Dutch and Sarawak Governments between the Ibans of the upper Batang Lupar and the Maloh Dayaks of the upper Kapuas.[2]

The Brooke historians, Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, later wrote that Bantin was a 'man of no rank',[3] a meaningless observation in view of the utterly classless nature of upriver Iban society. It is true that Bantin's father was not, like Ngumbang, a leader of great stature, but only a warrior of average reputation. It is also true that Bantin himself never claimed to have experienced the particular kind of dreams which alone enabled a man to take formal command of large forces. The Ibans say that he was not 'able to make war' (*tau serang*), but they also point out that this only meant that it was always necessary for his great war parties to be under the nominal authority of someone else. It was a theoretical distinction, which did not prevent Bantin from becoming the most feared warrior of his day.[4]

[1] The Dutch claimed that thirteen friendly longhouses along the Tangit stream, which flows south from the border range into the lakes, had been destroyed by the Sarawak force: Burgemeestre, 'Onze verhouding', pp. 12–13. For an indignant Dutch commentary on the 1886 expedition, written soon after, see H.A.A.N., 'Batang-Loepars', pp. 60–7. The semi-official Sarawak *History* by Baring-Gould and Bampfylde states that the Dutch were pleased by the results of the campaign, and quotes a portion of a letter from the Resident of Western Borneo to Charles Brooke congratulating him and promising full future cooperation (p. 384). Burgemeestre's account and subsequent events provide convincing contradictory evidence.

[2] *SG* 271 (1 Aug 1888). Biographical information on Bantin is from his son-in-law, Balai, interviewed at Nanga Delok, April 1966.

[3] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 387. Runciman calls Bantin 'a remarkable Dayak adventurer . . . of humble origin', *The White Rajahs*, p. 223.

[4] The concept of *tau serang* is discussed in ch. 1. Iban war-leaders mentioned frequently in this book who were *tau serang* include the Orang Kaya Pamancha Dana (Bayang) and Linggir (Mali Lebu), both of Saribas; Minggat of Krian and his son Penghulu Dalam Munan; Ngumbang of the Batang Lupar (under whose nominal leadership Bantin fought after 1902); Kana of Engkari (see

The upriver Ibans chafed under the Government's continuing effort to prohibit settlement anywhere except on the banks of the main Batang Lupar. By this period the upper river was already a long settled area, with little or no virgin jungle left. The best remaining hill rice farmland most frequently lay inland, along the narrow, precipitous side streams. The Ibans were powerfully inclined to keep on the move in search of such areas. For its part, the Government was convinced that if the Ibans were allowed to live freely among the hills along the border, there would be further bloodshed. The young men, confident that they could not be punished, would raid both into Dutch territory and against the friendly downriver Sarawak Ibans. There was undoubtedly justification for the Government's fear. The Ibans preferred the hills not only because they offered better farming, but because they effectively prevented the minuscule Sarawak administration from imposing its will upon them.[1]

Eventually some of the upriver people, including Bantin, began to move back into the prohibited area. In 1890 the Resident, Deshon, ordered Ngumbang to destroy Bantin's house of eight families, illegally located at the headwaters of the Delok, and Ngumbang obeyed.[2] But for all his enormous prestige, this great warrior and former rebel was unable to prevent five families from his own longhouse from breaking away and moving to the forbidden region two years later.[3]

At the end of 1890 D. J. S. Bailey, who had already been stationed at Simanggang for two years, began his long career as the senior officer in the Second Division. It soon became apparent that he disagreed with the Rajah over the correct policy to adopt toward the upper Batang Lupar Ibans. Bailey was determined to compel them to live along the main river, but at this period the Rajah was more inclined to be sympathetic with their desire to seek out the side streams. In 1894 he reprimanded the Resident for threatening, without his express permission, to destroy longhouses located in the border area, and early in the following year he somewhat relaxed the restriction on settlement in that area.[4] The Rajah did not approve at all of Bailey's

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p. 228, n. 1 below) and Balang of Katibas. Asun (Bah Tunggal), perhaps the last great Iban rebel, was, like Bantin, not *tau serang*. Asun was the central figure in a period of unrest beginning in 1931 in the Kanowit area: see ch. 10.

[1] Benedict Sandin believes the desire to remain beyond reach of the Government was by far the more important of the two motives.

[2] Deshon Second Division August report, *SG* 297 (10 Oct 1890). Several other upriver Iban leaders also obeyed Deshon's order to attack Bantin, according to this report.

[3] Bailey Second Division January report, *SG* 326 (1 March 1893).

[4] Charles Brooke to Bailey, 30 June 1894, SA; Bailey Second Division January report, *SG* 350 (1 March 1895). In his annual report for 1895 the Resident wrote, 'Your Highness was pleased to

subsequent behavior, which led to the outbreak of open hostilities with Bantin.

In 1895 Bantin and certain other upriver headmen went on a trading venture to the Kapuas. When they returned from Dutch Borneo, bringing with them old jars and brassware, they failed to pay an import duty which the Sarawak Government levied on such items. In fact, the upriver people were not accustomed to pay this tax on what the Government considered to be Iban luxuries. It was normally collected only at Simanggang and other downriver points, and was not applied to the small amount of trade crossing the land frontier. But Bailey, in a court session at Lubok Antu, nevertheless fined all the members of Bantin's party. He made Bantin himself pay ten katis ($7.20) and confiscated his brassware. It was a costly blunder. 'Bantin became an enemy on this account', the Rajah later wrote, and tradition in the upper river, where the incident is well remembered, agrees with his judgement.[1]

Bantin continued to live on the upper Delok, which Bailey still regarded as a prohibited area. In the summer of 1896 the Resident ordered a force of downriver Batang Lupar Ibans, hereditary enemies of the upriver people, to destroy Bantin's house. No European accompanied the expedition, which was under the sole command of Malay Native Officers. Two of the Native Officers lost their lives in the ensuing fight. The downriver Ibans lost one man, but they succeeded in killing Bantin's nephew. They took his head back with them to Sukong on the lower river, where they used it in a festival to end a period of mourning. The upriver people learned of this, and were further enraged.

Once again the Rajah felt that Bailey had gone too far. 'I do not wish any armed force to be sent against Bantin, and I can't look upon the death of the three men as "murder" in its common sense', he advised the Resident after this incident.[2] The following March Charles Brooke visited Simanggang, where he persuaded Ngumbang to take a peace offer to Bantin. But Bantin was by now determined to have his revenge, and he rejected the Rajah's terms. Later in the month the Government ordered Ngumbang and other Ibans to

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throw open the Kedang country which had previously been closed to the upriver Dayaks since 1887. At the close of the year these people caused some trouble by building their houses inland which is contrary to orders.' (*SG* 361 (1 Feb 1896).)

[1] Quotation from Charles Brooke to Bailey, 3 Oct 1897, SA. Details of the 1895 fines are given in 'Diary of the hon'ble the Resident of the Third Division', *SG* 382 (1 Nov 1897) (a report by H. F. Deshon, who had been requested by the Rajah to visit Simanggang in an effort to help resolve the Bantin problem). For the cash equivalents of Iban fines, often expressed in *katis* or *pikuls* of brassware, see p. 170, n. 1.

[2] Charles Brooke to Bailey, 11 Aug 1896, SA. Bailey did not mention the episode in his monthly report, but referred to it briefly in his annual report for 1896: *SG* 373 (1 Feb 1897).

collect a force and attack Bantin again, and this time Bantin's son Inggol was killed in a sharp encounter.[1]

It was at this point that the Rajah belatedly decided that the whole trouble could be traced to Bailey's undue severity in fining Bantin two years previously, on the occasion already described. In October of 1897 Charles personally went to Lubok Antu, hoping to see Bantin, who refused to meet him. But he told the other upriver leaders that all the fines imposed by Bailey in 1895 would be revoked or reduced, and that no further action would be taken against Bantin. The Rajah instructed Bailey,

> I wish now no steps to be taken by the Government of Simanggang in regard to Bantin.
>
> He can remain where he is at present at any rate. The [friendly] Dayaks about Lubok Antu can defend and take care of themselves, and follow up any enemy that appears against them. . . .
>
> No fines are to be imposed on him – the only condition will be that he ceases hostilities, and moves down [to] the mouth of Delok after the harvest.[2]

But it was too late for such clemency to have the slightest effect. Only a few weeks after the Rajah's visit to Lubok Antu, Bantin and his followers staged a pre-dawn attack on the Ibans of Sukong, who had taken the head of Bantin's nephew the previous year. After killing five men and five women they returned upriver, passing directly beneath the walls of the Government fort at Lubok Antu. Much to Bailey's disgust, the inhabitants of nearby longhouses, who were supposed to be loyal to the Rajah, made no effort to stop the raiders.[3]

The story of what followed has already been told in another connection. The Rajah now decided that all the upper Batang Lupar people would have to be punished for Bantin's action. He conceived the plan of sending a force of Ibans under the command of Munan overland from the Rejang to attack them from an unexpected direction. Munan's force carried out this mission, destroying twenty longhouses and killing eighteen of the upriver people. Bantin himself escaped by fleeing across the border.[4] Immediately afterwards, in March 1898, Bailey was ordered home on furlough under a cloud of royal disapproval.[5] The Rajah then met the chastized upper Batang Lupar leaders

[1] Bailey Second Division March report, *SG* 376 (1 May 1897).

[2] Charles Brooke to Bailey, 3 Oct 1897, SA.

[3] Bailey Second Division November report, *SG* 384 (1 Dec 1897). The Resident made it clear that he believed this incident vindicated his own 'hard line' toward Bantin, and proved the Rajah's attempted clemency to have been a waste of time.

[4] 'The Expedition from Rejang to Batang Lupar', *SG* 387 (1 April 1898).

[5] Charles Brooke to Bailey, 16 March 1898, SA, quoted on p. 185, n. 2.

at Simanggang, required them to deposit the usual pledges of old jars and brassware as a guarantee of future good behavior, and urged them to keep the peace henceforth. As for Bantin, who did not attend, 'His Highness thought it made little difference whether he was friend or foe, so long as he kept quiet.' It would be best, the Rajah told the headmen, if they could persuade him to come in. But he would leave it in their hands: 'So far as he was concerned, he would rather not hear the name of Bantin again.'[1] A few months later, in July 1898, the Government arranged a peacemaking between the hostile upriver and downriver Batang Lupar factions.[2]

For the next three years the Batang Lupar enjoyed relative calm. Bailey, apparently forgiven by the Rajah, once again took charge of the Division. In August 1900 Bantin and the other family heads in his longhouse paid their door tax at Lubok Antu, a sure sign of pacific intentions.[3] In the same year the first section of the Iban language dictionary which Bailey co-authored was published. It was dedicated to Charles Brooke,

> . . . whose personal exertions, humane and wise rule have enabled him to put an end to tribal warfare among the Sea Dayaks and assured them of the blessings of peace and prosperity within their borders whereby they have advanced in the scale of civilization and now occupy a position *second to none* among the natives of Borneo.[4]

But old hatreds were not forgotten and it required only one killing to start the trouble anew.

In December of 1901 some Ibans at Sermat on the lower Batang Lupar murdered a half-blind old man, a visitor to their area, after he had lost his way and blundered onto their farm. The killers, all young men, knew from his accent that he was a stranger from enemy country, and sensed an easy opportunity to procure a head. The victim's home was in Dutch territory not far from Lubok Antu, but his people were related to the upriver Batang Lupar Ibans. The Government, well realizing that this incident could be a spark in a powder keg, quickly sentenced the murderers to long jail terms and paid compensation (*pati nyawa*) to the dead man's family, in accordance with Iban customary law.[5] This was not enough to satisfy Bantin. In March 1902 he raided the home of the murderers at Sermat, killing two, wound-

[1] The report of the Rajah's meeting with Iban leaders at Simanggang is given in *SG* 387 (1 April 1898).

[2] Kirkpatrick Second Division July report, *SG* 392 (1 Sept 1898).

[3] Baring-Gould Second Division August report, *SG* 417 (1 Oct 1900); for an account of a visit to the upper river at this time, see Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 41.

[4] Howell and Bailey, *A Sea Dyak Dictionary*, dedication. Emphasis in original.

[5] The name of the victim was Bujal and his home was on the Badau, a tributary of Sungai Bunut, which flows into the lakes: 'Inquiry into the Sermat Murder', 22 Dec 1901 to 4 Jan 1902, Simang-

ing three and burning the longhouse.[1] He struck again in May, and the Rajah began to prepare for a full scale expedition against the upper Batang Lupar.

Early in June 1902 Ibans from many areas of the Second and Third Divisions began to assemble at Lingga, equipped with their own boats and weapons and prepared to feed themselves for up to one month. When they had all gathered, they moved up the broad estuary to Simanggang. There the Rajah addressed a final council of war on 9 June, and then turned command of the force over to his son, Rajah Muda Vyner, to H. F. Deshon, Resident of the Third Division, and to Bailey. The same day a seemingly endless line of war-boats began to move up the Batang Lupar. After two days of paddling, eight hundred of them reached Lubok Antu during daylight hours on 11 June, while many more passed the fort after dark. The Rajah had ordered that the force should include 300 Malays, who alone were issued rifles and ammunition. There was a single fifty-man squad of trained Sarawak Rangers from Kuching. Finally there were the Ibans, armed for the most part only with their own spears. Bailey estimated that at least 12,000 of them had answered the Rajah's call.[2]

By June the comparatively dry season of the southwest monsoon is well under way in Sarawak. In 1902 it had been particularly hot, rainless and oppressive, the sort of weather which shrinks water supplies and breeds epidemics in downriver Borneo. Even before the expeditionary force left Lingga, cases of cholera began appearing, but the Rajah, determined to see his plan executed, apparently ignored the obvious and terrible danger. The sickness nibbled at the edges of the force all the way upriver. On 12 June the officers in charge established a base camp at the mouth of the Delok, from which point, according to the Rajah's detailed instructions, parties would advance to attack enemy longhouses on all sides. The river, shut in by surrounding hills, flows over and around gravel beds upon which the army camped. The weather remained unusually hot, the water level was low, and the throng of humanity soon fouled the normally sparkling clear stream. Cholera began to spread like lightning. Thousands of panic-stricken Ibans, many of them already dying, started to flee back downriver.

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gang CCB, SA. Trial by jury, normal in most capital cases, was here dispensed with: the Government was determined to punish the killers as swiftly as possible in the hope that this would avert further bloodshed.

[1] Bailey, Second Division March report, *SG* 437 (1 May 1902).

[2] The most complete accounts of this expedition are Bailey's Second Division June report *SG* 439 (1 Aug 1902), and his dispatch dated June 19 in *SG* 438 (1 July 1902). The Rajah's instructions for the expedition, dated 13 May 1902, are among his letters, SA: see Appendix A.

Although the extent of the disaster was soon apparent, Bailey was unwilling to retreat without a 'single demonstration', as he phrased it, against the enemy. By 14 June he could muster only one hundred warriors out of the original force. Commanded by Penghulu Dalam Munan and Pengarah Ringkai of Betong, who himself died of cholera a short time later, these few stalwarts managed to burn some nearby longhouses, but made no contact with the enemy warriors. At least one thousand Ibans died on what came to be known as the Cholera Expedition. The frightened victims of the infection frequently carried it back to their longhouses, and it raged throughout the Second Division all summer. Many trusted Iban *penghulu* and a few Malay Native Officers were among the dead.[1]

Despite this costly setback, the Rajah still entertained the hope that Bantin might capitulate. He even instructed Bailey to be lenient.

Whether the late disastrous demonstration up the Batang Lupar will have a salutary effect on the inhabitants or not it is impossible to say – but I am always ready to show the olive branch under certain conditions, and these are that Bantin, if he and other leaders offer themselves to come in, pay a fine of, say, double ten jars, or their equivalent, and that they follow orders as to their place of living, you need not send any messages but await their offers of allegiance, if they refuse this, then I shall in course of time decide what to do – pray don't deal hardly with them, we must remember they are Dayaks and not civilized men, and easily put on the wrong path – with such a people a personal interest between governor and governed is always very desirable and only brought about by kindness and at [the] same time some severity, a mixture of the two – the *berandaus* [meetings with the chiefs] are neces-

[1] The estimate of more than one thousand Iban deaths is from 'The Expedition', *SG* 438 (1 July 1902). Bailey's July report in *SG* 440 (1 Sept 1902) lists the names of some prominent Ibans dead of cholera.

Reports published in the *Gazette* did not conceal facts which reflected little credit on the Rajah's judgement. They clearly stated, for example, that cholera was known to have been present in the force before it had left Lingga. Nevertheless Charles was angered when what he regarded as distorted accounts appeared in the Singapore press. He believed that an S.P.G. missionary was responsible, and demanded his dismissal: Charles Brooke to Bishop [G. F. Hose], 8 July 1902, SA. The Singapore *Free Press* of 3 July 1902 had observed (under the headline 'Disastrous Expedition in Sarawak') that 'When an army of ten thousand Dayaks in seven hundred boats travelling up a river which is their only source of drinking water, has even a single case of cholera, it is morally certain that the most fatal and rapid water-borne disease will spread with frightful speed.' In a book written years later, Vyner's wife, the Ranee Sylvia, charged that the Rajah Muda, among others, had warned his father that cholera was breaking out before the expedition left Lingga. Sylvia, who thoroughly disliked her father-in-law, added, 'I think this event proves more than any other what an unscrupulous and inhuman man this Second Rajah of Sarawak was. He was warned by everyone that cholera had broken out but he refused to listen. His plans came first. Without a tremor he sent his eldest son to an almost certain death.' (H.H. The Ranee of Sarawak, *Sylvia of Sarawak: an Autobiography* (London, 1936) p. 149. See also the same author's *The Three White Rajas* (London, 1939) pp. 127–8.)

sary to create influence and to make them know that we take an interest in their welfare – I know that this system is often very much opposed to the feelings and modes of Englishmen, and few of our countrymen can afford to show such condescension, but it is this that has led to the success of the Sarawak policy, if success it has been, instituted by the late Rajah and followed out by myself – I need not say more –[1]

The rebels, however, were in no mood to talk peace. Their position had never been stronger. According to upriver tradition, Bantin and the other leaders were warned in dreams not to take the heads of the cholera victims who fell on the expedition. They did not do so, and perhaps as a result the upriver people completely escaped the epidemic which decimated their downriver enemies. Ngumbang, who had been acting as the Rajah's man since 1886, now rejoined the rebel ranks. Two months after the Cholera Expedition, on 26 September 1902, he and Bantin at the head of one thousand warriors overwhelmed a longhouse on the lower Lemanak tributary of the Batang Lupar, killing seventy-two men, women and children.[2] During the following two months Bailey twice led expeditions to attack the upriver people.[3] There was another massive Government foray against Bantin in 1903, the last which Charles Brooke led in person, and yet another in 1904. On two more occasions Penghulu Dalam Munan led his warriors across from the Rejang to attack the enemy from the rear, timing his arrival to coordinate with Government forces advancing from Simanggang.[4] Scores of longhouses and tons of *padi* were destroyed in these attacks, but the Government could not eliminate the hornet's nest in the headwaters, nor could it prevent Bantin from taking his revenge by attacking the downriver Ibans. During the years 1903 and 1904 the pattern of raid and retaliation spread across the watershed

[1] Charles Brooke to Bailey, 25 June 1902, SA.

[2] Bailey, 'The Troubles in the Batang Lupar', dispatch dated 2 Oct 1902, *SG* 442 (1 Nov 1902).

[3] Bailey dispatch dated 13 Oct 1902, in *SG* 442 (1 Nov 1902); Bailey, 'The Recent Expedition', *SG* 443 (1 Dec 1902).

[4] The Penghulu Dalam's extraordinary feats during this period would provide the plot for several television serials. In November of 1902 he led his warriors from the Rejang under instructions to rendezvous with another force of pro-Government Skrang and Saribas Ibans under Insol, son of Nanang. Munan was delayed, however, and in the meantime Insol's force was ambushed and badly defeated by Kana of Engkari (for whose career, see p. 228, n. 1 below). When Munan did appear, he surprised a rebel Engkari Iban longhouse just as its inhabitants were celebrating over the heads of their recent Skrang and Saribas victims. Munan's party killed sixty of the Engkaris and took five captives: the incident is mentioned in Bailey's Second Division November report, *SG* 444 (2 Jan 1903). A few months later, in March 1903, Munan was wounded on the Batang Lupar expedition, the last which Charles Brooke led in person: 'Batang Lupar Expedition', *SG* 447 (1 April 1903). In July 1904, the Penghulu Dalam again led a force from the Rejang across the watershed to attack the Engkari rebels, who were still in league with Bantin. He timed his assault to coincide with the advance of a larger, European-commanded expedition up the Batang Lupar: Vyner Brooke Third Division July report, *SG* 464 (1 Sept 1904).

to the Kanowit River system as well.[1] Large areas of the Second and Third Divisions were plunged into virtual anarchy, and the situation did not improve measurably for another half decade.

There would be little point in describing the endless unrest of these years in detail. Most of the raids and expeditions were fully reported in the pages of the *Sarawak Gazette*. One feature of the fighting should be stressed, however. The Government never assumed for a minute that it could even attempt to protect the friendly Iban population from enemy attack. On the contrary, it was taken from granted that all loyal Ibans were warriors obligated not only to protect themselves but to defend others, by carrying out counter-raids if necessary.[2] Bailey expressed indignation in 1904 when he learned that

[1] Toward the end of 1903 the upper Batang Lupar rebels began to make frequent raids across the watershed into the lower Kanowit, where their activities caused the Government great concern. It was in March 1904 that the fabled 'Bong Kap Encounter' took place. Bantin and Kana of Engkari, leading a party of rebels down from the Kanowit headwaters, met a force of Sarawak Rangers under an English officer, H. S. B. Johnson (not to be confused with H. C. B. Johnson, the Rajah's nephew) at Wong Adai, above Nanga Entabai. The rebels were heavily defeated, losing eighteen killed according to one account. There was never any mention of this battle in the *Sarawak Gazette*. Conditions were so bad at this period that, for perhaps the only time during the Second Rajah's reign, reports on Iban affairs were censored before publication. The upper Batang Lupar Ibans remember the Bong Kap Encounter, however, and it is mentioned in several books: for a description of the bullet-riddled rebel *bong* (boat) and the figure of eighteen killed see H. Wilfrid Walker, *Wanderings Among South Sea Savages* (London, 1910) p. 193; other references are in Hose, *Romance and Research*, p. 152; and Ranee Sylvia, *The Three White Rajahs*, p. 134: the latter states that Rajah Muda Vyner was present.

Bantin was not present at the actual encounter, apparently because his boat had lagged behind the main rebel party coming downriver. Kana, the principal leader on the Iban side, was the son of Penghulu Munau apai Laja of Engkari; he was a warrior of great prestige and a famous upriver malcontent for many years. After the end of the Bantin troubles the Rajah appointed him *penghulu tolongan* (i.e. without any specific district) in the upper Batang Lupar, but at a later period he joined the rebel Asun and was detained in 1933. Like Asun, Kana was eventually sent to live in exile, under fairly pleasant circumstances, at Lundu in the First Division, where he died shortly after World War II. Among Government officers he was always regarded as a truculent loudmouth (see Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, pp. 127–8, 131–2). The Tuan Muda, Bertram Brooke, met this battle-scarred warrior in 1932 and reported, 'Kana, apart from his past record as a bitter and remarkably courageous enemy of Government in the old days, is an irascible despot in the ulu. He enjoys the prestige throughout the country of a man who has survived seven simultaneous Snider bullet wounds, whilst leading a forlorn hope in a river action against Government [apparently a reference to the Bong Kap Encounter], when his fleet had deserted him and fled. He will remain a legendary ulu Dayak hero after he is dead.' ('Extracts from a report by His Highness the Tuan Muda on a visit to the Ulus Entabai and Batang Lupar, and the Delok District, Third Division [*sic*], 13–19 February, 1932', *SG* 943 (1 April 1932).)

[2] A. B. Ward has written, 'It must be understood that the Government was powerless to protect the whole district against these raids. It would have meant the permanent employment of a large army to police the many miles of affected country. Sarawak could only give swift hard blows when it was possible to collect a number of loyal Dayaks with the least inconvenience to the levies themselves. The enemy, operating in small mobile parties, hit here, there and everywhere, without warning, trusting to the speed and knowledge of the thousand devious tracks through thick jungle to get clear before reprisals could be instituted.' (*Rajah's Servant*, p. 124.)

certain Ibans of the upper Lemanak River, harried by constant rebel raids, were migrating elsewhere, leaving their home area deserted and thereby exposing the downstream Lemanak population to Bantin's attacks.[1] He was scornful of longhouses which were slovenly about defense and allowed themselves to be surprised. After upper Batang Lupar raiders had killed thirty-four people on the Skrang River early in 1904 he commented, 'The slackness in guarding against surprise and lack of vigour in the fight and pursuit of the enemy as shewn by these ulu Skrang Dayaks is appalling.'[2] Charles Brooke considered himself an expert on the local mode of warfare, and sometimes advised friendly Ibans about how to take the offensive. He wrote in 1908:

> I stopped at the mouth of Kanowit and met the principal chiefs there, and they asked to raise a *bala* [large force] to attack Mikai Pambar [a hill on the border range in the upper Batang Lupar, a favourite gathering ground for rebela from all areas at this time] but that I did not recommend and advised them to make attacks in small forces of 100 to 150 men under different *tuas* [leaders] and on different routes – one after another and keeping up a succession of them. They appeared inclined to follow my advice.[3]

The international frontier remained a major problem for the Government. Iban rebels and wandering warriors (*kampar*)[4] from both the Second and Third Divisions retreated to vantage points in the hills along the upper Batang Lupar border. From here they could sally forth to raid the downriver Ibans, and then escape retribution merely by moving a few miles to Dutch territory. Relations between the Dutch and Sarawak Governments remained superficially cordial, and there was no revival of the open quarreling which had marked the earlier period of border troubles. The Dutch stationed military patrols along the frontier in the lakes region, in an effort to keep Ibans in the many areas settled by migrants from the Batang Lupar from rejoining their rebellious kinsmen in Sarawak. But they realized that these measures were not effective.[5]

The Dutch were not really very sympathetic to the Rajah's plight. They

[1] Bailey Second Division January report, *SG* 458 (3 March 1904).

[2] Bailey Second Dvision April report, *SG* 473 (1 June 1905).

[3] Charles Brooke to Bailey, 1 Aug. 1908, SA.

[4] *Kampar* is the Iban term for any man wandering, trading or fighting outside of his own country. Residents believed that such itinerants were behind many raids. Bailey wrote in 1904, 'These Orang Kampar are the curse of the Ulu Ai and the frontier and the chief cause of the troubles up country. They have nothing to lose but their lives and they do not mind risking them when they are mischief making (in some country that is not theirs) for they trust to their speed and knowledge of the jungle to save them.' (Second Division March report, *SG* 460 (3 May 1904).)

[5] Burgemeestre, 'Onze verhouding', pp. 15–16.

were more concerned about the possibility that one of the frequent Sarawak punitive expeditions might stray across the border and attack nominal Dutch subjects, as had happened in 1868 and again in 1886. In 1903 the Sarawak Government requested permission to take a small and disciplined force through Dutch territory to attack Bantin, some of whose followers living in Sarawak could be reached more easily from the direction of the Kapuas lakes. After a good deal of hesitation the Dutch agreed, but they imposed so many conditions, some of them distinctly insulting, that the Rajah abandoned the idea.[1] They steadfastly ignored pleas from the Sarawak Government to regard Bantin as an outlaw.[2]

According to Dutch sources, Bantin himself was extremely careful to remain on good terms with the Netherlands Indies authorities. In 1903 he sent apologies to them after some of his followers had attacked a longhouse in Dutch territory, explaining that the real object of the raiders had been to surprise and kill H. L. Owen, the young Brooke cadet then in charge at Lubok Antu.[3] The following year Bantin even promised the Dutch that he would keep them informed about the progress of a Sarawak Government punitive expedition which was advancing up the Batang Lupar to attack him. 'This promise can't be relied upon – I mention it only for its curiosity', remarked the Dutch officer who received his offer.[4] Sarawak officials were aware of the Dutch attitude. 'As long as Bantin and his people know that they are not treated as enemies by the Dutch authorities I am convinced they will continue to give trouble to Sarawak Dayaks', Rajah Muda Vyner wrote late in 1904, after presiding over a futile attempt to make terms with the rebels at Lubok Antu.[5] But beyond protesting to the Dutch, there was little the Rajah could do.

From 1903 onwards the two junior British officers stationed at Simanggang took turns in charge of the post at Lubok Antu, which had always previously been in the hands of a Malay Native Officer. Located in a critical

[1] Charles Brooke to the Resident of Western Borneo, 20 Feb 1903, SA. The Dutch conditions were: first, that the Sarawak force must be 'truly disciplined' and under European command, and must not include Iban levies; second, that it should follow a specified route through the lakes region toward the border range; third, that in Dutch territory it should be accompanied by Netherlands Indies troops under Dutch command; and fourth, that the Rajah must guarantee no injury to Ibans living in Dutch territory: Resident A. de Neve to Charles Brooke, 11 Feb 1903, in Burgemeestre, 'Onze verhouding', pp. 17–18.

[2] Charles Brooke letters to the Resident of Western Borneo, 13 April, 16 May, and 5 June 1905, SA.

[3] Controleur Campagne letter dated 25 Aug 1903, in Burgemeestre, 'Onze verhouding', pp. 19–20.

[4] Controleur Campagne letter, 25 June 1904, ibid., p. 21. For the Sarawak expedition in question, see 'The Expedition', *SG* 463 (2 Aug 1904).

[5] Vyner Brooke to Charles Brooke, 21 Nov 1904, SA.

position midway between friendly and hostile Iban territory and hard against the Dutch frontier, Lubok Antu was not at this period a very comfortable place to be. Both the fort and the small Chinese bazaar were surrounded by a stout stockade. There were watchtowers at the corners manned by armed guards. On at least three occasions the rebels tried to burn down the bazaar.[1] Bailey maintained strict control over the sale of salt to make sure that none got into the hands of the enemy, and fretted over the safety of the post. In the spring of 1905 he advised the Cadet in command:

> I may tell you that he [the Rajah] is anxious about the safety of Lubok Antu so I beg you to be *most careful* of your defences. . . . You should remember that 'It is always the unexpected that happens' hence you cannot be too careful and circumspect.[2]

By 1905 there were signs that some of the upriver people were tiring of the constant warfare. In that year, rebels living on the Pan and Engkari tributaries relatively close to Lubok Antu made a somewhat tenuous peace with the Rajah, and slowly began to pay in their door tax arrears, as well as pledges of good behavior.[3] Rumors began to circulate that Bantin himself might come to terms with the Government. These reports were eagerly received by Charles Hose, who after fifteen years in charge of the Baram had just been assigned to finish out his Sarawak career as Resident of the neighboring Third Division. Hose had recently obtained an honorary Doctor of Science degree from Cambridge, and his growing international reputation as the ethnographic savant of Borneo generated awe if not affection among his fellow Residents. He was intensely proud of his record as a peacemaker in the Baram, where the Kayans and Kenyahs, less pugnacious and more responsive to the authority of their chiefs than the Ibans, had readily accepted the Rajah's rule. In 1899 Hose had organized a great ceremony of reconciliation between formerly hostile Baram tribes, complete with boat races inspired by memories of Cambridge competition, which he had intended to serve as a new outlet for old rivalries.[4] The single peacemaking had been sufficient; the Brookes never found it necessary to send a single punitive expedition up the Baram, Sarawak's second largest river. Hose now hoped that he would be able to repeat this success with Bantin and the Ibans.

[1] J. Baring-Gould to F. A. W. Page-Turner, 23 March 1905, 'Bailey Letters', SA. This series, which contains many letters from the Resident at Simanggang to the officer in charge at Lubok Antu during the years 1905 to 1908, gives a vivid picture of the border post in troubled times.

[2] Bailey to Page-Turner, 5 April 1905, 'Bailey Letters', SA.

[3] Bailey Second Division April and May reports, *SG* 473 and 474 (1 June and 1 July 1905).

[4] Hose and McDougall, *Pagan Tribes*, II 293–300; Charles Hose, *Natural Man, a Record from Borneo* (London, 1926) pp. 148–55. The tradition of the boat races survives in the annual Baram regatta, still held every year at Marudi.

After much negotiation through intermediaries, Bantin and other leading upper Batang Lupar rebels appeared at Kapit on the upper Rejang. On 16 May 1907, in the presence of both the Resident, Dr Hose, and the Rajah, they made peace with the downriver Rejang Ibans, who, under the leadership of Penghulu Dalam Munan, had frequently participated in expeditions against them. Bantin spoke feelingly of his good intentions toward the Government and gave the Rajah a spear decorated with the long hair of his late enemies. As a friend, he said, it was no longer of any use to him. He then promised to go through a similar ceremony with the pro-Government lower Batang Lupar Ibans of his own home area, the neighboring Second Division.[1] In a book published twenty years later, Charles Hose, never one to diminish his own accomplishments, took full credit for making peace with Bantin, implying that he had swiftly cleared up a mess which Bailey had been unable to handle.[2]

Bailey, observing these proceedings from Simanggang, was both annoyed and skeptical at the intervention of his famous fellow Resident. He plainly felt that Hose, for all his honorary degrees, would have been well advised to confine his attention to affairs on his own side of the watershed. His doubts appeared to have been justified four months later, when Bantin appeared at Lubok Antu for the promised Batang Lupar peacemaking. Instead of submitting, he loudly claimed that the Rajah had authorized him to demand fines from his downriver enemies in the Second Division. At the very time that this 'peacemaking' was in progress, Bantin's allies and relatives carried out another bloody raid against a community on the upper Skrang River.[3]

Now in his twentieth year in the Second Division, Bailey was already suffering from what proved to be a fatal illness. But in the closing months of 1908 he obeyed the Rajah's command and led the last great expedition against Bantin and the upper Batang Lupar Ibans. More reliance was placed on trained Sarawak Rangers than had been the case on previous operations, and the force demolished over forty longhouses. 'For eight days the enemy's country was in complete possession of our people', Bailey reported, 'and, in the opinion of those who have had a long experience of ulu [upriver] troubles, these troublesome Dayaks have received, perhaps, the most smashing reverse they have ever had in the last twenty years.'[4] A short time later he returned to England, where he died in the spring of 1909 at the age of forty-nine.[5]

[1] The peacemaking is reported in *SG* 497 (5 June 1907).
[2] Hose, *Romance and Research*, pp. 158–9.
[3] Bailey Second Division September report, *SG* 502 (2 Nov 1907).
[4] 'Expedition against the Dayak Rebels in the Batang Lupar', *SG* 517 (1 Oct 1908).
[5] *SG* 532 (17 May 1909).

Wearied by years of warfare, most of the upriver headmen must have been anxious for peace. Their old adversary was gone, and the man who replaced him, A. B. Ward, was more lenient. In his opinion, Bailey's uncompromising insistence that the Ibans should live along the banks of the main river had been a major cause of subsequent bloodshed and ill-will.[1] Unlike his predecessor, Ward was able to relax with the often truculent upriver leaders. He would listen to their threats and grievances, and then invite them into Fort Alice for a brandy. Under his administration during the next five years, a degree of peace and quiet gradually settled over the upper Batang Lupar.

In March 1909, the same month that Bailey died, Bantin and the leading rebels visited Lubok Antu, and paid in their own personal shares of the one pikul ($28.80) per family fine demanded by the Government. Ngumbang was among them; it was a little over forty years since he had first led an attack on this same station.[2] But the mood of the upper river was still far from completely friendly to the Government, and the headmen could by no means persuade all their followers to submit. Bantin himself, after paying his fine, migrated with eighty families to the Leboyan River in Dutch Borneo, where he continued to live until his death in 1932, and where he is buried.[3]

In his annual report for 1912, Ward reported that for the first time in the history of the Second Division a year had passed without a single 'intertribal' killing.[4] There was another outbreak of raiding in the upper Batang Lupar in the period 1914–16, but this time the disturbances originated in the Balleh tributary of the Rejang, Third Division, where serious unrest continued until after 1919.[5] Shortly before the death of Charles Brooke in 1917, the

[1] Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, pp. 41, 121–2, and interviews with Mr Ward in October 1966.

[2] H. L. Owen Second Division March report, *SG* 531 (1 May 1909).

[3] Bantin's emigration is reported in Ward's Second Division June report, *SG* 537 (2 Aug 1909). The headwaters of the Leboyan River, to which Bantin moved, are just across the border range from the upper branches of Sungai Delok, his original home and the scene of many of his battles. Some of his family returned to Sarawak territory after World War II, including his daughter Dungi and her husband Balai, now living at Tapang Pungga on the main river just below Nanga Delok. Bantin's death is recorded in Burgemeestre, 'Onze verhouding', p. 35. This official Dutch report of 1934, which is consistently critical of Sarawak Iban policy, states that Bantin threatened rebellion against the Dutch in 1917 after they had used force to compel a large number of Ibans to leave the upper Leboyan and move to points further downriver. The Controleur of Upper Kapuas then offered him the choice of going back to Sarawak or taking an oath of allegiance to the Dutch. He took the oath, and was thereafter frequently helpful to the Dutch authorities: ibid., p. 29.

[4] Ward Second Division annual report for 1912, *SGG* (17 Feb 1913).

[5] The 1914–16 unrest is briefly described in ch. 8. Tabor, the leader of the rebel forces defeated at the battle of Nanga Pila on the Rejang in 1916, was a member of a well known upper Batang Lupar family. Tabor was killed at Nanga Pila, but his brother Ramba remained an influential upper Batang Lupar *penghulu* until the end of Brooke rule. Some awareness of common ancestry may have motivated young Batang Lupar Ibans to join Rejang dissidents in times of rebellion, and vice-versa, but sheer love of fighting and excitement was probably a more important motive.

Government for the first time began to exert systematic authority over Bantin's former home territory. Five *penghulu* were appointed for the upper Batang Lupar, and charged with seeing to it that no longhouses were established in side streams above certain specified limits. In later years *paks* or markers were placed in each stream to indicate these limits.[1] During the years of rebellion Sarawak Government officers had virtually never visited the upper river except at the head of punitive expeditions. Now they began to venture beyond Lubok Antu on more peaceful missions.

By 1920 the tempers of old enemies had cooled sufficiently to permit the Government to stage a great peacemaking between the upper Batang Lupar people and those from the Skrang, Lemanak and Saribas Rivers. Leaders from both sides participated in a ritual pig-killing and exchanged equal numbers of old Chinese jars. Speaking from a pavilion erected for the occasion at Simanggang, Rajah Vyner Brooke addressed the chiefs in Iban,

Thus have I come here to witness all you people of the upper [Batang Lupar] river [and the] Skrang, Layar [Saribas] and Lemanak make peace by the killing of pigs and the exchange of jars as a sign of having buried all your past enmities. And so, in days gone by, did my father witness the peacemaking between the Balau, Undup and Skrang tribes, since when they have lived in peace and good will with one another.[2] And to this day, every race under my rule has such signs of good faith from their aforetime enemies.

Now that all you of the upper river have settled the blood feud with the tribes of the Skrang, Layar and Lemanak, you recognize how all are of the same stock, and have no further cause for dispute, honour having been satisfied on both sides by the settlement at the Telaus meeting place and the blood of a pig having been spilled to testify to this.

But I have come here to ratify that compact as I am like a father with his children my sole desire being that all should live in peace and friendliness one with another, and all countries be open, that you may all gain in prosperity by the cultivation of the soil, and trading one with another in the produce of your forests. . . .

The oaths which you will utter according to your own custom this day, I confirm with my word that, should anyone reopen this feud at any future day, that man shall become my sworn enemy, and I shall demand the life of anyone who so takes the life of another. In the past your blood feud has been recognized, but from now

[1] The names of *penghulu* and the settlement limits are given in Page-Turner's Second Division December report, *SG* 379 (16 Feb 1918). Similar measures were enforced in the Third Division after the end of the Balleh disturbances, in 1921–2: see ch. 8.

[2] This is apparently a reference to the Balau-Skrang peacemaking of 1851 (see p. 92). There is no evidence that the Undups were involved, and Captain Brooke Brooke, not Vyner's father, Charles, organized the 1851 ceremony.

henceforth this no longer exists having been finally settled by the blood of these pigs and the exchange of those jars.[1]

Bantin came from his home in Dutch Borneo to attend the ceremony, but took no part in it, and afterwards made unrepentant and threatening remarks toward the downriver Sarawak Ibans.[2] Four years later, in 1924, the Rajah presided over an identical ceremony, again held at Simanggang, between the upper Batang Lupar Ibans and those lower Rejang Ibans who had fought on the Government side during the time of troubles.[3] This second Simanggang peacemaking, which should not be confused with the more famous Iban-Kenyah ceremony held at Kapit in the same year, was in fact a repetition of the one which had been held at Kapit in 1907 at the time of Bantin's abortive surrender.

The Simanggang peacemakings of 1920 and 1924 wrote a formal finish to an era of friction and bloodshed in the Batang Lupar which had continued almost throughout the long reign of Charles Brooke. A somewhat similar period of unrest in the upper Rejang, an area inhabited by a related Iban population, will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. But it should be emphasized here that prolonged turbulence of this kind was not a feature of relations between the Brookes and the various non-Iban tribal societies. Furthermore there was nothing similar to it in other areas of Borneo, where contact between the pagan peoples and the various European regimes was on the whole peaceful. Throughout the nineteenth century nearly all the more important Borneo rebellions were sparked by Moslem dissidents reluctant to relinquish their claims of overlordship, no matter how tenuous, to British or Dutch rulers.[4] Because the pagan cultures lacked the concept of kingship, and because their own traditional political systems rarely extended beyond the village level, they could not often produce any serious opposition to the new authorities. In the great majority of cases they were never inclined to do so.

The Ibans were a special case. Their traditional culture placed extreme and

[1] The Resident had previously gathered all the leaders involved at Nanga Telaus on the upper Batang Lupar to make sure they actually would agree to the later, formal peacemaking, hence Vyner's reference to that meeting: 'The Peacemaking at Simanggang', *SG* 800 (1 Sept 1920).

[2] Ibid.; Burgemeestre, 'Onze verhouding', p. 30.

[3] Reported in *SG* 846 (3 March 1924).

[4] I do not mean to suggest that pagans never fought against European authority, but rather that such opposition was relatively uncommon and rarely protracted. For a case of pagan insurgency in North Borneo, see the account of the Rundum rebellion of 1915 in Tregonning, *Under Chartered Company Rule*, pp. 209–12. More typical of serious Borneo rebellions were the Mat Salleh revolt in North Borneo (1894–*c.* 1901), the Banjermassin War (1859–67), the long series of troubles between the Dutch and the middle Kapuas Malay rulers after 1854, and Sarawak's own Malay Plot (1859–60), all of which were led by Moslems.

unusual emphasis on warfare, headhunting and migration, while at the same time it lacked the reliable chiefship institutions by means of which European rulers normally hoped to control Borneo tribal societies. In tones of near desperation the Rajah wrote of the rebellious upper Batang Lupar people in 1905, 'This Dayak community seem almost to be without leaders or anyone who they obey or who has any influence over them.'[1]

On the Government side, the Second Rajah was certainly as unrepresentative of European rulers in Borneo as the Ibans were of pagan peoples. The native materials and modified local techniques which Charles Brooke preferred were not sufficient to enable him to stamp out upriver unrest. The result was a long-drawn state of equilibrium between his regime, which wanted to end promiscuous headhunting and control migration, and the more inaccessible Ibans, who were more often enraged than subdued or persuaded by his tactics.

In the two most important river systems where the Rajah came into contact with large upriver Iban populations, different factors complicated the relationship. In the Batang Lupar the Government faced two main problems. The first was a long established tradition of hostility between the upriver Ibans and various peoples on all sides, including the Ibans of the lower Batang Lupar. The second complication was a legal frontier which divided the interrelated upriver Iban population into two contiguous groups, nominally subject to two mutually suspicious European governments whose philosophies and techniques of administration were often not compatible.

In the upper Rejang, where unrest persisted to a slightly later date, the Ibans were migrating into a thinly settled region at the expense of less numerous, less aggressive tribes. Instead of fighting with each other, as they tended to do in the Second Division, they took both the heads and the land of the non-Ibans. The pattern was more one of outright aggression, less one of intratribal warfare. Moreover, in the Third Division the frontier was never a problem to anything like the extent that it was along the upper Batang Lupar. Even today huge tracts of remote and uninhabited jungle separate the Iban-settled areas in the great Rejang River system from the nearest Indonesian territory. The Rejang frontier never divided an Iban population, and in most areas it was too remote to provide a convenient sanctuary.[2]

[1] Charles Brooke to the Resident of Western Borneo, 16 May 1905, SA.

[2] The Katibas tributary of the Rejang is to some extent an exception to the generalizations made in this paragraph. Although its upper reaches are not now inhabited, it was part of the Iban migration route from the Batang Lupar via the Kanyau in Indonesia to the main Rejang (see the beginning of ch. 8) and ever since it has been something of a highway from the frontier to the Rejang. For this reason the Rajah was particularly concerned for many years to control Iban settlement in the Katibas.

The Rajah's conscious policies were accordingly somewhat different in these two areas. In the Batang Lupar he was primarily concerned to end inter-Iban hostilities, and to prevent border disturbances. In the upper Rejang he wanted first and foremost to curb migration, both to protect the non-Iban peoples and to keep the migrants from spreading beyond hope of control.

Despite some difference in local problems and policies, however, the tactics which the Rajah employed in times of trouble were the same in both areas. He sent the downriver Ibans to fight the upriver Ibans, as he had learned to do in his earliest years at Skrang Fort. Iban levies cost the State nothing, and they enabled the Rajah to strike at adversaries who could not have been touched with conventional military forces. He remained convinced that 'Only Dayaks can attack Dayaks to make them feel in any way a punishment.'[1]

Unfortunately the use of Iban irregulars tended to create as many problems as it solved. With the best intentions in the world, the Government could not control such forces, which were forever attacking the wrong people in the wrong places. The average downriver war leader was neither able to restrain his warriors nor particularly interested in doing so. There were exceptional individuals, such as Penghulu Dalam Munan, who seems to have possessed altogether remarkable qualities, including the ability to control his men and the shrewdness to cooperate consciously with the Rajah. But in general, the Ibans on both sides in any conflict fought for heads and plunder and to satisfy their own thirst for revenge, and the downriver Ibans' idea of just who was the enemy frequently differed from that of the Government in whose name they fought.

Friendly Ibans were frequently able to manipulate Residents, who depended on them for information as well as for striking power. A classic case of confusion took place in 1879 in the Second Division, when the Resident, F. R. O. Maxwell, entrusted a Government spear to a visiting Iban headman from the Kantu River in Dutch Borneo. Maxwell asked this man to deliver a message to another headman on the Skrang River, who was supposed to report to Fort Alice. In this case the spear was merely a token of Government authority, according to Maxwell's account, but it was also the sign commonly employed to raise forces for an expedition. Instead of using it to summon the man Maxwell wanted to see, his messenger called out a large force of Skrang warriors and led them in an attack on certain enemies in the upper Batang Lupar. The Resident then demanded a heavy fine from the Skrang leaders,

[1] Charles Brooke to the Resident of Western Borneo, 20 Feb 1903. The Rajah had expressed the same sentiment almost half a century earlier: *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 188.

charging that they should have known better, Government spear or no, than to follow a spurious call to arms. But they refused to pay the fine, and made threats against the Government. Eventually Maxwell had to send two large punitive expeditions into the Skrang River to restore Brooke authority. He blamed the whole affair on the principal Skrang headman, Kedu (Lang Ngindang).[1]

Officers in charge of isolated outstations were frequently very young men. They would have been more than human had they not sometimes become careless and arrogant in exercising their ability to dispatch large forces of fighting men merely by giving the word. In 1884 Hugh Brooke Low authorized his Third Division Ibans to go on the warpath against certain jungle nomads who lived in areas of the Kapuas legally subject to the Dutch. 'So many having gone on this errand, it will be a wonder if they do not fall foul of each other, or some other tribe. However that's their look out, not mine', he blithely reported in the *Sarawak Gazette*.[2] Such men were easily able to feel a godlike sense of power over their nearer subjects, and this led them to make demands on the more remote people which they could not possibly enforce with any degree of precision.

The trouble with Bantin began when the Resident insisted that the upper Batang Lupar people should live along the main river, where he would be able to exert some influence over them. They resisted this demand partly because shifting cultivation soon exhausted the land accessible from such areas, and partly because they simply preferred to be well beyond the reach of an alien authority. In the resulting atmosphere of hostility, Bailey imposed an unusual and unwarranted fine on the young and ambitious war-leader, who responded to this personal affront by becoming openly rebellious. The Resident then sent a force of traditional tribal enemies to inflict further punishment, and in so doing they killed a close relative of Bantin.

Once blood was spilled in this manner, the Iban ethic demanded revenge. Bantin's own kin group was bound to stand by him, and since he was a warrior of exceptional ability he was soon able to attract other followers.

[1] Maxwell report dated July 1879, in Charles Brooke to C. Kater, 7 June 1880, SA. Runciman has inaccurately summarized the official explanation of this affair: *The White Rajahs*, p. 171. See also Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, pp. 381–2.

[2] Low, 'January Diary', *SG* 221 (2 June 1884). The jungle nomads in question were Ukits, who for years stubbornly resisted Iban migration into the Balleh; see p. 40, n. 3 for their possible relationship with the Serus of the Second Division. By this period most Ukits had been driven into the Kapuas, although some apparently retreated to the upper Balui (where there is still a Rumah Ukit today). On this occasion the Iban raiders returned claiming they had been fired on by Dutch troops: Low, 'March Diary', *SG* 222 (1 July 1884).

Young adventurers from distant rivers with no previous personal stake in the quarrel were eager to join his raiding parties.

Government expeditions followed, and on each of them Ibans killed other Ibans. Since the Government forces were drawn from wide areas, rivers such as the Saribas and lower Rejang, which had no previous tradition of hostility with the Batang Lupar Ibans, became involved in a feud relationship.[1] The rebels, angered still further by the loss of their crops and homes, retaliated by attacking the homes of those who answered the Government's frequent calls for military service. The Government felt compelled to launch still more expeditions, and the circle of bloodshed widened. Far from ending intratribal warfare, the expeditions only stimulated more killing and broadened the scope of the conflict, until a point was reached where the constant destruction of rebel longhouses and rice supplies made submission or migration preferable to further hostilities.

The degree of Government involvement in what the Rajah preferred to regard as purely traditional, tribal feuds was most clearly illustrated by the second Simanggang peacemaking, held in March 1924. This ceremony was designed to end hostilities between the upper Batang Lupar people and the Ibans of the lower Rejang. Certainly the populations of these widely separated districts would never have become 'traditional' enemies had the Brookes not constantly employed lower Rejang warriors against Bantin and his allies. Penghulu Dalam Munan's blitzkrieg attacks across the watershed are still recalled above Lubok Antu.

All the great Brooke peacemakings of the 1920s, including the third ceremony held at Kapit in 1924, were essentially Government affairs, with the Rajah playing the central role. They had no counterpart in pre-Brooke Iban culture, which, it was suggested earlier, lacked any such well-defined peacemaking mechanism. The Government hoped to end old enmities by creating new Iban custom.[2] The effort was praiseworthy, and, owing to

[1] Both Benedict Sandin and Penghulu Ngali of Delok are certain that in pre-Brooke days there was no tradition of hostility between the Saribas (Sandin's home) and the upper Batang Lupar (Ngali's home). They are not as certain about traditional Skrang–upper Batang Lupar relations, although they are inclined to think that in this case also enmity grew out of the expeditions, rather than vice-versa. (As stated at the beginning of this chapter, there *was* a history of pre-Brooke fighting between the upper and lower Batang Lupar, remembered by the descendants of all concerned.)

[2] For the absence of any purely traditional Iban peacemaking mechanism see ch. 1, esp. p. 32, n. 1. The ritual slaughter of pigs (*bebunoh babi bebaik*, 'killing pigs to make peace') was a central feature of the 1920–4 peacemakings. But according to Benedict Sandin, in pre-Brooke tradition pigs were killed only in connection with omenry.

Similarly in the Philippines, American administrators adapted local ceremonial forms to a new end when they sponsored peacemakings among the headhunting Kalingas of northern Luzon.

many other changes in the political environment after World War I, it enjoyed considerable success. Yet with regard to the Simanggang ceremonies in particular it may fairly be said that the enmities which were ended had resulted in large part from the Government's own actions through previous long decades.

Although the Rajah called Bantin and his allies 'rebels',[1] they were not rebels against central authority in the ordinary sense. Their rebellion was not a nativistic or revivalistic movement, nor, of course, was there the faintest trace of nationalism in it. They never entertained any plan to expel the three or four Europeans in the Second Division, much less to overthrow the Rajah in Kuching. In their eyes the principal enemies were always the downriver Ibans, and this point of view is still clearly apparent in conversation with their living descendants, even after the old hostility has vanished.

Bitterness against Europeans did exist, but it was aimed at individuals; there was no hatred for the white man as such, and indeed little evidence of hostility directed at the Government in general. Bantin revealed the nature of his feeling when he made peace with the Rajah and Charles Hose at Kapit in 1907, only to rebuff Bailey, the Resident of his own home river, a few months later. The focus of his resentment was regional and personal; he was fighting the Government of Simanggang, meaning Bailey, not the Government of Sibu (Hose) or of Kuching.[2] Bantin would no doubt have gladly killed Bailey and taken his head, given an opportunity, but he did not conceive of replacing the Resident with an Iban.

Bantin and his allies continued to fight with such doggedness partly because fighting was central to the Iban concept of the good life. By combating such rebels on their own terms, by employing traditional enemies and methods against them, the Brookes encouraged and perpetuated the traditional Iban glorification of bloodshed. The Dutch, observing Bantin's pro-

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They succeeded so well that the Kalinga peace pact system has been regarded both by anthropologists and by the Kalingas themselves as a wholly indigenous institution. Only recently has a Filipino anthropologist who is himself a native of the northern Luzon highlands determined that official encouragement played a key role in the development of the peace pact system: Albert Bacdayan, 'The Peace Pact System of the Kalingas in the Modern World', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., 1967.

[1] In May 1903 the Rajah officially proclaimed the upper Batang Lupar Ibans 'rebels': see Bailey Second Division annual report for 1903 in *SG* 458 (3 March 1904). Administrators frequently referred to hostile Ibans both as 'outlaws' and as 'rebels' throughout the period under consideration.

[2] Asun demonstrated a similar attitude more than two decades later. He was a native of the Entabai branch of Kanowit, and his hostility began in a quarrel with the Resident of the Third Division. When he surrendered he crossed the watershed and did so in the Second Division, rather than submit to the man whom he considered his real adversary.

gress from their own side of the border, were appalled by the Rajah's tactics. They regarded his punitive expeditions as clumsy and barbaric, and charged that by exacerbating tribal animosities he was stimulating rather than suppressing headhunting. They were aware that the Brookes thought of themselves as benevolent despots ruling for the benefit of the people, and regarded the Netherlands Indies Government as a harsh exploiter of its own native population. But local Dutch officials in Western Borneo who were familiar with the Rajah's Iban policies were able to conclude to their own satisfaction that his idealistic stance was as hypocritical as his methods were self-defeating.

The Dutch were willing to admit that, in the early days of their presence in the middle Kapuas, they themselves had employed Ibans as auxiliaries in warfare against the sometimes rebellious Malay princelings who ruled a number of tiny states in the lakes region and below. 'It is certain that we and above all Rajah Brooke have a little bit played the role of foxes preaching a sermon', wrote one commentator in 1887.[1] But by the turn of the century, the Netherlands Indies authorities were committed to more orthodox methods of imposing peace and order. They relied entirely on trained native soldiers, usually under European command, who patrolled portions of the border and manned outposts in times of trouble.

It is true that the Dutch did not face an Iban problem comparable to that which vexed the Sarawak authorities. The Iban center of gravity lies on the Sarawak side of the frontier. In the middle and upper Kapuas these troublesome tribesmen were then as now a minority, outnumbered by Malays and other non-Iban pagan tribes who were, on the whole, much more peaceful citizens. Those Ibans who did cause the Dutch concern, and there were some, were nearly all migrants in recent times from Sarawak, particularly from the upper Batang Lupar. But in Sarawak itself, Ibans remained the most numerous single element in the population of the State, and were at this period an absolute majority in both the Second and Third Divisions. The Dutch also enjoyed better communications into the Iban country, thanks to the Kapuas, navigable by steamer as far as the lakes. On the Sarawak side the rivers of the Second Division are smaller and more difficult to ascend.

Nevertheless the fact that the Dutch did not have the same degree of trouble with their own relatively less significant upriver Iban population clearly owes something to the different tactics they employed. To this day the upper Batang Lupar Ibans in Sarawak say that they never fought the

[1] H.A.A.N., 'Batang-Loepars', pp. 44–8; quotation p. 48. The sardonic second part of the title of this article, 'Europeesch-Dajaksche sneltocht', is a good indication of the prevalent Dutch attitude. It means 'European-Dayak headhunting expedition', a reference to the Sarawak Government's great Kedang Expedition of 1886.

Dutch native troops (*soldadu*) as they did the Iban levies (*bala Raja*) of Charles Brooke.[1] The Dutch soldiers were too well armed to make such encounters profitable. They did not often penetrate to remote upriver areas, burning and looting longhouses, and thereby arousing a desire for vengeance. They could not be accommodated within the traditional framework of warfare and tribal animosity, as the Rajah's unpaid soldiery could be and was.

The Dutch Assistant Resident at Sintang on the middle Kapuas ruled one relatively insignificant corner of a vast and wealthy empire. A variety of administrative machinery necessary for the operation of the entire Netherlands East Indies was at his disposal. In contrast, the Resident of the Second Division was a much more important figure in the context of his own far smaller and poorer State. His policies were always subject to the personal scrutiny of the Rajah, who in his early years could not have afforded any solution to the problem of upriver insurgency other than the one he employed, which in money terms cost almost nothing.

The Rajah was also the originator and perfector of the expedition technique, and he clung to it, partly for sentimental reasons, even when his officers began to wonder about its effectiveness. In 1905 Bailey proposed that a system of blockhouses be established in the enemy area at the headwaters of the Batang Lupar. Such outposts might have made possible a system of patrols among the upriver people, who were hostile partly because the only Government presence they ever experienced came in the form of expeditions. The outposts would have given some degree of protection to the friendly Ibans of the lower river, who as things stood were constantly exposed to the danger of surprise attacks. But the Rajah refused to consider such an innovation, and ordered that Lubok Antu should remain the Government station furthest upriver, as it always had been.[2] Three years later the

[1] This sentence is based primarily on a statement by retired Penghulu Ningkan at Pudai, which is confirmed by other Ibans. After leaving Sarawak, however, I discovered that Controleur Burgemeestre had written in 1934 about Kana of Engkari, 'During the [Asun] revolt he declared [to the Dutch] that one could well attempt resistance against the Sarawak Government but that against the Netherlands Indies Government with its "soldadus" nothing could be started.' ('Onze verhouding', p. 34.) The Dutch always regarded Sarawak's policy of relying on Iban levies as a policy of weakness. They could see nothing high-minded about it.

The Iban distinction between the Dutch *soldadu* and the Sarawak *bala Raja*, made by Penghulu Ningkan, is significant. *Soldadu* is an alien word, referring to a kind of military force outside the traditional Iban frame of reference. *Bala*, on the other hand, is the customary Iban term for a large war party, in contrast to a small band of raiders who carry out '*kayau anak*' or 'baby wars'. But *bala* also denotes any crowd or gathering; e.g. '*bala lelaki dudok di ruai*' simply means a group of men sitting on the longhouse verandah. Nothing could be more commonplace or familiar.

[2] 'Batang Lupar: I note that you do not consider Mr Resident Bailey's scheme of isolated blockhouses practicable and that Lubok Antu ought to be made the centre from which all attacks forays "*kayau anak*" and the like against the rebels should be made.' (Vyner Brooke to Charles Brooke, 17 May 1905, SA.) See the preceding note for the meaning of *kayau anak*.

Rajah was annoyed when his son approved the establishment of a blockhouse at Nanga Julau on the Kanowit, even though Vyner pointed out that the local Ibans friendly to the Government had requested it for their own protection, and argued that since it was manned partly by debt prisoners it would cost the Government practically nothing.[1]

Charles Brooke was almost seventy-four years old when he personally led his last expedition, the attack against Bantin in March 1903. But he continued to supervise every detail of later efforts, instructing Bailey that things should be done in time-tested ways, as he had done them. 'To camp at the mouth of Delok or Jingin', he directed on the eve of the final great Batang Lupar expedition of 1908:

> I should prefer the first as you will have more room there to hold the *bala* – To form the camp on the same hill that I did – (twice or three times). Make your base and don't be in any hurry in forming your marching parties under [H. L.] Owen or chiefs that you can trust – and in advancing toward Mikai Pambar I should think the best plan will be to have 2 or 3 lines of attack on different paths – One from Delok over [Bukit] Seligi – One from Jingin and one on another route. . . .[2]

The old man knew every hill and side stream in that country. He could see the long lines of Iban war boats advancing upriver and sense the excitement he had known so often. He made no secret of his disappointment when Rajah Muda Vyner, who failed to share his father's love for the rugged life, refused to take command of this expedition.[3]

It would be wrong to conclude that Charles Brooke was simply a sentimental septuagenarian, perhaps verging on senility, vicariously reliving the adventures of his youth. His letters indicate that his mind was clear until his death in 1917. But although in his final years he sought to keep Sarawak secure in a changing world by introducing needed reforms, he never re-evaluated his policies toward the upriver Ibans. His love of expeditions was not, however, the result solely of adherence to tradition, nor was it entirely the product of his insistence on inexpensive methods, although both of these considerations played a part. The Dutch believed him a hypocrite to employ such tactics while professing to be an enlightened ruler, but they did not understand the nature of his peculiar idealism. He accepted and admired

[1] Vyner Brooke to Charles Brooke, 30 July 1908, SA. See p. 228, n. 1, for rebel raids into the Kanowit, which prompted the demand for a blockhouse. During the Asun troubles more than two decades later the Government of Vyner Brooke did establish blockhouses linked by patrols in upriver areas; see ch. 10.

[2] Charles Brooke to Bailey, 1 Aug 1908, SA.

[3] Ibid.

features of native life which would have been thoroughly repugnant to most Europeans. He did not idealize the noble savage: he realized that his wilder subjects were full of faults and failings, and yet there is no doubt that he admired them nonetheless. He was in no hurry to impose upon them the sort of law and order which most colonial rulers, including the Dutch, regarded as the *sine qua non* of good government.

Charles Brooke viewed his Ibans as a population of natural warriors who would inevitably be a source of problems for any ruler. In a speech delivered at Sibu three years before his death he compared them to naughty children whose bad behavior only made their parents love them all the more:

> I have quite forgotten the number of times I have gone up and down this river during the last fifty or sixty years or the number of expeditions that I have commanded in and up all of its many branches against the Dayaks who we know are a very troublesome recalcitrant people, but like children, only more dangerous, for that reason are most liked by their parents. What one has to admire in the Dayaks is their vitality, energy and activity; if they are not farming or otherwise employed in peaceful pursuits they are on mischief bent, worrying or killing their so-called enemies. If it were not for their vitality they would be an effete race, as a weakly flower in a garden that one scarcely takes the trouble to notice; they are, however, strong in body, a mass of muscle, quick in intelligence and perception, with brains that are as the virgin soil and only require seedlings of a goodly sort to be planted, I feel sure, to produce useful things on a future day. I never tire of their misdeeds and I have reason to know that on many occasions they have desired to obtain my head and boil it in a cauldron.[1]

This sentiment, while undoubtedly genuine, was related to practical considerations. Charles Brooke certainly never forgot that the same warlike qualities which made the Ibans both likeable and troublesome had also enabled him to put the State on a secure foundation many years previously, and had provided it with a source of fighting strength ever since.

The Rajah's relationship with the upriver Ibans had its unfortunate aspects, even disregarding the constant loss of life and longhouses which it entailed. It contributed to the frustration of one of his own most cherished ambitions, the final absorption of Brunei by Sarawak. His neighbors the Dutch were not the only ones who questioned the wisdom of employing headhunting tribesmen on expedition service. In 1906, during discussion within the British Colonial Office about the future of Brunei, an influential civil servant cited *Sarawak Gazette* accounts of campaigns against Bantin to support the contention that Brooke rule was neither civilized nor humane.

[1] From a speech by the Rajah made on Christmas Day 1914 in Sibu: *SG* 667 (2 Jan 1915); the full text is printed in Appendix A.

He argued that Brunei would be far better off under a Malayan-style British Resident than it would be as part of Sarawak. His policy prevailed, to the intense disappointment of Charles Brooke.[1]

Perhaps more important, the Rajah's method of dealing with upriver insurgency left a heritage of problems for later generations concerned with modernization. Constant warfare naturally encouraged the upriver people to regard the Government as an antagonist first and foremost. The never-ending unrest exerted a socially conservative influence both on upriver rebels and on those downriver Ibans who were called out to fight against them. Headhunting remained possible for all concerned, and the entire complex of values associated with it was accordingly sustained. Related attitudes toward migration were likewise sustained, especially when continuing insecurity made moving to another part of the country seem all the more preferable to the only alternative, the adoption of more intensive methods of agriculture, such as planting coffee or rubber. So long as the Government could not or would not provide protection against raiders, the longhouse remained not only practical but absolutely necessary, although it might have persisted in any case. As we have seen, it endured even in the Saribas, where it was earlier suggested that an exceptional degree of social change was possible because geography isolated the people from the areas of chronic disturbance. But the Saribas longhouse endured in substantially modified and improved form, evolving into a permanent rather than a semi-nomadic habitation.

Punitive expeditions employing Iban levies in the old style were less frequent under the Third Rajah, Vyner Brooke (1917–46), but the tradition died hard, and the last expedition did not take place until 1935, in the aftermath of the Asun unrest.[2] A recent Resident of the Second Division, who first served under the Third Rajah, has commented on the 1935 episode,

> This trouble and the preceding ones, over nearly a hundred years, partly account for the backwardness of the 'Iban'. There is therefore a great deal to be done, and quickly, in the fields of economics, communications, agriculture and education, if they are to take their proper place in the community.[3]

This side of the story must be considered in any assessment of the Second

[1] R. E. Stubbs memo, 10 Dec 1906, CO 144/81. The full text and a short commentary are included in Appendix A below.

[2] *SG* 979 (1 April 1935); George Jamuh, 'The Kanowit Punitive Expedition, 1934', *SMJ* VII 8 (Dec 1956) 463–9. On the basis of comparison with reports in the *Sarawak Gazette*, it seems likely that the expedition Jamuh describes took place in Febuary 1935 and not, as he states, in June 1934.

[3] Anthony A. J. N. Richards, 'Notes on Kanowit Punitive Expedition, 1934', ibid., p. 471. Mr Richards' quotation marks around 'Iban' testify to the fact that as late as 1956 this term was by no means universally accepted to designate the people more commonly referred to throughout Sarawak history as Sea Dayaks: see ch. 1.

Rajah's government of the Ibans, who in his day were by far the largest single group in the Sarawak population. It can only be concluded that his upriver policies encouraged the preservation of traditional Iban values and practices of all kinds, those that inhibit Iban progress even today, as well as those that remain a treasured legacy from the past.

8 | Iban Migration and the Rajah's Response

IBAN migration across the face of Sarawak has been a social fact of local history second in importance only to the growth of Chinese population. Like the development of the Chinese community, it was a process greatly influenced by the presence after 1841 of a British Government. The story of the Iban migrations during the period of Brooke rule is not a simple one, and for the reader unfamiliar with Sarawak's profusion of rivers it may prove particularly difficult to follow. Yet no discussion of the relationship between the Brookes and the Ibans would be complete without a consideration of this topic.

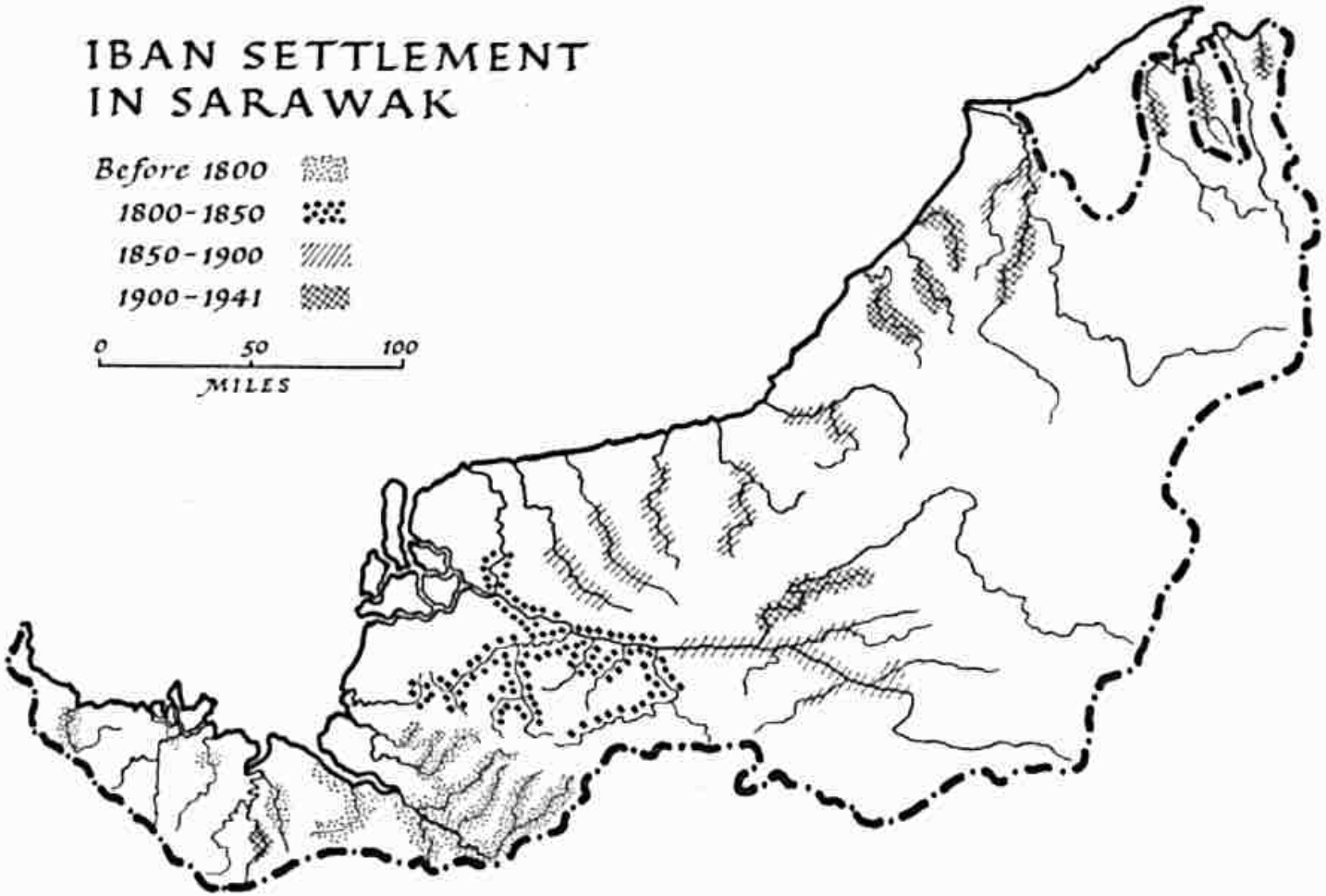
The scope of the movement may be indicated by comparing current Iban distribution with the situation in 1841. When James Brooke arrived, the Ibans in Sarawak were, as we have seen, largely confined to the Second Division. Today, however, they are also the most numerous single group in the Third Division, and there are important Iban communities in the Fourth and Fifth Divisions as well.

Iban and Total Sarawak Population by Division[1]

	1939		1960	
	Iban	Total	Iban	Total
First	10,681	149,564	19,954	247,954
Second	58,389	85,925	70,634	109,422
Third	81,084	172,519	111,732	261,487
Fourth	15,777	59,834	31,949	96,666
Fifth	1,769	22,743	3,472	29,000
Total	167,700	490,585	237,741	744,529

An earlier chapter related how Iban pioneers settled along the rivers of the

[1] 1939 figures are from the only thorough census taken under Brooke rule, reprinted in Noakes, *Report on the 1947 Population Census*, pp. 82–3. For 1960 figures, see Jones, *Report on the Census . . . 1960*, pp. 120–1.


IBAN SETTLEMENT
IN SARAWAK
Before 1800
1800-1850
1850-1900
1900-1941
0
50
100
MILES

Second Division perhaps two centuries before European rule, a story reconstructed from oral sources. It was also suggested that the further expansion of Iban settlement into the Rejang, which began not long before the First Rajah's arrival, was connected somehow with a more general florescence of Iban energies. This sudden ferment, the causes of which are unknown, also resulted in the simultaneous outbreak of Iban 'piracy' in the coastal waters of northwest Borneo. The continuing pattern of aggressive Iban behavior was to concern the new English overlords of Sarawak in all its manifestations. We have already seen how James Brooke was compelled to deal with the 'piracy' problem. His nephew Charles encountered the related migration phenomenon, directed inland rather than toward the coast, at its most dynamic phase.

During his half century of rule the Second Brooke Rajah was continually involved with the timing and extent of the Iban expansion. When he published *Ten Years in Sarawak* in 1866, there were as yet no Ibans living on any of the rivers north and east of the Rejang. The first migrants did not enter Mukah and Oya, the next districts to the north, until about 1870. There was no significant permanent Iban population in the present Fourth Division before 1891, when the Rajah planted a military colony in the Baram. Charles sanctioned Iban migration to the Bintulu River beginning in about 1900, but forbade similar settlement in three remaining districts of the Fourth Division (Suai, Niah and Sibuti), where no Ibans lived until ten years after his death. In the Third Division, Ibans moved into the Balleh to stay only in 1922, after almost forty years of disorderly confrontation between prospective settlers determined to farm the expanses of virgin jungle along this major tributary of the Rejang, and a Government often equally determined to prevent them.

These migrations, which are discussed at greater length in the remainder of the current chapter, are worthy of study for several reasons. They were part of a continuing process which is still creating political difficulties in Sarawak. Sometimes Iban migrants settled areas which were previously uninhabited. In other cases, however, they are today threatening to outnumber communities which were present before the first Iban made his appearance. In Baram District, for example, there are now sixty Iban longhouses with 8833 inhabitants, while the total number of Kenyahs and Kayans, who were the dominant peoples in this area of the Fourth Division before the Ibans arrived, is at present only 8972.[1] In the Baram, as in other regions where they are relative newcomers, the Ibans are culturally quite distinct from the

[1] Figures are from Baram District Office, Marudi, for 1965. Baram District population totaled 29,705 at this time. The balance of this figure included 4236 Chinese, 2620 nomadic Punans, 1717 Kelabits, 1680 Malays and 1647 others (Sebob, Berawan, Long Kiput, Bisaya Bukit, etc.).

original inhabitants, who tend to regard them as aggressive, troublesome newcomers. The older communities are aware that in Sarawak as a whole the Ibans are the most numerous 'native' (i.e. non-Chinese) people, and the one which is likely to have the dominant voice in State affairs. They fear that in the new era of Malaysia the Ibans may be able to abolish controls on migration which were always maintained, with varying degrees of success, by both the Brookes and the postwar British colonial regime.

The long struggle between Bantin and the Rajah, discussed in the previous chapter, resulted in part from Government efforts to prevent Ibans from living in inaccessible areas at the headwaters of the Batang Lupar. Similar conflict characterized the relationship between Government and people along the upper waters of the Rejang, the other major Iban river system of Sarawak. But whereas in the Batang Lupar Brooke authorities were also plagued by an artificial frontier as well as by chronic warfare between different groups of Ibans, in the upper Rejang Iban migration was the major source of friction. The first portion of the present chapter is concerned mainly with Ibans who were originally inhabitants of the Batang Lupar, the setting of Bantin's long insurgency. Moving into the much larger adjacent Rejang River system, they sometimes harassed and displaced a scattered non-Iban population and sometimes settled almost empty areas, but in either case they encountered continuous Government efforts to restrain them.

Restraint, however, was only one aspect of the Rajah's response to Iban migrations in general. The migration phenomenon posed problems for the Brookes, but it also presented opportunities. The latter half of the present chapter will relate how, in districts between the Rejang and Brunei, the Government actually sponsored Iban migration, for a variety of reasons and with considerable success. When the total picture of official involvement with Iban expansion is in view, it provides one vivid illustration of what may be regarded as the central paradox of Brooke rule. It is the paradox of a Government limited in personnel, poor in resources and avowedly conservative in philosophy, which was nevertheless largely responsible for determining the locations where large numbers of people, both 'natives' and Chinese, eventually came to live. Brooke efforts to influence settlement did not always succeed, as the history of Iban migration demonstrates, but they succeeded often enough to play a major part in fashioning the patterns of human habitation which exist in Sarawak today.

Government influence on settlement patterns extended to all the main ethnic groups, as will be shown in the following chapter, but vigorous migratory behavior of the sort that demanded an administrative response was always a purely Iban phenomenon. During the period of Brooke rule

the Land Dayaks showed no similar inclination to spread at the expense of their neighbors, and neither did any of the other pagan tribes. The Kayans and Kenyahs had already passed through a migratory phase early in the nineteenth century, moving from central Borneo to settle various areas along the Kapuas, Rejang and Baram Rivers.[1] As late as 1857 the Baram Kayans were even threatening to overrun the capital of the enfeebled Sultanate of Brunei.[2] But by the time Charles Brooke assumed control of Sarawak affairs, the Kayans were no longer an expanding force. The center of Kayan-Kenyah population remained in the deep interior of Dutch Borneo, while in Sarawak their numbers may have been greatly reduced by late nineteenth-century smallpox and cholera epidemics. Viewed from Kuching, they were a people geographically remote in comparison to the much more numerous Ibans, yet more amenable to Government influence through a powerful hereditary aristocracy. As a result of all these factors, Kayan-Kenyah population movement was never of any great concern to the Brooke regime.

It was suggested earlier that the pioneer Iban migrations into the Second Division may have been partly a process of cultural diffusion, in which aboriginal communities of jungle nomads were stimulated to 'become Iban' by adopting the way of life of a relatively small number of invading newcomers. With regard to the later migrations under Brooke rule, however, there is no doubt that, although some diffusion of Iban culture continued, the major component in the process was an amply documented physical transfer of population. These later migrations may be divided into two separate movements. The first, beginning not very long before the arrival of James Brooke, resulted in the spread of Iban settlement from Sarawak's Second Division into portions of the Rejang drainage in the Third Division. The migrants moved by land from the headwaters of their original home rivers into the adjacent headwaters of Rejang tributaries. The later movement, which took place largely by sea and was therefore more susceptible to Government control and influence, resulted in Iban settlement on the various

[1] The Kayan expansion down the Kapuas affected areas as far downriver as the lakes district. According to a Dutch account it resulted from an invasion led by 'the great Long Glat chief of the Mahakam, Bo Ledjo, the Dayak [Kayan] Napoleon', who later gave his daughter in marriage to the Malay Raja of Bunut on the middle Kapuas. This expansion took place largely at the expense of the Tamans, a people related in culture to the Maloh Dayaks. Both of the latter two groups were caught between the Kayan expansion and the later Iban migration from the upper Batang Lupar which is described below. (Bouman, 'Ethnografische aanteekeningen', pp. 181–3.) Similarly, the upriver Melanau ('Kajang') peoples of the Rejang were pressed between the Kayan influx into the headwaters of that river and the later Iban migration from downriver.

[2] The Kayan threat to Brunei is described at length in St John to Foreign Office, 10 April 1857, FO 12/24, and mentioned in St John, *Forests*, II 34.

rivers in the Fourth and Fifth Divisions. This movement began only after the establishment of Brooke rule, and was closely associated with the extension of Brooke authority along the coast toward Brunei.

MIGRATION TO THE REJANG

Ibans who had settled on the southern tributaries of the Rejang were numerous enough to attract the attention of James Brooke as early as 1845, and his relations with these people during the 'piracy' era have already been described. In general, the migrants first moved to the headwaters of the streams opposite their old home rivers in the Second Division. It was a gradual, continuous process, observed by Charles Brooke along the Kanowit River in 1859:

> This stream is inhabited by sea Dayaks, who had for the last fifteen or twenty years been migrating from the Saribas and Skrang districts for the purpose of obtaining new farming grounds. These exoduses took place overland between one river and another. Such parties would do their four or five days' march, then build their houses, and proceed to farm for one or two years, after which they would recommence their march, and so on, until they arrived at their final destination.[1]

In this fashion Ibans from the upper Layar (Saribas) and the Krian settled the Sarikei, and many of these people later moved on to the lower Rejang around the site of Sibu. Saribas Ibans also settled in portions of the Kanowit River system, including the upper Julau, and the Kanowit received additional migrants from the Skrang (especially along the Entabai tributary) and above all from the Lemanak. Ibans from the Lemanak were the most numerous migrants to the Poi and Ngemah branches of the Rejang. Oral traditions and genealogies agree with Charles Brooke's statement just quoted in recording that this movement to the lower Rejang began not long before 1840.[2]

Migrations to the upper Rejang commenced from the Batang Lupar River at a somewhat earlier period, perhaps around 1800.[3] This movement was only one facet of a vigorous expansion of population outwards from the upper Batang Lupar, which, as mentioned earlier, also resulted in the settlement of adjacent areas of Dutch Borneo. These areas included portions of

[1] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, I 327.

[2] Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, pp. 80–1; Freeman, *Iban Agriculture*, p. 13.

[3] Charles Brooke wrote in *Ten Years in Sarawak* (1866): 'To offer one instance of the multiplying process, I will mention the upper Batang Lupar river, which has now a population of eighteen or twenty thousand souls residing on it, and has emitted a supply, about fifty years ago, to a neighboring stream (a tributary of the Rejang), from which a population has now increased to from ten to twelve thousand souls, without the aid of any intermixture from other directions.' (II 336.) The 'neighboring stream' was the Katibas.

the Kanyau (Embaloh) and Leboyan tributaries of the Kapuas, as well as the region just north of the Kapuas lakes, which the Dutch consequently referred to as 'the Batang Lupar country' (*Batang Loepar Landen*), although it was geographically part of the Kapuas drainage.[1] The Ibans who remained settled along the upper Batang Lupar still remember these migrations into the nearer tributaries of the Kapuas. The migrations were accompanied by headhunting raids against previous inhabitants, including Maloh Dayaks in the Kanyau and Leboyan, who were ethnically distinct from the Ibans, and against the Ibans of the Kantu River just west of the lakes region.[2] The Dutch were sufficiently impressed and annoyed by the aggressive energy of the upper Batang Lupar Ibans, whom they justifiably regarded as intruders from Sarawak territory, to classify the entire Iban ethnic group under the name 'Batang Loepar Dajak'.[3] But neither the rebellions which plagued the Batang Lupar for so long nor the migrations which emanated from it were of such central concern to the Dutch authorities of Borneo's Western Region as they were to the rulers of Sarawak.

The migrants remained a Sarawak problem because after crossing into Dutch territory many of them kept on moving, following a path which eventually led them back into another area of Sarawak, the upper Rejang. They may have been headed toward that sparsely settled area all along. The easiest route from the upper Batang Lupar into the Rejang drainage lies by way of the Kanyau (Embaloh) branch of the Kapuas River, and thence back into the headwaters of the Katibas branch of the Rejang. It is a route which travelers between the two areas have always followed when political conditions permitted, and it is by this route that the Batang Lupar Ibans came to settle in the Katibas. This movement was of great importance, for these were

[1] According to the Dutch historian P. J. Veth, the movement to the region north of the Kapuas lakes district began in about 1830: 'The Batang Lupar Dayaks have with about 4000 families settled between the Batang Lupar mountains [i.e. the Pan-Kedang border range] and the Danau River [i.e. the lakes district], and at the sources of the Embaloh [Kanyau] and Leboyan Rivers. These Dayaks obtain their name from the Batang Lupar River and have emigrated to Dutch Borneo only fifteen to twenty years ago.' (*Borneo's Westerafdeeling, statistisch, historisch, voorafgegaan doore eene algemeene schets des ganschen eilands* (Zaltbommel, 1854–6) I 55.)

[2] For mention of Batang Lupar raids against the Kantu, see J. J. K. Enthoven, *Bijdragen tot de geographie van Borneo's Wester-afdeeling* (Leiden, 1903) I 70–1. According to tradition in the upper Batang Lupar, warfare with the Kantu people began after the period of raids against the Malohs, and was followed by a Batang Lupar Iban migration to the Kantu River, a tributary of the Empanang. In 1965 I interviewed a number of Ibans of Batang Lupar origin who had recently returned to Sarawak territory after living in the Kantu for more than a half-century.

Dutch authorities resettled the original Kantu population at various points along the middle Kapuas in 1882, partly to get them out of the way of raids from the Batang Lupar: ibid.

[3] 'The Sea Dayaks or Ibans come in our territory under the name Batang Lupar.' (Mallinckrodt, *Het adatrecht van Borneo*, I 8.)

the people who later moved down the Katibas, emerged into the main Rejang River and, after a long struggle with the Sarawak Government, eventually settled in the Balleh, the greatest and most important single affluent of the Rejang.[1]

These Ibans were already well established in the Katibas when Charles Brooke traveled down that river on his pioneer journey from the headwaters of the Batang Lupar early in 1862. We have already seen how they urged the future Rajah to attack their non-Iban enemies in the Rejang, and how large numbers of them accompanied him when he did so in 1863, on the Great Kayan Expedition. But they were unwilling to stop raiding when Charles Brooke decided they should, and before long he considered them enemies and rebels. Balang, the great Katibas war-leader on the 1863 expedition, praised by the Rajah in the pages of *Ten Years in Sarawak*,[2] allegedly attempted in 1866 to murder James Brooke Cruickshank, Resident of the Third Division, and was later caught and executed.[3] Balang's brother, Unjup, became the ringleader of the anti-Government forces in the Katibas. The Rajah sent four punitive expeditions into that river between 1868 and 1876, and after the last one he persuaded those rebels who had not retreated back to the Kanyau in Dutch Borneo to move downriver and settle along the banks of the main Rejang River.[4] For the next forty years the entire Katibas River was officially closed to Iban settlement.

This prohibition greatly increased Iban pressure to migrate into the virtually uninhabited Balleh, the next Rejang tributary upstream from the Katibas, and the largest single Rejang branch. At first the Rajah was less concerned about the Balleh than he had been about the Katibas. The latter stream was the high road for migration from the Batang Lupar, and it gave much easier access to the international frontier, which here (as in the Second Division) might provide a sanctuary for rebels. To potential migrants, however, the Balleh was well nigh irresistible. 'How desirable to Iban eyes must have appeared this great expanse of virgin territory! A shifting-cultivator's paradise!'[5]

[1] For further discussion of this migration, see Sandin, 'Enmity in the Batang Ai', in *Sea Dayaks*, pp. 87–9; Freeman, *Iban Agriculture*, pp. 13–14. Among those who followed this route from the Batang Lupar to the Rejang were the forebears of Temenggong Koh, the 'paramount chief' of the Balleh Ibans until his death in 1955, and those of his successor, Tan Sri Temenggong Jugah, now Malaysian Federal Minister for Sarawak Affairs.

[2] For Balang's role in inciting the Great Kayan Expedition, see *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 96.

[3] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 320. Iban tradition maintains that Balang was innocent, but was convicted on the word of a rival Iban leader, Unggat, who subsequently enjoyed the Rajah's favor: Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, p. 134 n.

[4] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 381.

[5] Freeman, *Iban Agriculture*, p. 15. The Iban migrations into the Balleh eventually displaced or

By 1874 Iban migration into this majestic river, as broad as the main Rejang itself, was under way. Longhouse communities existed as far upstream as the mouth of the Mujong, and individual families were farming well beyond that point.[1] Charles Brooke began to worry about the Balleh situation. He knew that, once the Ibans were well established, it would be impossible to keep them from raiding and headhunting against their scattered neighbors. There was as yet no Government outpost further up the Rejang than the mouth of the Ngemah, many miles below the mouth of the Balleh.

Hoping to prevent further migration into that river, late in 1874 the Government authorized construction of a new fort at the point where it joins the Rejang.[2] Pending completion of the fort, the Resident of the Third Division stationed a steam launch at the spot. There was an immediate collision between this vessel and fleets of Iban war-boats attempting to enter the Balleh. The officer in charge fired shots to discourage the would-be migrants from attempting a rush past the steamer.[3]

Neither the steamer nor the fort succeeded in stopping the migration, or the accompanying warlike activities. By 1880 increasingly defiant headhunting had evolved into open rebellion. The dissident Ibans retreated to Bukit Batu, a limestone crag at the headwaters of the Mujong tributary of the Balleh, where they withstood two Government punitive expeditions before submitting in 1881.[4] After this the whole of the Balleh was cleared of Ibans and declared closed to further settlement. The Government post had been moved a few miles down the Rejang, to the modern site at Kapit, and in 1882 the Resident, Hugh Brooke Low, reported that there were no

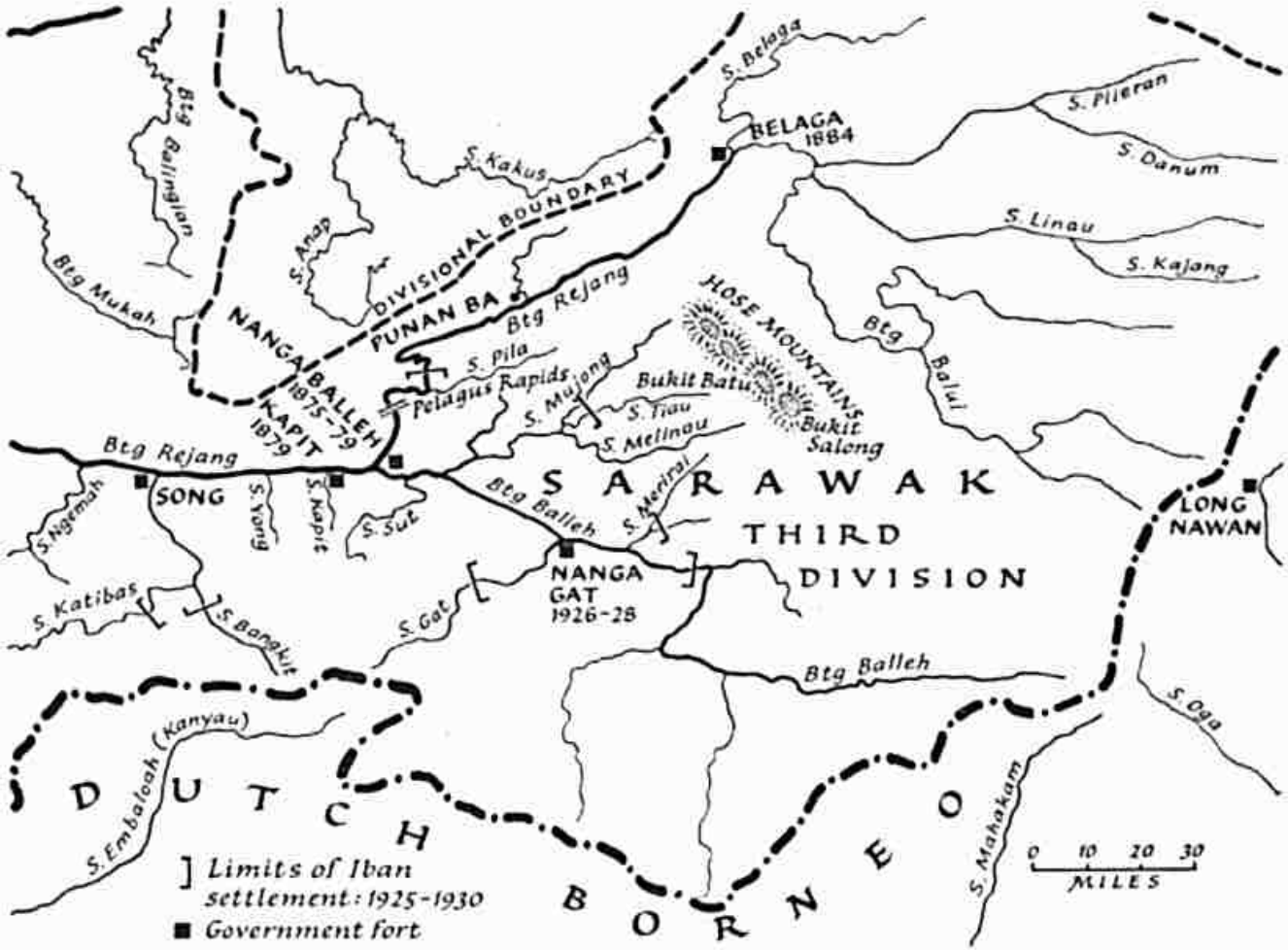
absorbed a thin preexisting population of jungle nomads and upriver Melanaus. The Lugats, apparently a Melanau group, lived at Nanga Gat and eventually fled to the Tatau River, Fourth Division. Jungle nomads included the Punan Batu, a small band living at the headwaters of the Mujong around the Hose Mountains, and the Ukits, inhabitants of the upper Balleh, some of whom eventually moved to the Kapuas and some to the extreme upper Rejang (Balui). (For more on the Ukits see p. 40, n. 3; p. 238, n. 2.) There were also Bukitans in the Balleh before the arrival of the Ibans, but more apparently accompanied the Iban migrations. Only Bukitans remain near the area today, in the Metah and Merit tributaries of the Rejang just above the Pelagus Rapids, no longer in the Balleh itself; Benedict Sandin, 'The Pre-Dayak Peoples of the Balleh River, Third Division' (1962), SA; Freeman, *Iban Agriculture*, p. 25 n.

[1] Third Division report, 25 Aug 1874, *SG* 85 (16 Sept 1874).

[2] Report of Committee of Administration meeting, 9 Nov 1874, *SG* 90 (16 Nov 1874).

[3] A. H. Everett, Third Division December report, *SG* 94 (16 Jan 1875). Everett states that the Resident, J. B. Cruickshank, had ordered the steam launch *Ghita* to remain at Nanga Balleh 'for the triple object of preventing the advance of boats on the warpath, of affording protection to the party working at the fort, and of obstructing the immigration of the Batang Rejangs [Ibans] into the Balleh'. Freeman is thus wrong when he says that no effort was made prior to 1880 to prevent Iban settlement in the Balleh: *Iban Agriculture*, p. 18.

[4] Ibid., p. 15.



UPPER REJANG AND BALLEH

Ibans living above that point. 'Mujong is deserted and Bukit Batu abandoned forever', he wrote, somewhat optimistically. 'There are no Dayaks living above the fort, and none should ever be allowed above it on any pretence whatever.'[1]

The Ibans were soon clamoring to be allowed to exceed this limit, and not surprisingly they eventually got their way. The entire Government in the upper Rejang at this time consisted of F. D. de Rozario, the son of James Brooke's chef, who served first at Nanga Balleh and later at Kapit for almost thirty years.[2] To assist him there were only one or two Malay Native Officers and a handful of untrained, locally recruited 'fortmen'.[3] The Resident of the Division normally remained at Sibu, a day's journey downriver by steam launch, and he visited Kapit only now and then. It was a minimal administration even by Brooke standards, and in the early days De Rozario could only watch helplessly as Iban war parties returned from successful attacks on Ukits, Punans, upriver Melanau groups, and others.[4] The Resident or the Rajah himself sometimes sanctioned such raids, either because it was believed that the Ibans had a legitimate grievance against tribal enemies, or because it was obvious that the Government was powerless to stop them.[5] It was only a shade less difficult to stop migration.

By 1887 the Ibans had received permission to settle along a number of Rejang tributaries above Kapit, although the Balleh itself remained empty.[6] But in 1895 it became apparent that migrants had been moving into one lower tributary of that forbidden river, the Sut. In doing so they had artfully avoided the attention of the Government by trekking up the course of the Kapit River, which enters the Rejang below Kapit Fort, and then overland to the Sut.[7]

[1] Low Third Division report, 3 Jan 1882, *SG* 184 (1 Feb 1882). The fort had been moved from Nanga Balleh to Kapit in 1879, after the Rajah had nearly drowned at the former site in 1877 when his steamer was swept against the river bank by the dangerous currents which prevail there: *SG* 130 (16 April 1877); *SG* 144 (29 July 1878).

[2] For De Rozario's career and place in the Brooke establishment, see ch. 5.

[3] During the reign of Charles Brooke, a detachment of trained Sarawak Rangers was never posted permanently in the Rejang beyond Sibu.

[4] A volume of letters from officers at Kapit, covering the period 1879 to 1892, is preserved in the Sarawak Archives. It includes many letters from De Rozario and graphically illustrates the character of his government.

[5] For an example of the Rajah sanctioning Iban raids, see his letters to C. A. Bampfylde dated 28 and 30 March 1891, in Appendix A; see also p. 238, n. 2.

[6] The rivers above Kapit settled at this time included Melas, Chermin, Amang, Ayah, Pelagus and Sain: Cox Third Division report, *SG* 257 (1 June 1887); Bampfylde Third Division August report, *SG* 275 (1 Dec 1888).

[7] Report of Committee of Administration meeting in *SG* 353 (1 June 1895); Freeman, *Iban Agriculture*, p. 15.

In the years after 1902 Bantin's rebellion, centering in the upper Batang Lupar, stimulated a spirit of restlessness among the related Ibans of the upper Rejang. As usual, defiance of Government took the form of increasingly overt migration, combined with headhunting. Late in 1902 a leader named Ayum moved with his people to Bukit Batu, where the rebels of 1880 had made their stand, but after a good deal of negotiation he was persuaded to leave the area, and the affair terminated just short of revolt.[1] In 1904 another group of dissidents under Janting congregated around Bukit Batu, which by now had become a symbol of resistance to the Government.[2] The Resident, Charles Hose, led a force of Ibans and Kayans against them in July 1904, and they were compelled to move downstream.[3]

Both of these attempts to circumvent the Rajah's authority were failures, but in August 1905 a *penghulu* named Merum succeeded in engineering the second full-scale Iban penetration of the Balleh. While he was leading his people from the Sut River to settle in the main Balleh as far upstream as the mouth of the Mujong, another group led by Jampi entered the Katibas.[4] Both men claimed to have received permission from Hose, who had gone on leave to England the previous May. But when the acting Resident, Ivone Kirkpatrick, visited Kapit a short time later, he told Merum's followers, who numbered about 128 families, that they would have to vacate the Balleh after harvesting their rice crops the following April.[5]

[1] Vyner Brooke Third Division June report, *SG* 451 (4 Aug 1903).

[2] Janting, whose real home was in the Kanowit River system, was the father of two famous Iban 'outlaws' of the 1930s, Kendawang and his half-brother Banyang. The latter is now Dato Pengarah Banyang, Council Negri Representative for Kanowit District and a member of the Malaysian Federal Parliament.

[3] Hose, *Romance and Research*, pp. 151–4; Hose and McDougall, *Pagan Tribes*, II 302–4. The latter includes a marvelous photograph of Hose, wearing a white uniform and pith helmet, planning the attack. Like Bailey of the Second Division, he was on the heavy side. According to a persistent tradition in Sarawak, the Rajah preferred large physical specimens in his service, on the theory that the local people were impressed by big men.

[4] Kirkpatrick Third Division report dated 17 Aug 1905, *SG* 477 (3 Oct 1905); Freeman, *Iban Agriculture*, p. 16. Merum, who had been among the rebels at Bukit Batu in 1880–1, had for some time been considered a friend of the Government. For his background, see ibid., p. 17, n.

[5] Kirkpatrick report dated 17 Aug 1905, *SG* 477 (3 Oct 1905); Kirkpatrick Third Division December report, *SG* 482 (3 March 1906).

It is not certain whether Merum and Jampi had in fact received permission from Hose to migrate or not. The reports just cited make it clear that both Penghulu Dalam Munan and De Rozario, who was the man on the spot in Kapit, at first believed the Iban claims, while deploring the possible consequences of the migration. Kirkpatrick later told Jampi's people that 'No permission had been granted to them to remove to the Katibas', but he did not specifically deny that Merum might have received permission to enter the Balleh: Kirkpatrick Third Division November report, *SG* 480 (3 Jan 1906).

Merum had done Hose a considerable favor the previous year by leading his warriors in a successful attack on rebels under Kana of Engkari in the Kanowit: see Hose Third Division

Rajah Muda Vyner, administering the country in the absence of his father, agreed with the acting Resident that, regardless of what Hose might or might not have allowed, Merum should not be permitted to stay where he was.[1] Vyner was convinced that the Balleh settlers were in league with Bantin's rebels in the upper Batang Lupar. He was further disturbed when, almost simultaneously with their entry into the Balleh, Merum's people became involved in a violent quarrel with some Rejang Ibans living in the Poi and Ngemah tributaries downriver. He urged the Rajah to consider an immediate attack on Merum's party:

> They intend taking up permanent quarters in the River Balleh and . . . mean to kill any downriver Dayak they find in their river. I should like to know whether Your Highness will give your sanction to an attack being made on the 'ulu ai' [here meaning the Balleh people] before they have collected their *padi* as I feel certain they intend doing something after *ngetau* [harvest]. The whole ulu of the Rejang is a hotbed of Empran and Mikai Pambar rebels who take up their headquarters in the Sut and elsewhere in the 'ulu' having removed from the ulu Batang Lupar and I feel pretty certain that mischief in some way or other is intended after the harvesting of the *padi*.[2]

Far from sanctioning such an expedition, however, Charles Brooke met with the Iban leaders at Kapit in April of the following year, 1906, and gave his blessing to what Penghulu Merum had done:

> The Balleh should be open for occupation by Dayaks as far as the mouth of the Gat River; that no permanent dwellings would be permitted in the side rivers; and that anyone putting up a permanent dwelling beyond the boundary of the Gat River would be dealt with severely.[3]

December report, *SG* 469 (1 Feb 1905). It is possible that the Resident had given Merum some concession in return, which the Iban leader might later have successfully represented as something bigger than it actually was. Hose did not return from furlough until after the migration was a *fait accompli*, and he never commented on the matter in any of his published reports or books.

[1] 'Many ulu ai [upriver] Dayaks with Dr Hose's knowledge and consent have moved into the Balleh and Katibas Rivers. In former times Dayaks were prevented from moving into these rivers from a variety of reasons and I foresee trouble amongst the ulu Dayaks if *these Dayaks are not immediately turned out and ordered to return from whence they came*.' (Vyner Brooke to Charles Brooke, 4 Sept 1905, SA; emphasis in original.) The Rajah Muda's acceptance of Merum's claim to have had Hose's permission was clearly based on initial reports by Kirkpatrick from Kapit, cited on p. 258, n. 5, and cannot be taken as his final opinion.

[2] Vyner Brooke to Charles Brooke, 12 Nov 1905, SA. Bukit Mikai Pambar is a hill in the border range between Sarawak and Indonesia on the upper Batang Lupar. Empran (from the Iban *emperan*, meaning an area of flat land) is the level region between the Kapuas lakes and the border range. Both areas were populated by Ibans who were frequently in league with Bantin's rebels throughout this period.

[3] Kirkpatrick Third Division April report, *SG* 486 (2 July 1906).

However the Rajah did not allow Jampi's people to remain in the Katibas, and he imposed an important condition on his relaxation of the Balleh prohibition. The Balleh people had to agree to launch attacks against the rebels associated with Bantin in the Poi, Kanowit and upper Batang Lupar Rivers.[1]

In a generally excellent account of Balleh history, J. D. Freeman implies that the Rajah's reversal of his ban on Balleh settlement, which had been maintained since 1882, was an inexplicable volte-face on the part of an aging ruler.[2] But although he was seventy-seven years old, the Rajah was not in his dotage, and he had good reasons for what he did. He was much more concerned with Bantin's insurgency in the upper Batang Lupar, which had spread to the Kanowit by this time, than he was about conditions in the Balleh. He certainly did not want to create still more Iban rebels at this juncture. Instead, sensing that the Balleh prohibition was ultimately unenforceable in any case, he bowed to the inevitable, and enlisted the Balleh settlers to fight his other enemies. Eventually he did use force to curb the increasingly headstrong Merum and his followers, but not until Bantin's long career of anti-Government activity was over.

An Iban stampede into the Balleh followed the Rajah's visit to Kapit:

> The Dayaks living between Song [at the mouth of the Katibas] and Kapit have been steadily moving into the Balleh, and I am informed that there are about 1,500 doors in the Balleh, and that the Dayaks are busily engaged in quarrelling over farming land. The Dayaks that are left in the branches of the main river between Song and Kapit complain that they have no penghulu or 'tuai' they all having moved into the Balleh.[3]

A year later the population of this river had risen to 1903 families, and it was already one of the major Iban districts of Sarawak.[4]

Far from slaking the Iban appetite for land, however, their second entry into the Balleh only seemed to whet it. In following years Merum and others again led migrations into the major Mujong and Gat tributaries of the Balleh, going well beyond the settlement limits set in 1906. Residents did not immediately raise any objections to these moves. One reported calmly

[1] Ibid. The Rajah knew that the Katibas was the most direct route to the frontier and to the upper Batang Lupar, the area where Bantin and his followers were the most active, and this is apparently why he insisted on maintaining the settlement prohibition in the Katibas while relaxing it in the Balleh.

[2] Freeman, *Iban Agriculture*, p. 16.

[3] Page-Turner Third Division (Kapit) July report, *SG* 488 (3 Sept 1906).

[4] Vyner Brooke report, 5 March 1908, *SG* 507 (3 April 1908). According to this report there were 8487 families of Ibans paying tax in the entire Rejang at this time, not including an estimated 500 families above Kapit on the main river and tributaries other than the Balleh.

in June 1911 that 'Numbers of Dayaks have removed from the Balleh into the Mujong and Gat streams which has necessitated a new census being taken.'[1] The Rajah himself was not yet inclined to take firm steps to limit further Iban expansion into the Balleh river system. Immediately after he had visited Kapit in July 1912, the *Sarawak Gazette* reported, 'Some of the chiefs expressed a wish to move higher up the Balleh, and as it is no use trying to prevent them, a tacit permission was granted.'[2] The continuing migrations were certainly not the result of any pressing shortage of land. The Iban movement into the Balleh had already encompassed an enormous area of virgin jungle, more than enough to sustain comfortably the system of shifting cultivation for many years.[3] But the people were intoxicated by their own expansion into fresh territory, combined with headhunting and successful defiance of the Government. The Rajah complained that he found it more difficult than ever to find leaders with any real authority among them.[4]

Increasingly flagrant raiding by Balleh Ibans against various other peoples, including Kenyahs living many days' journey away in Dutch Borneo. finally compelled Charles Brooke to abandon his attitude of tolerance. The Dutch authorities were by this time exercising a considerably greater degree of control over their own far-flung territory than had been the case in past decades. Their protests to the Sarawak Government increased, and so did the Rajah's impatience and embarrassment. In August 1913, while he was actually paying a visit to Kapit, news arrived that the Balleh Ibans had attacked the Uma Sulang Kayans of the Mahakam River in Dutch Borneo. The sixty-three men in the raiding party had taken seven heads.[5] It was the third such bloody outrage which the Balleh people had committed in less than a year. The Rajah, expressing his regrets to the Dutch Resident of Western Borneo, wrote, 'I have now come to the conclusion that these Dayaks living far up the Balleh branch will have to be burnt out next year.'[6] But instead, the Sarawak ruler merely used the threat of attack to force the surrender of the leading raiders, who were promptly executed.[7]

[1] Baring-Gould Third Division June report, *SG* 584 (17 July 1911).

[2] 'Diary of the Rajah's Visit to Coast Stations', *SG* 609 (1 Aug 1912).

[3] Freeman notes that virgin jungle was plentiful in the Balleh even five years after World War II (*Iban Agriculture*, pp. vii, 25) and today (1966) it is still regarded as one area in Sarawak where at least in the near future, shifting cultivation will remain economically feasible thanks to the large amount of land available.

[4] [Charles Brooke], 'Rejang Affairs', *SG* 635 (1 Sept 1913). This article is unsigned, but there is a draft copy in the Rajah's letter book, SA.

[5] Page-Turner Third Division August report, *SG* 641 (1 Dec 1913).

[6] Charles Brooke to the Resident of Western Borneo, 8 Aug 1913, SA.

[7] [Charles Brooke], 'Rejang Affairs', *SG* 635 (1 Sept 1913).

Headhunting continued in spite of such increasingly severe countermeasures, and by 1914 Merum and other Balleh Ibans were retreating toward the Mujong headwaters in open revolt. Two punitive expeditions, including small detachments of Sarawak Rangers and the usual unwieldy following of Iban volunteers, finally invaded the Mujong and the Gat, in February and May 1915. Something new was added on the Mujong expedition, where the Government employed a small mountain gun. The invincible cannon defeated rebels gathered on the summit of what they had believed was an impregnable mountain, Bukit Salong.[1] After these expeditions most of the defeated Balleh Ibans moved down to the main Rejang in the summer of 1915. The Rajah deposed Merum from his penghuluship and ordered that neither he nor any of his family should ever hold a position of trust again.[2]

A band of diehard rebels retreated to the extreme headwaters of the Gat, from which remote eyrie they continued for the next few years to raid across wide areas of both the Second and Third Divisions, but mostly the latter. Perhaps the boldest foray occurred on the night of 19 March 1918, when a party of Gat warriors killed three upper Rejang Kayans and wounded another in the walkway of the Kapit bazaar, and made good their escape.[3] The Government fought back with increasing harshness. In April 1916 a young officer named G. M. Gifford, leading a scratch force of Sarawak Rangers, Malays and Kayans, all armed with rifles, attacked a large party of Gat rebels on the main Rejang River above the Pelagus Rapids, killing about 200 of them. According to official accounts, the Ibans had been on their way to raid an upriver Melanau community. The Government force suffered no losses in what came to be known as the Battle of Nanga Pila.[4] The Rajah, hopeful that this action would teach the remaining rebels a lesson, rewarded Gifford with a new sword and a promotion.[5]

[1] For an account of the Gat expedition see 'Expedition Against the Balleh Dayaks', *SG* 672 (16 March 1915); for the Mujong expedition, *SG* 678 (16 June 1915). The latter report gives details of twenty murders committed by these 'rebel Dayaks'. Another account of the Mujong expedition is given in Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, pp. 159–63.

[2] 'One point was firmly laid down, namely, that their late chief Merum would not be again received in any capacity at all, as the loss of life and property and the attack on them may safely be attributed to his bad and unfriendly bearing toward the Government. He must be shelved for good and all and both he and his family retire out of Balleh waters.' (Report of Charles Brooke's remarks to the Supreme Council, 15 June 1915, *SGG* (16 June 1915).)

[3] Aplin Third Division March report, *SG* 743 (16 April 1918).

[4] Lang Third Division April report, *SG* 697 (16 May, 1916); 'Successful Expedition Against the Gat Dayaks', *SG* 696 (1 May 1916); 'The Almanac', *SG* 1093 (7 April 1949); interview with Impin (Pintu Batu) at Rumah Buyong, Bangat (near Betong), August 1965. Impin, a former Sarawak Ranger, is the man who killed and beheaded the leader of the rebel party, Tabor, an upper Batang Lupar Iban, in this battle. For Tabor's background, see p. 233, n. 5.

[5] Ranee of Sarawak, *Sylvia of Sarawak*, p. 208.

Nanga Pila was the bloodiest defeat administered to Iban rebels since the Battle of Beting Marau in 1849, but further steps were needed to eliminate the hostile stronghold at the headwaters of the Gat. Early in 1919, after the death of Charles Brooke, his son, Tuan Muda Bertram, led an expedition to that area, this time employing a machine gun. The last rebels retreated across the border, where they were soon rounded up and returned by the Dutch authorities, to be resettled far downriver along the safe, swampy banks of the Igan River below Sibu.[1] Ibans in the Sut tributary of the Balleh who had given aid to the Gat rebels were likewise forced to relocate. At the end of 1919 the Government reported,

> The Balleh and its tributaries are now cleared of all its inhabitants who, for five years, have given continual trouble. It will be necessary, if Dayaks are ever allowed again to reside in this part of the country, to garrison the district effectively, or further troubles will ensue.[2]

But by the same period the Government had quietly dropped its long-standing prohibition on settlement in the Katibas, officially in effect since 1876. The Rajah had apparently reasoned that if he allowed some Ibans to enter this area they would not be tempted to join the Gat insurgents.[3]

The third and final Iban entry of the Balleh took place under comparatively close Government supervision in 1922. Residents assigned specific territories to longhouse communities, and set upstream limits in the main river and tributaries beyond which no settlement was allowed. Rajah Vyner appointed a new group of leaders in the hope that they would keep the chastened Balleh Ibans within the boundaries set. These men were given 'pride of place', to use Freeman's phrase, at the heads of the various branch streams, where they enjoyed access to the greatest areas of virgin jungle, but were expected to prevent others from illegally migrating upriver. Foremost among the new leaders was Penghulu (later Temenggong) Koh, a successful headhunter and outlaw in his own youth, but a loyal and obedient follower of the Rajah after 1913, during the period of Merum's defiance. Like the similar measures which had been enforced in the upper Batang Lupar six years previously, these controls added up to the beginnings of 'something like effective government'.[4]

[1] Bertram Brooke, 'The Gat Expedition', *SG* 769 (16 May 1919).

[2] Third Division annual report for 1919, *SGG* (1 April 1920).

[3] Evidence that Ibans were again living in the Katibas is given in Baring-Gould Third Division May report, *SG* 723 (16 June 1917). The Government's motives for relaxing the Katibas prohibition and the exact date are not indicated in any written sources. The explanation given here is Benedict Sandin's opinion. It is certainly pertinent that after the end of Bantin's revolt in 1909 the Katibas route to the upper Batang Lupar had lost much of its former significance.

[4] Quotations in this paragraph are from Freeman, *Iban Agriculture*, p. 19. For similar measures

The final significant expansion of Iban settlement in the upper Rejang came as a direct result of Government initiative. In 1924 Rajah Vyner sponsored a great peacemaking ceremony between the Rejang Ibans and the various non-Iban tribes, mainly Kenyah and Kayan, of both the Rejang headwaters and neighboring areas of Dutch Borneo. It was hoped that this ceremony, similar in form to the wholly inter-Iban Simanggang ceremonies of 1920 and 1924 described earlier, would induce the Balleh Ibans to abandon their former unneighborly behavior.[1] However an additional step was deemed necessary to safeguard the peace. Early in 1925 the Rajah authorized the formation of a 'missionary settlement' of eighty families of Roman Catholic Ibans in the Pila tributary of the main Rejang River just above the Pelagus Rapids. He hoped to place these relatively law-abiding Christians, who were happy to leave their own worn-out farmlands on the lower Kanowit, where they might serve as a buffer between the non-Iban peoples upriver and the still unruly pagans of the Balleh.[2] The success of this calculated bit of social engineering is difficult to judge. Iban raiding on the old scale never revived, but this certainly resulted more from generally tighter Government control in later years than it did from the presence of the Christian colony.

Down to the present day the Pila River, still predominantly Roman Catholic in population, has remained the approximate limit of Iban settlement in the upper Rejang. Proceeding upstream from this area, the modern traveler next encounters longhouses belonging to settled Punans, upriver Melanau people quite distinct in language and culture from the Ibans. These Punans, who had fled from their homes in this area to escape Iban raiding, returned to them only after the age of Iban expansion into the upper Rejang closed in 1919,[3] probably forever.

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in the upper Batang Lupar, see ch. 7. The leaders appointed and limits on settlement in the Balleh are given in Le Sueur Third Division January report, *SG* 870 (1 March 1926). There is a report by the same officer on similar measures in the Katibas in *SG* 871 (1 April 1926).

[1] The 1924 Kapit peacemaking was particularly intended to end Iban hostilities with the Kenyahs of the Apoh Kayan, Dutch Borneo. Before the Kapit meeting a group of Ibans traveled with a Sarawak officer to the Apoh Kayan, where they made peace according to Kenyah custom. The Kenyahs then came to Sarawak for the later Kapit ceremony, which incorporated Iban customs with the Rajah presiding: see ch. 7 for a discussion of the similar ceremonies held at Simanggang in 1920 and 1924. The Iban-Kenyah peacemakings are described in D. A. Owen Third Division (Kapit) April–June report in *SG* 853 (1 Oct 1924) and 'Peacemaking at Kapit', *SG* 855 (1 Dec 1924).

[2] Bruggemann, 'History of the Catholic Church in the Rejang', p. 17; Third Division annual report for 1925, *SGG* (16 Aug 1926); De Skrine Third Division January report, *SG* 870 (1 March 1926).

[3] Third Division May report, *SG* 886 (1 July 1927). These people may have fled from the Rejang as early as the Great Kayan Expedition of 1863: see p. 133, n. 1.

THE COASTAL MIGRATIONS

The first Ibans to migrate north of the Rejang watershed settled along the nearby Oya and Mukah Rivers, beginning in about 1870. These districts, long settled by the sago-growing Melanaus along their coastward portions, were virtually empty in the interior. They were easily accessible by a land and river route from the lower Rejang, and the migrations to them were merely a continuation of the movement which had settled the latter area. Charles Brooke, who knew the sago areas well from his activities there at the time of the Malay Plot, indicated on a map in *Ten Years in Sarawak* that no Ibans were living on the Oya or Mukah when the book was published in 1866.[1] Only four years later the Resident at Mukah reported,

> There is a disposition on the part of the Dayaks in upper Rejang to remove in numbers into Mukah and Oya waters and it is only a few days since I received a communication from a Pakatan [Bukitan] named Kah Hong living at Sungai Melipis [a Kanowit tributary] asking to be allowed to cross my border with 100 followers. Of course I ordered him to return and shall communicate the matter to the Resident of Rejang; if he allows them to remove, well and good, but for my part I think the Dayaks and Pakatans will do much better by settling themselves in the locality and farming on a regular principle, than they will do by remaining continually on the move.[2]

Two years later, in 1872, the same officer complained that Iban migration was 'continually going on from Katibas and other branches of the Rejang River. Such men bring no passes. Their presence in the district is only known by report from the different chiefs.'[3] The newly arrived Ibans were disposed to locate themselves 'as near the Melanaus as possible . . . a very good understanding seems to exist between the two peoples.'[4]

The pioneer migrations to Mukah and Oya were a gentle, gradual affair compared with the eruption of Iban population into the upper Rejang, just described. Ibansnow living in Mukah District say that most of their forebears were originally inhabitants of the Skrang and Lemanak Rivers in the Second Division. After an initial migration to the Kanowit, they moved on by way of the main Rejang River and the Igan to Sungai Kut, then through this waterway to the Oya River. After farming on the Oya for a time they moved

[1] *Ten Years in Sarawak*, 1, map facing p. 1.

[2] Rodway Third Division (Mukah) report for November 1870, SA.

[3] Rodway Third Division (Mukah) report for February 1872, SA.

[4] Rodway Third Division (Mukah) report for August 1872, SA. For additional evidence of Iban migration to Mukah and Oya at this period, see Noel Denison, 'Journal (from 29th April to 25th May, 1872) when on a Trip from Sarawak to Miri on the NW Coast of Borneo in the Brunei Territory', *JSBRAS*, No. 10 (Dec 1882) 181.

overland to the Mukah River, the next stream to the north.[1] Administrative reports indicate that a lesser number of Bukitans were migrating into the area at the same time, keeping as usual on the outside edge of the expanding Iban territory.

This overland migration from the Rejang had a limited effect on Tatau and Bintulu, the next rivers along the coast toward Brunei.[2] But most of the area which Sarawak acquired from Brunei after 1861, including all the rivers beyond Bintulu, was not easily accessible to the Ibans by land. Migration to this region could not be the simple matter of making a succession of farms that it had been in the Rejang. Would-be pioneers had to have boats and the skill necessary to handle them off a long and harborless coast. They needed a greater degree of determination to start settlements in a strange land, sometimes in the neighborhood of unfriendly non-Iban peoples. They also needed enough rice to sustain themselves until they could grow their first crops.

But if migration to the rivers beyond Bintulu was in some ways more difficult, the attitude of the Government was helpful, rather than obstructive as it was in the Rejang. The three cessions of 1882, 1884 and 1890 gave the Rajah control of more than 250 miles of coast, from Tanjong Kidurong to the Trusan, excepting only the limited intervening enclaves which still remain to Brunei.[3] Many of the rivers which Sarawak acquired turned out to be isolated and underpopulated, difficult and expensive to administer.

The Baram and Trusan districts, acquired in 1882 and 1884 respectively, accrued a total deficit of $94,135 in the period down to 1889. The sum was not insignificant for a State whose total annual income at this time was only about four times this figure.[4] The *Sarawak Gazette* commented piously: 'If His Highness the Rajah likes to lose money in the interest of suffering humanity, far be it from us to gainsay his will or carp at his action.'[5] However there is no reason to believe that the Rajah was resigned to the deficits. He was by no means primarily an economically motivated ruler, but he was always aware that Sarawak could not tolerate financial losses, since there was no European treasury to make them good. His naturally frugal disposition, and his concept of each river as a separate political and economic entity,

[1] Interviews at Iban longhouses on the Mukah River, April 1966.

[2] Some Ibans and Bukitans were farming along the Tatau by April 1872; Sinclair Fourth Division (Bintulu) report for April 1872, SA. Tatau population figures for both groups are listed in *SG* 257 (1 June 1887).

[3] For details of these cessions, see Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, pp. 177, 184–94. The final expansion of Sarawak territory came in 1905, when the North Borneo Company transferred Lawas, a relatively small district adjacent to Trusan, to Sarawak; ibid., pp. 197–8.

[4] For the Baram and Trusan deficits see *SG* 292 (1 May 1890). Sarawak revenue and expenditure for the year 1888 were $361, 615 and $341, 482 respectively.

[5] *SG* 291 (1 April 1890).

further inclined him to insist that each should pay its own way. In most of the newly acquired districts, trade in jungle produce, at this period still of major importance to the Sarawak economy,[1] was the only potential source of revenue. If this trade could be stimulated in each outstation, income from export duties would rise, and the population of a growing Chinese bazaar would yield additional income from the usual spirits, opium and gambling farms.

Rightly or wrongly, the Government believed that the inhabitants of the newly acquired territories, who had never previously enjoyed access to a regular market, were indolent and inferior collectors of jungle produce in comparison to the energetic and experienced Ibans of the Second and Third Divisions. The Ibans were therefore officially encouraged to travel through the new districts in search of wild rubber, rattans, camphor, damar and other products. In 1889 the *Gazette* observed, with regard to the Trusan,

> Riches are spoken of in the interior, but it is a question if the inhabitants of the river have the energy to unearth them for the market. However, if this be wanting, at no far future day, when peace and good will have been established among the Muruts who have been the murderers on one or two occasions of Sarawak subjects, the Dayaks [i.e. Ibans] will find their way there and awaken the residents of these regions, as they seem to have done pretty well all along the Sabah (north) coast. . . . These young fellows are the working pioneers of jungle produce wherever it exists.[2]

As the author of this passage must have known, Ibans from Sarawak territory had already been active in the Trusan for some years. By murdering sixteen of them in 1884, local Murut tribesmen had provided the Sarawak Government with a pretext to demand the cession of the district from Brunei.[3] After the cession the Rajah had summoned the Murut chiefs to Kuching for a peacemaking with the aggrieved Iban communities, which was held in the dining room of the Rajah's Astana.[4] Immediately following this

[1] Between the years 1876 and 1910 jungle produce regularly accounted for about one-third of Sarawak's total exports. The remaining two-thirds consisted mainly of sago and various minerals (primarily gold and antimony) which were produced only in limited areas of the Third and First Divisions respectively. After 1910 the relative importance of jungle produce slowly declined, owing to the progressive displacement of wild rubber by cultivated rubber. Based on Sarawak trade returns published in the *Sarawak Gazette* and (after 1908) in the *Sarawak Government Gazette*.

[2] *SG* 239 (1 Dec 1889). The idea that Ibans were superior jungle produce gatherers persisted for years. Reporting on Iban-Kayan friction in the upper Rejang in 1895, C. A. Bampfylde argued that 'The Kayans are too indolent to work produce in the interior themselves, so without putting a complete stop to trade in the Rejang by prohibiting the Dayaks to go up the Balleh it is difficult to keep the hard working and ubiquitous Dayaks from coming into contact with the inland tribes.' (*SG* 358 (1 Nov 1895).)

[3] See p. 195, n. 2.

[4] *SG* 244 (1 May 1886).

ceremony the newly appointed first Resident of Trusan, O. F. Ricketts, observed, 'Now that peace has been formally made between the Trusans [Muruts] and the Dayaks friendly relations will exist between them, which will enable the latter to come into the territory and thus give an impetus to trade.'[1] It seems clear that this development had been the main object of the peacemaking.

Ricketts soon found that neither the Muruts nor the Ibans had been completely reassured by the ceremony. Iban produce seekers arriving in Trusan a few months later asked him to sell them guns and powder before they proceeded into the interior. Eager to see them at work, he agreed to do so, stipulating only that they could not take the guns home with them.[2] Two years later when Ricketts himself made a trip to the interior he found wild rumors circulating among the people that he was leading a large force of Ibans to attack them. The Muruts hid their women and children in the jungle at his approach.[3] It was not uncommon for non-Iban interior tribes to identify Iban intrusion with the Government in this fashion.

Along the much larger Baram River and its tributaries there was similar friction between the inhabitants and itinerant Iban produce seekers, with the Government again initially on the side of the Ibans. In 1884 the first Baram Resident, C. C. de Crespigny, told a reluctant Kenyah chief that he could either allow the Ibans to work produce in his area, in which case the Government would allow him to levy a toll of one-tenth of whatever they collected, or that the Rajah might well order them to work there anyway without further reference to him.[4] De Crespigny was irked when the Tinjar Sebob chief Aban Jau refused to allow a party of forty-five Ibans from Banting to work produce in his area. The Resident noted with approval that at this time over 200 more Second Division Ibans were reported en route to the Baram for the same purpose.[5]

No one knew better than the Sarawak Government that bands of young Ibans supposedly looking for gutta percha were capable of creating an almost endless variety of trouble, especially when there were human heads to be gained thereby. Gradually, officers appointed to the newly acquired rivers began to see things more from the local point of view. In 1888 A. H. Everett listened with sympathy when the Kenyah chief Aban Nipa (Tama Oyong) complained that the Ibans were denuding his country of jungle produce.

[1] Ricketts Fifth Division (Trusan) report for May 1886, SA.

[2] Entries for 8 and 10 Sept 1886, 'Mr Ricketts Trusan Diary', SA.

[3] Entry for 20 April 1888, ibid.; Ricketts Fifth Division (Trusan) report for April 1888, SA.

[4] De Crespigny, Baram Official Journal, *SG* 220 (1 May 1884).

[5] Baram Official Journal, *SG* 222 and 223 (1 July and 1 Aug 1884).

Everett recommended that the Ibans should in future work only in completely uninhabited streams:

> The Kayans and Kenyahs are now quite conversant with the methods of working and are, as they truly say, dependent on jungle produce to pay their tax to government and as the Dayaks will still have the choice of numerous uninhabited streams . . . in which to work and, as moreover, they have for over four years had their pick of the gutta producing districts, they can have no ground for complaint.[1]

Iban produce seekers continued to visit the Baram in large numbers, but they did not clash openly with the local people until 1894, in the wake of a great *penyamun* scare. Such scares, which have recurred periodically in widespread areas of Borneo, usually start with rumors that the Government needs a human head to bury in the foundations of some construction project. *Penyamun* (literally 'robbers') are reported everywhere: mysterious black-clad headhunters who prowl in the night, thrusting spears through the floors and walls of houses. The 1894 scare began in Kuching, where the Rajah was constructing a new waterworks, and spread throughout Sarawak. It set off a very genuine wave of murders and other violence, deeply alarming the Government. In the far-off Baram, the Kenyahs took advantage of the scare to murder twelve Ibans gathering jungle produce near their homes, and then claimed that they seemed to have been *penyamun*. The Resident, Charles Hose, concluded that the Kenyahs had really known full well who and what the Ibans were, and fined them heavily.[2]

A few of the Iban produce-seekers who journeyed to distant areas married into local communities, but in doing so they usually adopted the customs of their in-laws and thereby ceased to be Ibans. The great majority returned to their homes in the Second and Third Divisions. Nevertheless their wanderings were a prelude to the substantial migrations which followed, for they carried back with them glowing accounts of thinly settled rivers temptingly rich in unfelled jungle.

The Government, which had encouraged the Ibans to seek jungle produce, also promoted permanent Iban settlement in some of the newly ceded areas. Official motives for so doing were political as well as economic. The various tribal groups which inhabited the Fourth and Fifth Divisions, including Kayans, Kenyahs, Muruts and many others, were at first an unknown quantity to the Brooke regime. In general they were very different in political

[1] A. H. Everett Fourth Division (Baram) April report, *SG* 269 (1 June 1888).

[2] 'The Rajah *v.* Taman Bulan and others', 25 Feb 1895, Baram Criminal CCB, SA. For a description of both the great *penyamun* scare of 1894 and this incident, see A. C. Haddon, *Head-Hunters, Black, White and Brown* (London, 1901) pp. 338–42, 359, 368; Hose, *Romance and Research*, pp. 139–46; Hose and McDougall, *Pagan Tribes*, II 300.

character from the Ibans; they were less warlike, less nomadic, and conditioned by social systems which placed much greater emphasis on hereditary rank. Residents sometimes feared that the Moslem groups living in down-river areas were particularly likely to be swayed by the influence of their nearby former overlord, the Sultan of Brunei.

In contrast, all Sarawak officers were familiar with the Ibans and knew that they could be relied upon to fight for the Rajah in the event of any emergency. This fact was also appreciated in Brunei, and in the various districts along the coast. W. H. Treacher observed in 1889,

> Raja Brooke has had little difficulty in establishing his authority in the districts acquired from time to time, for not only were the people glad to be freed from the tyranny of the Brunei Rajas, but the fame of both the present Raja and of his famous uncle Sir James Brooke has spread far and wide in Borneo, and, in addition, it was well known that the Sarawak Government had at its back its war-like Dayak tribes, who, now that 'head-hunting' has been stopped amongst them, would have heartily welcomed the chance of a little legitimate fighting. . . .[1]

During his early years as Resident of Trusan, O. F. Ricketts had already on several occasions relied upon bands of Iban voyagers to bolster his authority. His diary records a typical incident in 1886:

> Mr [E. A. W.] Cox started for the Tengoa with the Sergeant and five [Sarawak] Rangers for the purpose of arresting Sichong. Four boatloads of Dayaks were going up and I told their headmen to keep up with Mr Cox in case they might prove useful should Sichong have got the Muruts to help him to resist.[2]

Only a month earlier Ricketts had reported that the arrival of sixty Iban voyagers had had a 'good effect' on another group of Muruts, who suddenly became willing to pay their taxes to the new regime.[3]

The Sarawak Government's need for a trustworthy source of fighting power in its new northeastern provinces was sharpened by worsening relations with Brunei following the seizure of Limbang in March 1890. The Sultan remained bitterly opposed to the loss of what had been his most important remaining river, and the Rajah of Sarawak believed that some of the Limbang chiefs were in league with him. In May of 1895, more than four years after Limbang was annexed by Sarawak, Charles found it necessary to

[1] Treacher, 'British Borneo', p. 22. Before this article was published in 1890, the author, William Hood Treacher, had been an acting Governor of Labuan and subsequently the first Governor of North Borneo under the Chartered Company, and in both positions he had on several occasions clashed with Charles Brooke during the years 1879–85: see Irwin, *Nineteenth Century Borneo*, pp. 207–9, 213.

[2] Entry for 26 Sept 1886, 'Mr Ricketts Trusan Diary', SA.

[3] Ricketts Fifth Division (Trusan) report, *SG* 247 (2 Aug 1886).

send an expedition made up largely of Iban levies to attack a Limbang chief, Orang Kaya Temenggong Lawai, who was suspected of pro-Brunei sentiment. Lawai was captured and sent to prison in Kuching.[1] The founding of an Iban colony in the Baram in 1891, the first such settlement in the Fourth Division, must be seen against this background.

According to local tradition, the Rajah imported Iban settlers to help him maintain order in the Baram itself. A Government officer with long experience in that district wrote just before World War II,

> [The Ibans] were brought to the [Baram] district in the first place as a nucleus for assistance should any of the upriver peoples prove refractory and it is said that, had one or two of the chiefs of the Tinjar been less truculent there would have been no necessity to bring them from the Batang Lupar.[2]

It seems certain, however, that the Rajah was less concerned about the Baram than he was about Limbang and Brunei.[3] He undoubtedly had additional reasons for sponsoring the colony. By 1890 it was clear that the Baram was not nearly as thickly populated as had been supposed before its cession to Sarawak. Many of its tributaries were quite devoid of humanity, and any settlement could only lead to a general increase in the trade and revenues of the district.

Whatever his reasoning, on 15 June 1891 Charles Brooke held a meeting of Iban leaders at Sibu, headquarters of the Third Division, and invited some of them to move to the Baram with their followers. Those who accepted expressed an atypical degree of hesitation. They claimed that they had no boats fit for ocean travel and no maritime experience, and asked the Resident to provide them with steamer transportation.[4] It is not certain whether the Government complied with this request, but within three months some of these Rejang Ibans had arrived in the Baram, and more were on the way.[5]

[1] Report of Supreme Council meeting of 20 May 1895, in *SG* 353 (1 June 1895). The expedition is described in *SG* 354 (1 July 1895); see also Charles Brooke to Consul Trevenen, 2 June 1895, SA. For an account of the Limbang annexation, which is charitable in its assessment of the role of Charles Brooke, see Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, pp. 186–94.

[2] Donald Hudden, 'The Baram District', *SG* 1093 and 1094 (7 April and 7 May 1949). Hudden, a brother-in-law of Anthony W. D. Brooke, was murdered by Baram Punans when he attempted to take refuge in the interior after the beginning of the Japanese occupation. Contrary to his account, the first Iban migrants to the Baram actually came from the Rejang, as noted below, although they may well have been of Batang Lupar stock. To my knowledge there is no contemporary document which specifically supports Hudden's theory.

[3] Only a month before he invited the Rejang Ibans to move to the Baram the Rajah had written to the officer in charge at Limbang, 'I don't know what may be the tactics of the Sultan, but if he meddles with us in a dangerous manner, I shall have to let him know that we shall not submit to any insults quietly.' (Charles Brooke to H. F. Deshon, 10 May 1891, SA.)

[4] Buck Third Division June report, *SG* 307 (1 Aug 1891).

[5] Hose Fourth Division (Baram) August report, *SG* 309 (1 Oct 1891). Years later Hose blamed the constant turbulence in the Rejang on the presence of a large immigrant Iban population.

For many years the Government restricted Iban settlement in the Baram to the vicinity of Marudi, then the headquarters of the Fourth Division, and to the Bakong, a downriver tributary where there was plenty of land.[1] Additional migrants from many areas of the Second Division were allowed to settle in these areas, and by 1906 the growing Iban community numbered 1960 people, or about one tenth of the then known Baram population.[2]

As things turned out, there was never any need for a military colony in the Baram, which remained a far more placid area than those districts from which the Ibans themselves had come. Conditions in the area around Brunei Bay slowly stabilized, and the appointment of a British Resident to the Sultanate in 1906 eliminated any possibility of further disruptive political rivalry between Brunei, Sarawak and North Borneo. The Rajah indirectly acknowledged these changed conditions four years later, when he raised the tax rate of the Baram Ibans from one dollar to two dollars per year, thus indicating that they were no longer expected to serve as unpaid soldiers.[3]

A growing shortage of hill rice farmland in the Second Division, together with continued unrest in upriver areas of that district, stimulated further Iban migration toward the northeast in the years around the turn of the century. By 1895 door tax receipts in the Second Division revealed an Iban population of at least 45,000. In fact the total may not have been far below the modern figure of about 70,000.[4] From the Iban point of view, the Second Division was overcrowded. By 1896 emigration was already sufficient to

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and remarked, 'The Baram was fortunate in that the Sea Dayaks had not established themselves anywhere within its borders.' (Hose and McDougall, *Pagan Tribes*, II 300.) He did not mention that the officially sponsored introduction of Ibans into the Baram had started while he was Resident.

[1] Beginning in 1932, Ibans were also allowed to settle in the Tinjar tributary, where there is today a substantial Iban community: for the beginning of this settlement, see Fourth Division June report, *SG* 947 (1 Sept 1932).

After the development of the Miri oil-field the Divisional headquarters was moved to that town, and Marudi (originally Claudetown) has ever since been merely the administrative center for Baram District.

[2] Douglas Fourth Division December report, *SG* 493 (4 Feb 1907). Total Baram population was 19,139, according to this report, which almost certainly did not take into account some of the more remote upriver peoples. (However the 1965 population of Baram District was only 29,705: see p. 249, n. 1.)

[3] Douglas Fourth Division May report, *SG* 558 (1 July 1910); for a discussion of the Sarawak tax system, see ch. 5.

[4] Bailey Second Division annual report for 1895, *SG* 361 (1 Feb 1896), gives total Iban door tax revenue as $9039, indicating the same number of families. At various times Bailey estimated that a single family averaged at least five to six members (see, for example, the quotation on p. 273 below), the same figure Freeman deduced from his modern Balleh research. But it is doubtful that all the upriver Second Division Ibans were paying taxes.

bring expressions of dismay from the Resident, D. J. S. Bailey. Referring to his largest river, the Batang Lupar, he concluded that the population was increasing slowly, 'despite the numbers who annually leave the country (many alas! never to return)'.[1]

Whatever the sentiments of his subordinates may have been, the Rajah himself was inclined to be sympathetic to the desires of the shifting cultivator. In July of 1899, on his annual visit to Simanggang, he listened for several days to crowds of Ibans requesting permission to move to Balingian, Bintulu, Baram and other rivers. Finally he declared that unrestricted migration would be allowed for the time being. Bailey reported,

> It is difficult to say, at present, with any certainty whether there will be a very large exodus of Dayaks or not but it is believed that in the course of the next year quite 400 doors (say 2500 people) will avail themselves of this chance of bettering their prospects.
>
> These people will be chiefly from the main river (Batang Ai) [Batang Lupar] and the Skrang. I have had no opportunity of learning yet whether a large number of Saribas and Kalakka [Krian] Dayaks desire to remove or not. . . .
>
> Without doubt the change from these waters where the population, for this country, is unusually large, to new farm lands and more sparsely populated rivers will enormously benefit the Dayaks from a physical point of view.[2]

Bailey's prediction was more than fulfilled in the months that followed. Those who took advantage of the Rajah's permission sometimes employed their own boats, and sometimes took passage on Chinese-owned schooners and other coasting craft. Either way the journey was perilous, and the second alternative was expensive as well. In July of 1900 Ibans leaving the Second Division for Bintulu were paying as much as $21 per family passage money.[3] In the same month fifty-five migrants lost all their old jars, brassware and rice supplies when the schooner *Kim Eng Seng* ran aground off Bintulu in a squall.[4] People awaiting passage congregated months ahead of time at Lingga, where they camped in flimsy huts near the Government bungalow and created disturbances.[5]

The influx of Iban population was most noticeable in the Bintulu and Balingian Rivers, both of which had been little affected by previous migration.[6]

[1] Bailey Second Division annual report for 1896, *SG* 373 (1 Feb 1897).
[2] Bailey Second Division July report, *SG* 404 (1 Sept 1899).
[3] Baring-Gould Second Division July report, *SG* 416 (1 Sept 1900).
[4] Day Fourth Division (Bintulu) July report, *SG* 416 (1 Sept 1900).
[5] Baring-Gould Second Division July report, *SG* 416 (1 Sept 1900).
[6] Bailey reported only thirty-five Iban families living on the Balingian, the river immediately east of Mukah, before the 1899–1900 migration: 'Balingian Affairs', *SG* 415 (1 Aug 1900). There is no definite evidence of any previous Iban settlement on the Bintulu, although there had been

Twelve hundred migrants arrived in Bintulu during July and August of 1900 alone, bringing the total Iban population there to about 2000 individuals. The Resident gave them permission to settle in the Sebauh and Pendan tributaries, predicting 'a great change upriver, the merest fringe of jungle along the bank having been cleared in past years'.[1] He persuaded the local Chinese traders to import extra supplies of rice to advance to the newcomers, who would be largely dependent on bazaar supplies during their first season in the country. They were expected to pay for the rice in jungle produce, and the Resident anticipated a boom in wild rubber and rattan exports.[2]

By an ironic coincidence, Bailey of the Second Division was temporarily assigned to Mukah in 1900, just in time to observe people from his own district arriving to live along the nearby Balingian River. He estimated that 800 individuals had settled there by October 1900.[3] Early the next year his successor complained that Mukah itself had been stripped of Chinese carpenters. They were all in Balingian, 'which place is considered by the Chinese to be very promising, owing to the influx of Dayaks', where they set about constructing additions to the dilapidated three-shop bazaar.[4]

Considerable numbers of Ibans from the Rejang joined the rush to the coastal rivers, and it was the Resident of the Third Division, H. F. Deshon, who summed up the results of the 1899–1900 migration:

During the latter part of 1899 and the commencement of 1900, Your Highness was pleased to accord permission to Dayaks in the Second and Third Divisions to remove without restriction and settle on the coast between Igan and Tanjong Kidurong. About a thousand doors have availed themselves of this permission and are now distributed in the Oya, Mukah, Balingian, Tatau and Bintulu Rivers, but mostly in the last three named districts. There are already signs that this not inconsiderable augmentation to the population in the places mentioned will immediately give a stimulus to the trade and general prosperity of the district.[5]

During the years around 1900, other Second Division Ibans received per-

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migration to the nearby Tatau (see p. 266, n. 2) and it seems impossible that Bintulu could have been overlooked completely.

The pre-Iban population of the rivers between Mukah and Tanjong Kidurong consisted of a thin fringe of Melanau settlement along the coast and a complex, scattered upriver population of jungle nomads, settled Punans, Kayans and others. Some of the Melanaus, such as those of Bintulu, were Moslems by 1900.

[1] Day Fourth Division (Bintulu) September report, *SG* 418 (1 Nov 1900).

[2] Day Fourth Division (Bintulu) reports for July and August in *SG* 416 and 417 (1 Sept and 1 Oct 1900).

[3] Bailey Third Division (Mukah) October report, *SG* 419 (1 Dec 1900).

[4] Bettington Third Division (Mukah) March report, *SG* 424 (1 May 1901).

[5] Deshon Third Division annual report for 1900, *SG* 422 (1 March 1901).

mission to migrate to Limbang, an area where wandering gutta-seekers and headhunters had caused constant turmoil in earlier years.[1] In the summer of 1899 the Chinese traders of Limbang requested that Iban immigration be allowed, and monthly reports from the district record sporadic arrivals from 1901 onwards.[2] The Government restricted Iban settlement in Limbang to the Lubai and Pandaruan tributaries until 1931, when additional lands upstream were opened to Second Division migrants.[3]

Many of the areas which Ibans were settling in the course of these migrations were quite uninhabited, but as time went by the Rajah became concerned to protect the scattered population which did exist. His Residents took steps to keep Ibans out of certain rivers such as the Kakus, a tributary of Tatau, which was reserved for settled Punan occupation.[4] In May of 1901 the Rajah himself issued an order prohibiting Iban settlement in three rivers of the Fourth Division, the Suai, Niah and Sibuti:

> No Dayaks are to be allowed to live on the Coast or in the interiors of rivers lying between Tanjong Kidurong and Miri and this order is not to be upset by any signature but my own. This part of the coast is reserved for other tribes, such as Kadayans, Melanaus, Dusuns, etc.
>
> The forest wood is to be preserved as much as possible and birds' nests caves developed by attention and placing them in the hands of reliable men.[5]

This Order was enforced until 1927, and as a result the three rivers affected remained free of Iban population until that date, although all have since received Iban migrants in considerable numbers.[6]

[1] Soon after the Limbang district was acquired by Sarawak in 1890, the Government learned that a party of Ibans, many of whom had married local women, were at large in the interior, raiding among the Kelabits and others. Their leader was a former Rejang Bukitan named Imang who had married an Iban woman of Ngemah and adopted Iban culture. On one of his raids he told the Kelabits, who were said to have believed him, that he was leading a Sarawak Government force. Not until 1898 were Imang and his troublesome followers finally deported to their old homes in the Rejang: Ricketts Fifth Division (Limbang) reports in *SG* 303 (1 April 1891) et seq.; 'Imang' and monthly reports from Trusan, Baram and Rejang in *SG* 390 (1 July 1898).

[2] Cunynghame Fifth Division (Limbang) May report, *SG* 402 (1 Aug 1899); Ricketts Fifth Division (Limbang) January report, *SG* 422 (1 March 1901).

[3] Fifth Division (Limbang) May report, *SG* 946 (1 Aug 1932), and following Limbang reports.

[4] Boult Fourth Division (Bintulu) January report, *SG* 594 (17 March 1916).

[5] Order dated 12 May 1901, in *SG* 425 (1 June 1905). The Rajah's reference to 'Dusuns' is mysterious. The only people commonly known as Dusuns (or, more recently, as Kadazans) are the major ethnic group of Sabah, none of whom live near the area in question.

[6] R. S. Douglas, who succeeded Charles Hose as Resident of the Fourth Division, would not even allow Ibans to work jungle produce on the Suai: see his Fourth Division report, *SG* 507 (3 April 1909).

From 1927 onwards Rajah Vyner Brooke permitted selected groups of Second Division Ibans, usually under the leadership of retired Sarawak Ranger non-commissioned officers, to settle in all three districts, and today they all have substantial Iban populations. The first such migration

Suai, Niah and Sibuti were the exception rather than the rule, however. By the time of the Second Rajah's death in 1917, virtually every other river along the great stretch of coast which had passed under Brooke rule since 1860 supported an immigrant Iban community. These settlements attracted additional migrants during the years that followed, as more people deserted their old homes in the overcrowded Second Division to seek new land. Normally they preferred to settle in areas where they had kinsmen, or at least where they would find people from the same home river, whose customs would be identical with their own. The process was further influenced by the policies of the Third Rajah, who opened up additional areas to Iban settlement, and by the postwar British colonial regime, which also sponsored some Iban migration. It has continued down to the present day.[1]

THE RAJAH'S RESPONSE

In 1896 some Second Division Ibans began to move across the border into Dutch Borneo. The Resident, Bailey, proposed attempting to stop them, but the Rajah demurred. In the closest approach he ever made to stating a policy on Iban migration, Charles Brooke wrote,

> We can use force of persuasion to prevent them, but if they are determined to go in spite of what we say, you must let things go, as we are not justified in treating them otherwise than as free men – in quest of good land, their own being mostly used up.

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on record was to Sibuti in 1927: Second Division annual report for 1927 in *Kuching Departmental and Outstation Annual Reports*, 1927 (Kuching, 1928). For migrations to Niah, see Benedict Sandin, 'The Sea Dayak Migration to Niah River', *SMJ* VIII 10 (Dec 1957) 133–5. The 1901 Order was never formally revoked.

In order to protect the Land Dayaks of the First Division, Charles Brooke also forbade Iban migration to that area, excepting only the lower Sadong and its Simunjan tributary: see his Order dated 1 April 1900 in *Orders which have not since been cancelled . . . 1899–1900* (Kuching, 1902). This prohibition was also relaxed somewhat under the Third Rajah, when Ibans from Saribas were allowed to settle in the Balai Ringin area in 1921: see Adams First Division (Sadong) May report, *SG* 815 (1 Aug 1921), and following reports. A 1903 Order required officers in the First Division to keep a register of all Ibans employed by the Borneo Company or others, or visiting the area: Order dated 3 Feb 1903, *SG* 446 (3 March 1903).

[1] In 1955, for example, the Colonial Government sponsored the migration of Ibans from a remote and infertile area at the extreme headwaters of the Batang Lupar to new homes at Lundu in the First Division. More recently, partly as a result of 'Confrontation' with Indonesia, Ibans living in a number of areas of the Second Division close to the frontier (including portions of the upper Undup and Batang Lupar) have been resettled in downriver areas, where they could be protected from Indonesian attack. For the first time in Sarawak history, however, these latest migrants have been offered a chance at a new way of life which they may or may not find appealing. The Government is providing them with new housing and eight-acre plots of high yielding rubber trees, as part of a comprehensive community development scheme. Throughout Sarawak unsponsored (and sometimes illegal) migration by individual Iban families is still common.

It makes little difference so long as they trade on this side and that I suppose they will do – when they cross the border and reach the Dutch possessions we have nothing further to do with them – they become Dutch subjects for the time.[1]

The Rajah believed that the Government should interfere in the lives of the people, especially the interior people, as little as possible, and this meant allowing them to move freely. But as this passage suggests, he could modify his philosophy of non-interference in the light of hard practical considerations, such as a possible loss of trade. On a day-to-day basis both he and his Residents were greatly influenced by such considerations, with the result that the Government sometimes encouraged and sometimes discouraged Iban migration.

The Rajah's personal familiarity with the Iban way of life disposed him to sympathize with the shifting cultivator's hunger for new land. To the average European administrator, unconditioned by a long life in Borneo, the spectacle of Iban agriculture would have been thoroughly distasteful. Semi-nomadic farming seemed inherently uncivilized to most colonial rulers, and when it resulted in the constant destruction of forest it appeared downright sinful. Only in recent years have anthropologists and other scientists pointed out that when enough land is available to allow a sufficient fallow period between crops, shifting cultivation does no permanent damage to the forest.[2] In areas where little or no level, irrigable land is available, it may be the only economically feasible method of farming.

Charles Brooke lived in an age before such knowledge was available, and to a certain extent he did deplore the destruction of forest.[3] In 1868, when he was still Tuan Muda, he issued an Order forbidding Ibans to farm areas of virgin jungle containing stands of ironwood (*belian*), the superbly tough and rot-resistant Borneo wood which then as now was greatly in demand for any permanent construction.[4] But he also knew that the Ibans were happiest and most prosperous when they had access to plentiful supplies of untouched forest, such as could only be obtained by frequent migration. Instinctively he tended to share their point of view, and, despite some conscious reservations, he seems generally to have regarded the land of Sarawak as an endless ocean which would never run dry. In the various rivers of the Fourth and

[1] Charles Brooke to Bailey, 11 Aug 1896, SA.

[2] Freeman's research in the Balleh led him to conclude that allowing for a minimum fallow period of twelve years between crops on the same ground, the Balleh area could support a maximum population of 46 persons per square mile without causing permanent damage to the land. The actual population at the time of his research was less than half this number: *Iban Agriculture*, p. 134, 136.

[3] See, for example, his Order of 12 May 1901, quoted on p. 275 above.

[4] Order dated 3 June 1868, in 'Sarawak Government Orders, 1863–1891', SA.

Fifth Divisions, more practical considerations moved him to encourage the Ibans to seek jungle produce, and to favor the migrations which this activity helped stimulate. As we have seen, he was eager to encourage trade and to increase population where little or none existed. In the case of the Baram, he felt the need for a source of Iban levies convenient to the troubled area around Brunei Bay.

Nevertheless it would be fair to say that the Rajah and his officers expended far more time and effort attempting to restrain Iban migration than they did trying to promote it. Charles knew from long, hard experience that among his most warlike subjects, migration and headhunting resulted from the same deep-seated pattern of motivation. Time and time again events in the Balleh proved that the more the upriver Ibans expanded territorially, the more aggressive they became toward their weaker neighbors, whom the Rajah was disposed to protect. As in the case of the Batang Lupar, described in an earlier chapter, the punitive expeditions which the Rajah employed to enforce his authority sometimes only fanned the flames of unrest, leading to a protracted cycle of defiance, revolt and more expeditions. But in the early years of his reign Iban levies were the only means that he could afford, and in later years the only one that he would consider using, to impose his will upon a restless population.

The history of friction between the Government and Iban migrants in the upper Rejang was repeated on a lesser scale at many other times and places. Brooke officers became preoccupied with the problem of physically controlling Iban population movement. They evolved specialized administrative techniques to deal with this problem in a variety which was remarkable considering the generally limited nature of the Brooke regime. The whitewashed riverside forts remained essential to the effort, but their purpose was in a sense reversed. In the Second Division, the oldest forts had been established to prevent Iban 'pirates' from going to sea on raiding expeditions. In the Rejang, however, the upriver post at Kapit was intended to keep the Ibans from moving further into the interior, thereby getting beyond all hope of control or even influence. Once Brooke rule was secure on the coast, defiance of Government tended to entail movement upstream rather than downstream and from the time of the Katibas expeditions of 1868–76 onwards, the Rajah's stock response to rebellion was to resettle the chastized insurgents 'below the fort'. In the administrative vocabulary, 'move down' became synonymous with surrender.

The importance attached to Iban control is illustrated by the fact that no Iban anywhere in Sarawak could legally travel outside his own Division, even for a short period, without first obtaining a pass from the Resident

Although the regulation was never committed to writing, it was enforced where possible from a very early period in the Second Rajah's administration. The fine customarily imposed on violators varied. In the Third Division in the 1870s it was five dollars, while in the Second Division just before World War I it was twenty katis ($14.40). A typical Iban pass case from the Simanggang court records states, 'Defendant asked for permission to leave the district but on the earnest request of his wife who was enceinte he did not receive one.'[1]

The regulation applied with special force to those wishing to migrate (*pindah*). In the Second Division, the source of most migration, any would-be pioneer had in theory to obtain the personal permission of Charles Brooke himself. In 1896 the Rajah gave his assent to one such petition while presiding over the Resident's court at Fort Alice, Simanggang: '*Uju* youngest son of Tarang of Krian obtains permission to move from this Division to Baram. 4 doors. 26 people. (letter given).'[2]

Residents frequently requested Ibans leaving their Divisions to deposit pledges, or conditional fines, in old jars or brassware, to be retained by the Government until the individual returned again. Toward the end of his reign, the Second Rajah began the practice of setting markers (*paks*) in critical Iban rivers, beyond which settlement was prohibited. Charles also began the practice of locating the most trusted Iban leader in the neighborhood nearest the *pak*, where he enjoyed access to upriver farmlands, but was expected to make certain that no one else did.

Under the administration of the Third Rajah, all the various control measures mentioned above were continued, sometimes in much more stringent form, and new ones were created. After 1926, for example, all Ibans in the Third Division were required to live in longhouses of not fewer than ten family rooms, on the assumption that this would help the *penghulu* and the Resident or District Officer prevent illicit migration, and would facilitate administration generally.[3] This regulation might have surprised Charles

[1] 'Government *v* Chembai', 18 May 1914, Simanggang CCB, SA. In 1900, the Rajah proposed a regulation requiring all Sarawak subjects traveling abroad to take out passports, for which a fee of $5 was to be charged, but as finally promulgated the Order applied to 'Sea Dayaks [Ibans] only'. See report of Supreme Council meeting, 10 May 1900, in *SG* 413; Order dated 18 June 1900 in *SG* 415 (1 Aug 1900).

[2] Noted in Simanggang CCB, 3 May 1896, SA. Chulo (Tarang) was a famous Iban warrior of Paku (Saribas) in the days of coastal raiding: see Sandin, *Sea Dayaks*, pp. 68–9.

[3] For the initiation of this 'ten door rule' throughout the Third Division, see the Third Division annual report for 1926, *SGG* (1 Sept 1927); see also Freeman, *Iban Agriculture*, p. 35 n. In the Second Division, where migration control was not so critical an issue, no attempt was made to enforce the ten door minimum house length until the period of the Asun troubles in the early 1930s. Even then the rule was not applied in certain districts, such as the middle and lower Saribas,

Brooke, who tended to regard longhouses as a barrier to Iban advancement, although he would never have dreamed of attempting to abolish them.[1] After the Asun troubles in the 1930s the Government created the Lanjak–Entimau Protected Forest on the rugged borderland area between the Second and Third Divisions, in order to make it strictly illegal for the late rebels to move into the extreme headwaters of their rivers. Most Protected Forests were genuine conservation measures, but administrators soon dubbed this one the 'Lanjak–Entimau Political Forest'.[2] Many other examples of more recent control measures might be cited, but they lie beyond the period under immediate consideration, that of the Second Rajah.

The measures which Charles Brooke devised to control migration were often impossible to enforce, thanks to the small scale of his Government, the size and topography of Sarawak, and the persistence of the Ibans. It was all very well to decree that migrants had to obtain the Rajah's permission and carry passes, but in reality no power on earth could prevent overland movement between adjacent watersheds. Enforcement was difficult enough even when those attempting to evade the rule traveled by river, and had to pass under the very nose of the Resident of the Division, as the following 1887 report from Sibu demonstrates:

A good deal of trouble has been given by Ambau, Ampam, and Kendawang, Bukong [Kanowit] Dayaks.

On the fourth, Ambau and Ampam with three boats came in to pay revenue. Hearing that they intended to move on to Tatau with the intention of settling there, I had them up in court and ordered them to return to Bukong and farm upriver this year. I also told them that if they wanted to move next year, they must bring the case before the Honourable the Resident of the Third Division.

Ambau and Ampam promised to return. As I did not trust Ambau I put two watchmen on the Datu Bandar's wharf [in Sibu] to watch Selat Lamangan [a channel in the Rejang River]. At midday on the fifth I heard that Ambau and

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where the Ibans were judged to be relatively 'settled'. This information is from Benedict Sandin, whose own longhouse, at Karangan Pinggai, Paku, Saribas, is about forty years old and only six doors long.

[1] The Rajah wrote in 1903, 'It would be better if the Dayaks had separate houses as the longhouse is not in many ways advantageous, tho' in some ways I will grant it is.' (Charles Brooke to D. Owen, Resident of Bintulu, 10 Feb 1903, SA.) Interestingly enough, D. J. S. Bailey, despite his long battle to control Iban settlement in the upper Batang Lupar, disapproved emphatically of the longhouse in general: see, for example, his remarks in 'Batang Lupar Notes', *SG* 340 (1 May 1894).

[2] The Second and Third Division portions of the Lanjak–Entimau Protected Forest, covering about 450,000 acres, were finally gazetted in 1940 and 1941. 'The scheme is a political one', a senior Forest Department official had written in 1938, 'and it is desired to take advantage of the Forest Order to legalize the protection of the forest in this area as a "buffer" against the encroachment from both sides of the Dayaks of the two Divisions concerned.' (T. Corson memorandum, 14 Feb 1938, Lanjak-Entimau file, Forest Department, Kuching.)

Ampam having been joined by Kendawang with five more boats, had gone down river during the night. The next morning at six a.m. the *L'Aubaine* [a steam launch] with Abang Bunsu on board was ordered in chase, and if it was necessary Abang Bunsu was to go as far as Mukah. On the eighth Abang Bunsu returned in *L'Aubaine* from Oya bringing Ambau and Ampam and their three boats leaving Kendawang and his five boats to follow. On the tenth the [three] boats were towed to Kanowit the people escorted to Bukong and two of their boats were brought back here. Ambau and Ampam were in the meantime shut up in the Fort here. On the [seventeenth] Kendawang and his five boats arrived. On the eighteenth the five boats were towed a short distance upriver, the women and jars having been previously placed on the steamer, and were cast off to make their way to Kanowit, where they were to rejoin their property and be escorted to Bukong by Abang Bunsu, Kendawang in the meantime having been shut up in the fort.

On the twenty-seventh Ambau was fined one and a half pikul, Ampam one pikul and they were released. Ambau had already been fined half a pikul last year by the Honourable the Resident of the Third Division for moving to Tatau without leave. The people have now settled down.[1]

But evidence elsewhere indicates that Ambau, the hero (or villain) of the piece, did move to Tatau eventually, legally or otherwise.[2]

Ambau was not an isolated case. The Ibans became talented at getting where they wanted to go in spite of the Government. One favorite method of evading migration control, still in use in Sarawak today, was to obtain permission to visit relatives who had moved elsewhere, and then gradually settle down with them, eventually building an additional room on the longhouse. A 1928 report from the Second Division states:

Penghulu Unji came down from the Spak [Saribas District] on the seventeenth. He reported that a favourite trick amongst Dayaks in the ulu Layar is to ask leave to go to the Baram or Limbang to work *jelutong* [a variety of wild rubber] or visit relations and on arrival start farming, finally remaining without getting permission through proper channels. He suggests that everyone taking out such passes should be made to put in a pledge of twenty katties [$14.40] and that these pledges should revert to Government should the man not return to his old home in a specified time.[3]

Perhaps the most effective weapon in the entire Iban arsenal was endless pleading and persistence, designed to wear down the patience of Residents,

[1] Falconer Third Division report for July 1887, SA. The cash equivalent of one pikul was $28.80. Abang Bunsu (or Bonsu) was a well-known Malay Native Officer, the brother of Abang Apong of Paku, Saribas. He served for many years in the Third Division, including a long period at Kapit: Sandin, 'Descent of Saribas Malays (and Ibans)', p. 513.

[2] The leader of the Rejang Ibans at Tatau in 1908 was a man named Ambau: Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 110.

[3] Page-Turner Second Division July report, *SG* 899 (1 Aug 1928). The pledge device was, in fact, very old indeed by this date.

who sooner or later might yield and declare a prohibited area open to migration. The same ethic which placed high value on the ability to speak well and motivated the Ibans to make constant use of the Resident's court prompted them to argumentative tactics in this field as well. In any dispute with Government, they were always aware that if they failed with one officer, they might have better luck with his successor. Sheer persistence on the part of the Ibans helps to explain why there has been a tendency for migration controls to be progressively relaxed down through the years.

The success which the Ibans frequently achieved in their efforts to evade or abolish limitations on migration stimulated the same attitudes which were encouraged by the Rajah's upriver policies in general. The Ibans were further conditioned to regard unpopular Government edicts as annoying but transient obstacles, and were therefore disposed to rely on stubborn resistance. Successful evasion, together with continuing Government sponsorship of some migration, helped to keep the nomad ethic vigorously alive among the more conservative communities.

Resulting attitudes have hampered recent efforts to promote new farming techniques as an alternative to migration. In 1961 the officer in charge of a Second Division community development scheme reported, 'The Dayaks of the Lemanak are not interested in development, partly because they do not understand what it means and partly because it obviously runs counter to their only real objective: *pindah* [migration].' The people in question, who were living in poverty on exhausted hill rice land, had just been refused permission to migrate to the Fourth Division, where virgin jungle is still available. The report continued, 'The conclusion they draw is that the Government refuses to permit the only solution to their present position which they can conceive; the [development] scheme is simply a lollipop to keep them happy.'[1]

In summary it is fair to say that while both the Second Brooke Rajah and the British rulers of Sarawak who followed him were usually able to encourage migration, their efforts to control it met with much more limited success. Yet it is entirely likely that had control not been attempted, the expansion of Iban settlement would have been even greater in certain areas than it was. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the upper Rejang valley, the setting for the longest and hardest of all the conflicts over migration, where the Iban-inhabited areas have remained substantially as they were when Charles Brooke died in 1917.[2]

[1] Quotations from 'Lubok Antu (Lemanak) Development Scheme', in *SG* 1243 (30 Sept 1961).

[2] Freeman believes that the Rejang Ibans 'would have extended their influence even more widely' had the Government not forcibly restrained them: *Iban Agriculture*, p. 25 n.

9 The Ibans and Others: Communal Relations under Charles Brooke

ANY visitor to Sarawak who knows something of its past is likely to have learned that Brooke rule was conservative; that the rulers were neither inclined to bring about rapid social change nor equipped with the resources to do so. There is little doubt that in so far as their conscious policy is concerned, the White Rajahs were on the whole conservative. Yet even a short stay in the State should be sufficient to raise some doubts about this generally accepted point of view. For it is an immediately obvious fact that the towns, increasingly the most important features in the human landscape, are the product of conditions resulting from Brooke rule. It is less obvious, but equally true, that nearly every facet of the human settlement pattern, whether urban or rural, was greatly influenced by decades of British government.

The results of Brooke influence are just as apparent in the provinces as they are in Kuching, and they are more strikingly visible in the small towns than anywhere else. The typical Charles Brooke outstation did not grow like Topsy; it developed according to a precise physical pattern. In Simanggang, still the headquarters of the Second Division and one of several towns in Sarawak where recent change has not obscured the pattern, it conveys an impression of neat, disciplined colonial order. The hand of the Resident, running his Division the way a captain runs his ship, or at least trying to, is visible in everything. The configuration of an outstation is rich in political and historic significance, for it conveys better than any written document an idea of the relationship between the three major ethnic groups, Malays, Ibans and Chinese, which came about under Brooke rule. Like the outstations themselves, that relationship was in many ways a product of the Rajah's presence. The socially conservative Brooke regime was responsible for a great deal of human engineering, intentional or otherwise.

Simanggang, already the setting for an earlier chapter, is located on the south bank of the Batang Lupar, about thirty miles from the South China

Sea. The settlement originally centered around Fort Alice, still standing on a small hill just above the broad, tidal waters, in former days the emblem and seat of the Rajah's authority. (Today there is also a more modern Government headquarters in back of Fort Alice, housed in an ordinary office building known as 'the new fort'.) Immediately upstream from the hill on which Fort Alice stands is the Chinese bazaar, formerly a single long row of almost identical shophouses parallel to the river bank. Until very recently, the only real street in town ran between the bustling row of shops and the river bank, where launches from Kuching still load and unload freight.

Within the town complex, on either side of this fort-bazaar nucleus, are the two traditional Malay residential areas, the 'upstream village' (*kampong ulu*) and the 'downstream village' (*kampong ilir*). Today there are many educated Iban civil servants living in Simanggang, but in the Brooke era few if any Ibans lived within the town area, and it was a healthy walk to the nearest longhouse. Upriver, toward the distant hills that form the border with Indonesia, the rural population remains largely Iban, longhouse-dwelling. Downriver, toward the sea, there are some Iban settlements, but many more Malay villages made up of separate houses.

The new pattern of communal relations which resulted from the presence of a European government in Sarawak, and which found partial expression in town shapes such as this, was the product of a kind of change subtler yet more momentous than the adoption of new crops or Christianity. A plural society of unusual diversity and complexity took shape in Sarawak during the Brooke era. Like everything else in the State, the pattern of communal relations which evolved varied greatly from region to region. The present chapter will compare aspects of this evolution in the two main areas of Iban settlement, the Second and Third Divisions, emphasizing the role of Charles Brooke policies (both conscious and unconscious) in what came to pass.

In the Second Division, the pre-Brooke relationship between the Malays and Ibans, already described in an earlier chapter, developed into something quite different, while a wholly new interdependence came into being between the Ibans and a relatively small population of Chinese traders who followed the forts. This latter relationship between Ibans and Chinese traders was broadly typical of contact between Chinese traders and pagan tribesmen of all groups in most areas of Sarawak. In the lower Rejang valley of the Third Division, however, the pattern which took shape was very different. There the original Moslem population was relatively weaker than was the case in the Second Division; the vastly greater number of Chinese immigrants who arrived were predominantly farmers, not traders, and their relations with the

Ibans, who were themselves recent migrants to this area, were from the beginning less harmonious.

The interaction between pagans and Moslems typical of Iban areas prior to Brooke rule was disorderly and imprecise from a Western point of view. The Malay chiefs regarded themselves as both rulers and traders, but in the absence of all security trade was meager. Instead of ruling, the chiefs condoned headhunting raids and did their uncertain best to manipulate the headhunters to their own advantage. As we have seen, in the Second Division there was no distinct demarcation between areas of Malay and Iban settlement. Tiny and impermanent Malay villages were scattered up and down the Batang Lupar from Lubok Antu to the sea, and along both this river and the Saribas there were areas where the two groups lived intermingled with each other. It is unlikely that anything like the present distinction between 'Malay' and 'Iban' existed in the minds of the people themselves.

The presence of the Brookes brought immediate changes in the Malay-Iban relationship in the Second Division. The Malays gathered around the new forts, sometimes at the direct bidding of the Government, and the old-style mixed settlements slowly vanished. Once the hostile, 'piratical' Malay chiefs had been subdued or eliminated, those who remained played a new political role more clearly defined than that of their forefathers. The Brookes gave them limited administrative powers over the pagan Iban population, on the condition that they adhere more or less to Brooke ideas of good government. On balance, their prestige and power among the Ibans was increased. The senior member of a leading Malay family of the Second Division, the descendant of three generations of Native Officers, told the present writer, perhaps exaggerating slightly, 'Before the Rajah came the Malays and Ibans were all equal. There were not enough of us to be above the Ibans: we would have lost our heads. The Rajah lifted the Malays over the Ibans.'

According to the nineteenth-century British liberal ethic, which was in part a reaction to the age of mercantilism and the East India Company, those who governed should not become involved in commerce. Rulers did not soil their hands in trade.[1] This attitude underlay the Brookes' frequently expressed aversion to European capitalism. The same attitude led them to discourage the Malay chiefs incorporated into their new ruling order from

[1] Thus even the Chartered Company in North Borneo remained 'a purely administrative company' (Tregonning, *Under Chartered Company Rule*, p. 52), which recompensed its shareholders from surplus of revenue over expenditure only, and did not itself engage in commerce. (But the Company offered far greater incentives to Western enterprise than the Brookes ever did, guaranteeing, for example, a four percent dividend for six years to all companies formed to plant rubber in North Borneo after 1905, and promising not to levy rubber export duties for fifty years: ibid., p. 89.)

continuing in their old dual role as trader-chiefs. We have seen how the First Rajah deplored this mingling of functions, which amounted to corruption in English eyes; the resulting friction was a major cause of the Malay Plot of 1859–60. But where James had often been powerless to act, Charles gradually began to achieve something.[1] When his old companion and favourite Native Officer Abang Aing of Simanggang died in 1885, the *Sarawak Gazette* cited his career as an example for others to emulate. His obituary stated, 'Abang Aing's whole life has been given up to Government affairs, *he has not striven to enrich himself by trade* nor used his position of influence among the people for his own advantage.'[2]

Not all Malays could be Native Officers. The others were urged to be better and more industrious farmers, but again exhorted not to trade. Addressing the primarily Malay chiefs of the Council Negri in 1883, the Rajah told them to encourage the planting of sago and *padi*, 'as it was a far more regular way of getting a livelihood than the petty trade that was in many instances sought after by those who wish to have the name of Nakodah attached to their names.'[3] The kind of trading which the Malays had traditionally carried on among all the pagan tribes did not seem to the Rajah and his subordinates to be worth encouraging. In their view, it was an itinerant barter trade conducted by peddlers who presumed whenever possible on the ignorance and superstition of their pagan customers, and who, if they possessed any political authority, never failed to use it to drive a better bargain.[4]

The traditional Malay traders could not easily survive competition with the Chinese, who immediately established a bazaar in the shadow of every new Government fort. The outstation Chinese maintained permanent shops; they understood and used cash, although much barter trade continued, and in time they were supported by an organized chain of credit and transport facilities stretching back to Kuching and eventually to Singapore. In contrast to the traditional Malay trader-chiefs, they had no political ambitions with regard to the pagan population. Also unlike the Malays, they usually understood the concept of 'good will', the idea that if the customer got a better deal he would be more likely to return in future. It seems almost certain that the

[1] As always in matters pertaining to Brooke rule, the emphasis should be on 'gradually'. The first Brooke authority to serve at Lio Mato in the Baram headwaters was a Brunei Malay trader, Bua Hassan, employed part-time and termed an 'upriver agent' from 1908 until he was dismissed for corruption in 1919: R. S. Douglas report (no date) in *SG* 509 (16 June 1908); C. D. Adams Fourth Division June report, *SG* 775 (16 Aug 1919).

[2] Emphasis added: *SG* 228 (3 Jan 1885).

[3] Report of Council Negri meeting, 11 Aug 1883, *SG* 212 (1 Sept 1883).

[4] For a lengthy description of Malay trading methods which well reflects the official attitude on this subject, see 'Upper Sadong Notes', *SG* 342 (2 July 1894).

Chinese would have displaced the Malay traders even if the Government had not taken the attitude that Malay talents were better exercised in other fields.

In the Second Division, Malay trade waned slowly but surely, although it never entirely disappeared. By the turn of the century, the Batang Lupar River commerce, which had been wholly in the hands of Malays forty years previously, was dominated by the Chinese traders of Simanggang.[1] A decade later, however, Bailey reported that the Malays of the Krian and Saribas were still actively trading their salt fish both into the interior and up and down the coast.[2] Some of them have continued to own and operate their own small trading boats down to the present day.[3] Elsewhere, Malay peddlers continued to serve as middlemen between the bazaar Chinese and the people of the interior.[4] But in general it is safe to say that in every area of Sarawak, the advent of Brooke rule and the consequent influx of Chinese traders reduced the Malay element to a position of marginal importance in commercial life.[5]

The Government regarded two specialized forms of Malay trading which did survive as distinctly undesirable. The fine art of trading old jars of Chinese origin to Ibans was one activity at which the Moslems continued to excel. Residents were aware that the Ibans were willing to pay large sums of money for certain types of ceramics, and concluded that they were being cheated by Malay 'swindlers', as was sometimes undoubtedly the case.[6] In 1909 a Second Division officer observed:

It is rather extraordinary that Dayaks like the ulu Krians, numbers of whom have travelled long distances, should be so gullible as to believe the statements made by these Malay swindlers. . . . I know of several cases of Dayaks who have lived all

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[1] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 164–5; Kirkpatrick Second Division August report, *SG* 393 (1 Oct 1898).

[2] D. J. S. Bailey, 'Report on Trade in Kalakka and Saribas', *SG* 497 (5 June 1897).

[3] In August 1965 my wife and I traveled from Saratok to Betong in a small motor-launch owned by a Kabong Malay.

[4] For a description of Malay traders operating as middlemen between Chinese and Kayans in the Fourth Division, see Charles Hose, report dated 7 Dec 1891, *SG* 313 (1 Feb 1892).

[5] For example, 'When the Brooke regime first brought peaceful conditions to the Oya River the purchasing and further refining and export of sago was in the hands of Malay traders. Today this is, for practical purposes, entirely in the hands of Chinese dealers.' (Morris, *Report on a Melanau Sago Producing Community*, p. 44.)

[6] Cheated Ibans sometimes prosecuted jar salesmen in court. In a typical Third Division case several Ibans, including one woman, had paid $500 for what turned out to be a worthless (damaged or counterfeit) old jar: 'Indai Engkai *v.* Daud, Entreng and others', 19 April 1876, Sibu CCB. In another case a false jar sold for $246.50 in what the magistrate termed 'a very gross case of deliberate swindling': 'Risa *v.* Munap, Bireng, Salam, Lamit, Mugas and Omar (Bruit people) and Sawing (a Maloh Dayak)', 27 June 1876, Sibu CCB. Jar transactions could be exceedingly complicated, and, as the last case demonstrates, Moslems were in fact by no means the only sharp operators in this field.

their lives in contact with Malays and Chinese, and who have themselves traded jars in other parts of the country, falling easy victims to the Malays.[1]

The habit which some Malays made of selling magic charms to Ibans was even less admirable from the official point of view. Many Residents regarded charm selling as a criminal activity, and automatically punished any Malay caught indulging in this kind of enterprise.[2] They did so partly because they regarded themselves as the protectors of the pagan peoples, even the warlike Ibans, vis-à-vis the more sophisticated Moslems. But the Government attitude on this subject also reflected a lingering fear of uncontrolled Malay political influence over the pagan population, which dated back to the era of the Malay Plot and before. The British officers were certainly aware that claims to magic powers had been one source of Malay influence among the Ibans since the days before Brooke rule. As late as 1908 a Kapuas Malay named Pengiran Omar sent a flurry of excitement through the Ibans of the Second Division by selling invulnerability charms and proclaiming himself to be endowed with supernatural powers. In nearby areas of Dutch Borneo, Omar's followers fought with Government troops. In Sarawak, the normally peaceful and friendly Ibans of the Lingga River, convinced that Omar's charms were proof against bullets, tried to spear the acting Resident of the Second Division when he led a detachment of Sarawak Rangers into their area to investigate rumors of unrest. The Government concluded that the entire episode had been fostered by 'unscrupulous trading Malays for their own profit'.[3]

If relations between the Malays and Ibans altered as a result of Brooke rule, Chinese-Iban relations were necessarily a new phenomenon, since there had been no significant Chinese population in Iban areas before the establishment of Government posts. The Second Division Chinese population consisted largely of traders.[4] They were dependent on the Ibans, who comprised at

[1] Owen Second Division December report, *SG* 524 (16 Jan 1909). For a lively description of Malay 'swindlers' trading jars, see 'Batang Lupar Notes', *SG* 360 (2 Jan 1896). Shortly after the turn of the century, Residents expressed concern when Sarawak Chinese began making new jars which could at first be passed off on the unwary as valuable antiques: see Bailey Second Division April report, *SG* 437 (2 June 1902); Deshon Third Division August and October reports, *SG* 441 and 444 (1 Oct 1902 and 2 Jan 1903), and Deshon letter dated 6 Feb 1903, in *SG* 446 (3 March 1903).

[2] See, for an example, Bailey Second Division January report, *SG* 494 (4 March 1907).

[3] Quotation from Ward Second Division annual report for 1909 in *SGG* (16 Feb 1910). The Pengiran Omar scare was reported in the *Sarawak Gazette*, beginning with an item 'Border Troubles' in *SG* 507 (3 April 1908); see also Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, pp. 124–5.

[4] There were some Hakka Chinese pepper-planters in the Second Division as well, although the number was never very significant until the pepper boom of the 1920s. A colony of Hakka gold-workers lived at Marup (near the later site of Engkilili) from some time late in the reign of

least three-quarters of the total population, for the majority of their business, and as a result the relationship which developed tended to be symbiotic in character. Then as now Chinese-Iban trade was conducted in two ways. The Ibans made periodic visits to the bazaars where the Chinese were located, and the Chinese traveled upriver in floating shops, stopping at longhouses. As we shall see, the boat traders were, in theory, strictly prohibited from stopping for more than a few hours at any one longhouse.

The Chinese-Iban relationship was not entirely harmonious. The Chinese sometimes cheated their customers by using rigged scales to weigh jungle produce,[1] but the Ibans retaliated by mixing earth and other trash into the gutta, and later they learned to practice similar tricks with cultivated rubber as well.[2] The early outstation Chinese were often rough and roistering, the Ibans were hot-tempered, and communal quarrels inevitably occurred. Ibans sometimes protested in the Simanggang court when rowdy shopkeepers pinched the exposed bosoms of their women. After one such incident the magistrate observed, 'More than one complaint has been made by Dayaks of Chinamen behaving thus, and it is disgraceful that a woman cannot walk in the bazaar without being assaulted in an indecent manner by Chinamen.'[3] The Ibans were not above boasting of their prowess in war, and implying that the Chinese were a contemptible, cowardly collection of women, as witnessed by another Simanggang court case of 1895:

Plaintiff [a Chinese] says his sister Indu [*sic*] was sitting on the bench outside [in the walkway of the bazaar] and defendant [an Iban] came along and took hold of her cheek and she complained. He called out to the Defendant and then he [plaintiff] came out and asked him what he meant by that and Defendant admitted having done so and then proceeded to say how the Chinese had no heads [human head trophies] and weren't brave and make statements about the Chinese women in the bazaar. . . .[4]

For their part, the Chinese would have been more than human had they

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James Brooke, and there were other Hakkas working *belian* (ironwood) for many years in the Krian. The traders of Simanggang, Betong and the other more important outstations were predominantly Teochews with a lesser number of Hokkiens: for recent information on dialect groups among the Simanggang Chinese, see T'ien, *The Chinese of Sarawak*, pp. 50–1.

[1] In order to combat fraud the Government issued a set of scales (*daching*) and a *gantang* measure to every Iban *penghulu* (together with a uniform shirt and a Sarawak flag). Residents frequently checked the scales used by Chinese traders and imposed heavy fines when they detected skulduggery.

[2] Spenser St John wrote that mutual Chinese-Iban cheating along these lines was common even before he left Sarawak in 1861: *Rajah Brooke*, p. 215.

[3] 'Tani, fortman, *v.* Uning, Chinaman', 14 May 1887, Simanggang CCB, SA.

[4] 'Beh Bo Gi *v.* Utik', 5 Feb 1895, Betong CCB, SA.

not regarded the Ibans as bloodthirsty barbarians. There was a serious political consideration behind this attitude. Everyone knew that the penalty for secret society leadership was death, and that the Rajah's chief weapon against any large-scale Chinese subversion would be, as it had been in 1857, the use of Iban irregulars. After learning that a secret society was active in the Krian area of the Second Division in 1906, Charles Brooke sent an officer to the scene with instructions to 'give out that the Dayaks will have permission to kill any Chinese that are found holding meetings in either day or night in future'.[1]

Despite such elements of friction and hostility, there is far more evidence of mutual advantage in the relationship between the bazaar traders and their upcountry customers. From an early period it was the common practice, as it still is, for Ibans to live over or in back of the Chinese shop where they traded on their periodic visits to the bazaar.[2] Once a bazaar was well established, an Iban would normally do business with the same shopkeeper on every visit, but in the early days the Chinese often competed furiously for pagan trade. Sibu court records from the 1870s include several cases of Chinese and Malay traders mobbing boats arriving from upriver in their eagerness to exchange salt for Iban rice.[3]

Competition of this nature was typical of early outstation situations when newly located traders were still bidding for regular customers among a tribal population to whom the very concept of a permanently located market was still entirely novel. O. F. Ricketts, the first Resident of Trusan, worked incessantly to persuade the Muruts to bring in jungle produce to trade. In 1890 he recorded in his diary:

Last night there seemed to be a disturbance in the bazaar and on going down I found that about fifty Muruts from the Bah had come down and those who had brought them down were dragging them different ways to different shops with their gutta. Some lower river Murut generally heads each party and he gets a commission from the Chinamen on the amount of gutta taken to their shops so that naturally there is some disturbance on the arrival of an upcountry party and there is also

[1] Charles Brooke to John [J. E. A.] Lewis, 6 April 1906, SA. The Order proclaiming the death penalty for the leader of a 'secret hueh', dated 14 May 1870, is in *Orders which have not since been cancelled . . . 1863 to 1890*, p. 114; it was enforced on several occasions, including the one in question when the Rajah ordered eight Chinese leaders executed: see instructions dated June 1906 in his letter book, SA; also the lead article in *SG* 486 (2 July 1906).

[2] Tan Sri Temenggong Jugah, Malaysia's Federal Minister for Sarawak Affairs, and the highest ranking older generation leader of the Third Division Ibans, today maintains an up-to-date pine-panelled suite over a shop in the Chinese bazaar at Kapit. In this case he owns the shop, but it is still Chinese-operated.

[3] 'Government *v.* Lye Choon and Ayong', 13 Jan 1879; 'Government *v.* Inche Lanang, Kandan, Mumein, Mataim and Tanjoh', 3 Nov 1877, both in Sibu CCB, SA.

great competition between the Chinamen. Although there was a good deal of noise there was no quarrelling or fighting.[1]

Ricketts goes on to note that it was the first visit of these particular Muruts to the station; the Trusan had been acquired by Sarawak only six years previously.

The more the Chinese depended on jungle produce, the more anxious they were for a large and friendly pagan population. In one district of the Fifth Division, they petitioned the Rajah to allow Iban migration.[2] On a Third Division river, the Balingian, the growth of a Chinese bazaar was a direct result of Iban migration.[3] When several Kenyah chiefs in the Baram were fined $3000 for murdering a party of Second Division Ibans in 1894, most of the fine was immediately paid by the Chinese shopkeepers of Marudi, who undoubtedly extracted gradual repayment in jungle produce from the Kenyahs.[4] But in the Second Division fourteen years later, a Resident refused to allow Chinese who were planning to set up shops at Lubok Antu to pay the fines of the recently rebellious upper Batang Lupar Iban leaders:

I have warned the Chinese that this will not be allowed on any account. Their object in paying the fines for the Ulu Ais is to receive the patronage of the particular chief whose fine they pay. This way of doing things besides being obviously wrong leads to ill feeling.[5]

Chronic indebtedness to Chinese traders, so common a feature of life among many societies in Southeast Asia, has always been most unusual among Ibans. Part of the explanation may be traced to the fact that, by unwritten law, Brooke courts generally refused to recognize any debt summons issued by a Chinese trader against an Iban or a member of most other pagan tribes. As the Rajah explained in 1890, 'About the Dayaks and other aborigines, we do not allow traders to give them credit, or if they do, they cannot take out summons to sue them in our courts – this is the rule but some ex-

[1] Entry for 11 Jan 1890, 'Mr Ricketts Trusan Diary', SA. The Bah country, in the deep interior of the Fifth Division at the headwaters of the Limbang and Trusan Rivers, is noted for its sophisticated Kelabit–Murut wet rice agriculture.

[2] See p. 275, n. 2.

[3] See p. 274, n. 4.

[4] 'The Rajah *v.* Taman Bulan and others', 25 Feb 1895, Baram Criminal CCB, SA; see also p. 269, n. 2. The Government subsequently allotted $1200 of the fine levied on the Kenyahs to the relatives of the murdered Ibans in the Second Division, but was careful to deduct and repay from this compensation money sums which the Chinese traders of Marudi had advanced to the Ibans before their fatal venture into the interior: notation dated 25 March 1895, Simanggang CCB, SA.

[5] H. L. Owen Second Division April report, *SG* 532 (17 May 1909).

ceptions are made.'[1] In 1908 he turned down a petition from Chinese traders in Lawas:

His Highness in refusing the application said that the Muruts were a jungle people whom it would always be difficult to serve with a summons, and he was averse to any order to issue summons with fees to either Dayaks or Muruts.[2]

As this passage suggests, the rule was intended less to protect the tribal peoples than to discourage competing Chinese traders from recklessly advancing large sums of money to remote interior customers, and then relying on the understaffed Government to recover their money for them. In 1903 the Rajah ordered that certain settled Punans who lived not far from the Bintulu bazaar could, contrary to the rule, be sued for debt. As he explained it,

The order is intended to prevent the Chinese making advances in goods &c. and there is impossibility in sending summons in the far inland country and which would scarcely ever be answered. The Officer of the station has perfect right to call on Dayaks owing Chinese or others where they visit a station to pay any just debts without any summons at all. The Punans of Pandan, I think quite come within the reach of the bazaar for summons at the same time it will be a mistake to in any way encourage the Chinese making advances to these people, this they often do in the most heedless manner and deserve to lose their money, so in future you can serve summons to the near Punans.[3]

In many other cases common sense was the criterion in allowing exceptions to the rule. It was not enforced in the Saribas, at least not in the case of the more progressive and accessible Ibans of that district. Moreover one Iban could issue a debt summons against another. On at least one occasion a Chinese trader tried to evade the rule by taking advantage of this fact, providing the head of a longhouse with the necessary summons fee to bring suit against one of his followers who owed the Chinese money.[4] In 1907 a Chinese trader of Sebuyau in the Second Division appealed to the Rajah Muda after the Resident had refused to allow his suit against some Ibans who had accepted an advance payment of money, rice and fish to work wild rubber, and then sold the rubber elsewhere. Vyner reversed the Resident's decision:

I am perfectly aware that Dayaks cannot be sued for debt, but this appears, if Sun

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[1] Charles Brooke to Governor Creagh of North Borneo, 10 Sept 1890, SA.

[2] Kirkpatrick Fifth Division May report, *SG* 511 (July 1908). A summons fee was normally charged in the Court of Requests.

[3] Charles Brooke to [D. A.] Owen, 10 Feb 1903, SA.

[4] Lawrence Fourth Division December report, *SG* 601 (16 April 1912).

Cheang's statement is correct, to be more than a mere case of debt. It seems more like a case of taking money under false pretences.[1]

The unwritten regulation was not applied either to Malays or to down-river Melanaus, whether Moslem or pagan, and the Melanaus in particular showed an early and persistent tendency to become badly indebted to the Chinese.[2] But it seems certain that this tendency resulted as much from cultural characteristics as it did from Government policy. Malay and Melanau settlements were normally close to shophouses, which naturally tempted people to live on credit. Both groups were willing to run up large debts to finance expensive weddings and funerals. In contrast, most of the Ibans lived in areas remote from the nearest bazaar. They normally earned cash by collecting jungle produce before they invested in prestige property such as old jars and brassware. They were naturally inclined toward frugal, almost parsimonious behavior, and had they not been it seems unlikely that all the rules and regulations on earth would have prevented them from going into debt. The *Sarawak Gazette* commented in 1922:

It is gratifying to know that the Sea Dayaks with few exceptions have never run into debt to Chinese and Malay traders. This may be partly on account of an unwritten law (we have never been able to find it in writing) forbidding magistrates to serve debt summons on Dayaks. In these days many Dayaks, especially those of Saribas and Krian, do considerable trading with Chinese and others and many of them are far from stupid in their transactions – in fact they are quite the equal of the Chinese in trading methods. On the whole, however, the Dayak does not even wish to buy on credit: he is a careful man and something of a miser. He very rarely repudiates a debt and is at times remarkably honest in his money dealings.[3]

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[1] Vyner Brooke to the Resident, Second Division [Bailey], 18 Nov 1907, SA.

[2] In 1904 the officer in charge at Mukah complained that 'Every Melanau in the Mukah and Oya district is almost without exception more or less heavily in debt. . . . If the Melanaus could be put on the same footing as the Dayaks and their credit cried down, it would benefit them greatly, and the Chinese also and would produce a much healthier state of trade.' (Bettington Third Division (Mukah) January report, *SG* 458 (3 March 1904).) For a description of Melanau indebtedness to Chinese traders in recent times, see Morris, *Report on a Melanau Sago Producing Community*, pp. 10, 44–7.

[3] 'The Court of Requests', *SG* 832 (2 Jan 1923). Many authors have commented on Iban frugality. Freeman writes in connection with land transactions, 'By and large, the Iban are a straight-handed people, and even between close kin there is sometimes considerable niggardliness over land.' (*Iban Agriculture*, p. 24.) A missionary remarked of the Balau Ibans of Banting in 1858, 'They are industrious, frugal and accumulative, and, were they not so poor, might even be reckoned stingy; but as each knows that, if from the failure of his crop, or from any other unavoidable cause, he should fall into debt, it will accumulate so rapidly, from the high rate of interest, that he will probably never get free from it, the carefulness and frugality which they display cannot be regarded than otherwise as legitimate.' (Quoted in Roth, *Natives of Sarawak*, 1 82. See also Gomes, *Seventeen Years Among the Sea Dyaks*, p. 63.)

Indeed the shoe was frequently on the other foot: Chinese indebtedness to Ibans provoked more administrative concern than the reverse. At an early period Ibans who accumulated considerable sums of money from the sale of wild rubber and rattans began to lend their savings to outstation merchants Commenting on the Iban country in general, the *Sarawak Gazette* reported in 1872,

> Trade is very good notwithstanding all the various brawls, the harvest on the whole promises to be above the average, and the Dayaks without doubt are amassing riches, money fast taking the place of jars, gongs &c. Some of them who possess their 500 or 600 dollars have even put it out at interest among the Chinese.[1]

In 1885 the Rajah felt it necessary to issue an Order requiring that all loans from Ibans to Chinese be registered with the Government, to protect the Ibans from defaulters.[2] In 1902, a year when the price of gutta percha reached an all-time high,[3] the Resident of the Third Division registered sixty such loans amounting to over $10,000. The total sum of money which the shopkeepers of Kapit owed to the still far from pacified upper Rejang Ibans at the same period was double that figure.[4] Over the years, transactions of this kind became entirely customary, so much so that when the Third Rajah inaugurated a postal savings scheme in 1926, an official report complained of the competition encountered in bidding for Iban business: 'The temptation to Dayaks to "invest" their savings with Chinese at a high rate of interest is at present too great to allow them to take the safer course of investing at 3 percent.'[5]

By 1900 it was not uncommon for Third Division Iban leaders to own bazaar shophouses.[6] Since the Ibans never took part in the operation of the business, which remained entirely in the hands of the Chinese, 'owning' a

[1] *SG* 38 (1 April 1872). The 'brawls' referred to were rebellious activities on the part of upriver Ibans in both the Second and Third Divisions, frequent throughout this period.

[2] 'It having been found in some of the Outstations that the Chinese traders, taking advantage of the ignorance of the Dayaks, are in the habit of swindling them out of considerable sums of money received under the promise of paying an interest on money deposited with them:

'It is now made known that any Chinaman or Kling [Indian] trader that receives such deposits or loans from Dayaks without it having been reported, both by creditor and debtor, to the officer of Court of Requests, or the Officer in charge of the District, will be liable to term of imprisonment or heavy penalty.' (Order dated 27 June 1885, *Orders which have not since been cancelled . . . 1863 to 1890*, pp. 21–2.)

[3] B. E. Smythies, 'History of Forestry in Sarawak', *SG* 1243 (30 Sept 1961).

[4] Deshon Third Division annual report for 1902, *SG* 446 (3 March 1903); 'The Rejang', *SG* 448 (2 May 1903).

[5] Third Division annual report for 1926, *SGG* (1 Sept 1926).

[6] See the reports cited in n. 4 above. Penghulu Dalam Munan of Sibu owned shops at both Sibu and Kapit.

shop in this manner was really no more than a form of loan, with rental substituted for interest and the shophouse serving as security. In the Second Division, where the Ibans did not enjoy such close proximity to an enormous hinterland rich in jungle produce, there is less evidence of cash wealth on such a scale at so early a period. But with the advent of cultivated rubber the Saribas Ibans in particular caught up with and passed their migrated brethren in the Rejang. In the boom years during and following World War I, they too began to invest in Chinese shops, until nearly half the shops in Betong Bazaar, and more than half of those in some smaller outstations, such as Spaoh on the Paku, were Iban-owned. This trend, which was always restricted to the Saribas, has not continued since World War II, but in 1966 more than twenty of the sixty-six shophouses in Betong were still wholly or partly owned by Ibans.[1]

Wherever a few Chinese traders lived among a predominantly Iban population there was much intermarriage, especially since in Sarawak as elsewhere the Chinese frequently came to the country as single men. Such marriages were not always stable. The Chinese sometimes returned to China without their Iban wives. More often, perhaps, the Iban wife tired of living Chinese style, once the initial attraction of the bazaar had subsided. There is not a great deal of physical difference between an Iban longhouse, which is split into family apartments, and a rickety, unpainted row of Chinese outstation shops; the one is hardly more substantial in construction or communal in ownership than the other. The difference between Iban and Chinese social values is more considerable. Most Chinese in early outstation Sarawak were hardly strict Confucianists, but the transition from Iban society, where the woman is equal if not superior, to the Chinese world of feminine subordination could never have been easy.

In the event of separation there was the eternal problem of who was to keep the children, and such problems tended to land in the lap of the Resident. The Rajah's policy on this subject went through an interesting transformation over time. In 1866 Charles Brooke or one of his subordinates ordered that the offspring of a Chinese who married an Iban ('Dayak') belonged to the father. But if the mother returned to the longhouse, the father had to pay her compensation of ten reals ($7.20) per child. Moreover, he could not take the child out of the country, perhaps back to China, without the permission

[1] There were no Iban-owned shops in Betong as of 1916: 'Enquiry into burning of Betong bazaar', 19 March 1916, Betong CCB. According to Benedict Sandin, four Ibans lost shops when the Betong bazaar burned down again in 1926; the great period of Iban investment in Betong shops came in the five years prior to World War II. Information on current shophouse ownership is from Abang Naruddin bin Sarkawi, Saribas District Officer in 1966, and from Benedict Sandin.

of the Government.[1] Almost thirty years later the Rajah apparently had second thoughts about the justice of this regulation. In the preamble to a new Order issued in 1893 he seemed to imply that the old one had never really existed:

> Whereas it has been brought to my notice that it has been the *custom* in some of the Outstations on the Coast to grant Chinese the custody of their illegitimate children by native women against the wishes of the mothers. . . .[2]

The new Order went on to state that in future a native mother who deserted her husband for any reason whatever would retain custody of the children; the courts would entertain no claims from Chinese fathers.

Because the Brooke regime never at any period officially recognized mixed-blood status, it is impossible to estimate from written records the exact extent of intermarriage between Chinese and Ibans.[3] Any child of mixed descent had to be either one thing or the other; either Chinese or Iban; he could not be 'Sino-Dayak'.[4] This attitude was in part no more than recognition of the fact that in Sarawak the distinctions between Malay, Chinese and Iban were cultural, not biological. A man's way of life, language and religion, not his physical ancestry, determined his ethnic affiliation. But the Rajah's refusal to recognize mixed or indeterminate status was also part of a broader inclination to define as clearly as possible the distinctions between cultural communities.

The most striking evidence of this inclination lies in the fact that it was a crime under another unwritten Brooke law for a Chinese or a Malay to live

[1] The only copy of this Order, dated 24 Feb 1866, is in 'Sarawak Government Orders, 1860–1890', SA. The text is in *jawi* script, which was very unusual for Brooke records at any period, and does not specify any issuing authority. It was almost certainly Charles Brooke, however; he was the effective ruler of Sarawak at the time. A later court case enforcing the regulation referred to it as 'the order of H.H. the Rajah of 1866': 'Ah Ni *v.* Daun (female)', 10 Feb 1879, Simanggang CCB; for another example of its enforcement, see 'Ah Tun *v.* Padang and Jumaat,' no exact date, 1880, Simanggang CCB, SA.

[2] Emphasis added: Order dated 31 May 1893, *Orders which have not since been cancelled . . . 1863 to 1890*, p. 148; *SG* 329 (1 June 1893). This Order did not apply to a small minority, mostly Christians, who were married before a magistrate according to a civil marriage regulation.

[3] A report of the Rajah's visit to Simanggang in July 1907 refers to the large number of half-Iban children in the Simanggang Bazaar, nearly all of whom, it was observed, grew up speaking Chinese: *SG* 499 (5 Aug 1907). Benedict Sandin estimates that at least one-half of the Betong Chinese traders are partially Iban in ancestry.

[4] By way of contrast, in Sabah a mixed blood 'Sino-native' or *peranakan* community, predominantly the offspring of the Kadazans and the Chinese, has long been officially recognized. This community is today of great political and social significance, tending to act as a bridge between the Chinese and the Kadazans, who are (like the Ibans) the largest single native group in their State. The complete absence of a similarly recognized group in Sarawak may well be regarded as one of the less fortunate heritages of Brooke rule.

among Ibans, or for a Chinese to live among Malays. Since Ibans who lived among Chinese or Malays almost always assumed the culture of their adopted community, the reverse of these situations was rarely if ever at issue. The most frequent transgressors of this regulation, and the ones at whom it was primarily aimed, were Chinese traders who attempted to desert the bazaar and establish themselves in some longhouse upriver, frequently taking Iban wives.

By so doing, a trader gained an obvious advantage over his competitors downriver. However court records indicate that the motives which impelled Chinese to take this step were often a good deal more complex. People who were in trouble at home, or in debt, or chafing under parental tyranny, might merely be trying to escape from it all, in much the same way that troubled children on the American frontier longed to run away and live among the Indians, and sometimes did. But whatever the motives, Residents strongly disapproved of such behavior. They were afraid that, in the event of any quarrel, a Chinese in such a situation was likely to lose his head in the most literal manner. They also objected because unless traders lived near the fort it was impossible to control the salt trade, one of the few effective techniques they could employ to bring upriver Iban rebels to heel. Furthermore it was assumed that if the Chinese were allowed to set up shops beyond the ken of Government, they would be able to cheat the Ibans to their hearts' content.

The wording of court cases in the Sarawak Archives indicates that 'living amongst Dayaks' first became a formal, finable offense in the late 1870s.[1] From the administration of D. J. S. Bailey (1890–1908) onwards, offenders in the Second Division were normally jailed for up to six months, when they were caught. In remote areas, where Residents sometimes appeared only at long intervals, transgressors could avoid notice for years. An officer who visited Belaga on the upper Rejang, Third Division, in 1909, convicted fifteen Chinese and Malay traders for living with the people. He observed that the huts which they had set up near longhouses had been 'destroyed before on more than one occasion' by a visiting Resident.[2]

The traders who were apprehended often argued that they had married 'Dayak' women, and that they intended to become 'Dayaks' themselves. This was an acceptable defense, but it was extremely difficult to persuade magistrates that such claims were genuine. As far as they were concerned, Iban wives were merely an excuse to set up shop in a longhouse. A case

[1] 'Ah Joon is fined $20 for neglecting to comply with the order of Government directing all Chinamen living in Dayak houses to return to the bazaar.' ('Government *v.* Ah'Joon', 15 June 1878, Sibu CCB, SA.) Among the earliest similar cases on record from the Second Division are 'Government *v.* Ah Soi', 3 Dec 1878, Simanggang CCB; 'Government *v.* Ah Thia', 1 Sept 1879, Betong CCB, SA.

[2] Baring-Gould Third Division February report, *SG* 529 (1 April 1909).

appealed to Rajah Muda Vyner Brooke in 1906 elicited the following Solomonian judgment:

I have given permission to 'Abas' to live with Dayaks provided he becomes a Dayak and conforms to Dayak customs. Abas must keep his hair short [this was in the days of the Chinese queue] and wear rings in his ears and in other ways keep to the dress worn by Dayaks. Abas must be warned that he is not allowed to trade and that if he reverts to Chinese habits will be imprisoned for the usual six months.[1]

'You must be one thing or the other' was a recurring theme in such cases. In 1916 a Chinese defendant was warned against spending even a single night at the longhouse of his Iban wife, who herself received the following admonition: 'If she wishes to follow defendant she must not bring him to live in the Dayak house. She must decide once for all whether she will follow Chinese or Dayak custom'.[2] A similar verdict was recorded in an unusual 1893 case from the First Division, in which a Land Dayak wished to become Chinese in order to avoid payment of the two dollars per year exemption tax:

Kayo, a Dayak, who was charged with evading the payment of exemption tax and stated that he had become a Chinaman, was sentenced to one month's imprisonment and was ordered to have his pigtail cut off and become a Dayak again.[3]

The same note was sounded in the case of a Malay sentenced to six months at hard labor for living among Dayaks:

The defendant is brought up as he is charged with living in a Dayak house – he being a Malay.

He denies it saying he lived in a *langkau* [a small farming hut built apart from the longhouse].

P.S. [Police Sergeant] Samsuddin has reported that he was living in a *langkau tempok* [joined on] to another *langkau* of Dayaks.

The Malay chiefs are much annoyed at this man living and eating with Dayaks. If he wishes to become a Dayak of course he can but he must do one thing or the other. He has been *ajar*-ed [warned] before.

The Resident sentences defendant to six months' hard labour.[4]

The cultural complications in such cases could be extensive, as the following 1913 record indicates:

Defendant's father and mother were both Dayaks of Lemanak. His father died

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[1] Vyner Brooke to D. J. S. Bailey, 13 March 1907, SA.

[2] 'Government *v.* Goh Khai Sok', 11 April 1916, Simanggang CCB, SA.

[3] 'Police Court' report, *SG* 330 (1 July 1893).

[4] 'Government *v.* Mansur', 26 March 1906, Simanggang CCB, SA. Malay and Iban words such as *ajar* were often anglicized into the administrative jargon in this fashion.

when he was quite a child – and then his mother married a Chinaman. Shortly after his mother died – but he still lived with the Chinese at Nanga Lemanak – and also at Sribau and used to wear a pig-tail. He has now gone back to Dayak and is living at Grugu's [longhouse] at Sungai Tiga.

The Native Officers consider that undoubtedly defendant was following the Chinese custom until quite lately – and must be considered as practically a Chinaman – and had no right to go back to his Dayak house without making it clear beforehand.

Defendant cut off his pigtail when the other Chinese here did so – on hearing of the revolution in China. He only went to live in a Dayak house two months ago. The usual penalty of a Chinaman living in Dayak houses, or Malay likewise, is six months' imprisonment – but considering that defendant's parents were both Dayaks and he has really only taken on the Chinese customs and gone back before making it clear which he wanted to follow – he is now sentenced to three months' imprisonment.[1]

The need of a small-scale government to achieve administrative convenience was the most important single cause of the official tendency to frown on cultural mingling. The Rajah's men, required to rule huge areas, were compelled to minimize their own involvement in local affairs. They knew that each group within the complex population possessed its own customary procedures and authorities for settling disputes. But quarrels which crossed communal lines could only be settled by appealing to an impartial authority, which meant the Government. The Rajah even disapproved of intermingling between the members of different pagan tribes, most particularly when the naturally truculent Ibans were one party. In what may have been his most unenforceable Order, he forbade Ibans to marry Kayan women without official permission.[2] In the Baram, Charles Hose segregated Ibans who had taken local wives into separate longhouse communities. A visiting anthropologist, A. C. Haddon, explained this policy in 1901:

Hose has found from past experience that it is a very unsatisfactory arrangement for foreigners like the Ibans or Malohs, or even more nearly allied peoples like the Melanaus, to marry into and live amongst up-river tribes. Sooner or later trouble arises through a lack of solidarity between the aliens and the original inhabitants, cliques are formed, and the foreigner sides with the disaffected and the irresponsible men, such as are to be found in every community. Whenever possible he solves the difficulty by making the parties of these marriages live together far from the wife's relations, and he has caused them to build a longhouse at Tanjong Upah on the

[1] 'Government *v.* Ang Kom', 6 Nov 1913, Simanggang CCB, SA. The end of the Manchu Dynasty came in 1911, occasioning the removal of Chinese queues even at places as remote as the mouth of the Lemanak River.

[2] Order dated 2 July 1906, *SG* 487 (2 Aug 1906).

Baram, about eight miles above Claudetown [Marudi] where, being isolated, they can work out their own salvation but at the same time they are within easy reach of headquarters.[1]

Other Residents followed a similar policy, and mixed longhouses of Ibans married to others are still in existence in various districts of northeastern Sarawak.

As was so often the case with Brooke policies, administrative convenience came to be reinforced by moral justifications. Officers felt strongly that each group should be true to its own customs, and not dilute or betray them by assuming a different cultural status. 'Living amongst Dayaks' was not only administratively inconvenient to the Government; it was improper as well. In 1893 a Resident reported from Sadong:

Some young Chinamen came before me with the request that they might be allowed to live and pay tax as Dayaks, they were dressed in Dayak costume and had married Dayak wives. I had already heard of this and had been asked by the Chinese to send these men back to their relations, and apart from this request I do not consider that Chinese living amongst the Dayaks in this manner is to the benefit of the Dayak community and I therefore ordered them to return and live amongst their own people. . . .[2]

Residents tended to view themselves as the guardians of Malay *adat* in particular; the upper-class Malays were also rulers and were expected more than any others to know how to behave properly. There was a distinct note of horror in an 1896 verdict against a Kabong Malay who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, only to be apprehended living in a longhouse of pork-eating infidels: 'The Court has never before heard of a Haji living in a Dayak longhouse!'[3] Ten years later a Batang Lupar Malay who had married an Iban and moved upriver was ordered to return, with the following injunction: 'If he wants to farm he will farm with the Malays and live in the kampong *properly* under penalty of imprisonment.'[4]

A Second Division Resident who was a particular admirer of Malay custom, A. B. Ward, in 1915 persuaded the Rajah to authorize a local order prohibiting the Kabong Malays from practicing a pagan healing ritual which 'had grown from its original medicinal objects into depraved dances and gaieties'. Ward reported that respectable Malays welcomed the new regulation.[5] On another occasion the same Resident expelled a lower Batang Lupar

[1] Haddon, *Head-hunters, Black, White and Brown*, p. 357.
[2] Maxwell First Division (Sadong) report, *SG* 329 (1 June 1893).
[3] 'Umi *v.* Haji Kria', 12 Jan 1896, Betong CCB, SA.
[4] Emphasis added: 'Government *v.* Alut', 6 Jan 1906, Simanggang CCB, SA.
[5] Ward Second Division reports for April 1914 and July 1915 (quotation is from the latter) in

Malay chief from the Division for refusing to begin the fast month (*bulan puasa*) on the exact day appointed by the Malay Datos of Kuching, who in Ward's opinion should have been regarded as the supreme Sarawak authorities on Moslem affairs. This ruling drew a rebuff from Rajah Muda Vyner, who was at this time administering the country in the absence of his father. 'It might interest you to know', he wrote Ward,

> there are two sets of Mohammedans here in Kuching [a reference to the existence of a Malay Sunni and an Indian Shi'ite community]. Each are allowed their religious differences, cannot the Stirau people be allowed the same latitude? Do you think I or any Englishman would be heavily fined in a civil court and banished from England if we chose to keep Christmas Day on the 24th instead of the 25th December?[1]

The Resident's action may have been extreme in this instance, but his attitude was broadly typical of Brooke administrative attitudes in general. Officers from the Rajah downwards generally preferred to regard the different cultural groups as discrete, well-defined entities; they had strong ideas about the character and behavior suitable for each, and they continually, if not always successfully, tried to make people live in areas that suited the convenience of the Government. Chinese traders belonged in the bazaar, Malays belonged in their *kampongs*, and, as we have seen, the government of the upriver Ibans was one long battle to keep those restless subjects in areas where the Resident might hope to control them.

The net result of this blend of conscious policy and unconscious attitude was to stimulate, with all the enormous weight of official prestige, awareness of ethnic affiliations; to encourage people to think more in communal terms and less in terms of geographic location, which had been the traditional focus of loyalties in the atomized and chaotic world of pre-Brooke Sarawak. In the final years of the postwar British colonial regime, when both independence and the inevitable development of communal political competition were looming on the horizon, Government officers looked back with some nostalgia to the halcyon days of the Rajahs, when all peoples had lived in mutual tolerance under the umbrella of Brooke justice. There was some justification

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SG 652 (16 May 1914) and 674 (16 Sept 1915). *Berantu* and *berbayoh* ceremonies, bearing a strong resemblance to similar pagan Melanau rituals, were commonly reported among the Second Division Malays, one of many indications that these Moslems are probably descended largely from pagan Melanau stock.

[1] Quotation from Vyner Brooke to A. B. Ward, 23 May 1912, SA; see also Vyner Brooke to Ward, 4 June 1912, SA. Ward's action against the offending Malay chief is reported in 'Government Native Court *v.* Teh Sait and Haji Dullah', 28 Sept and 6 Nov 1911, Simanggang CCB, SA.

for this popular view of the past, but it is also fair to say that a Government which viewed people in terms of ethnic groups and encouraged them to do the same naturally if unwittingly stimulated the communalization of tensions and disputes of all kinds. There is ample evidence of communal conflict between the Ibans, who are the particular concern of this book, and the members of the other major groups during the reign of Charles Brooke. Owing largely to different patterns of Chinese immigration, which were a direct result of the Rajah's policies, the significant lines of tension between the Ibans and others varied in the Second and Third Divisions.

As we have seen, the Second Division Chinese were mainly traders, and their relationship with the Ibans was in general similar to that which existed between Chinese traders and Ibans all over Sarawak, already described above. But there was also a Malay population of farmers and fishermen in the lower reaches of most Second Division rivers. It has already been mentioned that from a very early period the Rajah tried, for political reasons, to separate the Malays from the Ibans, and that the old mixed settlement areas typical of the pre-Brooke 'piracy' era passed out of existence.

Despite the continuous migration of Ibans away from the Second Division, communal land disputes between Malays and Ibans were frequent during the reign of the Second Rajah. Thanks partly to the Iban love of litigation, such disputes frequently dragged on for generations. One of the better documented cases involved the people of Spaoh, the Malay village located at the junction of the Paku and Saribas Rivers, and the Ibans who lived further up the Paku. The Spaoh Malays cultivated a primitive variety of swamp *padi*, without benefit of plows or draft animals, on river-bank land along the Paku, which was periodically inundated by strong tidal fluctuations. The Paku Ibans practiced the identical form of agriculture, which has been more fully described in an earlier chapter, but unlike the Malays they also grew hill rice on the higher ground inland from the banks of the river. The dispute, which began shortly after 1870 and was not finally settled until 1916, concerned both river-bank swamp *padi* lands and rights to certain fruit trees which the forefathers of the Spaoh Malays, the companions of the Paku Ibans in pre-Brooke coastal raiding, had planted in upriver areas long before the Rajah persuaded or compelled them all to move down to the river-mouth settlement at Spaoh.[1]

The Government solution was to give the Ibans rights to all the land and fruit trees above a specified boundary on the Paku River, and to all the interior high ground along the entire course of the river. The Malays were

[1] For this resettlement, see ch. 3. The village at the mouth of the Paku was earlier known as Boling.

restricted to the banks of the Paku River below the boundary set, and they were not allowed to farm more than one hundred yards inland from the river. Although the land was not surveyed, boundary pegs separating the Malay and Iban areas were set as early as 1882.[1] With the advent of cultivated rubber after 1910, the Paku decision took on a new significance, for the new cash crop would thrive only on the high ground inland, from which the Spaoh Malays had been excluded. In later years, when the Paku Ibans were growing wealthy on rubber, the Spaoh Malays were frequently reduced to tapping Iban trees on shares.

Similar disputes occurred in many other downriver areas of the Second Division, virtually wherever Malays and Ibans lived in proximity to each other. The Government inevitably responded to such conflict by attempting to fix a boundary between the quarreling communities.[2] 'Good fences make good neighbors' was the official philosophy. Boundaries were also set to eliminate litigation between different groups of Ibans, and indeed there were far more inter-Iban land cases than there were cases between Ibans and Malays.[3] But the inter-Iban boundaries were not as significant in the long run because they did not emphasize and dramatize a division between communities which differed in religion, language and world-view, as the Malay-Iban boundaries did.

In the lower Rejang valley of the Third Division, the other major Iban

[1] The first record of this endless dispute is in 'Abang Apong *v.* Emparak, Melina, Pandat, Bakir [*et al.*]', 7 Oct 1873, Betong CCB, and it is frequently mentioned in Second Division monthly reports and court cases thereafter. A history of the entire controversy is given in 'Abang Amban (on behalf of Spaoh Malays) *v.* Nunong, Enju, Indit, Blayong, Runggah, Damat and Jabot', 21 March 1916, Betong CCB, SA.

[2] For a similar settlement of a Malay-Iban dispute in the Batang Lupar, see Bailey Second Division August report, *SG* 309 (1 Oct 1891).

[3] An unpublished Sarawak Museum analysis of Betong (Saribas) court cases covering the years 1866–80 and 1884–1916, for which records survive, gives the following figures for land and related cases:

Chinese *v.* Chinese	11
Malay *v.* Malay	132
Iban *v.* Iban	453
Chinese *v.* Malay	—
Chinese *v.* Iban	9
Malay *v.* Iban	45
Government *v.* Chinese	1
Government *v.* Malay	1
Government *v.* Iban	6
	658

The vast majority of the inter-Iban cases were between individuals, but some involved disputes between longhouse communities. During the same period the Betong court heard a total of 3062 cases of all kinds.

province of Sarawak, the Ibans became involved in a more aggravated variety of communal conflict over land as a result of Chinese immigration sponsored by Charles Brooke. The lower Rejang was originally inhabited by a scattered population of Melanaus, both Moslem and pagan, who, as already related, were joined by Ibans migrating from the Second Division after about 1840. In their attitude toward the land both the Melanaus and the Ibans differed fundamentally from the Chinese immigrants, who were farmers rather than traders. This discrepancy led to tension even at a time when it seemed inconceivable to the British rulers that there was not plenty of room for all concerned.

For years Charles Brooke had tried to attract Chinese farmers to Sarawak, at first with scant success.[1] In 1898, however, an organized group of Hakka immigrants settled in the First Division, a region already long populated by other Hakkas.[2] In 1901 and 1902 two groups of Chinese settlers, one of Christian Foochows and one of unconverted Cantonese, arrived in the lower Rejang under agreements between the Sarawak Government and private Chinese contractors. The Rajah intended that each group should serve as the nucleus for a growing colony of *padi*-planters.[3]

The Foochow immigrants were destined to prosper and multiply with particular vigor in the years ahead, but they had a difficult time at first. They had left China in fear of religious persecution at the time of the Boxer up-

[1] In 1863, only six years after the Chinese rebellion which nearly killed him, the First Rajah was warily considering a 'Chinese immigration scheme'. James Brooke letter dated 29 April 1863 in Rutter, *Rajah Brooke and Baroness Burdett Coutts*, p. 189. The following year the Government advertised in the Singapore press, offering land on liberal terms to attract Chinese gambir and pepper-planters: G. T. Ricketts report dated 25 Sept 1864, FO 12/32A; Sarawak land regulations dated 11 June 1863, in FO 12/37. Early in 1867 Charles Brooke wrote, 'We are going to reduce the price of the cooked opium in the country and this if report be true will be the means of bringing many hundreds perhaps thousands of people into the country. We want population to turn our waste land into shape and create bustle and industry. I never saw the country so still as it is now and this does not agree with me. . . . [I want] to see the jungle falling right and left and people settled over what are now lonely wastes and turning them into cultivated lands.' (Entry for 21 Feb 1867, 'Extract from the Diary of Charles Brooke'.)

[2] For the Hakka immigration, see the lead article, *SG* 406 (1 Nov 1899); Charles Brooke to 'The Reverend Fathers' of the Catholic Mission, 15 Nov 1899; Richard Outram, 'The Chinese', in Harrisson, *The Peoples of Sarawak*, p. 117 (which wrongly gives the date as 1900).

Runciman implies that the Rajah had succeeded in attracting Chinese settlers to the Rejang by 1880 (*The White Rajahs*, p. 208) but it is certain that no large organized group arrived before the Foochows in 1901.

[3] Contrary to popular belief in Sarawak today, the contracts did not absolutely require the immigrants to grow rice. In the case of the Foochows the Government agreed to 'place no restrictions on the immigrants with respect to their planting or the sale of their products', but added, 'It is understood by the contractors that the primary object in introducing these immigrants is the cultivation of rice.' (Memorandum of Agreement, 9 July 1900, 'Agreement Book', II, SA.) The Cantonese contract, dated 5 March 1901, is in the same volume.

rising. Once they were in Sarawak, the Government allotted them lands on Sungai Merah, near Sibu, but their early rice crops were all failures and many of them fell victim to fever. The new Borneo environment was strange and frightening:

> Grass was as tall as a man's height and jungle surrounded them in all directions, and what they saw were natives (Dayaks) with knotted hair on top of their heads and tattoo covered bodies. They found nobody to whom they would be able to confide their worry and hope.[1]

By the end of 1903 only 673 Foochows remained alive in Sarawak out of almost 1000 who had arrived during the previous two years.[2]

The Foochows had been converted to Methodism by American missionaries in China, and the American Methodist Episcopal Mission in Malaya had been in touch with them even before their arrival in Sarawak. The Mission was alarmed to discover that in the absence of any Methodist clergy in the Rejang, they were being lured away by the blandishments of the Roman Catholics, who had been established in the area since 1882. As a result, in 1904 the Americans sent a young man named James M. Hoover to take charge of this flock without a shepherd. Two years later the Chinese proprietor of the colony, who was badly in debt to the Rajah, gave up his difficult post. Hoover assumed temporal as well as spiritual powers over the settlement, and from this time onwards the Rajah regarded him as the Capitan China of the Rejang Foochows.[3]

Under Hoover's vigorous administration the colony began to prosper. He built a rice mill, pioneered the introduction of launch service on the Rejang, and supervised the construction of numerous schools and churches. At an early period he encouraged his people to take up the cultivation of rubber. By 1910, in spite of the Rajah's original intention that the Foochows should grow rice, they were well on the way to becoming a colony of prosperous rubber smallholders.

Rubber prices soared upwards in the years before World War I, and Chinese immigrants began to flock into the Rejang, swelling the number already there. There was a definite rhythm to the immigration. When rubber

[1] Chiang Liu, 'Chinese Pioneers, A.D. 1900. The New Foochow Settlement of Sarawak', *SMJ* VI 6 (Dec 1955) 538. For early Foochow rice crop failures, see J. M. Hoover, 'Cultivation of Rice in the Rejang', *SG* 770 (2 June, 1919). Another good account of the earliest days of the settlement is Lin Wen Tsung, 'The first ten years of New Foochow Colony', *The Sarawak Teacher*, II 2 (1966) 13–14, 28.

[2] Vyner Brooke Third Division annual report for 1903 in *SG* 461 (4 June 1904).

[3] Frank T. Cartwright, *Tuan Hoover of Borneo* (New York, 1938) pp. 62–8; *Minutes of the Twelfth Session of the Malaysia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 24–9 Feb 1904 (Singapore, 1904).

prices were high, the Chinese came in large numbers; when prices fell, the newcomers poured back to China. In good times new arrivals could tap rubber on shares until they had saved enough money to become planters themselves, or they could borrow funds. But when rubber prices slumped, the cost of other commodities, notably rice, remained high; credit was not easily available, and the immigrants faced starvation.[1]

Much to the annoyance of the Government, even the well-established Chinese smallholders could not easily grow rice to feed themselves during the lean years, since their land was covered with rubber trees. So at such times they borrowed swamp *padi* lands from the local Ibans and Melanaus, sometimes with and sometimes without the knowledge and assistance of the administration. One Resident, J. Baring-Gould, arranged such land loans for the Foochows as early as the spring of 1909:

> The Malays and Dayaks are, in most cases, willing to lend their land for one season only but are naturally not inclined to part with it altogether, whereas the Chinese consider that one crop of paddy does not compensate them for the labour they expend on ploughing and irrigation.[2]

Baring-Gould observed that the Foochows were unable or unwilling to clear and farm land covered with virgin jungle, which was still in plentiful supply. Instead they preferred low-lying areas already stripped of big trees by the less intensive operations of the natives, who, here as in the Second Division, practiced a form of swamp *padi* cultivation without plows or draft animals, a kind of semi-shifting cultivation adapted to a moist terrain.[3]

Government officers and missionaries alike rapidly discovered that the pioneer Foochows were not only good Christians and good farmers; they were stubborn, strong-willed and acquisitive in the bargain, even in comparison with other Chinese. In later decades these qualities enabled the Foochows to become the masters of an ever-expanding lower Rejang economy, completely overshadowing Cantonese, Henghuas and other dialect groups. But the Foochow blend of innate Chinese energy with the Protestant Ethic, if that is what it was, also led them into constant conflict with their

[1] Incomplete and probably unreliable Rejang Chinese immigration figures were published from 1915 onwards. Prior to 1926 they were included in Third Division annual reports, published in the *Sarawak Government Gazette* from 1908 until 1926. For the years 1925 to 1930 figures were published in *Supplement to Sarawak Government Gazette, Annual Statistics and Accounts*, and after that date in the annual *Sarawak Administration Report*.

[2] Baring-Gould Third Division May report, *SG* 534 (16 June 1909).

[3] Baring-Gould wrote that there were 'thousands of acres of old jungle which only require clearing, and as they appear unable to do this work themselves they have only to procure Dayak labour, which is comparatively cheap, for the purpose.' (Ibid.)

neighbors from an early date, particularly since their strong-willed behavior was combined with a preference for land already cleared by the efforts of others. The first settlers were hardly off the boat in 1901 before they were complaining of insufficient land and recklessly cutting down Iban fruit trees. The Resident denied their complaint, and accused them of 'pure obstinacy' and constant encroachment on the land of others.[1] Two years later, in 1903, Rajah Muda Vyner Brooke, then administering the Division, advised against the importation of any more Chinese to the Rejang, 'for without being of any profit to the Government they are a source of constant trouble to their neighbors the Dayaks and Melanaus'.[2]

Rajah Charles never shared the point of view here expressed by his son, although he became well aware of a growing land problem between the Foochows and others. 'I think some are encroaching too much on the Dayak farming land, which may cause trouble if not checked in time', he wrote in 1908.[3] Unless the problem was solved, he warned, 'I shall not be surprised to hear that the Foochows will meet with some rough treatment from either Malays or Dayaks or both. It is of the greatest importance.'[4] But a year later, in 1909, he was negotiating with a Shanghai firm for the importation of yet more Chinese to the Rejang:

> I have a great desire that Chinese should be introduced for the culture of rice and in time make this large extent of country export instead of importing that commodity – about fifteen to twenty miles of the lower Rejang River would be excellent land for this purpose without any other population to disturb them.[5]

Despite the problems which the Rejang Chinese colony generated, there was never any doubt in his mind of its value or of the superiority of Chinese agriculture to the Iban variety:

> The Chinese are always increasing and the Government has to be careful that they do not encroach too much on the Dayaks which would cause jealousy: however, there is ample room for both races. The Dayaks scarcely cultivate at all except for their rice fields, which do not yield more than will feed themselves. . . . Anyone who takes the trouble to study the difference of cultivation between Dayaks and Chinese will easily arrive at the conclusion that one Chinese garden is of more value to the country than fifty Dayak holdings, the former occupying permanently a

[1] Cunynghame Third Division July report, *SG* 428 (2 Sept 1901).
[2] Vyner Brooke Third Division annual report for 1903, *SG* 461 (4 June 1904).
[3] Charles Brooke to Baring-Gould, 24 July 1908, SA.
[4] Charles Brooke to Baring-Gould, 2 Aug 1908, SA.
[5] Charles Brooke to Wallen and Co. of Shanghai, 16 Aug 1909, SA. This negotiation apparently came to nothing.

plot of land from one to two acres in extent on which the gardener and his family live and it is hoped will continue to do so for many generations.[1]

The Rajah remained convinced that there was really plenty of room for all, and that any land problem could be solved by setting aside definite areas within which the Foochows and other colonists should live, and from which the Ibans and Melanaus should be excluded. In 1909, after consultation with Bishop Oldham of the Methodist Mission, he set aside twelve miles of river bank on either side of the Rejang below Sibu for this purpose, and promised to survey the grant to eliminate land disputes in future.[2] Years later Hoover described the circumstances of this grant:

From the very beginning land disputes arose between the colonists and the natives so that something had to be done to define the boundaries of the colony. On one of the late Rajah's [Charles Brooke's] visits he called into the local fort the head men of the Chinese, Malays and Dayaks, and said to them: 'This colony is here. We will not discuss whether it is a good thing or not, but since it is here, and there is abundant land for everybody in this district, I am going to set aside certain areas for the Foochows, out of which they will not be allowed to settle, and into which no others will be allowed to go. All Dayaks, Malays and others now living in this area must move out at once.' He then had a large map hung on the wall, and he himself with a blue pencil marked points on the river bank showing the extent of the grants.[3]

In the same year that he made the grant, 1909, the Rajah announced new land regulations for the lower Rejang area. Ibans, Malays, and Melanaus were prohibited from selling land held under customary tenure to the Chinese. They first had to obtain title, which involved paying a fee of fifty cents per acre and an annual quit rent of ten cents per acre thereafter. The new regulations observed that 'Malays and Dayaks should occupy land apart from what is apportioned for the occupation of the Chinese. It is desirable to separate races as much as possible to prevent difficulties or quarrels arising in future.' It was specifically left to the discretion of the Resident of the Third

[1] 'Rejang River', *SG* 667 (2 Jan 1915). This unsigned article is placed immediately after the text of the Rajah's Christmas Day speech in Sibu, which is reproduced in Appendix A. It echoes that speech in many respects and the style strongly suggests that Charles Brooke was the author; in any event I believe it may be accepted as an expression of his views.

[2] *Eighteenth Session, Methodist Conference* (Singapore, 1910). In a later report Hoover said the 1909 grant had extended 'ten miles on both sides of the Rejang River' rather than twelve miles: *Twenty-Fifth Session, Methodist Conferance* (Singapore, 1917). Chiang Liu wrongly gives the date of the grant as 1906: 'Chinese Pioneers', p. 14. Bishop Oldham reported to the 1910 Conference that on the same trip to Sarawak he had persuaded the Rajah to cancel the remaining $25,000 still owed to the Government by the Foochow colony.

[3] *Thirty-first Session, Methodist Conference* (Singapore, 1923). Also quoted in Cartwright, *Tuan Hoover of Borneo*, as a 'letter' from Hoover, with no date: pp. 113–14.

Division to decide just how far from Sibu the new rules were to be enforced. He was merely advised gradually to extend the new system up and down the river.[1]

Six years later, however, the Resident complained that the result of this policy had been the opposite of that intended:

> The disposal of land in the Rejang is still the cause of considerable difficulty. In 1909 certain portions of land were made over to the Chinese colonists and boundaries fixed in order to safeguard the natives against further encroachment. Malays, Seduans and others were also permitted grants for their holding in order to further safeguard them. The result has been the reverse of what was hoped. The natives have planted up the land leased to them, in a dilatory fashion, and are now prepared to sell their land to Chinese for any sums of money so as to get a little ready cash to squander. Another day there will be complaints from these people that all the land has been taken up by the Chinese.[2]

The Rajah then announced that certain lands on Pulau Selalu, an island in the Rejang below Sibu, which Moslem Melanaus had sold to the Chinese, would be reclaimed by the Government, and the money paid refunded to the Chinese. It was announced that 'No Malays or others will in future be allowed to dispose of their holdings without first obtaining special permission.'[3] But land disputes between natives and Foochows continued to plague the Resident of the Third Division, who reported in 1918:

> There were several disputes over the land between the Dayaks and Foochows. The chief cause of the trouble seems to be that *kampar* [wandering] Dayaks sell the land to the Chinese without any reference to the real owners. Local notices have been issued to stop this.[4]

The Government continued to welcome Chinese immigrants, many of them relatives of the original colonists. Except during the sharp rubber price slump of 1921–2, they tended to arrive in ever increasing numbers in the years after World War I. By 1922 the Foochow concession on the Rejang had been expanded well beyond the original 1909 limits. Besides the twelve miles on either side of the Rejang below Sibu, it now included an additional eight miles on the south bank, covering the entire distance from Sibu to Binatang, plus ten miles on the Sarikei River. An additional group of Methodist Henghua colonists who had arrived in 1913 were located on a

[1] 'Instructions to the Resident of Rejang with Reference to the Land Regulations of that District', *SGG* (16 Aug 1909).

[2] Baring-Gould Third Division June report, *SG* 671 (2 Aug 1915).

[3] *SG* 672 (16 Aug 1915).

[4] Aplin Third Division February report, *SG* 742 (2 April 1918). For the definition of *kampar*, see p. 229, n. 4.

five-mile grant on the Igan, while the Cantonese immigrants of 1902 occupied lands along the Rejang upstream from Sibu.[1]

The Sibu administration continued to operate according to the informal, minimal methods of Charles Brooke, even after his death in 1917. As late as 1915 the entire Government of Sarawak's largest and most rapidly developing Division was still housed entirely in the old ironwood fort, bearing spear marks left by an Iban attack of 1870. The Resident was in theory still the king of all he surveyed, subordinate only to God and the Rajah, but already the job was becoming too much for him. In no single area was this more evident than in land affairs. In 1920 the entire Third Division land staff consisted of one semi-trained Malay surveyor and a few laborers. The Resident complained that they were completely insufficient for the job:

> Owing to the lack of a proper Land Department at Sibu, with consequently no surveys, land grants have been issued promiscuously in the past.
>
> Apparently any Chinese can grab any area they please plant it up any way they please and then apply for a grant which is given them. The consequence is that granted land is dotted all over the country, while along the river banks the granted land is continuous with no reserve for roads, and the owners of such land are in a position to hold up all the jungle inland.[2]

An officer sent to examine the situation in 1922 reported that 'Certain areas of land were allotted to the Foochows for planting many years ago but the boundaries of these are not known nor has any survey been made for them.'[3] As a result of this report, a full time British land officer was finally assigned to the Division in 1923 and an attempt was initiated to survey the Chinese grants.[4] The next year, however, the Resident wrote that the new land officer had gone home on furlough and no one had replaced him: 'A very large amount of work requires doing but the staff to do it does not exist. The lack of such a staff not only hampers but actually prevents the development of this district.'[5]

In 1925, a boom year for rubber, the tide of Chinese immigration reached flood proportions. At least 4000 new arrivals, most of them Foochows, dis-

[1] *Thirty-first Session, Methodist Conference* (Singapore, 1923). In this report Hoover observed that 'As these concessions have no back boundary, there is no way of estimating the area.' The Methodist Henghuas were the last organized group of Chinese settlers to come to Sarawak: a sketch of the agreement under which they arrived, dated 30 June 1911, is given in 'His Highness the Rajah's Order Book', III, SA.

[2] D. A. Owen Third Division September report, *SG* 804 (1 Nov 1920).

[3] Report of H. B. Crocker, Superintendent of Lands, in Third Division annual report for 1922, *SGG* (17 Feb 1923).

[4] Third Division annual report for 1923, *SGG* (16 April 1924).

[5] D. A. Owen Third Division August report, *SG* 854 (3 Nov 1924).

embarked at the Sibu wharf.[1] The land situation soon got completely out of control. The Government had just authorized another large addition to the Foochow reserve, extending up the Binatang tributary of the Rejang, as yet completely unsurveyed. Without even inspecting the area, the Divisional authorities proceeded to grant temporary titles to the incoming Chinese. An official report later explained with remarkable candor:

The Foochow Chinese are pouring into the country by every boat, and this, coupled with the high price of rubber, made it certain that, if titles of some sort were not issued the land would be taken up without titles of any sort. It seemed, also, that as these newcomers were being allowed to enter the country it would have been illogical to have refused them facilities to earn their living in the only way open to them, viz., on the land, even had such refusal been practicable.

The advantage[s] of such an issue were that Government at least knows roughly the location of these people, in addition to which a contribution to the revenues is ensured.[2]

Three thousand one hundred temporary titles, known as 'Occupation Tickets' or 'O.T.s' were issued during the year, of which 40 percent were for 'newly opened land'.[3]

Unfortunately much of the proposed Binatang grant turned out to be land recently farmed by Ibans (*temuda*) and still claimed by them. The newly arrived Chinese were hardly to blame for what followed. To them, an Iban hill rice field several years old and covered with young jungle no doubt looked like forest primeval, nor were they sufficiently expert to distinguish a valuable fruit tree from any other. They hacked down all the trees in sight to prepare the ground for rubber planting. The Binatang Ibans reacted violently. In the Tulai and Mador tributaries they looted Chinese shops and attacked the Foochows, wounding at least three of them.[4]

An officer who visited the scene of the disturbances was amazed at what he found:

As I came out of this jungle I was astonished at the sight which met my eyes: one huge area of low hills absolutely cleared of all vegetation with occasional small

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[1] According to Hoover, 'About 4000 came during the year. Perhaps 2000 have returned to China, but at least three-quarters of these are hoping to return with wives, families and relations.' (*Thirty-fourth Session, Methodist Conference* (Singapore, 1926).) The number was large in relation to the Chinese already in the Rejang. A year later the total population of the Foochow colony was estimated at 15,000: Third Division annual report for 1926, *SGG* (1 Sept 1927). For a vivid description of immigrants arriving, see 'Sibu Notes', *SG* 877 (1 Oct 1926).

[2] Third Division annual report for 1925, *SGG* (16 Aug 1926). [3] Ibid.

[4] Archer Third Division August report, *SG* 865 (1 Oct 1925). Archer commented, 'It is possible that this affair, however much one may deplore persons taking the law into their own hands, will have a very salutary effect on the Foochows who appear, in cases, to have broken every Dayak custom.'

patches of jungle. All this land is old farming land and the Dayaks with me pointed out several old [long]house sites and fruit groves, many of the latter having been destroyed by the Foochow's clearing and burning off. I walked through area after area of cleared land, the greater part of which has not yet been planted, with here and there Foochow houses stretching as far as the banks of the S. [Sungei] Mador. In one case a Foochow felled jungle within a few yards of a newly planted stretch of Dayak *padi*. This man has been told to stop all further clearing immediately.[1]

He blamed the situation on Foochow ignorance of the Iban language and farming methods:

The whole of the trouble in this district with the Foochows is that they don't know the language or customs of the Dayaks: they come in and see old padi land which is free from all large timber and very easily cleared and naturally settle there They do not seem to be able to distinguish between fruit trees and ordinary trees.[2]

Rajah Vyner was away in England, but his brother, Tuan Muda Bertram Brooke, made a hurried trip to the area. The Government hastily suspended the sale of all firearms, and dismissed Lani, the Iban *penghulu* of Binatang, for his part in the disorders.[3] Foochow immigration was suspended until the Chinese reserves could be delineated, and additional surveyors were assigned to this task.[4] The Binatang Ibans eventually received about $1300 in compensation for their destroyed *padi* lands and fruit trees, and there were no further serious disturbances.[5]

Early in 1926 Reverend Hoover related the events of the past year to his fellow missionaries in Singapore:

Last year I told you we had been given an extension on the Bintang [*sic*] River. This turned out to be the finest country yet opened up to us. We went in with such a rush that a new situation developed in Sarawak. The old fellows with money, grubstaked the new fellows on most generous terms, and they whacked in – jungle fell as though a tornado had passed through. The Government had experienced nothing of the kind. I was not prepared for such a development. The Dayaks were scared plumb stiff. First, they complained. Then they did everything they knew to hold up the slaughter of their jungle. When the Tuan Muda came to Sibu, the Dayaks came in crowds and implored him to save them. The situation got so tense that the only thing left was to bring the Chinese out till boundaries could be set,

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[1] Le Sueur Third Division September–October report, *SG* 867 (1 Dec 1925).
[2] Ibid.
[3] Third Division November report, *SG* 868 (2 Jan 1926).
[4] Third Division January report, *SG* 870 (1 March 1926).
[5] Aplin Third Division May report, *SG* 875 (2 Aug 1926).

and some limit put to the clearings. I am not surprised that the Dayaks were frightened – in this short time an area was cleared that looked like the beginnings of an Empire – over 500,000 rubber trees planted just as a sample of what can be done if one only has a chance.

The Rajah himself came to see us a few weeks ago, adjustments were made, several rivers were laid down as boundaries, and we are moving in again.[1]

The Binatang incident of 1925 was only one spectacular symptom of a more basic problem, that of accommodating large numbers of Chinese farmers in a country of shifting cultivators. The Second Rajah had clearly underestimated the political and administrative difficulties which this would entail. That he should have done so is not altogether surprising. There is every reason to believe that he was obsessed with his dream of a bustling Chinese province in the lower Rejang. Moreover, even today, when the population of Sarawak has greatly increased, it is easy to view the seemingly almost empty landscape and conclude that there must still be more than enough land for all. (Three-quarters of the surface area of the State is still covered with virgin jungle, according to the 1962 Annual Report.)[2] There would indeed be plenty of land, if it were all arable and accessible, or if the people were completely mobile, or if they were all educated to farm more intensively. But as a matter of practical fact there is frequently not enough usable land for all, and since World War II this effective shortage has been a growing cause of political tension.[3] The Binatang incident and the events leading up to it indicate that this tension is not, as popularly supposed, wholly a recent phenomenon. Nor can the problem be blamed entirely on 'anti-Chinese' land policies pursued by the Brookes and their postwar British Colonial successors, since it clearly antedated those policies.

Indeed the timing of the Binatang incident suggests that it may have influenced the later development of Sarawak land law, or, at very least, that

[1] *Thirty-fourth Session, Methodist Conference* (Singapore, 1926). The following year Hoover reported that over a million rubber trees had been set out in the Binatang grant: *Thirty-fifth Session, Methodist Conference* (Singapore, 1927).

Hoover's reference to 'Bintang' results from the fact that during Rajah Vyner's recent absence in England his brother, Tuan Muda Bertram, had granted a petition from the citizens of Binatang (which means 'animal' in Malay) to change the name of their town to Bintang (which means 'star'). Unfortunately the Rajah had not been consulted about the change, and when he returned from England he peremptorily revoked it. (Both changes were reported in *SG* 865 (2 Nov 1925) and *SG* 870 (1 March 1926) respectively.) Veteran Brooke officers cite this incident as an example of the new ruler's occasionally recurring jealousy of his younger brother, who was much more like their father Charles in personality, and had always been obviously favored by him. For further discussion of this point, see ch. 10.

[2] Sarawak, *Annual Report*, 1962 (Kuching, 1963) p. 49.

[3] For a review of the problem as it has developed in recent years, see Sarawak, *Report of the Land Committee, 1962* (Kuching, 1963), esp. pp. 1–8.

it dramatized a situation which made a change in emphasis inevitable. In several areas the practices of Charles Brooke, never embodied in a comprehensive land code, were reversed in the later and more detailed laws enacted under his son and successor, Rajah Vyner (1917–46). We have seen that Charles believed in avoiding trouble by keeping different cultural groups from mingling, but in his eagerness to promote Chinese immigration he stressed the demarcation of land reserves for the Chinese, rather than reserves for the natives. He worried as much, if not more, about protecting the colonists in strange and hostile new surroundings as he did about protecting the Ibans and Melanaus. What constantly concerned him was European encroachment, not Chinese encroachment,[1] and he never legally defined the term 'native' to mean non-Chinese, as his successor did.

By 1925 the situation which confronted Rajah Vyner had changed radically. There was no longer any need to worry about nurturing infant colonies: the entire lower Rejang was fast becoming a Chinese province, as Charles had intended that it should. When serious conflict over land developed, the Sarawak Government faced three possible alternatives. It could halt or severely curtail Chinese immigration; it could establish administrative safeguards to protect the non-Chinese; or it could undertake the enormous task of teaching the natives to practice more intensive, settled forms of agri-

[1] In 1915 Rajah Charles made a famous speech before the Council Negri, warning the people of the country not to let strangers deprive them of their land: 'He drew their attention to others that may appear after his time with soft and smiling countenances to deprive them of what solemnly and truly he considered to be their right, and that is *The Land*. It is their inheritance on which their *Daging Darah*, flesh and blood exists, the source of their self existence, their *harta pusaka* which if once lost, no amount of money could recover. It is this cultivation of the land by themselves or by those who live in the country that is so important. Cultivation by those who are strangers who carry the value of the products out of the country to enrich shareholders is undesirable. . . . Unless this advice is followed the inhabitants will lose their birthright which will be taken from them by strangers and speculators who will become masters and owners while they themselves the people of the soil will be thrown aside and become coolies and outcasts, and proofs of what he stated may be produced in countries not far distant. . . . After his life the future would remain with them to be independent and free citizens or be a humbled and inferior class without pride in themselves or in their race. They must choose between the two, the owner or master on one side or the dependent and cooly on the other. It is for them to see that whoever rules this land, that the land is not granted away to strangers. This he repeated is the danger after he had passed away.' (*SGG* (1 Sept 1915).)

This speech is sometimes understood in Sarawak today as an expression of warning to the 'natives' against future Chinese encroachment. But a careful reading of the text indicates that the Second Rajah was worried only about European capitalists. His other pronouncements during the period of the pre-World War I rubber boom, which greatly stimulated his fears for the future, make it absolutely clear that the Chinese smallholders of Sarawak, far from being the objects of his anxiety, were among those whom he was determined to safeguard against Western speculators. See particularly his article, 'Sale of Rubber Plantations' and the Order of 1910, both cited on p. 138, n. 1.

culture, which would enable them both to compete with the Chinese and to become an equally valuable economic asset to the State. The Government did not wish to crimp revenues and development by taking the first course,[1] and it had neither the resources nor the inclination to attempt the latter. So it chose the middle road and erected administrative barriers to protect the natives from the Chinese. Given the number of Chinese who had already arrived and the natural rate of Chinese increase, this policy probably would have been adopted even had immigration been completely curtailed.

From the late 1920s onwards the emphasis in a growing volume of Sarawak land regulations shifted away from reserves for the Chinese toward reserves for the natives. A system of Malay Reservations had been authorized in Malaya in 1913, and this precedent may have influenced the Brooke regime, although there is no hard evidence of this.[2] The change in emphasis was made most explicit in two major land laws passed in 1931 and 1933, which with slight modification have remained the basis of Sarawak land law down to the present day (1966). Under these laws and attendant regulations the entire area of the State was divided into 'Native Area Land', within which no non-native could in future buy land, and 'Mixed Zone Land', within which land could be owned by either natives or Chinese, and where some but not all land held by natives under title could be sold to Chinese.[3] The

[1] The Sarawak Government continued to welcome Chinese immigrants until World War II, but with more caution following the events described in this chapter. A little more than a year after the Binatang incident the first detailed immigration law was enacted: Order L–3 (Labour Protection), *SGG* (10 Sept 1927). A North Borneo official who was later seconded to serve in Sarawak described Brooke immigration policy under this legislation: 'Sarawak is a land of smallholders and is not faced by the problems caused by the closure of large places of employment. Consequently there have been no acute unemployment difficulties and no need to repatriate Chinese, except decrepits. Chinese immigration is restricted, and no Chinese labourer is allowed to enter the country unless a responsible Chinese resident will guarantee his repatriation expenses should he become a charge on government within a year.' (C. F. C. Macaskie, 'Notes on a visit to Kuching in November, 1931', 2 Dec 1931, CO 874/1060.) But the basic reason for the slackening of Chinese immigration was the effect of the world depression on rubber prices after 1929.

[2] The central Secretariat files which might have contained such evidence were apparently destroyed during the Japanese occupation of Kuching: see the Note on Sources. For the date of the first Malay Reservations enactment, see J. Kennedy, *A History of Malaya* (London, 1962) p. 205.

[3] 'The Land Rules – 1933', issued pursuant to Order L–2 (Land) 1931, in *SGG* (1 Dec 1933); also published separately as *The Land Rules, 1933* (Kuching, 1933). Under these rules 'Native Area Land' was subdivided into 'Dayak Areas' and 'Native Reserves'. Land in the former category, within which no surveys were to be conducted and no titles of any sort issued, corresponded, with some major differences, to what has more recently been known as 'Interior Area Land', while the 'Native Reserves' category corresponded roughly to the modern 'Native Area Land'. The meaning of 'Mixed Zone Land' has not changed in any major respect down to the present (1966).

The two important land laws mentioned were Order L–2 (Land) of 1931 in T. Stirling Boyd,

term 'native' was for the first time defined in law to mean, in effect, non-Chinese, the meaning which it has retained ever since.[1] The change in policy was succinctly summed up in the 1933 Land Rules, which explained the reason for the new dichotomy of Native Area and Mixed Zone: 'It has been decided, in order to safeguard better the interests of the natives, to lay off areas in which no *alien* will be granted any rights to land.'[2]

The Binatang incident of 1925 is interesting not only for its probable influence on the later development of Sarawak land policy, but also because it suggests how much more difficult was the relationship between Chinese farmers and natives of all classes than was the relationship between Chinese traders and Ibans, described earlier. The Chinese farmer-native relationship lacked almost all the elements of reciprocity which were such a striking feature of the trader-Iban relationship. The Foochow immigrant on his river-bank farm was in no way motivated toward assimilation. Unlike the trader, he came to Sarawak as a member of an increasingly vigorous, self-contained community, with its own schools, churches and political structure. Like one

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The Laws of Sarawak, 1927–1935 ('The Red Book') (London, 1936) pp. 223–65; and Order L–7 (Land Settlement) of 1933, ibid., pp. 285–305. For a discussion of the development of Sarawak land law, an important topic which could well be the subject of a separate study, see Sarawak, *Report of the Land Committee, 1962*; Richards, *Land Law and Adat*.

[1] Schedule B to Order L–2 (Land) of 1931 reads: 'Races which are now considered to be indigenous to the State of Sarawak and therefore natives within the meaning of this Order. Bukitans, Bisayahs, Dusuns, Dayaks (Sea), Dayaks (Land), Kadayans, Kelabits, Kayans, Kenyahs (including Sabups and Sipengs), Kajangs (including Sekapans, Kejamans, Lahanans, Punans, Tanjongs and Kanowits), Lugats, Lisums, Malays, Melanaus, Muruts, Penans, Sians, Tagals, Tabuns, Ukits. And any admixture thereof.' (Boyd, *Laws of Sarawak* ('The Red Book') p. 258.) This definition has remained in force ever since: see Appendix D, 'Legal Meaning of the Term "Native" ', in *Report of the Commission of Enquiry*, North Borneo and Sarawak, 1962 (Cmnd 1794) (London, 1962) p. 88.

Prior to 1931 'native' was legally a term of nationality, not ethnic status, and could be applied to many ethnic Chinese. Thus the first comprehensive land law in the history of Sarawak, enacted under Rajah Vyner in 1920, merely defined 'native' as 'a natural born subject of His Highness the Rajah', which specifically included any Chinese born in the State, as well as anyone successfully applying for a certificate of naturalization: see below, p. 324. (Sarawak nationality and naturalization regulations pertinent at the time of the 1920 land law are quoted in the Order dated 10 May 1900, *Orders Issued by H.H. the Rajah of Sarawak* (Singapore, 1923) pp. 274–5. This law was not materially altered until 1934, when Order N–2 (Sarawak Nationality and Naturalization) for the first time denied subject status to Chinese born in Sarawak to non-subject parents: *SGG* (16 July 1934).)

Moreover, under the 1920 land law the term 'native', however defined, did not have its later significance. There was no division of land into Native Area and Mixed Zone, and 'natives' were privileged only in so far as they alone were allowed to hold title to three-acre plots of land under certain conditions without paying any rent, so-called *Pesaka* holdings. For the 1920 land order, see 'Land Regulations, Order No. VIII, 1920', in *Orders Issued by H.H. the Rajah of Sarawak* (Singapore, 1923), esp. pp. 185, 189, 196.

[2] 'The Land Rules – 1933', *SGG* (1 Dec 1933). Emphasis in original.

cell in a growing coral reef, he lived in a colony, surrounded by his own kind, not in an isolated bazaar surrounded by natives. He was inclined to import his wife from China, rather than to marry a local Iban or Melanau. Unlike the trader, he was not dependent on the good will of native customers. There was no reason for him to learn the Iban or Malay language; he did not do so, and in general has not down to this day.

In comparison with the outstation trader, the Chinese agricultural colonist was economically, socially and even sexually self-sufficient. Unlike the trader, who was by definition involved in a constant exchange, he gave nothing to the natives and demanded little from them in return. But the one thing that he did require was land, and here, in the case of the Ibans in particular, he struck a very sensitive nerve.

The root of the problem lay in the utterly incompatible attitudes toward land ingrained in the two cultures. To the Chinese, coming from a country where land was supremely scarce, it was a commodity to be cherished, developed with labor and capital, and never relinquished. This is a point of view alien to almost all the cultures of Borneo, where (except when the Chinese are farming) agriculture is nearly always semi-nomadic, and where land as such is a commodity with little or no intrinsic value, regarded by the shifting cultivator much as a fisherman regards the sea. It is a point of view not only alien but antithetical to the traditional Iban outlook, for the Ibans are the most emphatically semi-nomadic farmers in the country, and their whole culture glorifies migration. But this did not mean that they were always willing or able to migrate to make way for the Chinese, and the spectacle of Chinese agriculture in close proximity was frightening because it was incomprehensible. Reverend Hoover, who was too busy boosting his Foochow colony to expend much sympathy on the lower Rejang Ibans, nevertheless recognized the source of their concern, as he demonstrated in a letter written only a few years after his arrival in Sarawak in 1904:

With the Resident I have put in a lot of hard, trying work this year, surveying and setting up boundary posts. We try to be just and fair with the Dayaks – if they have rice land that they farm, we keep the Chinese off; if fruit trees are cut down, the Chinese must pay for them; but they cannot understand the Chinese way of farming! It is the Dayak custom to farm a piece of land one year, and the next year go to some other place; and if anyone wants the piece they had the year before, there are no objections. Not so with the Chinese! Every foot of land they get they keep, and work every year – a mean and foolish practice in the Dayak's eyes! Just behind the old chief's house is a fine piece of high ground, so overgrown with jungle that only a wild pig can get through. The Chinese wanted to clear this piece of ground so I went to see the chief about it. He said 'All right', so I made a map of the place

and went to see the Resident. He drew a line through the map, making the boundary two hundred yards back of the chief's house; but when the Chinese had worked for two or three days and the chief saw what havoc they were making of his beautiful jungle, he hurried to complain to the Resident, and wanted to move; but he is wanted here, for there is no telling what he would do if he got away where he could not be watched. He said 'With the enemy up river, the Chinese down river and the smallpox everywhere, life is not worth living.' So I said we would not clear this strip.[1]

Hoover's implication that the lower Rejang Ibans were helpless to meet the challenge was not entirely justified. Like the Saribas Ibans, to whom a portion of them were related, some took to rubber planting almost as soon as the Foochows did,[2] and later prospered in the rubber boom. The complex of longhouses at Bawang Assan near Sibu was a notable example. Here the Ibans even employed Foochow labor to tap their rubber. A 1925 report states:

Many of these men, especially the community at Bawang Assan, have amassed a considerable amount of money and not a few instances are recorded of Foochow Chinese being employed to do all the work whilst the Dayak owner is free to enjoy himself and take a share varying from half to three-fifths of the produce of the trees. The Malays do not seem to have taken the same advantage of the rubber boom and most of their gardens are in a miserable state of neglect and disease.[3]

But Bawang Assan and similar communities were not typical. The lower Rejang Ibans were on the whole more traditionally inclined, and rubber planting among them never reached the same level of popularity that it did in the Saribas. It was for these more conservative people that the Chinese agricultural colonies posed the greatest problems.

The material presented in this chapter suggests a contrast in Chinese-Iban relations between the Second Division, where the immigrant Chinese were traders and few in number, and the Third Division, where a prosperous Chinese farming population along the lower Rejang and its tributaries

[1] James M. Hoover letter quoted in Cartwright, *Tuan Hoover of Borneo*, pp. 112–13; no date; but the context indicates it was written not long after Hoover replaced the Chinese proprietor of the colony in 1906. 'The enemy up river' were the Ibans of the Balleh and other districts, against whom the lower Rejang Ibans were still being called out on expedition service at this period.

[2] The Resident, Baring-Gould, wrote in 1910, 'Both Malays and Dayaks have begun small rubber plantations': Third Division annual report for 1910, *SGG* (16 March 1911). The following year he reported that Ibans had planted 'several thousand' trees and were keen on planting more: Third Division annual report for 1911, *SGG* (2 April 1912). Sibu was the home of Penghulu Dalam Munan, whose planting activities are mentioned in ch. 6.

[3] Third Division annual report for 1925, *SGG* (16 Aug 1926). For a commentary on the impact of progress at Bawang Assan, where by this date gramophones, bicycles and a growing desire for schools were all in evidence, see 'Sibu Notes', *SG* 871 (1 April 1926).

endures as a monument to the policies of the Second White Rajah. It should be emphasized that the lower Rejang pattern was not repeated throughout the entire vast extent of the Third Division. Perhaps two-thirds of the total Rejang Iban population, living on the Kanowit, the Balleh and other branch streams, as well as the Iban population of the upper Oya, Mukah and Balingian Rivers, came in contact with the Chinese largely if not solely as traders. In such areas the relationship was no different from the Chinese trader-Iban relationship elsewhere. It should also be noted that a boom in pepper planting which developed after 1920 stimulated a sudden growth in the Chinese farming population of the Second Division, particularly in the area around Engkilili on the lower Batang Lupar,[1] and led to a pattern of conflict over land similar to that described for the lower Rejang, but more localized.

Nevertheless it is fair to conclude that on balance the growth of the Chinese agricultural colonies was the most momentous development in the history of the Rejang in the Brooke era, while in the Second Division the Chinese farmer remained the exception rather than the rule. A glance at recent census figures, or at a population density map of the two areas, makes the contrast apparent. Travel in the pertinent regions makes it doubly apparent. One result has been that in the Second Division an older heritage of Iban-Malay friction has retained priority in the minds of many Ibans, while in the Third Division there is a more noticeable tendency for Ibans to align with other 'natives' of all groups, including Moslems, against what appears to be the more fundamental challenge of the Chinese.

[1] In some areas along the lower Batang Lupar the administration made room for an influx of Hakka pepper planters from the First Division by encouraging the Ibans to migrate to portions of the Fourth and Fifth Divisions where virgin jungle was still plentiful: see C. D. Adams Second Division report, *SG* 891 (1 Dec 1927), and subsequent Second Division reports.

10 | Conclusion and Epilogue

THE State of Sarawak remained under Brooke rule for almost exactly a century, excluding the final years of Japanese occupation during World War II. The Second Rajah, Charles Brooke, was by any criterion the most important single figure in the history of this period. His effective reign lasted more than half a century, spanning decades when Sarawak was gradually exposed to many kinds of fundamental change. Despite its limitations in size and professed intentions, his Government presided over and greatly influenced the emergence of a new social and political order. This change affected both the Malays, the nominal overlords of Sarawak's rivers in an earlier period, and the Chinese, most of whom came to Sarawak as a result of Brooke rule. The Second Rajah's regime left an equally profound impression on the Ibans, who were the largest single group in the population, and who are the special concern of this book.

In the future, increasing numbers of educated Ibans may be curious to know just how the period of Charles Brooke rule altered the course of existence for their forebears and for themselves. Any answer must consider the subtle impact of the Rajah's Government both on Iban society, itself and on the position of the Ibans in the broader context of a multi-racial State. The answer must also take into account the lingering influence of traditions and precedents which Charles Brooke established on the Government of his son and successor, Charles Vyner Brooke. The importance of the Second Rajah lies not only in the immediate effect of his own work, but also in the continuity which his commanding personality inspired.

Conservative rulers over a forbidding terrain, the Brookes did not make their presence felt in the obvious manner of colonial regimes elsewhere. They left no profusion of rubber plantations, roads and railroads. In most areas the customs and dress of the people remained unchanged. Some remote interior peoples, such as the Kelabits of the Fourth Division, remained beyond effective contact with the central Government until after the Japanese occupation. Other groups, including the Land Dayaks in the hinterland of

Kuching itself, were too quiet to attract any consistent attention from the small-scale administration.[1] But the Ibans, the largest single ethnic group in the State, were not a people of the extreme interior, and they were not inclined to placid behavior. Their unique addiction to warfare and migration made them a cause of political concern to the Brookes almost from the moment that James first set foot in the Kuching area in 1839.

In the long involvement that followed, several stages may be discerned. A full decade before the First Rajah established a foothold in the Iban heartland, the Second Division, he came into conflict with 'Arabs' and other ambitious Malays who raided along the coast in cooperation with the Ibans. In this conflict James Brooke relied upon two weapons, his prestige as an Englishman, made palpable by the support of the Royal Navy, and certain native allies. Among the most important of these allies were outlying Iban groups, notably the Balaus and Sebuyaus, who had long been at war with the stronger, 'piratical' Iban and Malay communities of the Second Division. James later testified that 'Without their assistance we could do nothing. Without them the English could not have got into the country.'[2]

His efforts to control 'piracy' and to deny Malay rivals access to the main reservoir of 'Sea Dayak' fighting power led the First Rajah to establish forts in the Iban country after 1850. His nephew, the future Second Rajah, Charles Brooke, was the key figure in this phase of Sarawak history. The new outstations greatly expanded the area under Brooke control and solved the problem of 'piracy' by isolating the Ibans from Malay leadership and denying them access to the sea. In accomplishing this task Charles Brooke learned that he could rally large numbers of downriver Ibans who had been among the 'pirates' of the previous decade to oppose the more recalcitrant upriver people, and indeed to fight for the Government whenever occasion demandedt

During the years between 1857 and 1863 the skill which the future Rajah had developed in the use of Iban levies enabled him to bring the infant State of Sarawak through a series of crises, and to reestablish Brooke authority on a firmer footing and over wider areas than ever before. Many of the methods and attitudes which typified his later long reign grew out of his experience during this period, which for him was one of supreme political accomplishment.

In the decades that followed, the relationship between the Rajah and the Ibans varied according to the distance of any community from the nearest

[1] A. B. Ward wrote of the Land Dayaks, 'Government officers as a rule show a pathetic lack of interest in them and no one that I can remember ever mastered their language. As a race they are so quiet and unobtrusive that one was apt to forget their existence, but Sarawak has no subjects more loyal or peaceful.' (*Rajah's Servant*, p. 179.)

[2] Testimony of James Brooke, 'Reports of Brooke Inquiry', *PP* XXIX (1854–5) 233.

Government fort. The more remote upriver people remained committed to a tradition which emphasized migration and headhunting. The downriver people were far sooner exposed to new outside influences. Some of them, most notably the people of the Saribas River system in the Second Division, were willing and able to abandon some old habits and to take advantage of certain new opportunities which resulted from European rule.

The Rajah played a part in introducing change in downriver areas, making new crops available, and subsidizing a limited amount of mission education. But he was far more often concerned with the pressing and dramatic problem of the upriver people, and his desire somehow to control them. In his efforts to do so the Rajah continued to rely on levies of downriver Iban volunteers. He estimated in 1915 that he had personally commanded about fifty expeditions manned by such levies, almost one for every year of his reign.[1] He and his Residents authorized 'friendly' Ibans to carry out countless lesser raids against 'enemy' tribes without any European supervision.

The expeditions were a factor of preeminent importance in the relationship between the Second Rajah and the majority of his Iban subjects. They exerted an overwhelmingly conservative social influence, involving both the upriver 'rebels' and the pro-Government downriver Ibans in endless hostilities which nourished the traditional war ethic on both sides. It is widely believed that the White Rajahs stamped out headhunting in Sarawak, and there is no doubt that they consciously tried to do so. But as Spenser St John realized as early as 1854, Brooke reliance on Iban fighting power in fact perpetuated headhunting.[2] The constant insecurity which prevailed in the Iban country until the period of World War I also encouraged migration, which was inspired by the same complex of values and traditions that sustained the Iban love of war.

Yet it would be far from accurate to say that the only effect of the Second Rajah's Government was to preserve and perhaps even to accentuate traditional Iban culture. In the process of bringing rough law and a degree of order to the downriver areas, and above all by encouraging the growth of Chinese population, Brooke rule accomplished a fundamental reordering of the whole of Sarawak's multi-racial society. Both as a category and as individuals, the Ibans became involved in a new pattern of relationship with the two other main groups, the Chinese and Malays.

[1] 'I have had under me some fifty expeditions': Charles Brooke to R. S. Douglas, 12 July 1915, SA.

[2] Questioned about headhunting at the Brooke Inquiry in 1854, St John commented, 'I think that among the hill [Land] Dayaks the taste will be eradicated in another generation; among the sea Dayaks, as long as they are allowed to accompany expeditions, the taste will continue.' (Testimony of Spenser St John, 'Reports of Brooke Inquiry', *PP* XXIX (1854–5) p. 207.)

The Rajah's selective encouragement of Chinese immigration had the most immediate and visible impact on the pattern of communal relations. In the lower Rejang, where he induced Chinese farmers to settle in large numbers, conflict over land was typical of the Iban-Chinese relationship from an early period. But in the Second Division and other areas the activities of Chinese traders and Ibans were on the whole mutually beneficial, and where communal tension did appear, it was more generally between Ibans and Malays.

The previous chapter discussed this contrast between the Second and Third Divisions in more detail, and in the course of that discussion something was said of the manner in which the Second Rajah's officials differentiated between Malays, Ibans and Chinese. But the importance of this differentiation and the significance of the official attitudes which accompanied it cannot be fully understood without realizing the extent to which the entire Brooke State was attuned to this three-fold distinction. Each of the three major groups in the population played a specific and necessary role within what was in many ways a remarkably ordered social and political world.

The role of the Malays in the Brooke world was primarily political. When the First Rajah arrived in 1839, he found a thinly settled country of autonomous river systems, each under the nominal authority of a Malay aristocrat. The relationship with Brunei, generally weak, varied from river to river, and so did the actual degree of influence which the Malay upper class of traders and rulers exerted over the largely pagan population. What matters in any consideration of later events is that these chiefs were the only people who conceived of themselves as rulers at anything beyond the village (or longhouse) level.

Inevitably the new European overlord clashed with the Malay chiefs, whose political concepts were irreconcilable with his own ideas of good government. But just as inevitably he came to rely upon the Malay aristocracy, since he was neither able nor willing to import a large number of European administrators, and since in general no other element in the population was culturally equipped to exercise magisterial functions. The Malay aristocrats were not regarded as wholly suitable administrators, however, until they had been purged of a lingering propensity to trade.

Malay trade was no longer necessary, in the eyes of the new rulers, because the establishment of law and order around Government stations made possible the growth of a new Chinese trading class. It was assumed that, with few exceptions, the overseas Chinese were not aristocrats, not gentlemen, perhaps, as the Malays often were. But they were indisputably skilled, efficient and orderly traders, and they came to dominate commerce in Sarawak

as elsewhere. In Kuching, the Rajah was always on particularly close and cordial terms with certain leading Chinese merchants. 'To quarrel with such men is liable to do the Government much injury', Charles admonished his Superintendent of Police in 1896, after receiving a complaint from the head of the Kuching Chinese community. The Rajah continued,

> They are the capitalists that we have most to depend on, and a certain amount of consideration and respect should always be paid to them. They may be sometimes a little difficult to manage, but they are generally ready to show respect and willingness to abide by orders, and assist whatever may be going in works of charity and liberality when treated well. They are always peculiarly sensitive to justice.[1]

But the Chinese were not only traders; they played a second economic role in the Brooke State as well. They were the industrious cash-crop farmers whose labors transformed the countryside from a wilderness of scrub and swamp to a neat and productive landscape of pepper vines or rubber gardens, depending on the area. No matter what occupation they followed, the Chinese always in one way or another accounted for the majority of Sarawak revenues from the very beginning of Brooke rule.

Charles Brooke never ceased to encourage Chinese agricultural immigration, even when it led to friction with Ibans and other natives. He admired Chinese culture, and proved it by inaugurating State education in the medium of Mandarin.[2] After five years residence, any Chinese could apply for 'privileges of Naturalization'. If the Government approved his application, he then paid a fee of fifty dollars and was henceforth 'deemed a natural born subject of His Highness, as if he had been born within the said State'.[3] The fact that the Chinese paid no capitation taxes, however, indicates that they were never regarded in quite the same light as the Malays, Ibans and others, for whom such 'head' and 'door' taxes symbolized the obligation of the citizen to serve his ruler. Even more significant, no Chinese was ever given a seat on the triennial Council Negri.[4] Chinese political activity, which in the years before the Revolution of 1911 inevitably took the form of secret society activity, remained not only suspect, but strictly illegal.

The vital function of the Ibans within the Brooke State was military. The lower tax rate which the great majority of them paid implied a special obliga-

[1] Charles Brooke to [C. W.] Daubeny, 22 March 1896. Ong Tiang Swee, long recognized by the Rajah as the overall head of the Kuching Chinese, was the man who had lodged the complaint. For his connection with the Chinese Court, see p. 173, n. 2.

[2] See the beginning of ch. 5.

[3] Order of 10 May 1900; see p. 316, n. 1.

[4] Chinese unofficial members were appointed to the new Council Negri established in 1941, mentioned at the end of this chapter.

tion to fight in the service of the Rajah.[1] Their most important single leader in the era of Charles Brooke, Penghulu Dalam Munan of Sibu, was a war-leader of extraordinary skill and stature. The entire history of Sarawak down to 1861 may be interpreted as a contest between the Brookes and the old, as yet unreformed, Malay ruling class, for control of a predominantly Iban population. There were other pagan and Malay groups at stake in the contest as well, but the Ibans were of critical political importance because they enjoyed fighting, and in those early years little cared whom they fought. After the Brookes had subdued or expelled their Malay rivals, the Ibans remained useful primarily for service against rebel Ibans equally fond of fighting. But the realization that Iban levies would respond to the Rajah's call undoubtedly exerted a quieting effect on potential subversives of all ethnic shades. This was apparent even to casual visitors, such as the English traveler Lord Brassey, who commented in 1887 on the position of the isolated Brooke Resident,

> He has an authority with the people, because it is known that he can at any moment call in an overwhelming force to punish insubordination and crime.[2]

The functions performed by Malays, Chinese and Ibans were thus political, economic and military respectively. Each function was equally necessary to the operation of the State, and this fact should be borne in mind when evaluating official attitudes toward the various peoples. Residents tended to regard as right and proper those characteristics of each group which enabled it to perform its particular function, and to look with disapproval on those which were deviant and therefore potentially disruptive. They saw the Malay Native Officers as gentlemen who, like themselves, should not soil their hands at trade, because they could not do so and still be worthy rulers. They regarded the Chinese as excellent traders, but believed them to be devious and dangerous in political behavior.

They viewed the lithe, long-haired Iban from upriver as a more attractive specimen than the Iban who had achieved a mission education and acquired a rubber garden. The Rajah's quasi-official historians wrote in 1908:

> The Sea-Dayak has all he wants. He is well off, contented and happy. He is a sober man, and indulges in but few luxuries. He is hard working and he is honest, but he lacks strength of mind, and is easily led astray. Therefore, the longer he is kept

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[1] See especially the quotation from Ricketts Trusan Diary in ch. 5, p. 163, n. 4.

[2] Thomas Brassey, *Voyages and Travels of Lord Brassey, K.C.B., D.C.L.*, ed. Captain S. Eardley-Wilmot (London, 1895) II 311. Brassey, the son of a railway magnate, was an indefatigable globe-trotter and the husband of Annie Allnut Brassey, author of several well-known travel books.

from the influences of civilization the better off it will be for him, for the good cannot be introduced without the bad.[1]

Westerners found the 'uncivilized' Iban fascinating and attractive, and indeed there was much in the traditional way of life to excite attention and sympathy. The present writer will certainly always remember with particular pleasure his own visits to the more remote upriver areas of Sarawak, and he would be the last to deny the genuine aesthetic appeal of such experience. But it would be unrealistic to ignore the fact that in the era of Charles Brooke there was a wholly practical aspect to this attitude, whether it was ever consciously recognized or not. Educated Ibans would no longer have been of the slightest value on expedition service, and it was difficult for administrators to conceive of any alternative to the military role for the Iban people in general.

Not all the men who served in the Second Rajah's highly individualistic service shared these attitudes, here presented in the simplified form of stereotypes, although they were broadly typical. Moreover it should be emphasized that the attitudes described applied only to the three most numerous cultural groups: Malay, Chinese and Iban. Others, including the Land Dayaks, the Melanaus, and the Kenyahs and Kayans, did not occupy such clear-cut positions within the Brooke political system, and official attitudes towards them were, perhaps not surprisingly, less well-defined.

From the Western point of view the status of the Melanaus, mostly concentrated along the coast of the Third Division, was confusing and ambiguous. Many Melanaus were already Moslems when James Brooke arrived in Sarawak, yet many remained pagan. A Melanau who adopted Islam might call himself a Malay, or a Moslem Melanau, or he might alternate between identifications depending on his assessment of the political circumstances.[2] Furthermore, by the time Brooke rule came to the Melanau country nearly all its inhabitants were rapidly abandoning longhouses and living in villages superficially resembling those of the Malays.

Brooke officers at all periods were frequently conditioned by service among the more numerous Ibans. Many learned to speak Iban as well as Malay, while very few ever became fluent in Land Dayak, Kayan or Melanau. In the Iban country the cultural distinction between Moslem and pagan was precise, since the rare Iban who converted to Islam invariably called himself a Malay, and henceforth lived in an entirely different fashion. The Rajah's men were aware that, as a result, an Iban was by definition pagan, excepting

[1] Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, *History*, p. 440.

[2] Morris, *Report on a Melanau Sago Producing Community*, p. 2, and conversation with the author.

the relatively small number who became Christians.[1] The Government of necessity recognized a pagan Iban leadership, and even tried, without much success, to strengthen it by creating *penghulu*, a new category of headmen who were authorized to exercise limited powers over wider areas than had ever been customary among the Ibans before.

In the Melanau country, however, the average Brooke administrator tended to recognize the Moslem leadership, which he could easily accommodate within his understanding of 'Malay', and to ignore the pagans, who were quite unlike any of the three main groups discussed earlier. Moslem Melanaus served on the Council Negri, while pagans did not. More important, the Rajah normally appointed Moslem Melanau Native Officers to positions of authority within the mixed communities, and thereby put them in a position where they could stimulate the further progress of Islam.[2] A concept of 'Melanauness' never gained wide currency among Europeans in Sarawak, despite the distinctive and important Melanau sago-producing economy. An official questionnaire circulated among senior members of the Government in 1938 posed the question, 'How is the Melanau problem to be solved? Should they be encouraged to retain their individuality, or should they be absorbed by the Malay Race?'[3]

If the Melanaus could be most easily accommodated in the Malay category, the other longhouse-dwelling pagan tribes, including Land Dayaks, Kayans and Kenyahs, were quite obviously closest to the Ibans. Yet although they shared many traits of physical culture in common with the Ibans, they were anything but Iban in political temperament. The Land Dayaks were particularly unsuited for the warrior role, and the British rulers frequently portrayed them in unflattering terms. Charles Brooke wrote in *Ten Years in Sarawak* 'Their customs and appearance differ considerably from the other tribes, and, do not encourage so great an interest in a traveller's breast as the Sea Dayaks, who are a fairer and finer people in every way.'[4]

If failure to behave more like Ibans sometimes caused the Land Dayaks to be held in mild contempt, the same was not generally true of the Kenyahs

[1] For recent statistics on Iban conversion to Christianity, see p. 17, n. 1.

[2] Morris, *Report on a Melanau Sago Producing Community*, pp. 4–5. The author states that in Oya district, the Brooke administrative language was Malay written in *jawi* script, and that 'Consequently the lower grades of the Civil Service were always recruited from the Moslem community.' (Ibid., p. 4.) But in general very few Brooke records were kept in *jawi*, even at the local level, and when they were it resulted from a policy of recruiting Moslem Native Officers (who were frequently literate only in *jawi*) rather than vice-versa. Chinese clerks and court writers recorded most Government business in English.

[3] E. Parnell circular dated 20 Dec 1938, SA. Parnell was Chief Secretary at this time.

[4] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, 1 48. For a much more pejorative semi-official comment on Land Dayak character, see *SG* 269 (1 June 1888).

and Kayans. The Rajah's men encountered them only at a relatively late period, but once they had done so familiarity bred respect. No officer who knew them ever implied that these people of the Baram and upper Rejang Rivers were effete or dispirited. Their well-developed institutions of rank and chiefship were more in tune with nineteenth-century British values than was the noisy, anarchic democracy of the Ibans, and made them far less troublesome subjects. Yet on at least one occasion the Baram Kayans and Kenyahs suffered precisely because they would not fight at the Government's urging in the Iban fashion.

This revealing episode occured in 1915, when the Balleh Ibans under Merum had retreated to the far headwaters of the Mujong River in defiance of the Government. The Rajah authorized an attack to be made on them from two directions. One force, composed of Ibans, would advance from the lower Rejang, while a second contingent of Kayans and Kenyahs made the arduous trip overland from the Baram to the Rejang headwaters, in order to strike the rebels from an unexpected direction. The Baram chiefs agreed to this plan, but only somewhat reluctantly, one may surmise. They had already suffered from recent Iban raids in the Tinjar tributary and elsewhere, and may well have realized that by participating in this expedition they were likely to stir up a hornet's nest of vengeance-seekers. At the last minute their leaders reconsidered the situation and flatly refused to go, claiming to have heard unfavorable bird omens. R. S. Douglas, Resident of the Fourth Division, fined them the enormous sum of $4000, and summarily dismissed at least one of the principal Baram chiefs for reneging on his earlier promise to cooperate.[1]

There is no evidence on record that Ibans, for whom expedition service became a hallowed tradition, ever refused to answer a Government call for any reason. Confusion and ambiguity sometimes characterized official attitudes toward less numerous peoples like the Kenyahs and Kayans, but with regard to the three major groups such attitudes were highly realistic, if they are evaluated in the social context of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Borneo, and judged in the light of the Government's limited resources.

[1] Charles Brooke to Baring-Gould, 22 March 1915; R. S. Douglas to Charles Brooke, 29 June 1915, copy in 'His Highness the Rajah's Order Book', IV; Charles Brooke to R. S. Douglas, 12 July 1915, all in SA. The Rajah felt that Douglas had been too severe, but reluctantly approved a fine of ten dollars for every man who had refused to go on the expedition, totaling about $10,000, which the Resident had imposed. The Fourth Division annual report for 1916, *SGG* (16 March 1917), indicates that the fine was apparently later reduced to $4000. Additional information on the incident is given in the annual report for 1915, *SGG* (3 April 1916). The chief who lost his post was Tama Tinjan of the Tinjar: C. H. Hartley, 'Where's That Head?' in *Borneo Jungle*, ed. T. Harrisson (London, 1938) pp. 125–6.

Today it would be deceptively easy to support the crude contention that in building a new social and political order rooted in cultural differences the Rajahs were following a policy of 'divide and rule'. Both James and Charles seemed to say as much themselves on different occasions. Disturbed by an influx of Chinese *kongsi* members from Sambas in 1842, the First Rajah observed,

> But 'divide and rule' is a good motto in my case; and the Chinese have overlooked the difference between this country [the Sarawak River system] and Sambas. There they have numerous rivers in the vicinity of their settlements – here but one; and, the [Land] Dayak population being against them, starvation would soon reduce them to terms.[1]

Before Charles became Rajah, he expressed the same idea in more general terms:

> Our population requires an experienced commander, but when once the relations of one party with another are properly understood, it is a singularly easy government to carry on, – tribes, one with another, being so well balanced, that in the event of danger arising from any one party, the other may be trusted to counteract evil influences, and act as a balancing medium in the scale.[2]

No doubt there was ample political juggling of one 'tribe' against another, especially in the early, uncertain days when the new British rulers were struggling for survival, sometimes dependent entirely on their wit, and, relative to the Borneo people, their wider political horizons. But it goes without saying that they did not create the very real cultural differences which distinguish the Moslem Malay from the pagan Iban, or the somewhat more than semi-nomadic Iban from the intensively farming Chinese. They did not 'divide' so much as take advantage of what seemed to them to be the three self-evident and significant categories in an almost infinitely divisible local population. In practice, as the example of the Melanaus indicates, the cultural categories which they implicitly recognized were always broader rather than narrower than those which were traditionally recognized by the people themselves. In the long run the Brooke system could only encourage individuals to conceive of themselves in larger rather than smaller groupings, and to supplement their older, highly localized geographic loyalties with a new sense of identification with a widely distributed ethnic group. The slow growth of more settled conditions and better communications further

[1] James Brooke journal entry for 25 March 1842 in Keppel *Dido*, I 284. See also James Brooke to Templer, 25 Sept 1841, *Letters*, II 116.

[2] Brooke, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, II 308–9.

tended to break down the traditional political barriers between river segments and villages.

In Sarawak, where there was little material modernization, European influence was more significant in this subtle realm of political concepts. Of the three major groups in the population, the Ibans stood to undergo the greatest change as a result of such influence, precisely because they were originally the furthest removed from any ideal of ethnic or national unity. In the Brooke era they found themselves living for the first time under a consistent if limited central Government. Inevitably the Rajah impressed his presence upon them in a way which the Sultan of Brunei never had. He regarded them as members of one ethnic group, closely related in language and custom, and owing certain obligations in common to the State. Although he never recognized 'Melanauness', the concept of 'Ibanness' was basic to the operation of his political system. In time the Ibans themselves came to realize full well that as a group they stood in a special relationship to their ruler. On the great expeditions, warriors from widely separated rivers shared an experience in which all of them took the same pugnacious pride. Admittedly the expeditions also nourished a continuing hostility between upriver and downriver Ibans, but even this enmity followed a pattern which was wider in scope than the old pre-Brooke pattern of feuding between geographic communities. There was a tendency for the downriver people, who were increasingly in the majority as time went by, to be gradually united against the remaining 'enemy' in the headwaters.

The official assumption of 'Ibanness' exerted its effect gradually but continuously through the period of Brooke rule. At first it encouraged the beginning of ethnic awareness in addition to, rather than in place of, the older river and longhouse loyalties. This process, perhaps the first step in a complex transition to an awareness of nationality, has continued down to the present day, and it is only recently that the majority of Ibans have begun to regard themselves more as Ibans than as members of some localized subgroup.[1]

Charles Brooke, the builder of the State, certainly did not plan the social realignment of his subjects. His conscious inclinations were entirely the reverse. He believed that, in general, people should be allowed to live and behave in the way that came most naturally to them. His administrative policies, the product of a keen intuition and a lifetime of experience at the local level, were based primarily on a pragmatic assessment of social realities. Although he attuned his policies to certain innate talents and inclinations of the three major groups, he remained willing to recognize that individuals or

[1] See discussion of the term 'Iban' in ch. 1.

localities could be exceptional. His philosophy of personal government honored the exception as much as the rule, and this is why he could and did with perfect consistency appoint some Ibans to be Native Officers in some areas, although it was not his usual practice to do so.[1]

Even in his lifetime, however, there were dangers of injustice inherent in the Second Rajah's methods. Despite his extraordinary energy and capacity for detail, he could not always prevent his distant subordinates from developing unyielding attitudes toward the various ethnic groups. Some were undoubtedly convinced that only Malay aristocrats could be administrators, and that even the most exceptional Iban would be spoiled by education.[2] Toward the end of his long reign, the Rajah's own love of tradition and the country as it was made him reluctant to abandon what were already becoming outworn methods, particularly in his dealings with upriver Iban rebels. Moreover, he could not guarantee that after his death his own essentially personal, flexible policies might not be frozen into dogma, even as the conditions which had made them practical at one time were rapidly vanishing. This is precisely what happened under his son and successor, Vyner Brooke.[3]

Charles Brooke died in May 1917, at a time when the continued spread of rubber planting, the development of a major oil field in Sarawak, and certain obligations and hardships imposed on the State by World War I all seemed to presage a basic change in the international environment.[4] Charles believed

[1] See in particular the careers of Nanang, Insol and Ringkai of Betong, outlined in ch. 5, and of Munan, described in ch. 6.

[2] Topics such as this were frequently the subject of debate among members of the European community. The S.P.G.'s education effort in the Second Division, limited as it was in the days of Charles Brooke, was often criticized in the pages of the *Sarawak Gazette* for 'spoiling' the Ibans: see, for example, various articles, letters and editorials in *SG* 29 (16 Nov 1871); *SG* 129 (15 March 1877); *SG* 289 (1 Feb 1890); *SG* 390 (1 July 1898); and *SG* 498 (2 July 1907). Debate frequently continued in issues following those cited.

[3] The Third Rajah's full name was Charles Vyner Brooke, but he was always known as Vyner and this usage has been followed through the present study to avoid confusing him with the Second Rajah. The remainder of this chapter is based primarily on interviews with Sarawak civil servants, past and present, whose names will be found in the foreword at the beginning of this book. It is restricted to a description of those elements of continuity and change which particularly affected the Iban population, and is not a complete account of Vyner's reign. For a more general discussion, see Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, pp. 231 ff. Owing apparently to the loss or destruction of Secretariat files during the Japanese occupation, documents pertaining to Vyner's administration are scarce and of uneven importance; there is little pertinent material in the Sarawak Archives. For that reason, and because I have concentrated my research on earlier periods, the conclusions expressed about his government are necessarily tentative.

[4] For an account of the World War I period which communicates the feeling of change in the air, see Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, pp. 151 ff. For a time Charles believed that the new oil field at Miri might tempt the British Colonial Office to assume direct control of Sarawak, and this sharpened his conviction that the State would have to be strengthened to survive as an independent entity in an increasingly predatory world: Charles Brooke to the *Morning Post*, 7 Nov 1912, and to Arnold White, 20 Nov 1912, both in SA.

that the tide of change would inevitably affect the internal affairs of his State, and he began to make alterations in the traditional political structure. He concluded, for example, that the Supreme Council, composed of the Kuching Malay chiefs whose ancestors James Brooke had befriended in 1842, was becoming an anachronism. He recognized that the advice of men who lacked any Western education was of lessening value to a Government increasingly faced by technical problems:

> . . . allowing full credit to the five Datos who sit on it as a majority with as a rule two European[s] and the Rajah as President and wishing to keep this as intact as possible in its functions which were instituted by the first Rajah. Yet without any desire to lessen its dignity – it can scarcely now stand as a full quantity to administer the requirement[s] of such a population as Sarawak territory possesses when educated European heads are required to solve and balance so many questions that more or less have to do with the outside world. . . . The Edifice may stand but it requires substantial outside supports.[1]

In 1915 Charles acted to dilute the authority which he himself had hitherto wielded by creating a new Committee of Administration, the members of which were all European officers.[2] (It did not replace the Supreme Council, which continued to meet as before.) Already three years previously the Rajah had inaugurated a State Advisory Council in England, made up of retired Sarawak officers, which he intended to be a watchdog over the finances of Sarawak after his death.[3] His actions during these years may be interpreted as a conscious effort to move the State away from absolute monarchy and toward a constitutional form of government, however gradually.[4] His behavior was equally radical in other respects, considering his background and his advanced age. It was during this same period that he was preoccupied with schools, the railroad, and a new wireless network.[5]

Vyner Brooke did not display the same active concern with change which

[1] Charles Brooke to C. Robison and George Gillan, 2 Sept 1915, SA.

[2] Details of the new Committee of Administration are given in the Order dated 19 Oct 1915, *SGG* (1 Nov 1915). The new permanent Committee of Administration should not be confused with previous *ad hoc* Committees of Administration which were sometimes appointed to govern in the absence of the Rajah from an early period in the reign of Charles Brooke.

[3] See the Proclamation in *SG* 620 (16 Jan 1913); Boyd, 'The Law and Constitution of Sarawak', pp. 54–60.

[4] In 1934 the Chief Justice of Sarawak commented on the 1915 Committee of Administration, which was abolished in 1924 (see p. 333, n. 4 below), 'It is obvious that the step taken by the [late] Rajah to establish the basis of constitutional government was a wise and liberal measure, though unfortunately it has not yet been destined to come to fruition.' (Boyd, 'The Law and Constitution of Sarawak', p. 48.)

[5] For the railroad, see Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, p. 219; for the wireless, Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 173 and Ranee of Sarawak, *The Three White Rajas*, p. 106; for Charles' education efforts, see the beginning of ch. 5.

marked the twilight years of Charles. As a result, a fundamental uncertainty characterized the final phase of Brooke rule. The explanation may be found in the personality of the Third Rajah, which was shaped by his reaction to a strong-willed father. Their relationship had never been an easy one. Steven Runciman has observed,

> [Charles] seems always to have thought him a little easy-going and extravagant and not quite serious enough; but he had no cause for complaint. After the Rajah Muda's marriage in 1911 matters became worse. The Rajah did not care for his daughter-in-law and she returned his dislike.[1]

Charles preferred Vyner's younger brother, Bertram, the Tuan Muda, who was cast in his own austere image, and of whom Runciman writes,

> Devoted though he [Bertram] was to Sarawak, he had no personal ambition to rule it and was eager to be of service to his brother, who, however, could not help suspecting that he was in league with his parents against him. The Rajah Muda's suspicions were not surprising. The old Rajah openly rejoiced when the Tuan Muda's wife, the Dayang Muda, gave birth to a son, while the Ranee Muda only produced daughters.[2]

The Rajah would not deprive his eldest son of the succession, despite the increasing friction between them, but in his will he required that Vyner should consult Bertram on all major administrative matters.[3] He had already compelled Vyner to undergo a long, rough apprenticeship in the outstations, which the Rajah Muda had found distasteful, and which probably only increased his aversion for the serious side of Sarawak Government. Of all the differences which distinguished him from his father, an essential incapacity for involvement in the details of administration was the most important. As the years went by it became increasingly clear that although he enjoyed being Rajah of Sarawak, a far from unpleasant social position, he was never really interested in the work of governing.

Vyner may well have regarded the initial constitutional reforms of his father's later years merely as part of a humiliating attempt to debase his inheritance. At any rate he allowed the new institutions to lapse,[4] and no

[1] Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, pp. 221–2.

[2] Ibid., p. 223.

[3] 'The last will and testament of Sir Charles Brooke, Second Rajah of Sarawak', 16 Dec 1913, in *The Facts about Sarawak* (London, 1947) pp. 21–7; Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, pp. 231–2. Despite Vyner's suspicions, his brother turned out to be a loyal and self-effacing assistant. In later years he regularly spent about six months of each year in Sarawak, administering the country while Vyner was in Europe. But the new Rajah never completely recovered from his jealousy of Bertram: see p. 313, n. 1.

[4] The new Committee of Administration met infrequently after 1919, and Vyner abolished it in 1924: Boyd, 'The Law and Constitution of Sarawak', pp. 48, 50. The Sarawak State Advisory

attempt was made to replace them until 1941, only months before the Japanese landings. In the meantime the traditional political structure of the State continued to wither. The triennial Council Negri remained a useful backdrop for the Rajah's speech from the throne, but the Supreme Council stopped meeting in 1927.[1]

With the old advisory institutions increasingly moribund or meaningless, Vyner became, in theory, a less restrained, more absolute monarch than his father had been. But the changing concerns of government and the personality of the new ruler combined to sap even the monarchy of much of its former vitality. Informal, personal rule was plainly inadequate to cope with such problems as rubber restriction, which forced the Government to intrude constantly into the lives of the masses of smallholders throughout the State.

Under the terms of the International Rubber Regulation Agreement of 1934, which Sarawak reluctantly joined under pressure from the British Colonial Office,[2] State-wide tapping holidays were decreed every fourth month. By 1936 rubber restriction was already a familiar fact of life to thousands of Sarawak families of all ethnic groups, and Ibans might be heard to date an event as so many days before the scheduled tapping holiday, or 'rubber stop' (*empai kena* stop *tangkal suba*).[3] The holidays proved ineffective, and in 1937 were replaced by a far more complicated 'coupon system' of individual restriction. Personnel from Malaya helped to count and survey the more than 90,000 smallholdings in the country, and each owner received coupons entitling him to market a specified amount of rubber, related to the size of his holding.[4] Under the terms of the 1934 international agreement all new planting was forbidden, a stipulation which proved difficult to explain to many upriver Ibans, who were just beginning to develop an interest in the crop. Some went ahead and planted anyway, only to have their young trees destroyed by touring Government officers.[5]

Council in England survived until 1929, when Vyner instructed that it too should be abolished: ibid., p. 60.

[1] The last recorded meeting of the Supreme Council was on 27 April 1927: ibid., p. 60. The Rajah continued to receive a brief ceremonial visit from the Kuching Malay chiefs twice a week in his office. The Supreme Council was revived in entirely different form under the 1941 Constitution. For the original institution, see p. 120, n. 2.

[2] From a man who was a senior member of the Brooke administration at the time. Sarawak had previously participated in the much less rigorous Stevenson restriction scheme (1922–8).

[3] Third Division August report, *SG* 997 (1 Oct 1936).

[4] Order R–9 (Rubber Regulation) 1937, *SGG* (16 Dec 1937); 'Rubber in Sarawak', *SG* 1016 (2 May 1938).

[5] From contemporary Sarawak officials. A 1937 report notes that persons from nearly every house in Penghulu Ringgit's district (near Lubok Antu on the Batang Lupar) had been fined and imprisoned for illegal planting: Second Division April report, *SG* 1005 (1 June 1937). For other

Well before the advent of rubber restriction it had been necessary to regularize, to 'bureaucratize', the administration of Sarawak in many fields. The Government steadily expanded its scope during the postwar period until 1929, when the onset of world depression and the consequent decline in rubber prices brought a sharp decline in revenues and necessitated some retrenchment.[1] A written criminal code based on the Indian Penal Code went into effect in 1923, and a Legal Department under a trained Chief Justice was created in 1928.[2] The first State-wide land law was promulgated in 1920, to be replaced with far more complex legislation in 1931 and 1933.[3] There were periodic examinations for Government officers after 1924,[4] and municipal administration began in Kuching and Sibu during the following two years.[5] Gradually more departments were created, and some technical specialists were posted to the outstations.[6] With the appointment of a Chief Secretary in 1923, a small, formal Secretariat began to function in Kuching. The power of the Residents remained great, but a wholly new emphasis on administrative uniformity began to appear in some official pronouncements. The Rajah's address to the Council Negri in 1924 contained a passage that would have been unthinkable twenty years previously. The Residents were urged to regard the Chief Secretary as a 'coordinator', and were further advised, 'It

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examples of Iban evasion of the ban on planting, see Second Division March report, *SG* 980 (1 May 1935); Fourth Division August report, *SG* 985 (1 Oct 1935); and for a report on 431 Ibans caught illegally planting in Tatau District alone, Fourth Division December report, *SG* 1049 (1 Feb 1941).

[1] Sarawak revenues rose steadily through 1929:

1915	$1,536,763
1920	2,646,265
1925	5,094,580
1929	6,671,291

They then declined to a low of $3,558,580 in 1933, recovering during the immediate pre-war years to a new peak of $7,463,314 in 1940: Sarawak, *Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 1942* (Kuching, 1941).

[2] Boyd, 'The Law and Constitution of Sarawak', pp. 72–3. Further revision and amplification of the court system and judicial procedure followed in 1933: ibid., pp. 73–5. Like rubber restriction, Mr T. Stirling Boyd came to Sarawak as the result of pressure from the Colonial Office, which believed it was high time that the Rajah employed at least one trained legal mind. Boyd was named Chief Justice in 1928: ibid., p. 1. There are many more indications that, although Sarawak remained theoretically internally self-governing, the State operated under increasing British surveillance in the years before World War II: see p. 336, n. 1.

[3] See p. 315, n. 3; p. 316, n.1.

[4] Notification XLV in *SGG* (17 March 1924).

[5] Vyner Brooke speech to Council Negri, 21 Oct 1924, *SGG* (3 Nov 1924). The Rajah's triennial Council Negri speeches, always reported either in this source (*SGG*) or, much less frequently, in the *Sarawak Gazette*, provide useful summaries of Government accomplishments and intentions.

[6] For example, the first medical staff were posted to Simanggang and Sibu, headquarters of the Second and Third Divisions respectively, in 1921: Medical Department annual report for 1921, *SGG* (18 April 1922).

was sometimes forgotten that these Divisions were not independent provinces; but that they all formed part of one united Sarawak; and when a policy was formed, orders were drawn up for the good of the whole State.'[1]

Rajah Vyner, who was frequently absent in Europe, took little if any active part in the gradual formalization and growth of Government activity, yet he was not willing to be a mere figurehead. His approval was still the sole authority required to enact any law, and he often made arbitrary and unpredictable decisions. He remained in fact as well as in theory an absolute monarch, but since he failed to provide consistent leadership or guidance for his subordinates, his presence tended merely to demoralize them.

The civil servants, into whose hands the government of the country increasingly fell, were pushed and pulled by contradictory motivations. Even the warmest admirers of the old Rajah's methods recognized the necessity for some change. A. B. Ward, the first senior administrator under Vyner, fashioned the new comprehensive penal code which took effect in 1923.[2] He believed that the Government should do something about the problem of lepers, previously ignored.[3] He arranged for the training of forestry staff in Malaya.[4] He promoted a program of road building, at a time when many officers felt that roads would be merely a foolish extravagance.[5]

Yet he also believed deeply that, in so far as was possible, he and his

[1] Vyner Brooke speech to Council Negri, 21 Oct 1924, *SGG* (3 Nov 1924). Conflict between a Secretariat faction and more conservative 'outstation men' continued through the closing years of Brooke rule. In 1939 the outstation Residents, advocates of continued decentralization, won a decisive victory thanks to the intervention of the Rajah and his nephew, the then heir apparent, Anthony W. D. Brooke. Five senior Secretariat members resigned in consequence. As a result of this murky episode, in which personal factors may have played an important role, the British Government appointed a 'General Advisor' to keep an eye on what it clearly regarded as a dangerously unstable regime. The best account is in Otto Charles Doering, 'The Institutionalization of Personal Rule in Sarawak', unpublished M.Sc.Econ. thesis, London School of Economics, 1965, pp. 130–3. The same study analyzes the entire process of 'bureaucratization' in Sarawak.

[2] Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, pp. 202–3.

[3] A. B. Ward to Vyner Brooke, 2 March 1921, 'Letter Book, 1918–1922', SA.

[4] A. B. Ward to Vyner Brooke, 12 Aug 1921, ibid.

[5] Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 199. The railroad which Charles Brooke began in the First Division was never extended more than ten miles from Kuching, but another ten miles of grading had been completed by 1921. Ward wanted to finish it as a motor road, the course which was eventually followed. 'If people are expected to come and settle', he wrote to Vyner, 'it will be necessary to open up new ground to accommodate them, otherwise the country will stagnate.' (Letter dated 6 June 1921, in 'Letter Book, 1918–1922', SA.) Before World War II the road was extended to Serian, on the eastern edge of the First Division, and previously vacant lands in a strip on either side were opened to Hakka Chinese farmers. After World War II this area was the subject of intensive study by a trained anthropologist (T'ien, *The Chinese of Sarawak*, esp. pp. 30–3). More recently, as a result of pro-Communist activities during the period of 'Confrontation' with Indonesia, the local Hakka population has been resettled in 'new villages' modeled on Malayan Emergency prototypes.

brother officers were obligated to conserve and cherish the traditional Brooke State, and to resist the importation of any new philosophy from elsewhere in the British Empire. He warned the Rajah in 1921 that not all of his colleagues agreed with this opinion:

> It is certain that as long as Sarawak goes on slowly progressing on her old lines, with the fundamental rights of the natives as a base, there will be many sympathizers of the regime. The great fear are innovations to suit capitalists leading to a gradual disappearance of the independence of the state.
>
> I should not be surprised if there were some in the country now whose ideas are more for self-betterment than for the holding together of the constitution of the country and they would hail with delight any change that brought the government into line with any of the colonial administrations. I should designate them traitors.[1]

Because Vyner himself was not a forceful ruler, his father's ghost haunted Sarawak for decades in the guise of precedent and tradition. In the absence of initiative from the top, old attitudes easily became entrenched in the new and more complicated administrative procedure. With regard to the Ibans in particular, this situation led to friction with the traditionally oriented upriver communities, and encouraged an outworn approach to the new problems of the increasingly advanced downriver people.

After more than a decade of peace, anti-Government activities, mingled with headhunting and outlawry, broke out among the upriver Ibans of the Second and Third Divisions in 1931. Personal resentments played a part in the subsequent years of unrest, usually identified with ex-Penghulu Asun o Entabai, Kanowit, and so did the memory of Bantin and other heroes of the past. But there was a new factor involved in the Asun unrest, which began at a time when the depression-pinched Government was attempting to systematize collection of the one dollar per year door tax. According to the Ibans, the authorities demanded payment from widows and indigents, who in earlier times would have been informally exempted. The people believed that the Government was violating a long-established customary relationship, and readily accepted wild rumors about all sorts of other new and fantastic taxes. The tax issue was really only one symptom of a much wider malaise. The upriver people did not understand the beginnings of bureaucracy, and when it made new and unwelcome demands upon them without giving them anything in return, they found it easy to fall back on a well-established tradition of insurgency.[2]

[1] A. B. Ward to Vyner Brooke, 14 March 1921, 'Letter Book, 1918–1922', SA.

[2] Based on travel in Kanowit and Lubok Antu Districts, interviews with Ibans and contemporary Government officials, and material in the *Sarawak Gazette*. For a brief account of the Asun trouble, see Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, pp. 239–40. See also my article, 'Asun's "Rebellion": the Political Growing Pains of a Tribal Society in Brooke Sarawak, 1929–40', forthcoming in *SMJ*.

In the more accessible downriver areas, injustice resulted from the fact that the official attitude toward the Ibans in general made no allowance for change. By 1935 the Government estimated that members of the pagan tribes, the great majority of them Ibans, owned more than one-half the rubber smallholdings in the State.[1] There were increasing signs that at least a few of the more progressive Ibans were eager for education.[2] More than ever before, it was unsafe to assume that the Malays were a natural ruling class, and that Ibans were inherently unfit for administrative service. Yet during most of the period between the two World Wars these assumptions were accepted less critically than they had ever been by Charles Brooke.

During the greater part of Vyner's effective reign of twenty-four years, no Ibans were recruited to join the Native Officer corps.[3] No effort was made to educate the Malays who did serve to cope with the increasing complexities of administrative affairs. Although English remained the primary medium of government, virtually none of them could read anything but Malay in *jawi* script. The *1935 Blue Report*, a critical survey of the administration compiled by a senior Brooke officer, commented on the result:

Many of them [the Malay Native Officers] seem to suffer from an inferiority complex due, in great part, to psychological reasons. Their reluctance to undertake responsibility, to make decisions, their apparent lack of initiative, all these may, I think, be traced largely to the fact that they are ignorant of the laws of the country,

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[1] This estimate is in *Sarawak Administration Report for 1935* (Kuching, 1936) p. vi. It should be noted that although 'natives' of all groups owned a greater number of rubber smallholdings than did the Chinese, Chinese rubber acreage was greater. The detailed rubber census of 1938 revealed that all 'natives', including Moslems and pagans, owned 76,940 rubber holdings with a total acreage of 101,000: while 'non-natives' (Chinese and Europeans) owned 17,910 holdings with a total acreage of 127,000. Only 5 percent of the Sarawak total was held by large estates, all presumably included in the 'non-native' figure above: Appendix D, Sarawak, *Report on the Rubber Survey and Assessment of Sarawak* (Kuching, 1938). For somewhat earlier figures, see *SG* 994 (1 July 1936).

[2] See, for example, the account of Bawang Assan near Sibu in 'Sibu Notes', *SG* 871 (1 April 1926). The author of the 1937 Hammond Report remarked, 'A considerable number of Dayaks have expressed their wish for Dayak schools, and many have stated quite frankly that they wished for Government and not mission schools.' (R. W. Hammond, 'Report on Education in Sarawak', 1937, p. 23.) In the same year a Government officer on tour in Sadong reported that some Ibans or Land Dayaks had collected $16 to hire a Chinese to teach them to read and write, but after taking their money he had disappeared. The officer commented, 'The Dayaks urged that the Government should give their children facilities for education.' (First Division (Sadong) September report, *SG* 1010 (1 Nov 1937).)

[3] There was apparently only one exception to this rule before 1935. Lucas Chuat, a Saribas Iban, received a probationary appointment as a Native Officer in 1932: Second Division April–May report, *SG* 946 (1 July 1932).

are unable to read the regulations, and as a result are entirely in the hands of the court writer.[1]

Under Vyner, Malay Native Officers were for many years recruited on the basis of birth; they represented certain upper-class families only within the Malay community. Their continuing monopoly of a position of political power and privilege and the absolute exclusion of Ibans and other non-Moslems from Government service had long since ceased to bear any relation to practical considerations. Increasingly it could only be viewed as unjust favoritism on behalf of a portion of one ethnic group.

A similar and related inequity became apparent in the Government's education program. The rudimentary system of State schools for Chinese and Malays commenced by the Second Rajah became a system for Malays only after 1919. But although the Government expended increasing sums of money in this field, rising to 4.3 percent of total expenditure in 1932,[2] the Ibans and other pagans were systematically excluded from State schools. At a period when the Chinese were rapidly expanding their own private school system, Iban education remained entirely in the hands of the missions, whose efforts could reach only a tiny proportion of the more accessible Iban population.[3] In other fields as well, traditional concepts became ossified in practice just at a time when there was increasingly less justification for them. Under the new land law which went into effect after 1931, for example, some Ibans were deprived of previously acquired titles in regions now formally classified as 'Dayak Areas', where only traditional customary tenure was henceforth recognized.[4]

There is no need to rely on historical hindsight to conclude that by 1935 a change in the fundamental approach to Iban administration was long overdue. Critics within the Sarawak Government itself were beginning to point out both the injustice and the impracticality of continued reliance on old assumptions in an era of new conditions. The *1935 Blue Report*, for example, questioned the use of punitive expeditions against Iban rebels. (The last such expedition had taken place only a few months earlier.) It suggested that a

[1] C. D. Le Gros Clark, *1935 Blue Report* (Kuching, 1935) p. 37. The author of this report, the only comprehensive critical review of Brooke administration ever published, was the Chief Secretary at the time of the Japanese landings in 1941, and was later executed by the occupation authorities.

[2] Hammond, 'Report on Education', p. 84.

[3] By 1936 there were twenty-five Government schools for Malays and Moslem Melanaus. Their total enrollment of 2086 included only six Ibans and one Land Dayak. At the same time the mission school enrollment included 339 Ibans and 296 Land Dayaks. About 14,000 students of all groups were enrolled in all Sarawak schools, of whom more than three-quarters were Chinese in independent Chinese and mission schools: Hammond, 'Report on Education', Appendices I and III.

[4] Clark, *Blue Report*, p. 22.

closer and more sympathetic administration of the upriver areas would do more to end the unrest:

> The efficacy of expeditions, the purpose of which is to round up a handful of rebels, is seriously to be questioned. The cost of these expeditions is no small sum. They are certainly welcomed by the ulu tribes [i.e. by those who were called out on expedition service], but they seldom have any result and can only bring Government into contempt by their continuous failures. It is suggested that, if we open stations in the interior, further expeditions on a large scale will be unnecessary, and the work of rounding up small and insignificant bodies of rebels can be as effectively done by patrols.[1]

As a result of the recommendations in this report, a new Government station was opened at Nanga Meluan, Kanowit, in the heart of the disaffected region, in 1936. There were no more expeditions. The Government henceforth relied on a system of blockhouses linked by police patrols, of the sort which D. J. S. Bailey had suggested during the Bantin revolt almost thirty years previously, to continue its operations against the steadily diminishing number of Asun's followers and fellow malcontents who remained at large.[2]

The *Blue Report* also recommended that Ibans as well as Malays should be appointed as Native Officers,[3] and that the State should begin to provide basic vernacular education for Ibans and other pagans, and not just for Moslems.[4] Both these recommendations were strongly endorsed by a survey of education in Sarawak, the Hammond Report, the conclusions of which were accepted by the Government in 1938.[5]

In 1936 the semi-official *Sarawak Gazette* gave prominent space to a favorable review of Julian Huxley's *Africa View*, reprinting long excerpts in

[1] Ibid., p. 46.

[2] Clark had suggested that Meluan might become the headquarters of a separate 'Interior Division' to include the upriver Iban areas of the Third Division (but not, for some reason, the adjacent areas of the Second Division). As an alternative to closer administration of the Iban interior he recommended resettlement of the lately disaffected population in downriver areas: ibid., p. 50. Closer administration was the solution decided upon, although the Interior Division was never created: *Sarawak Administration Report for 1935*, pp. 30–1; *Sarawak Administration Report for 1936* (Kuching, 1937) p. 26.

[3] Clark, *Blue Report*. p. 45.

[4] Ibid., p. 49

[5] Hammond argued that a primary education was an 'elementary right' of every child, that the Ibans were highly educable (not a sentiment shared by all Government officers at the time), and that the mission schools were inadequate. He proposed a system of Government village or longhouse schools in the local language (i.e. Iban in Iban areas) up to Standard IV (fourth year of primary school), and in Malay thereafter: 'Report on Education', pp. 1, 71, 128. The author had been a colonial official in Africa, and had a son in the Sarawak Civil Service. For the acceptance of his report, see intra-Government mimeographed newsletter marked 'Confidential', No. 2/1938, SA.

which Huxley argued that the continuation of colonial rule in Africa and Asia could only be justified by education and modernization of the native societies.[1] Referring specifically to the Ibans, the editor of the *Gazette* echoed Huxley's assertion that it was illogical and self-defeating for British rulers to deplore or obstruct the change which their presence inspired:

No one likes to see an ulu Dayak in a bright blue blazer and a homburg hat – he presents a grotesque spectacle, but let us remember that this is our fault, for if we were not here he would not be sporting his homburg hat at all. (Instead he might be wearing a confection adorned with the hair of a recently decapitated child – *so* unspoilt and romantic.)

. . . Surely it is up to us, not to laugh at the Dayak in his homburg, but to see that he gets the right kind of homburg, and wears it in the right way. We should do our best, that is, to help him cease to be grotesque, – to ensure that eventually the sight of a Dayak in European clothes will seem to us just as natural as an Englishmen or a Chinese similarly attired. For he is going to buy his homburg and blazer, make no mistake about that.[2]

Clearly the point of view expressed here was not shared by all Sarawak officers. In the same issue of the *Gazette* one of them reported sourly on a recent visit to the most advanced and prosperous Iban river in the State, the Paku branch of the Saribas, Second Division:

The Resident states that it is doubtful if civilization as it has developed in the Paku is advantageous. The Paku Dayaks are extremely wealthy, and their hospitality is overwhelming. Each house is well supplied with tables and rattan chairs, and Chinese port wine, beer, gin, milk and Ovaltine are amongst the beverages supplied in place of *tuak* [rice wine]. Men carrying European officers' *barang* [baggage] from house to house are frequently to be seen turned out in immaculately ironed white trousers and shirts.[3]

Despite the misgivings of some, however, steps were taken to liberalize Iban administration in the years immediately before World War II. For the first time since the days of Nanang, Ringkai and Penghulu Dalam Munan, an Iban Native Officer, Francis Ansin of Sibu, became a member of the Council Negri in 1937.[4] Additional mission-educated Ibans were recruited as junior police officers.[5] Following its acceptance of the Hammond Report in 1938, the Government began to plan schools for 'natives' other than

[1] 'Notes and Comments', *SG* 999 (1 Dec 1936).
[2] *SG* 1001 (1 Feb 1937).
[3] Second Division December report, *SG* 1001 (1 Feb 1937).
[4] Report of Council Negri Meeting, Supplement to *SG* (1 May 1937).
[5] Interviews with John Nichol Kasim and Juing Insol, who were among the first educated Ibans recruited into the Constabulary Inspectorate.

Malays, and at least one was in operation by 1940.[1] The term 'development' entered the Sarawak administrative vocabulary.[2] In Kanowit District, Third Division, the source of most unrest during the Asun troubles, a trained Government specialist, Ong Kee Hui of Kuching, presided over a demonstration farm from 1937 onwards in an effort to improve Iban agriculture.[3]

In 1941 Rajah Vyner proclaimed a new constitution for Sarawak which might have completely altered the character of Brooke rule. The old Council Negri became an entirely new institution modeled on a typical British colonial legislative council, with legislative powers, an official majority and an appointed unofficial minority membership. The Supreme Council, effectively defunct since 1927, was revived and refurbished, to resemble the usual British colonial executive council.[4] The Japanese arrived and the Brooke era came to an end before the new constitution could be tested in practice. In presenting it, the Rajah had set forth his views on the ultimate aims of Brooke government:

> I have always been positive, as was my Father, that it was never the intention of Sir James Brooke to establish a line of absolute rulers. What he set out to do was to protect the Natives of Sarawak, the real but backward owners of this land, from exploitation and oppression, until such time as they could govern themselves. I hope that it may be fairly said that this worthy aim has in a large measure been achieved.[5]

He also cited nine 'Principles of Government which have actuated our predecessors and ourselves during the one hundred years of the rule of the English Rajahs'.[6] Two of them, the second and seventh, were particularly pertinent to Iban administration:

> 2. That social and education services shall be developed and improved and the standard of living of the people of Sarawak shall be steadily raised.

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[1] The system of village schools recommended by the Hammond Report did not get far beyond the planning stage before World War II, but a school of Kayans, upriver Melanaus and Chinese opened at Belaga as part of the development scheme in 1940: see n. 2 below.

[2] 'Development schemes' including schools as well as medical and administrative facilities were initiated at Belaga on the far upper Rejang (Balui) and at Long Lama on the Baram. For the Belaga scheme, see *SG* 1043 (1 Aug 1940). The Baram scheme was apparently just being inaugurated when the Japanese arrived; it is mentioned in a C. D. Le Gros Clark memorandum dated 6 Oct 1941, SA.

[3] Third Division January report, *SG* 1002 (1 March 1937). Mr Ong, more famous recently as Mayor of Kuching and Chairman of Party SUPP, is the grandson of Ong Tiang Swee, leader of the Kuching Chinese in the Second Rajah's day: see p. 324, n. 1. He was trained at Serdang College of Agriculture in Malaya, having won a three-year Sarawak Government scholarship.

[4] For events surrounding the promulgation of the new constitution, see Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, pp. 247–52.

[5] Proclamation dated 31 March 1941, in *SG* 1051 (1 April 1941).

[6] Order C–21 (Constitution) 1941, *SGG* (24 Sept 1941).

7. That so far as may be Our Subjects of whatever race or creed shall be freely and impartially admitted to offices in Our Service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability and integrity duly to discharge.[1]

Despite the Rajah's claim to the contrary, these two principles were not always evident in earlier Brooke theory or practice. It would hardly be fair to judge the administration of Charles Brooke against later pronouncements. It is fair to conclude that Vyner, during the majority of his years as Rajah, only partially fulfilled the trust which he himself recognized, in so far as the Ibans were concerned. He made little effort to prepare them for self-government or to improve their standard of living, and he certainly did not admit them to his service freely or impartially. An apparent reason for this partial failure is one familiar in the annals of kingdoms. Vyner's is the old story of a weak ruler following in the footsteps of a strong predecessor, taking the easy path of reliance on old habits of thought and practice in an age of new realities, failing for a variety of complex personal reasons to exert his own will to forge new solutions to new problems. The lingering influence of the departed father aggravated the weakness of the son.

Vyner maintained Charles' policy of discouraging European investment, and under his administration Sarawak remained a country of smallholders. Perhaps he saved some Ibans from loss of land and exploitation, although the world depression might have done this anyway. But it must also be concluded that during a period when many more Ibans might have started the slow and arduous transition into the modern world, a transition which all are making now, his Government gave them only what its own more enlightened members acknowledged to be insufficient and belated encouragement. The deficiency cannot be blamed entirely on a lack of funds. At the time of cession to the British Crown in 1946, Sarawak's financial reserves amounted to £2,750,000, more than double the total revenue of the State in the most prosperous year of its history, 1940.[2] It may well be wondered whether more of this comfortable nest-egg might not have been spent to good effect toward attainment of the Rajah's high ideals.

Only an unusually strong and far-sighted ruler would have seen any virtue in such a suggestion in the pre-war years. If there were some administrators who recognized the need for change, and whose efforts initiated the limited

[1] Ibid. The nine 'Cardinal Principles' are also in Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, pp. 248–9. It is interesting to note that the seventh principle, which so far as I know is nowhere mentioned in earlier Brooke pronouncements, is taken directly from Queen Victoria's habitually ignored Proclamation of 1858: Emerson, *Malaysia*, p. 513.

[2] Runciman, *The White Rajahs*, p. 261; *The Facts about Sarawak*, p. 7. For 1940 Sarawak revenue, see p. 335, n. 1. The Straits Dollar has been pegged to Sterling since 1906 at the rate of 2*s* 4*d* per dollar.

new programs already described, there was in general little sense of urgency abroad in the land. The Rajah might talk of eventual independence in introducing the new constitution, but self-government was not yet an idea which many people took seriously. There were some Ibans who were already anxious for more education, but the majority were still living in a world of wholly local, traditional concerns. Because it was a state of smallholders, and owing partly to the oil field at Miri, Sarawak had weathered the world depression with only minor hardships and dislocations. In 1941 it was a comparatively comfortable, profoundly isolated corner of colonial Southeast Asia. A weekly steamer provided the only connection between Kuching and Singapore, and when it sailed up the Sarawak River, a cannon shot from the damp-stained parapets of the old fort boomed out to signal the great event. To most Europeans and Asians alike, the great centers of trade, learning and politics all seemed very far away. It was altogether easy for a Government to remain convinced that modernization was remote and irrelevant.

A shell of complacency surrounded the Brooke State, and if the shell was developing a few obvious cracks, it nevertheless required the events of World War II to shatter it completely. The Japanese occupation and the subsequent cession of Sarawak to the British Crown, developments which lie beyond the scope of this study, stimulated a flood of new concerns. But the events of the postwar period have also made it apparent that the Brookes left something of value as well as a record of things undone. The colonial regime which began in 1946 and endured until the inauguration of Malaysia eighteen years later gave an entirely new priority to education and economic development, but it also made a conscious effort to reaffirm the humane, idealistic ethic of Brooke rule, and indeed to exploit in every way possible the legacy of the preceding century. The fact that many Brooke officers remained to serve the new Government insured a degree of selective continuity.

It is fair to say that Brooke rule stimulated attitudes among the Ibans which have hampered development since World War II, but it is also obvious to anyone who visits Sarawak today that the Brooke legacy did contain much of continuing value. The Second Rajah's stress on personal government remained alive at the outstation level, despite weak leadership in Kuching and the growth of bureaucracy. His concept that administrators should travel among the people, aware of their concerns and sympathetic to their problems, was a worthy and useful ideal, no matter how unevenly it may have been applied in practice. If the Ibans were conditioned to evade and resist the edicts of the Government, they were never moved to regard the agents of the State as alien oppressors. The touring Resident was always

welcome in the longhouse, whether its occupants intended to obey him or not, and this cordial tradition has also survived. As a result, any Western visitor who travels in the Iban country today will still experience unforgettable hospitality. But the tradition is not restricted to foreigners. It is of infinitely greater importance that the modern Government officer, whether Chinese, Iban or Malay, still enjoys an access to the people and their problems which is conspicuously lacking in many other parts of Asia. In an age when the involvement between Government and people is constantly increasing, the Brooke heritage of personal contact and communication is more valuable than ever before.

If it may be accepted that the recent past has done much to mold the social and political shape of modern Sarawak, the question remains to be asked whether the story of the White Rajahs sheds any light on the broader phenomenon of European rule in the East. Was Sarawak an altogether exotic offshoot of the Western presence in Asia, or can her experience be placed on some spectrum of colonialism? It should be remembered that my primary topic in the preceding pages, the Brooke-Iban relationship, has not allowed complete discussion of all the important aspects of Brooke rule. Almost nothing, for example, has been said about the vital area of Chinese administration. Nevertheless I believe that the picture is sufficiently complete to warrant some further concluding generalizations.

The Sarawak case shows the considerable impact which even a limited form of European rule could have on the social fabric of a relatively primitive Asian country under nineteenth-century conditions. The record of Brooke rule also illustrates some of the basic forces involved in the creation and maintenance of colonialism, particularly the motivation of colonial rulers. Today many people in Southeast Asia, influenced by Lenin's theory of imperialism, are inclined to regard the era of Western domination as the consequence solely of European economic greed. A wide range of subtler human motives, which are strikingly apparent in the history of Sarawak, are frequently ignored.

According to Lenin's well-known dogma, the industrialized nations of the West acquired dependencies so that excess capital might be invested abroad and the death throes of capitalism postponed. Sarawak alone will not disprove this theory, which has already been tested and found wanting on bigger battlefields, but it does provide an intriguing example of a 'colony' where the active ingredients of the Leninist formula were wholly lacking. The independent Brooke State had no mother-country whose excess capital it should have been her function to absorb. Beyond this, the inherent poverty of the State makes it impossible to attribute the maintenance of Brooke rule

to any underlying economic causation. The efforts of postwar regimes to promote development by all the modern means at their disposal have made it painfully apparent that Sarawak's economic problems are linked to fundamental resource limitations, and could not have been easily solved by any government, regardless of its intentions.

Had Borneo turned out to be the El Dorado that some early European observers envisioned, it is just possible that the First Rajah's dream of a greater British involvement might have come true. Instead, he and his successor were left scraping to make ends meet. In later decades pinched circumstances colored every aspect of the government of the Second Rajah, from his *laissez-faire* philosophy to his indefatigable attention to administrative detail. One might search in vain for another Eastern potentate who personally ordered his regime's supply of typewriter ribbons,[1] and regarded any official furniture that was not Spartan in its discomfort as grossly extravagant.[2] After World War I, and with the help of the oil field at Miri, the State enjoyed an increasingly comfortable income, but it would be absurd to argue that profit in any way became a major motivating factor in the minds of the rulers even then.

If economic motives were insignificant, can one then assume that the sustaining force behind the regime was idealism, philanthropy pure and unalloyed? This interpretation, which runs through much of the European myth and commentary bearing on Sarawak's past, would apparently contradict Rupert Emerson's generally accepted dictum that 'As a general first proposition it must be laid down that no dependency has ever been drawn within the scope of imperialist control in the interest of the dependent society itself.'[3] Yet one need not reject the myth completely to conclude that Emerson's rule does apply in the case of Sarawak, even though the Brooke State was not, from a narrow legal standpoint, 'within the scope of imperialist control'.

It seems to me apparent that Brooke idealism was primarily a rationalization of the special conditions which prevailed in Sarawak, and only secondarily a motivating force. In order to maintain their own pride and self-respect the Rajahs were compelled, perhaps unconsciously, to justify both their continuing exercise of control over an alien population and their inability to accomplish any dramatic change, developmental or otherwise, in an environment studded with obstacles to economic activity. It is also true, but less significant, that over time their rationale developed a momentum of its own,

[1] Charles Brooke to Kelly and Walsh, Singapore, 13 July 1910, SA.
[2] Ward, *Rajah's Servant*, p. 100.
[3] Emerson, *Malaysia*, p. 467.

eventually serving not only to explain Sarawak's impoverished informality, but also to influence the rulers toward conserving the status quo.

The mainspring of Brooke rule was the soul-filling satisfaction which the first two Rajahs, but above all the Second, derived from ruling. This is not very hard to understand, certainly not for anyone who has visited the Royal Astana in Kuching, gazed out over the pleasant town across the river, and acknowledged a small inner voice which suggests that the exercise of total power must be pleasant, if not irresistible. If the visitor imagines himself to be not only an Oriental monarch with savage armies at his command, but also a shrewd and modest administrator, and a philanthropist as well, it will be clear why the Brookes were fond of their vocation.

The pattern of motivation which came to exist was complex, of course, as was the relationship between the historical circumstances of Brooke rule and the development of Brooke idealism. To begin with it must be recalled that James did not intend to be a White Rajah; the status was forced upon him. He would originally have preferred a more orthodox colonial role, but London rejected both him and his rather unprepossessing piece of Borneo. The independent State which resulted survived a perilous childhood and entered a long, lean maturity. Despite the rigorous economies practiced by Charles Brooke, half a century went by before his accounts began to show what he could consider a comfortable surplus. By the year 1910 Sarawak could boast four-fifths the population and six times the territory of Perak, a single State of Malaya, but only one-tenth of Perak's revenue.[1]

Elsewhere in the British Empire, and most emphatically in nearby Malaya and Ceylon, trade and economic development were major, if not the major, justifications for colonial rule. The Second Rajah could not point to any spectacular accomplishments in these fields, nor could he claim to have provided anything beyond a modest minimum in the way of orderly administration or education. As things were, Charles ran a taut ship, and regardless of what his intentions might have been, he did not in the final analysis have the funds to do more than he was already doing. But he did have an idealistic philosophy, rooted in the principles of nineteenth-century liberalism and first enunciated in broad outline by his uncle, James. In adhering to it he was accomplishing something which none of his neighbors, of whose prosperity he was well aware, could hope to match. In fact his idealism made virtues out of some practices which they would have regarded as less than ideal. His professed aim of ruling the country for the ultimate benefit of the inhabitants was not very debatable, nor was it unique to Sarawak. But gradualism carried to excess could be interpreted as tolerance of the intolerable. As we have seen,

[1] See Appendix B.

Charles glorified non-interference with local custom even in some cases where that custom was morally obnoxious in contemporary Western eyes and would hardly be defended by any educated person in Sarawak today.

The more acutely aware the Brookes became of the differences which distinguished Sarawak from orthodox colonies, the more they were naturally inclined to emphasize, to themselves as well as to others, their own benevolent ideology. If the Sarawak way was right, it followed that other ways were wrong, and Charles in particular said so in no uncertain terms. When the Colonial Office thwarted his ambition to absorb Brunei it only strengthened him in his self-righteous dissent. Already in a condition of political and geographic isolation, the White Rajah became psychologically isolated as well. Sarawak developed a personality of its own precisely because it was not a part of any greater imperial whole; the people remained cut off from outside currents, and the rulers were constantly reminded of their own unique position. All the circumstances surrounding the State stimulated the Brookes and their officers (who were underpaid as well as under-supervised in comparison to colonial servants elsewhere) to see themselves as threadbare aristocrats, poor but honest, eccentric in the spirit of a British value-system which has always made room for high-minded eccentricity.

Considering Sarawak's lack of exploitable resources, and the numerous opportunities open to Western capitalists elsewhere, it could be said that Brooke idealism was never tested against any truly severe temptation. Nevertheless there is evidence that in time the official ethic did come to exert its own force. Charles could certainly have attracted some plantation enterprise to Sarawak, as the Chartered Company in North Borneo did,[1] had his ideological position not been fixed before the advent of the world rubber boom. His philanthropic credentials were tried on one occasion in 1911, after he had granted monopoly rights to the United Malaysian Rubber Company to process Sarawak's production of the swamp-growing wild rubber, *jelutong* This elaborate scheme, which led to the construction of a large factory in the Sarawak River delta, was based on a wildly over-optimistic estimate of the prospects for *jelutong*. But before its fatal flaws were completely apparent, the Company demanded that Charles should interpret the concession agreement in a way which would have disadvantaged certain Chinese middlemen who were the initial purchasers of the raw rubber. Deciding in favor of the Chinese, the Rajah made it clear that he would maintain his own standards.

[1] See p. 285, n. 1, for incentives to planters offered by the Chartered Company. As a direct result of this difference in past policy, roughly one-half of Sabah's present rubber acreage is located on large estates, compared to only about one-tenth of Sarawak's: James C. Jackson, 'Smallholding Cultivation of Cash Crops', in *Malaysia: A Survey*, ed. Wang Gungwu (London, 1964) pp. 265–70.

'Congo rules cannot be supported in Sarawak to please anyone or company', he concluded.[1] The later, negative consequences of his theories, as they were adhered to after his death under a less flexible and forceful successor, have already been mentioned.

When Sarawak is viewed in the larger Asian context, it may be argued that the later nineteenth-century race for colonies made it inevitable that northwest Borneo should come under some form of European rule, and that the specific motivations of the men who governed one marginal area did not necessarily have any relevance to the dynamics of imperialism in general. The international structure as a whole might well have been the product of purely economic factors, and yet permitted, perhaps even demanded, the existence of economically unjustifiable units. But it seems more likely that the factors which motivated the Brookes in Sarawak were also at play elsewhere. Both James and Charles sometimes spoke as if Sarawak held a monopoly on idealism, but the altruistic concept of the civilizing mission was an ingredient in virtually all colonialism. There were few if any dependencies whose European administrators did not come in some degree to identify themselves with the welfare of the local people, often in opposition to the interests of the mother country. And although no others enjoyed the trappings of royalty as the Brookes did, there were innumerable provincial governors and district officers who derived satisfaction from conscientiously ordering the affairs of subject peoples. The history of Sarawak proves once again, if further proof be needed, that these considerations cannot be dismissed as insubstantial frosting on the Leninist cake. If such motivation was potent enough to be the sustaining force behind a century of British rule in northwest Borneo, it can well be regarded as having contributed heavily to the complex causation of colonialism in general.

[1] Charles Brooke to W. H. Galbraith, 5 June 1911, SA; *SG* 579 (1 May 1911). The unlikely history of this interesting venture, well documented in the Sarawak Archives, proves that the Second Rajah was not automatically and irrevocably hostile to large-scale Western investment. The factory complex at Tanjong Batu was named Goebilt in honor of two American barons of finance, Robert Goelet and Cornelius Vanderbilt, who were the original promoters. It was not finally abandoned until after World War I.

Appendix A

SELECTED DOCUMENTS

THE RADICAL CASE AGAINST JAMES BROOKE, 1850

THE bitter political controversy over James Brooke which culminated in a Royal Commission of Enquiry held at Singapore in 1854 centered on his harsh treatment of Saribas and Skrang Iban 'pirates' at the Battle of Beting Marau in July 1849. Brooke's Radical enemies made some uninformed and irresponsible attacks on him, but they also recognized what his friends were not always willing to admit: that the White Rajah was an essentially political figure, whose primary goal was to extend Brooke and British influence in Borneo.

The following printed letter, composed by two prominent members of the anti-slavery and aborigines' protection movements, is in FO 12/8. The Radical campaign against Brooke is discussed at the end of Chapter 3 above, and at much greater length in the various works cited on p. 66, n. 1. Place names are spelled as in the original document in all the passages in this Appendix, and are not altered to conform with modern usage as has been done elsewhere in this book.

35 Bedford Square
1st June, 1850

Sirs – The Committee of the Aborigines' Protection and the Peace Societies having been informed that a motion is shortly to be made by Mr Hume in the House of Commons, for the appointment of a Committee of Inquiry into the Proceedings at Borneo of Sir James Brooke, with reference to the massacre of the Sarebas and Sakarran [Skrang] Dyaks, on the 31st July 1849, they earnestly desire to urge upon your particular attention the subjoined statement.

1st. The expedition – the third of its kind – was fitted out against the tribes aforesaid, on the plea that they were pirates. It waylaid their fleet on its return from a predatory excursion against some neighbouring tribes, and destroyed it together with at least 1500 of the natives, the larger portion in the jungle, after the attack was over. For this transaction a sum of 20,700 l. has been awarded as head-money to Commander Farquhar and the officers and men engaged in the expedition.

2nd. The depositions upon which Sir Christopher Rawlinson, one of the judges

of the Vice-Admiralty Court at Singapore, determined that the claim for head-money was valid, do not substantiate the alleged accusation of piracy against the Sarebas and Sakarran tribes, but go to prove that their predatory excursions are strictly part of a system of intertribal warfare. Moreover these depositions were not taken on the trial of any particular individual accused of piracy, but on a general charge of piracy advanced, in support of the claim of head-money, against the two ribes in question, who reside in the vicinity of Sir James Brooke's territory, Sarawak; who are and have long been at open enmity with the natives of this province and of the districts adjacent, these latter likewise having ever been at feud with them. Further, the depositions were taken after the massacre, and the principal ones at Sarawak, under the controul [*sic*] of Sir James Brooke, who had a direct interest in the issue. Lastly the deponents examined were *Malays*, not Dyaks: and it is important to note that the Malays make no distinction between intertribal warfare and piracy.

3d. That had the accusation alleged against these tribes, by Sir James Brooke, been fully proved, it would have been not less incumbent upon us to protest against a proceeding, repugnant to all Christian principle; and the recurrence of which, on the fiat of a Colonial Governor, must endanger the very existence of an aboriginal race.

4th. As much stress has been laid on the supposed approbation of the conduct of Sir James Brooke, by the merchants of Singapore, as being the most competent judges of its propriety, it is essential to state that it can be proved on the clearest evidence that the majority of the merchants there, and the official functionaries, have withheld their approbation of the procedure.

5th. The proceedings of Sir James Brooke – even granting the aforesaid charge of piracy to have been founded – were in direct and open violation of the Treaty entered into in May, 1847, between Her Majesty and the Sultan of Borneo, which treaty expressly stipulates that all vessels and persons captured in the act of piracy shall be reserved for judgement in the proper Courts.

6th. The Admiralty Instructions – with a wise foresight – prohibit the officers of Her Majesty's navy, engaged in the suppression of piracy in the Eastern Seas, from 'interfering directly or indirectly with any ship, vessel or boat they may fall in with, under the supposition that she may be a pirate, or have been engaged in any unlawful act; unless she shall have within view attacked some British vessel or subject, or except on such proof as would satisfy a Court of Admiralty in England.'

7th. The Parliamentary Returns headed 'Malay Pirates' laid before the House on the 16th April *ult.*, do not prove that any British vessel has ever been attacked by the Dyaks of Sarebas and Sakarran, or by either; though they shew that British vessels *have* been attacked by the *Malays* and others: and your attention is called to the subjoined analysis of those returns.

Of the twenty-eight vessels reported in that Document to have 'been either captured, attacked, plundered, or in any way molested, by either Malay or Dyak pirates, on the coast of Borneo, from the 15th August, 1839, to the 15th August inclusive, 1849', 13 are reported at Lloyd's as 'missing ships'; 6 were wrecked, one

of these being abandoned; 2 were burnt; 3 were attacked by Chinese pirates; 3 by the Malays or Lanuns, and one by the natives of the Nicobar islands, who are neither Malays, Lanuns nor Dyaks. Thus it would appear that in ten years, seven vessels were attacked off that coast by Chinese, Malays and Lanuns, but not one by Dyaks.

8th. Sir James Brooke states, that during his absence in England in 1847, the native trade on the coast was completely cut up, in consequence of the Sarebas and Sakarran tribes being emboldened by his absence to continue their piracies with impunity. As proof that this statement is incorrect, your attention is directed to the following summary of the official returns of arrivals and departures from Sarawak of native craft, in the years 1845, 1846 and 1847 respectively, namely: In 1845, *One hundred and one prahus*; in 1846, *one hundred and forty*; and in 1847, TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTEEN.

9th. Previously to the arrival of Sir James Brooke at Sarawak the Dyaks had never been accused of piracy by *any of the numerous* authorities on the habits of the tribes of Borneo and of the Eastern Archipelago. But after Sir James Brooke's arrival, and more particularly after his assumption of the Rajah-ship of Sarawak, that charge is found to be constantly alleged exclusively against the Dyaks of Sarebas and Sakarran, and several sanguinary expeditions have, upon his representations, been fitted out against them, involving great sacrifice of human life, a large expenditure of the pubic money, *and a failure in the end proposed to be attained.*

10th. The printed journals of Sir James Brooke prove incontrovertibly that the natives of Sarawak and the Sarebans and Sakarrans are hereditary foes, and that Sir James Brooke's aim has been to extend Sarawak influence and power over the whole of the country adjacent.

11th. There are strong reasons for believing that massacres of the 31st July were long premeditated; as it will be found by a reference to the Parliamentary Papers, headed 'Piracy' (Borneo) presented to the House in April last, Page 2, No. 1, Sir James Brooke to Viscount Palmerston, that Sir James Brooke states that Captain Keppel and himself made arrangements in England in 1847, and publicly pledged themselves to attack Sarebas and Sakarran.

12th. According to Sir James Brooke's own shewing, four-fifths of the hands on board piratical fleets in the Eastern Seas are slaves, generally unarmed and employed at the oars, prohibited from fighting and in no case free-agents. Granting, then, the act of piracy on the part of the tribes in question, the laws of this country would treat with leniency men in this position, who could prove that they were acting under compulsion. But in the present instance a *very few* prisoners were made, whilst the slaughter was pitiless to extreme degree, the Dyaks having no firearms, but only spears and shields.

13th. The existence of piracy is not denied by the undersigned on behalf of their respective Societies. But the pirates of Sooloo, of Illanoo, of Magindanao, who are Malays, who frequent the coast, and even run up the rivers of Borneo, must not be confounded with the Dyaks of Borneo, who are an agricultural people, and whose head-hunting expeditions are undertaken in deference to a religious superstition,

which the introduction and spread of Christianity and Civilization amongst them would eradicate, as they have eradicated cannibalism among the New Zealanders. It is necessary to add, that this truly barbarous practice of head-hunting is not confined to the Sarebans and Sakarrans, but is common to all the Dyak tribes; and that in employing those of Sarawak against the Sarebans and Sakarrans, Sir James Brooke is perpetuating the practice; for he states, that when the Malays and Dyaks of Sarawak penetrated into the country of the Sarebans and Sakarrans, the former looked after the plunder, whilst the latter were content with the heads of their foes.

Under these circumstances, the Committee of the Aborigines' Protection and the Peace Societies earnestly solicit you to support the Motion for the Parliamentary Inquiry alluded to.

We have the honour to remain, Sir,
On behalf of the Committees aforesaid,
Your very obedient Servants,
Louis Alexis Chamerovzow,
Secretary to the Aborigines' Protection Society
Henry Richard
Secretary to the London Peace Society.

THE SARAWAK–BRUNEI TREATY OF 1853

In 1853 Brunei relinquished legal rights to the main areas of Iban settlement, including the entire Second Division and most of the Third, to Sarawak. The cession is discussed at the end of Chapter 3. The following English translation of the treaty is enclosed in Governor Edwardes to Foreign Office, 8 June 1860, FO 12/27. The treaty was renewed in almost identical language in 1855: W. G. Maxwell and W. S. Gibson, *Treaties and Engagements Affecting the Malay States and Borneo* (London, 1924) pp. 188–9.

A.H. 1269. At that time His Majesty the Sultan Abdul Mumin the son of the deceased Mulana Abdul Mahal to whom at this time belongs the Government and Royalty of the City of Brunai together with its Provinces and Dependencies has made certain and clear with reference to the former agreement of the former Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin the son of the deceased Sultan Mahomed Jamal al Alam who had surrendered the Countries of the Seven Provinces: 1stly Rejang, 2ndly Kalekka [Krian], 3rd Sarebas, 4th Lingga, 5th Sakarran, 6th Sadong, 7th Samarhan, requesting assistance in adjusting their revenues from the Tuan Besar Sir James Brooke Rajah of Sarawak.

2ndly. His Majesty the Sultan of Brunai has concluded an agreement with the Tuan Besar Sir James Brooke so that (on account of) the Countries above mentioned he will provide for the payment every year of one thousand five hundred dollars to

the Government of His Majesty the Sultan of Brunai in lieu of taxes and tribute (forced trade).

3rdly. In reference to those countries His Majesty the Sultan does not interfere with the measures which the Tuan Besar Sir James Brooke may devise in those Countries to raise revenues [and] to cause a good understanding (or tranquillity or comfort or peace) between both parties or whoever may succeed us afterwards.

4thly. If there should be collected revenues above the expenses; a profit; it is to be divided into two; to the Tuan Besar one half of the profit and to the Sultan of Brunai one half.

5thly. His Majesty the Sultan will not order his people to bring any business whatever into the Country. If His Majesty the Sultan wishes to or has any business His Majesty the Sultan will order it to be sent to the Tuan Besar Sir James Brooke or whoever may be acting by his authority.

6thly. Regarding our people of the other Provinces should they desire to enter to reside in the Countries above mentioned do not receive them because it would cause a want of consideration for the customs of our Government in other Provinces.

7thly. We desire the Tuan Besar Sir James Brooke to command in reference to the Dyaks of Sarebas and Sakarran, who are very bad constantly attacking or killing people who seek for profit (traders) that if they should not cease from these evil doings to attack them at once wherever these wicked people are, if they should wish to behave better and submit to all people then it may cease.

8thly. His Majesty the Sultan has concluded an agreement with Sir James Brooke – Should we get into difficulty in our City of Brunai or in our Provinces our People of the Countries mentioned above may (or will) come and assist us, together with Sir James Brooke or his people.

9thly. Those our people who are in the Provinces referred to in this if they come into our City of Brunai or into our other Provinces they may not use flags which are prohibited by us in the City of Brunai; but they may fly one flag in the stern.

10thly. This treaty may be exchanged in the City of Brunai within twelve months.

This writing of agreement was written on Saturday the 17th day of the month Lul' Kaidar in the year 1269 [22 August 1853].

AUTHORIZED IBAN RAIDING, 1891

The Second Rajah frequently gave Ibans permission to attack tribal enemies, when he felt that they had a legitimate grievance. In 1891 the upper Rejang people complained of raids by the Uma (or Leppo) Kulit group, Kenyahs inhabiting the upper Kayan River in the deep interior of Dutch Borneo. The Uma Kulits were believed also to have raided into the headwaters of the Baram in Sarawak's Fourth Division. As a result, the Rajah issued the following instructions to the Resident of the Third Division, Charles Agar Bamp-

fylde, later co-author of the semi-official history of Sarawak published in 1909. Contemporary reports in the *Sarawak Gazette* indicate that the expedition sanctioned here never took place, although fighting between Ibans and Kenyahs continued. The 'articles of trade' to which the Rajah refers in his second letter are jungle produce, primarily wild rubber and rattans, a major component of Sarawak exports at this period.

The original letters are in a volume of the Second Rajah's correspondence normally kept on public display in the Sarawak Museum. Like many old Sarawak documents it has suffered over the years from the activities of white ants, and the meaning of some almost completely devoured words, set off in brackets in the text below, can only be guessed.

March 28th '91
Kuching

The Hon'ble
C. Bampfylde
Resident. 1c. 3.D. [First Class, Third Division]

Sir,

I do not feel myself justified in preventing the Dyaks of Rejang and the inhabitants of Baram from avenging the losses they have sustained from the Uma Kulits – I allow them to decide for themselves independent of any action of the Government.

The Uma Kulits being quite beyond the control of any civilized Govt. – It is useless for me to promise even to attempt to settle the question amicably or otherwise of their killing indiscriminately our people without cause so far as can be known, or owing perhaps to old & past feuds –

Our losses amount now within the last two to three years to [?] men, women, & children – houses [burnt?], goods plundered and Upper Baram depopulated –

I wish you to assemble the chiefs & ascertain if they are still determined on making an attack on the Uma Kulits – and if so – I direct that the following points may be attended to

1st. That they name the chiefs responsible for the conduct of the force –

2nd. That the chiefs will be held responsible should any innocent lives be taken or people molested –

3rd. That this one attack must settle the feud, and it must be over in 9 [?] months after the harvest is in –

4th. Should there be a failure and fresh attacks be talked of the Govt. will prevent all parties from passing the fort [at Kapit] either for Balui [upper Rejang] or Balleh –

5th. To avoid bloodshed as much as possible

6th. That the expedition is to consist of the Rejang inhabitants or from Baram or Kanowit or only those who have been the sufferers – All outsiders from Kaluka [Krian] or other rivers to be sent back –

7th. That the expedition does not pass through the Kayan Country [in the upper Rejang], but through some uninhabited part of the Balleh –

I am, Sir,
Yrs. faithfully
(sd.) C. Brooke
Rajah

March 30 '91
Kuching

My dear Resident,

Apart from the points in the enclosed official letter I send you about this balla – I should like you to try your best to impress on the Tuas that it will be much to their advantage to give up the idea of going to make this, uncertain of success, attack on those so far away – or at any rate to postpone the attack for another year. The articles of trade are now high in price, and everything is at a standstill so long as they are engaged in warfare – So they will be great losers in many ways – and their harvest has not been abundant this year – If they leave it to me to decide I should certainly recommend the postponement and I am as anxious as they are that the Uma Kulits shld be punished and attacked – However if they are still determined there is one more point which I think advisable, though I will not press it, that is, that say 100 pikuls of jars and tawaks [brass gongs] & c. are lodged in Government hands as guarantee that they do not do mischief en route –

Yrs Sincerely
Sd C. Brooke

[P.S.]
Rejang will lose 6 or 8 months trading time if the expedition goes and I expect there are many [discontented?] among the Dyaks in their own hearts.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CHOLERA EXPEDITION, 1902

Charles Brooke insisted on supervising every detail of the great expeditions. The following are his instructions for the Cholera Expedition of 1902 against Bantin, described in Chapter 7. 'Balla' [*bala*], as explained elsewhere, is the Iban term for a large party of warriors.

A copy of the instructions is in the Rajah's letter book, Sarawak Archives.

Kuching –
13th May 1902

Balla
To assemble at Simanggang on 1st day of bulan Ralil Awal – June 8th – under command of Honble H. Deshon – H.H. the Rajah Muda and Mr Bailey – to attack all in Delok and elsewhere if required – Delok and its vicinity first of all –

Composed of Dyaks of Kaluka, Saribas, Ballaus, Undups, Lower Batang Lupars, under their respective chiefs – of Malays as follows:

2	boats –	25	men ea. –	15	Sniders –	180	rds from S'wak.	Kalukas.
2	,,	25	,, ,,	15	,,	180	,,	Saribas.
2	,,	25	,, ,,	15	,,	180	,,	Linggas.
4	,,	25	,, ,,	20	,,		from S'gang.	Simanggang.
2	,,	25	,, ,,	40	,,		20:– in each pouch.	Kuching. [*]

Provisioned 20 days to count from Simanggang. 5 Gantangs each. Mr Bailey with 2 boats of Simanggang Malays to take charge of position at or near mouth of Delok. While the other part of force under H. Deshon and Rajah Muda will push up river –

Mr Gould to be left in charge of Simanggang fort and great care must be taken to watch the fort and prevent stragglers from doing mischief, as well as send those back who would be too late to join the force –

Lobok Antu fort to be well watched by Dagang & his squad. Careful watches at Sibu & Kapit in Rejang also kept up when balla is away – No large boats to be taken up river –

The arms, carbines, will be supplied from Zahora at mouth of Lingga – 45 carbines as mentioned above & pouches. 4 cases spare ammunition 1000 rds each – sent in Rangers boats –

The boats from Kaluka, Saribas or elsewhere are to await the Rajah's arrival at mouth of Lingga the day before new moon bulan Ralil Awal June 7th

N.B. If boats of twenty-five men are considered too large or heavy the same number of men (50) can man 3 or 4 boats.

[* A marginal note opposite this line reads 'Rangers', i.e. Sarawak Rangers from Kuching.]

A COLONIAL OFFICE COMMENT ON SARAWAK, 1906

Charles Brooke always wanted to incorporate the remainder of Brunei in Sarawak. At the end of 1905, however, the British Government deeply disappointed him by sending a Malayan-style Resident to the Sultanate, thereby indicating an intention to preserve its independence. But letters in the Sarawak Archives prove that as late as September 1907 Brooke hoped that this decision would be reversed, and in the meantime the eventual fate of Brunei was still the subject of debate within the Colonial Office.

According to Dr Donald E. Brown of the University of California, who has recently completed anthropological research on the history and structure of the Brunei Sultanate, documents in the Public Record Office indicate that Reginald Edward Stubbs was the most persistent and influential advocate of maintaining Brunei's integrity. Stubbs, at this time a member of the Colonial Office staff, went on to a highly successful career abroad, serving at various times as Governor of Hong Kong, Ceylon and Jamaica. His

minute of 10 December 1906, reproduced below, indicates that the Rajah's handling of upriver Iban problems in Sarawak damaged his reputation in London and contributed to the frustration of one of his oldest ambitions.

As a general assessment of Sarawak rule, Stubbs' minute was unduly harsh. He failed to consider the utterly different social and geographic conditions which distinguished Borneo from Malaya, and which would inevitably have resulted in a less formal administration, regardless of who governed Sarawak. Nevertheless he also pointed out some of the very real deficiencies in the Brooke system. Sir John Anderson, who apparently provided some of his information, was British High Commissioner in Singapore, hence also (at this period) British Agent for the Borneo Territories. The dispute between the Rajah and his nephew over Lawas is mentioned on p. 144, n. 1 above. For the secret society affair alluded to, see p. 290, n. 1. It is likely that Stubbs' reference to an illegitimate son of the Rajah was accurate, but the individual concerned may have living relatives in Sarawak who are somewhat sensitive on the subject, and it would serve little purpose to speculate as to his identity.

The original of the Stubbs minute is in CO 144/81.

Mr Lucas:

Mr [Winston] Churchill wished this letter registered and recirculated. Appended is the minute which you wrote in connection with the H. of C. [House of Commons] Questions. I annex also two cuttings from to-day's 'Standard', annotated. They are mainly interesting as shewing (*a*) the need of a school of geography for journalists and (*b*) that Sir E. [Edward] Sassoon thinks that Brunei is in the Malay Peninsula.

To your minute. I venture to add a few observations which may shew the true nature of what Sir E. Sassoon calls the 'humane, civilized and enlightened rule of Rajah Brooke'. The Brooke family have held Sarawak or parts of it for nearly 65 years. We have held the F.M.S. [Federated Malay States] for 22, (less in some cases such as Pahang). I take it that we want to assimilate Brunei to the F.M.S. and therefore a comparison is instructive. We have established peace in a country formerly one of the most unsettled in the world and we have done it practically without fighting. The Perak war, some trivial disturbances in the Negri Sembilan and two trifling revolts in Pahang have been the only disturbances. We have established a thoroughly civilized system of law and a judiciary, at the head of which is an independent Supreme Court. We have encouraged the introduction of capital and the development of the country. We have abolished slavery.

What has Sarawak done in a period nearly three times as long? Open any Sarawak Gazette and you will find records of punitive expeditions or rebellions. There is a good specimen attached. . . . Two punitive expeditions in 3 days. 81 villages burnt & the district ravaged from the mouth of the river to the source. Very humane civilized and enlightened, no doubt, but – . . . . A reference to some Dyaks going on the warpath. . . . More Dyaks out after heads. The Penghulu wishes to

attack them and the Rajah forbids his interfering with them. It is worth remembering that the Dyak who goes out after heads, wants any head he can get and usually collects more specimens from women and children than from men. (This Gazette is nothing out of the common. I have all the 1906 Gazettes before me and can parallel these methods of 'humanity, civilization and enlightenment' from any one of them.)

Moreover I invite reference to 36143/05 in which Sir J. Anderson points out that wild Dyaks uncontrolled by Europeans are despatched on punitive expeditions. As we have seen from the Sarawak Gazettes, the Dyaks are still head-hunters. Comment is superfluous.

So much for civilization and humanity. Now for Justice. There is a Sarawak Supreme Court indeed but who are its members? The Rajah, his son, and the principle *executive officers i.e. the Residents*. These men are wholly dependent on Rajah Brooke, against whom they have no remedy if he dismisses them, from whose decision they cannot appeal. A man must be almost superhuman not to become subservient to the Rajah in such a position. That the Sarawak officers are not superhuman will be apparent from the following anecdote, vouched for by Sir J. Anderson. Sir C. Brooke quarrelled with his nephew, Mr Brooke Johnson, about the Lawas business. It is not necessary to go into the details: the quarrel was on a matter of policy, and there was nothing against Mr Johnson's character. The Rajah thereupon demanded that his nephew should be expelled from the Sarawak Club: and all the members, govt officers, voted accordingly for expulsion – the only vote against it was that of the Bishop – the only man there not dependent on the Rajah. No doubt, the most subservient judges could do little harm if the laws were good but in Sarawak written laws are few. The Rajah's will governs most matters. Sir J. Anderson (or Sir W. Treacher) tells me that the Rajah himself is constantly interfering in the Courts taking part-heard cases from another 'judge' and hearing the end himself. This system might work all right with a very primitive community but I submit that it is a bar to all progress. Moreover it depends too much on the personality of the Rajah, who is now 77. Little is known of his sons and what little is known seems not to be good. (Sir J. Anderson told me that the general opinion is that the only man in Sarawak who is any good as an administrator is one of the Rajah's illegitimate sons by a native mother.)

I can find little about such written laws as exist but one provision is that membership of a Secret Society is punishable by death. This is not an idle threat as the Straits papers a few months ago had a report of a trial in which a number of Chinese (9, I think) were condemned to death for this offence. Unless the practice has been altered in quite recent years, the mode of execution is neither 'humane, civilized nor enlightened' – it consists of stabbing to death with the kris.

Then as to development. Sir C. Brooke discourages the introduction of capital. . . . So far as I can ascertain from directories &c., almost the only European firm is the 'Borneo Co. Ltd', the Rajah's commercial agents in England. To slavery, you have already alluded. . . . [*sic*]

I submit that in view of these considerations the surrender of 30,000 more natives to Sarawak would be a crime and a disgrace to Great Britain. I have no fear that Sir

E. Sassoon would find any unbiassed Englishman to share his views, if the facts as to Sarawak rule were known.

[Sd] R. E. S. 10/12.

CHARLES BROOKE ON RUBBER PLANTING

In 1910 Charles Brooke's youngest son, Harry Brooke, had the temerity to suggest that his father might consider backing a new rubber planting enterprise in Sarawak. The Rajah's reaction, in the letter which follows, is a good sample of his attitude toward rubber planting and large-scale Western investment in general.

Chesterton.
March 5th 1910.

My dear Harry,

I have read your letter over as well as the one or two sent by [C. A.] Bampfylde, and I have had frequent applications of a similar kind from many others within the last month – but not believing in the permanence of the Rubber boom I don't wish Sarawak to be a great producer of this article – except it can be planted by natives who could afford to sell it a 20th part less than European Companies, and this is what it will come to another and not distant day. I can't look at this Matter in a private light and if I had listened to the luring proposals of rich merchants I should have been a millionaire 30 or 40 years ago – I feel sure the enterprise you propose would get a good hearing in British North Borneo, which is full of Mercantile Enterprises and achievements.

I hate the name of Rubber and look on it as a very gigantic gamble, as is now turned to account in making the fortunes of many and another day will be the means of depriving the poor and ignorant shareholders of their hard earned savings –

I don't wish to put my hand in the bag or be a party to what I don't approve –

Of course I know the tree & its growth perfectly well and am now spreading the cultivation among the inhabitants in a humble way hoping that they will make a genuine concern out of its small profits and small motor owners & [*sic*] purchase their tyres at fifty times less than the market price at the present day. I regret I can't assist you in your project.

Yrs affectionate
sd C. Brooke

CHARLES BROOKE ON IBANS, CHINESE, AND WORLD WAR I

On Christmas Day 1914 the Rajah addressed a festive gathering of Europeans at the headquarters of the Third Division, Sibu, expressing his thoughts

about the Ibans, the Chinese, and World War I. He was 85 years old. The following account of his speech is from the *Sarawak Gazette* of 2 January 1915.

Christmas at Sibu

On Friday, 18th instant, at about 6:30 p.m., His Highness the Rajah arrived at Sibu and having sent for the Resident of Mukah and Oya and his staff, the Season's festivities began.

On Christmas Day His Highness gave a dinner in the fort when no less than 22 Europeans were present, the largest gathering there has ever been at Sibu.

The Fort was illuminated and very well decorated with flags and evergreens, and much credit is due to those who were in charge of the arrangements. After dinner His Highness proposed the health of absent friends and made the following speech –

I am much pleased to see the gathering around this table this evening and I offer you all my warmest greetings on this occasion. I have quite forgotten the number of times I have gone up and down this river during the last fifty or sixty years or the number of expeditions that I have commanded in and up all of its many branches against the Dyaks who we know are a very troublesome recalcitrant people, but like children, only more dangerous, for that reason are most liked by their parents. What one has to admire in the Dyaks is their vitality, energy and activity; if they are not farming or otherwise employed in peaceful pursuits they are on mischief bent, worrying or killing their so-called enemies. If it were not for their vitality they would be an effete race, as a weakly flower in a garden that one scarcely takes the trouble to notice; they are, however, strong in body, a mass of muscle, quick in intelligence and perception, with brains that are as the virgin soil and only require seedlings of a goodly sort to be planted, I feel sure, to produce useful things on a future day. I never tire of their misdeeds and I have reason to know that on many occasions they desired to obtain my head and boil it in a cauldron. A traveller who visits them cannot be otherwise than interested and fascinated as he sees and hears the primitive man in his surroundings of grand jungle and river, nature in all her beauty and wildness. Taking on the other hand the Chinese who are being brought into this river by the American [Methodist] Mission, for which we have every reason to be very grateful, they are the steady workers who have centuries of semi-civilization behind them; they are making a mark already which in 10 years will be a very considerable mark in this river's prosperity.

I am strongly against large capitalists embarking in speculative concerns; they move things out of their natural groove and are more liable in most cases to do the country much more harm than real good – to move on slowly and surely is safest and best.

And now I would touch on this sad war which is filling the minds of all men and women. I would ask what are we fighting for? For peace which we have not enjoyed for the last fifteen to twenty years. Our ears have always been filled with Dread-

noughts and scares – taxes laid out on armaments that ought to be used beneficially for the inhabitants and their country's welfare. It is fortunate the war has at last come to pass as had it come, say 10 years later it would have gone very hard with our independence and it is to be regretted it did not take place ten years ago when we might have had a much easier task. We fight for peace and to prevent an iron despotism trampling and crushing the smaller states and even weakening ourselves and France. I look on it that all nations and peoples and individuals have two sides to their character – the one the rough side and the other the smooth, or, in other words, on one side is the material and on the other the ideal. The material is the Bull dog side, rough, hard, strong, combative, warlike; and however much we may admire the military side, its pomp and panoply, its chivalry, bravery and renown, this is the side that the Germans have scientifically for the last 50 years been bringing to a wonderful pitch of strength and perfection in order to overcome the whole of Europe, if not the world, and this is what they will certainly do with success if we, the allies, are unable to overcome and conquer this tyrannical spirit and shape out affairs so that a lasting peace may be attained in the future. No doubt the military side is necessary but a limit is required to curb and control it.

Now I would look on the other side – where certain thinking and studious men devote their lives to thought and study, living in a world of their own, solving social problems and scientific methods to aid mankind and the world to attain a higher standard of intelligence and intellect, to improve the gifts that are most to be desired, such as literature, music, painting, sculpture and the many branches of civil engineering – and whatever we may think of military glory it is only second to the higher class of the mental or ideal side which leaves an everlasting monument of mental culture for future generations.

Gentlemen, I wish to propose 'absent friends', but before doing so I would say a word of sympathy, which I feel sure all must feel, for those who have lost so many relations and friends in this terrible war, in which brave men are being shot down and are falling like leaves off an autumnal tree. On such an occasion as this I must repeat four lines from my dear poet Tony Moore –

> But pass round the wine cup, while a relic of truth
> Is in man or in woman, this prayer shall be mine
> That the sunshine of love may illumine our youth
> And the moonlight of friendship console our decline

I drink to absent friends and victory –

After dinner a number of the guests rendered songs both grave and gay, which tended to add all the more to the enjoyment of a most memorable evening. Three hearty cheers were given later for His Highness who said he hoped he would have the pleasure of meeting those present again, and he took this opportunity of wishing them all the best of luck and prosperity. His Highness then went on board the *Zahora*. Songs and various amusements were kept up until the early hours of the morning.

CHARLES BROOKE AT SIMANGGANG, 1915

In the fall of 1915 Charles Brooke made what may have been a final visit to his favorite outstation, Simanggang, headquarters of his beloved Second Division. Some of the upper Batang Lupar Ibans were again causing trouble, inspired by the continuing unrest in the Balleh headwaters of the Third Division, but there was hardly anything unusual about that. The Rajah was pleased with the condition of the station. His only wish was that the ten-mile railroad which he had recently completed in the First Division might be extended the additional one hundred miles to Simanggang. (It never was.) The letter is with miscellaneous papers in the Sarawak Archives.

Simanggang
November 5, 1915

My Dear [F. H.] Dallas [Treasurer of Sarawak],

I am waiting patiently here till my armed party return from upriver – and I expect them in another seven days. I hope they will be successful but one can't tell as Dyaks are as difficult to catch as wild birds or animals. I conclude you recd my letter and scale of salaries. As you may imagine I am passing my time in reading and writing all day with a two mile walk every evening. The place looks so nice and homely. How I wish a railway reached this far – & to this place I should direct it straight from Tebekang in Sadong if I was living. The place is flourishing in pepper there are a hundred gardens on the road to Sabu where [the Reverend William] Howell lives and many more upriver near Marup – I feel Mr Page-Turner will do well here and I am greatly pleased with young [J. A. H.] Hardie who is not a simpleton as I thought he was – he is a smart young fellow quite the gentleman and good looking – he will do well as he has all his wits about him and surpasses his papa [J. Hardie, a former manager of the Borneo Company Ltd in Sarawak] I think already.

I shall give Page-Turner very distinct orders about the Dyaks.

I hope you are all well – I am so sorry to hear about the loss of the bull [presumably one of the Kuching Astana cattle herd] & can't understand why.

Yrs very sincerely
C. Brooke

'DYAK AFFAIRS', 1916

In 1916 Charles Brooke relinquished his formal authority over the upriver Ibans of the Second and Third Divisions to his son and successor, Charles Vyner Brooke. The following proclamation, published in the *Sarawak Gazette* of 2 October 1916, is a good gauge of the special importance which the Second Rajah always attached to upriver Iban affairs. The various troubles

alluded to are discussed in Chapters 7 and 8. 'Mr Gifford's action', mentioned in the second paragraph, was the battle of Nanga Pila.

Dyak Affairs

This 30th day of September I wish marked as an important epoch in the history of Sarawak for I have to-day handed over the control of the Ulu Ai or interior of Rejang and Simanggang districts together with all correspondence concerning these districts into the hands of my son and successor the Rajah Muda. Fully half the correspondence which I have collected during my long life in this country and by far the most interesting part of it concerns these districts. All or nearly all the incidents that have occurred there at various times may be found recorded in the *Sarawak Gazette* and I now leave to the Rajah Muda matters that are at present pending in the Upper Rejang and Ulu Batang Lupar.

Batang Lupar – Last year the Jingins killed eighteen innocent women and children in Sakarang, a cold blooded murder without cause. I had intended attacking them but on the strength of the losses they had sustained through Mr Gifford's action a few months ago I pardoned them on payment of a fine of $50 a head or $900 in all. They have paid up half of this fine, I am informed, and will pay the balance. There are a few other outstanding fines in this river about which the Acting Resident Mr Page-Turner holds written orders and can give any information required.

Ulu Rejang – After the attacks on and removal of the Mujongs and almost all the Ga-ats down to the lower side of the Kapit fort, a meeting was held in which I gave them to understand that they were to remain below Kapit for at least three years, and that on no account were any to be allowed to remove above Kapit fort till such time as all the Ga-ats had been either driven away from our border or brought in as friendly disposed, and that when allowed to move no houses would be allowed to be built above the mouth of the Mujong. These people, who suffered so much from the two attacks made on them last year – in fact, almost losing everything they possessed – have given very little trouble since; there have been a few scares, most of which were trifling and not caused by them, and they are now farming in the 2nd year. I will not offer any suggestions regarding their future but shall always be ready to assist by my advice if applied to. The two *balas* were fortunately successful and have subdued the dangerous instincts of these tribes for some time to come. The lesson has been a severe one and was necessary owing to their unruly and outrageous conduct imbued as they were with the prevailing idea that they were superior in strength to the governing power and could play their own game of killing and mastering the different tribes throughout the country – this was shown clearly by their killing indiscriminately in Tatau and Bintulu waters, in Oya, and in many places in and about the Rejang delta. The spirit for mastery has this time been overcome and it must not again be allowed to get the upper hand, as it is in the power of these people to seriously damage the advancement of the country. By a few acts they might cause scares that would prove ruinous to the prosperity of the Rejang, Batang Lupar, Saribas and other districts in a very short time. This

spirit is in them and can only be kept in check by constant care and vigilance. I now lay down the reins and it is for my successor to be the responsible agent from this day henceforth for the future guidance of the Dyaks.

C. BROOKE,
Rajah

Kuching, Sarawak,
30th September, 1916

Appendix B SECOND DIVISION AND SARAWAK REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE 1895–1920 (in Straits Dollars)

	1895	1900	1905	1910	1915	1920
Batang Lupar						
Revenue	12,490	15,247	16,136	21,044	22,529	39,026
Expenditure	12,690	14,930	26,150	19,435	24,291	44,056
Saribas						
Revenue	3,293	3,795	6,360	7,463	6,471	16,350
Expenditure	2,308	2,752	3,520	4,725	4,417	6,978
Krian						
Revenue	6,412	5,930	7,995	8,728	9,067	18,828
Expenditure	3,695	2,396	2,754	3,959	3,919	8,083
2nd Division Total						
Revenue	22,186	24,973	30,491	37,325	38,074	74,203
Expenditure	18,694	20,078	32,424	28,118	32,626	59,117
Sarawak Total						
Revenue	453,800	915,966	1,353,477	1,407,360	1,536,762	2,646,265
Expenditure	462,882	901,172	1,240,523	1,263,063	1,313,328	2,352,300
Perak (F.M.S.)						
Revenue	4,033,611	7,636,126	12,242,897	14,229,799	20,984,823	37,681,352
Expenditure	3,757,007	6,144,744	10,141,980	12,060,565	21,732,145	50,786,373
Pahang (F.M.S.)						
Revenue	106,743	419,150	528,368	1,017,801	1,598,257	2,956,200
Expenditure	231,913	630,678	1,208,176	1,755,128	1,952,485	4,369,822

Sources: Bailey annual report for 1895, *SG* 361 (1 Feb 1896); F. A. W. Page-Turner annual report for 1920, *SGG* (1 March 1921); *Colonial Office List* (for Malayan figures).

	Area (square miles)	Population (as of 1910)
Sarawak	47,000	400,000(?)
Perak	8,000	49,4000
Pahang	14,000	11,1000

Source: *Colonial Office List.*

A NOTE ON WRITTEN SOURCES

The Ibans have always been at the center of Sarawak political affairs. For this reason, regardless of the period under consideration, whenever the sources for Brooke history in general are plentiful, Iban affairs are frequently mentioned. But the quality and completeness of the sources available varies greatly from period to period.

THE ERA OF JAMES BROOKE (1839–*c.* 1855)

The First White Rajah's colorful and controversial career, his love of publicity, and his total lack of inhibition about writing what he felt all combined to generate much useful paper. The ten published volumes of his letters and journals (see works by Keppel, Mundy, Templer, and Rutter, listed in the bibliography) remain a basic source of information for the earliest period of Brooke Sarawak history. In addition to being the First Rajah, James Brooke was also a Crown official from 1845 to 1853, and his reports to the British Government are preserved at the Public Record Office, London, primarily in the FO 12 (Borneo) and CO 144 (Labuan) series. After his defeat of Iban and Malay 'pirates' at the Battle of Beting Marau in 1849, and as a result of the following controversy, nearly all these official reports and letters were published in the mass of Parliamentary Papers devoted to the Brooke debate. The Royal Commission of Enquiry into Brooke's position, which finally met in 1854 at Singapore, heard detailed testimony from Europeans and natives of Borneo, the record of which is an exceptionally valuable source of information on mid-nineteenth-century Borneo society and politics. This testimony was published in the Parliamentary Papers for 1854–5, and also in a separate pamphlet, *The Borneo Question*, both listed below. In short, nearly all the known historical sources concerning the Government of James Brooke have been published in one form or another, except for the period of the 1859–61 Malay Plot, when his nephews were actually governing Sarawak, for which pertinent material is most plentiful in the CO 144 and FO 12 series.

THE ERA OF CHARLES BROOKE (*c.* 1855–1917)

For the historian, the years from the mid-1850s until the *Sarawak Gazette* first appeared in 1870 are a dark age. James Brooke, his health and spirits broken, was increasingly absent from Sarawak and out of touch with its internal affairs. Thanks to Governor Edwardes' feud with the Brookes, the

Malay Plot was fairly well documented in British official reports, but as a general rule Her Majesty's Government received little information on Sarawak after 1854. These were the years when Charles Brooke was coming of age in the Iban country. The only account of this fascinating and fateful process is in his own book, *Ten Years in Sarawak*, compiled from journals which he kept during the period 1851–63. It would be hard to exaggerate the value of this two-volume work to any student interested in the Second Rajah, his personal development, or the record of his subsequent fifty-year reign. Aside from *Ten Years in Sarawak* I was able to locate only a few consular reports in the Public Record Office and the Parliamentary Papers; missionary reports in the S.P.G. Archives, London; a few travelers' accounts; and an unpublished fragment of Charles Brooke's diary for the years 1866–8, a copy of which is in the Cornell University Library.

The first issue of the *Sarawak Gazette* appeared in 1870, and from that year to the present day this publication has remained a most valuable source of information on Sarawak. Appearing at fortnightly (later monthly) intervals, it was from the beginning a semi-official publication. It has always been financed by the State, and under Brooke rule the editor was normally a member of the Government service. Yet, perhaps partly because copy was often hard to obtain, the *Sarawak Gazette* welcomed articles on a wide range of non-official subject matter, and in its columns are to be found many valuable accounts of Borneo history and ethnography. Most Europeans who remained in Sarawak for any length of time developed a deep and abiding interest in local affairs, and the frequency of this intellectual and emotional involvement, which the Second Rajah encouraged in every way he knew, made the *Gazette* the superb source that it is.

For thirty-eight years, until a separate *Sarawak Government Gazette* began publication in 1908, the *Sarawak Gazette* was also the vehicle for all official pronouncements. These included the Rajah's Orders and Notices, the only written legislation in the country; reports of the Supreme Council, the triennial General Council (Council Negri), and the various Committees of Administration; reports of some court cases; and, most important of all, monthly reports from the Divisions and from subdistricts within the Divisions.

The outstation monthly reports have been perhaps the single most important written source of information for this book. As early as 1863 the future Second Rajah required his Residents to submit 'a regular monthly report of all the domestic and foreign events which occur in your province together with such information as you are able to give of the political and social condition of the people'.[1] Seven years later he again called for reports

[1] Order dated 19 May 1863, in 'Sarawak Government Orders 1860–1891', SA.

'containing the leading and principal matters of business that have transpired within their [the Residents'] jurisdiction and under their control. . . .'[1] Some of these reports were published in the *Sarawak Gazette* from its inception, but they did not begin to appear on a regular monthly basis until the mid-1880s.

Charles Brooke once wrote, 'I am always in favour of everything in Sarawak being published as much as possible',[2] and the monthly reports in the *Sarawak Gazette* offer convincing evidence that he meant what he said, for they contain much information which would have been excluded from a more orthodox government publication. The *Gazette* regularly published accounts of Iban troubles which could and sometimes did discredit the country in the eyes of foreign observers abroad.[3] A comparison between the published monthly reports and those manuscript copies which have survived and are preserved in the Sarawak Archives indicates that the great majority were printed verbatim. Disastrous events such as the Cholera Expedition of 1902 were in many cases discussed fully and frankly. There were even occasions, rare to be sure, when a Resident ventured to imply criticism of the Rajah in a published report, as D. J. S. Bailey did at several times during the Bantin revolt. (See above, Chapters 6 and 7.)

Beginning in the mid-1890s, Divisional annual reports also appeared in the *Sarawak Gazette*. After 1908, however, these were printed in the *Sarawak Government Gazette* instead until 1926 inclusive. Annual reports for the year 1927 appeared in a separate volume, but apparently no annual reports for the years 1928–41 were ever published. The monthly reports continued to appear in the *Sarawak Gazette* until World War II.

For the present study, the *Gazette* has been used in conjunction with the excellent collection of unpublished material from the reign of Charles Brooke preserved in the Sarawak State Archives, which is administered as part of the Sarawak Museum in Kuching. The Archives contain four general categories of materials: the letters of Rajah Charles Brooke and Rajah Muda Vyner Brooke, 1880–1915; manuscript reports and letters from outstations; records of the various Residents' and other law courts; and miscellaneous administrative records, including the Rajah's manuscript 'Order Book', copies of Government contracts, and treasury account books. This material, nearly all of which is in English, is described at greater length in the bibliography. The bulk of it dates from the period 1890–1915. Only a small proportion of these records has been catalogued or adequately indexed, but they are all

[1] Order dated 1 Sept 1870, 'His Highness the Rajah's Order Book', 1, SA.
[2] Charles Brooke to Messrs Gribble and Co., 21 May 1907, SA.
[3] See, for example, the R. E. Stubbs minute of 1906 in Appendix A.

well preserved in an air-conditioned room in the new research building of the Museum under the care of a trained archivist, Mr Loh Chee Yin. Mr Loh is also in charge of the Museum's excellent research library, which contains the best collection of Borneo books yet assembled anywhere in Malaysia.

The archival collection exists largely as a result of the efforts of Mr Tom Harrisson, Curator Emeritus of the Sarawak Museum. After World War II he supervised the search for and reconditioning of old records which might otherwise have been consigned to the trash heap in the various outstations, and his extraordinary energy and political acumen were instrumental in producing the fine new (1955) research building where the Archives and library are now housed. Until very recently there has been a shocking lack of similar attention paid to the preservation of historical records in Sabah, and indeed few of the States of mainland Malaya can match Sarawak's efforts in this field. The Curator of the Museum was assisted in his job of collecting old records by various other members of the postwar administration who were interested in the Brooke past, and to whom all students of Sarawak owe a debt of gratitude.

THE ERA OF CHARLES VYNER BROOKE (1917–1941)

Little of the Sarawak Archives' collection dates from the period of Charles Vyner Brooke, and his reign, the most recent, is paradoxically the most poorly documented in Brooke history. He apparently did not maintain letter books of his correspondence, as his father had. Instead, a central administrative filing system began to operate at some period after the inauguration of a small Secretariat in Kuching in 1923. Surviving officers of the Third Rajah remember working with large numbers of subject files devoted to such problems as the Asun revolt, the period of Iban unrest which began in 1931 and dragged on for almost a decade. But apparently the great majority of the Secretariat records either were destroyed by the Japanese during World War II (the Japanese are always easy to blame) or perished in housecleaning operations shortly after the war. Controversial material relating to the stormy period of Cession may have been removed by interested parties. Certain Departments, notably Land and Survey, and Forest, did preserve many of their prewar records intact, but since this material is today often filed by subject with current material it may not always be accessible to the researcher, and most of it is highly specialized in nature.

Two extremely important critical reports dealing with the final years of Brooke administration have survived: the published *1935 Blue Report* by C. D. Le Gros Clark, and R. W. Hammond's unpublished 'Report on

Education in Sarawak'. In addition to these documents, the Sarawak Archives contain a reasonably complete collection of annual departmental reports, which tended to increase in number and length as World War II approached.

The weakness of the available manuscript sources for the period after 1917 is matched by the declining value of the news items and monthly reports appearing in the *Sarawak Gazette*, which were obviously subjected to far more consistent scrutiny and censorship than had been the case under Charles Brooke. This is particularly true of post-1930 Divisional monthly reports, the contents of which were often wholly inconsequential. (Under the British Colonial Government, after 1946, the *Gazette* regained much of its former quality of cheerful, semi-official semi-independence, and contained perhaps more serious writing than at any previous period.) On the eve of World War II there were three Chinese language daily newspapers appearing in Sarawak, but no unofficial journal, daily or otherwise, in either Malay or English.[1] If any copies of the pre-war Chinese papers have survived their whereabouts is a mystery.

The brief discussion of the Third Rajah's reign in this study is thus based largely on interviews with surviving participants, and on travel in the areas concerned. But the nature of the State is such that, in my opinion, extensive travel is essential for the student of any period. Until the end of Brooke rule Sarawak was a country where conditions changed only slowly over time, but extremely rapidly over distance, from upriver to downriver, or from one river to another. Without an understanding of this regional diversity, which is still highly visible, no amount of written source material will make very much sense.

[1] J. Belville Archer, 'Preliminary report on the Information office attached to the Secretary of Defence, also a short report on the *Sarawak Gazette*', 1941: Miscellaneous papers, SA.

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Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Archives, London

'Borneo and Malaya, 1846–1910'. Two Boxes. Early Borneo Church Mission material.

'D Series'. Copies of Letters Received, Borneo. Two volumes, 1848–93. Reports from early S.P.G. missionaries in the Second Division.

Sarawak State Archives, Kuching

The following is a list of the records consulted for this study. It includes all major holdings relating to Brooke administration, as of May 1966, but it is not a comprehensive survey of the Sarawak Archives, nor does it include any of the Sarawak Museum's extensive collection of texts and other unpublished materials in the fields of folklore, religion and ethnography.

Letters of Rajah Charles Brooke and Rajah Muda Vyner Brooke, 1880–1915

The Second Rajah's letters, including most of his public and much of his private correspondence, were copied into letter books, of which ten have survived. All are indexed. The series is complete from March 1887 to November 1915. A few additional letters by Charles Brooke not included in this series are with unbound miscellaneous papers. Virtually none of the Rajah's incoming correspondence has been preserved.

The volumes are variously labeled as follows:

'2nd Rajah's Letters June–December 1880'.
'2nd Rajah's Letters December 1882–June 1885'.
'H.H. The Rajah's Letters March 1887 to April 1890'.
'H.H. The Rajah's Letters April 1890 to December 1892'. (This volume is normally on display in the main building of the Sarawak Museum.)
'Letters of C. Brooke'. January 1893 to April 1896.
'H.H. The Rajah's Letters August 1896 to June 1898'.
'H.H. The Rajah's Letters June 1898 to April 1901'.
'H.H. The Rajah's Letters April 1901 to August 1906'.
'H.H. The Rajah's Letters August 1906 to April 1913'.
'H.H. The Rajah's Letters April 1913 to November 1915'.

After 1904, Rajah Charles Brooke sometimes designated his son, Rajah Muda Vyner, to administer the country in his absence. The following two volumes contain copies of Vyner's reports to the Rajah during such periods, as well as the Rajah Muda's instructions to Residents and other officials. Since the Sarawak Archives contain no letters of Vyner dating from the period of his own reign (1917–46), these volumes are the only available source of unpublished material written by the later Third Rajah:

'3rd Rajah's Letters 1904 to 1907'.
(mislabeled) 'H.H. The Rajah's Letters April 1907 to June 1912'.

Outstation Monthly Reports

The nineteen bound volumes of manuscript monthly reports which have survived

contain relatively little material not later printed in the *Sarawak Gazette*, except for the years 1870–2. The following districts and dates are covered:

1. First Division
   Lundu: August 1900 to December 1906.
   Sadong: August 1900 to December 1906.
   Upper Sarawak: September 1870 to December 1872; June 1896 to August 1901.

2. Second Division
   Simanggang: September 1870 to December 1872; June 1896 to March 1900; January 1903 to April 1907.
   Kalakka (Krian): September 1870 to December 1872; February 1885 to October 1889; June 1896 to March 1900; January 1903 to April 1907.

3. Third Division
   Mukah: September 1870 to December 1872; June 1896 to March 1912; February 1916 to February 1918.
   Oya: June 1896 to March 1912; February 1916 to February 1918.
   Rejang: September 1870 to December 1872; January 1885 to May 1889; September 1896 to February 1905.

4. Fourth Division
   Baram: February 1885 to October 1889; January 1901 to February 1910.
   Bintulu: January 1901 to February 1910.

5. Fifth Division
   Limbang: July 1896 to February 1905.
   Trusan: February 1885 to October 1889; July 1896 to February 1900; March 1900 to February 1905.

Some valuable reports and letters from outstations are separate from the nineteen volumes of monthly reports. The following were consulted in the course of this study:

Kabong Court Writer's Reports and Letters. Three notebooks covering the periods 1892–3 and 1895–8, cited as 'Kabong Letters', containing letters and reports from Court Writer Cheyne Ah Fook, the mission-educated Hakka Chinese in charge of the Krian post, to D. J. S. Bailey, Resident of the Second Division.

'Letter Book, January 1879 to January 1892'. Miscellaneous reports from the officer in charge of the upper Rejang post, first at Nanga Balleh and later at Kapit, to the Resident of the Third Division. Includes many reports from F. D. de Rozario, as well as notes and memoranda left by touring Residents.

One large package of miscellaneous correspondence between the Resident of the Second Division, D. J. S. Bailey, and other officers, cited as 'Bailey Letters',

1904–8. An invaluable source for the period of Bantin's revolt, it includes many personal notes and letters from the Resident to the officer in charge at Lubok Antu, and a signed copy of the Rajah's detailed instructions for an expedition against the upper Batang Lupar rebels, dated 14 June 1904.

'Mr Ricketts Trusan Diary', September 1886 to April 1892. The official diary of O. F. Ricketts, the first Brooke officer to serve in what later became the Fifth Division. The only document of its kind in the Archives, a unique source of information on pioneer outstation government.

Resident's Court Records

The following series of court case books, cited as 'CCB', were particularly important for this study. They constitute the Sarawak Archives' major holdings for the Second, Third and Fourth Divisions. There are in addition many less important court records, as well as some major holdings from the Kuching area, First Division, which are not listed here. Most of the Baram criminal, Betong, and Simanggang cases, as well as those in one volume from Sibu (1874–9), have recently been card-indexed under the following categories, with subheadings.

A. Land (and trees)
B. Property
C. Social (status)
D. Marital (status)
E. Ex-Marital (status)
F. Physical (acts)
G. Money and Contracts
H. Belief and Custom
I. Slavery
J. Judicial
K. Various

These records are a magnificent source, not only for the historian of local administration and Brooke justice, but for the student of Iban, Kayan and other customary law as well.

1. Second Division

Simanggang: Twenty-seven volumes, September 1876 to November 1916. Additional fragments of old case books, some dating as far back as 1866, were received after the above series had been rebound and are kept separately.

Betong (Saribas): Twelve volumes, 1866 to 1880, 1884 to 1930.

Pusa (Saribas): Seven volumes, 1889 to 1896, 1903 to 1932, 1938 to 1941.

2. Third Division

Sibu: Criminal cases, seven volumes, 1874 to 1879, 1915 to 1917, 1919 to 1923. Court of Requests (debt cases), four volumes, 1914 to 1922.

3. Fourth Division
Baram: Criminal cases, eight volumes, 1882 to 1908, 1910 to 1919. Civil cases (mostly debt cases), four volumes, 1883 to 1916.

Other Documents, Sarawak Archives

'Agreement Book'. Four volumes, 1872 to 1922, indexed. Records of contracts and other agreements between the Government and both companies and individuals, contained in four large volumes. Includes such valuable documents as the 1900 contract between the Second Rajah and the proprietor of the Rejang Foochow colony.

'Chinese and Native Employees Roll Book'. One volume, indexed. Records of service of 369 native employees who joined the service mostly between 1890 and 1909. However most of the salaried outstation Native Officers were not listed in this volume.

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'His Highness the Rajah Confidential'. Two volumes, 1904 to 1906, and 1911 to 1913. Mostly reports from the Resident of the First Division, who was normally the senior administrator under the Rajah, to Charles Brooke. Includes commentary on events throughout Sarawak.

'H.H. The Rajah's Order Book'. Four volumes, 1863 to 1920, indexed. These are not, as the title implies, merely volumes of the Rajah's Orders, most of which were printed in the *Sarawak Gazette*. They record a wide range of administrative decisions by Charles Brooke, often with his marginal comments, as well as letters and memos to and from Residents. Invaluable material on the native civil service and the Rajah's pioneer education efforts. The first volume also contains some reports of Supreme Council meetings.

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Sarawak Treasury Cash Books. Twenty-five volumes, 1842 to 1900. These records are apparently the only existing documents which survived the destruction of Kuching during the Chinese Rebellion of 1857. They are the only manuscripts in the Archives pertaining to the administration of the First Rajah. State income and expenditure is listed by month and sometimes by year.

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