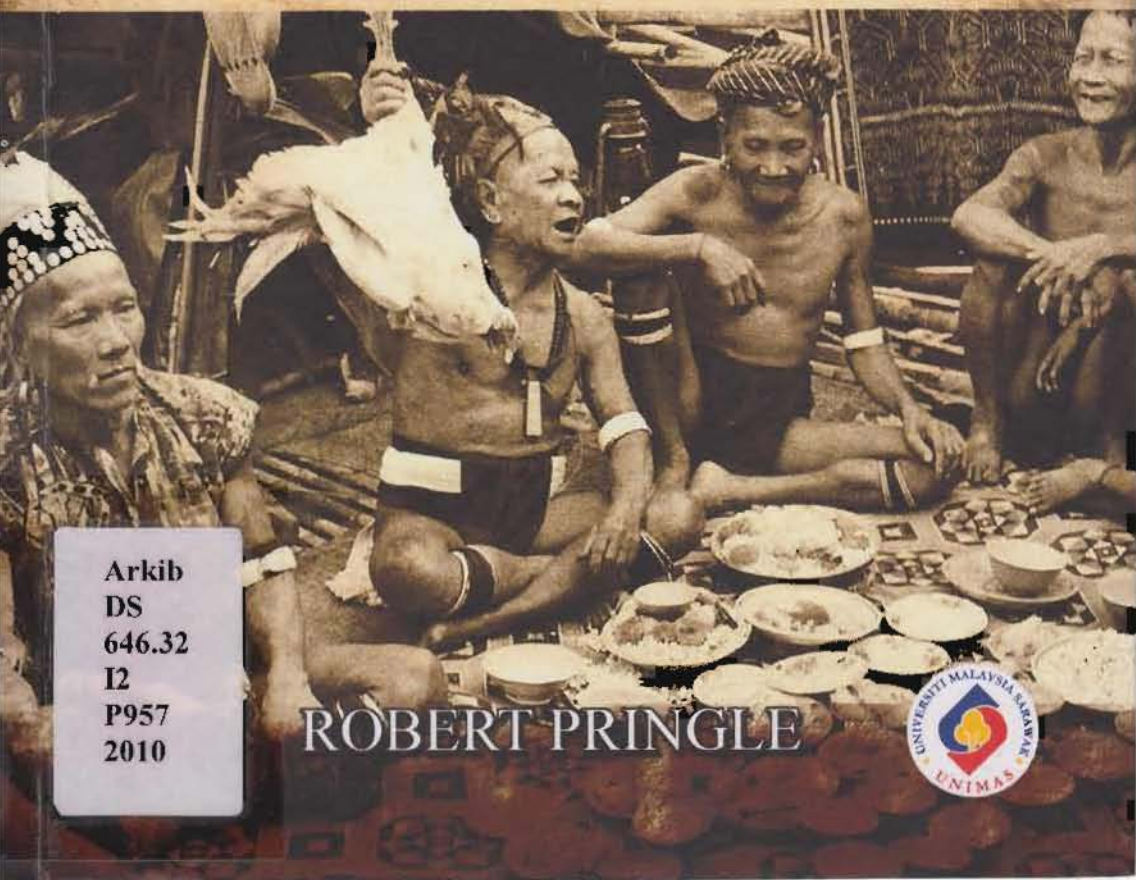
RAJAHS and REBELS

The Ibans of Sarawak under Brooke Rule, 1841 - 1941

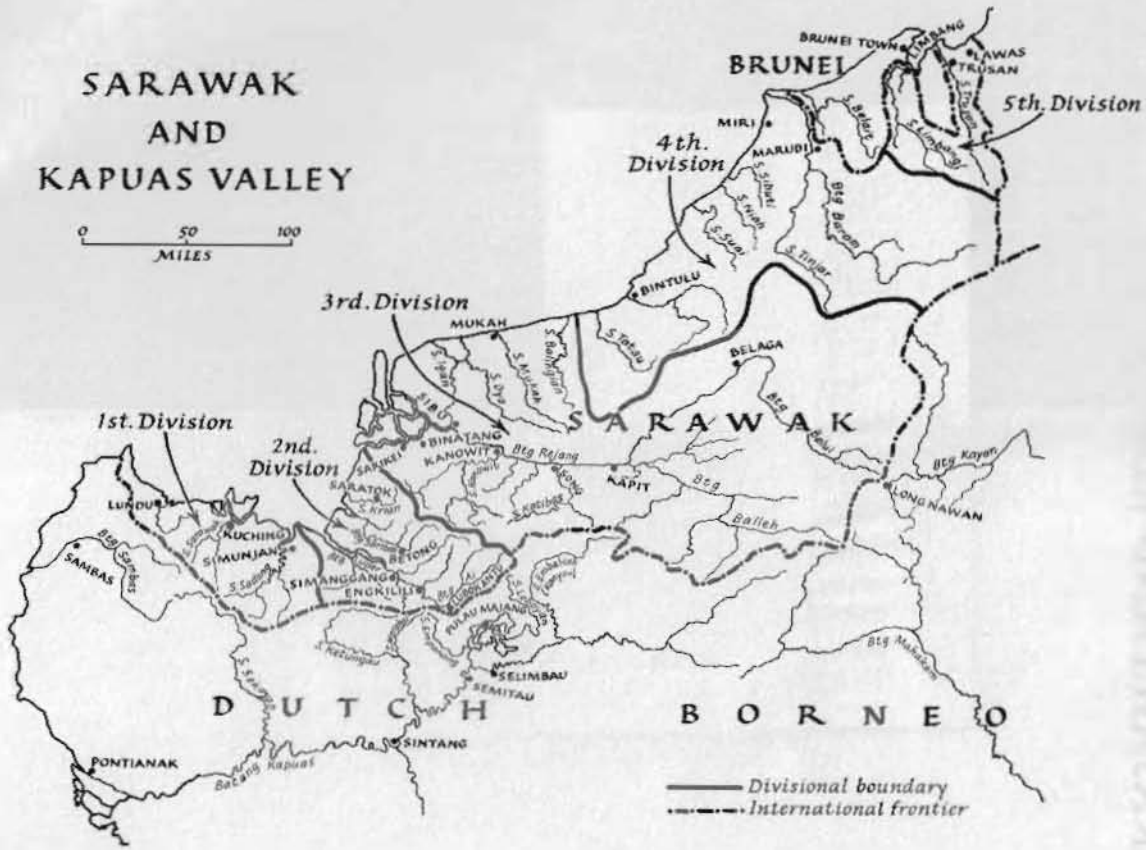


ROBERT PRINGLE

The photos on the front and rear covers of this book were taken by Hedda Morrison and are from Life in a Longhouse, an account of Iban life published by the Borneo Literature Bureau in 1962. Hedda took most of the photographs at Rumah Garu, a longhouse in Kanowit District on the Ngemah River, which joins the Rejang about fifty miles north of Sibu. These images comprise an unsurpassed record of traditional Iban life.

The photo on the front cover, from p. 205 of Life in a Longhouse, shows a group of elders on the verandah of the longhouse, perhaps speculating about what the future would bring. The smaller photo on the rear cover, from p. 195, shows a man's tattoed hands, indicating that he has taken an enemy's head. The photos are used courtesy of the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

RAJAHS AND REBELS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2nd. Division
SIBU
BINATANG
KANOWIT
SARATOK
LUNDU
KUCHING
SIMUNJAN
SAMRAS
SIMANGGANG
ENGKILILI
BETONG
KAPIT
LONGNAWAN
PONTIANAK
SINTANG
SELIMBAU
SEMITAU
DUTCH BORNEO
Divisional boundary
International frontier

Rajahs and Rebels

The Ibans of Sarawak under Brooke Rule, 1841 - 1941

ROBERT PRINGLE

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Kota Samarahan
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FOR BARBARA AND BENEDICT

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Unless otherwise credited, the photographs are by the author

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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW EDITION

I returned to Sarawak in 2007 after an absence of forty-one years and was surprised to discover that there is still considerable interest in this book. I was therefore delighted when UNIMAS decided to go ahead with a new edition, and I agreed to write a new introduction, looking back at the circumstances of the first edition and talking about what I might have done differently if I were able to do it over again.

This book was made possible by the Cold War and the increase in American funding, both private and government, for foreign area studies. I was a graduate student of Southeast Asian history at Cornell University looking for a PhD thesis topic. Unlike most of my fellow students, I did not want to become a university professor – at least not until I retired. I wanted to join the US Foreign Service and be a diplomat, as I eventually did. I also wanted to write a dissertation that would be publishable. As I saw it, the PhD and a respectable book to my credit would help me find another job in case at some point I decided that I could no longer in good conscience remain an employee of the US government – a judgment which was rational enough at a time when the anti-communist hysteria of the McCarthy era was still fresh in the minds of most Americans.

As for my topic, it was a natural outgrowth of a long fascination with the historical interplay between tribal peoples, such as the Ibans, dominant lowland cultures, such as the Malay, Thai, and Vietnamese, and colonial governments. I had come to this interest through my earlier work on the history of American Indians and the tragic story of how they had fared at the hands of European invaders. Sarawak seemed a wonderful variation on this kind of relationship, because the balance between "tribal" and "dominant" peoples was initially far more equal than in most areas of the world.

I was exceedingly fortunate in my association with several individuals, beginning with my professor at Cornell, O.W. Wolters. Professor Wolters' extraordinary scholarship on early Southeast Asian History was to make him famous in academic circles, but he was also a veteran of the Malayan Civil Service and a former district officer, so he regarded my topic as both interesting and important, and he knew a great deal about it. Moreover, unlike most of my fellow graduate students, he found my intention to forsake academia and go into public service to be altogether admirable, and he cheered me on. He also assured me that *Rajahs and Rebels* would have a long shelf life, because it was unlikely that

anyone else would have a chance to work with Benedict Sandin on this material again. He was right about that as well.

A second key figure was Professor George McTurnan Kahin, who headed the Cornell Southeast Program, then arguably the premier institution of its kind in the world. Kahin was always on the lookout for locations where graduate students from Cornell could conduct field research, and he had been working with Tom Harrisson, Curator of the Sarawak Museum and Government Ethnologist, to reach an informal partnership. With Sarawak's independence within Malaysia in the offing, Harrisson was quite interested in a possible future position at Cornell, and so these two utterly different personalities reached an agreement. I was to be the first Cornell graduate student to take advantage of it.

I could not have done anything without the Sarawak Museum, which was officially charged with overseeing all foreign research. The prospects were a bit daunting. I was well aware of Harrisson's often belligerent personality. Tales abounded of the Curator's epic clashes with anthropologists who ventured onto his turf, some of them every bit as idiosyncratic as he was. The fact that I was a historian, not an anthropologist, would give me some cover, or so I hoped. In the event, Harrisson was away from Kuching, at Niah, during the majority of my stay, leaving the Museum in charge of Lucas Chin, later himself to serve as Curator. It also no doubt made my life easier that, given the possibility of his future employment at Cornell, Tom was on his best behavior with me.

As things turned out, what mattered most was Harrisson's genuinely deep interest in having me work with and support Benedict Sandin, who was to be his first successor as Curator. Harrisson was famously somewhat uninterested in the Ibans, in contrast to his infatuation with the *Orang Ulu* (Kayan, Kenyah *et al.*) and especially the Kelabit. I think he felt a bit guilty about this, and he fully appreciated Sandin's extraordinary talent as the unofficial historian of his people. The deal between Harrisson and Kahin was that I would work with Sandin and help him to produce his own book,[1] in return for his help with my work on the Ibans and the Brookes. It turned out to be a priceless bargain for me, and I did my best to make it valuable for Sandin as well. Without his judgements on key events and his tutelage on Iban culture, this book would have been little more than weakly grounded narrative. In the original forward to the book, included in this new edition, I gave an example of how his incredible recall of Iban history made it possible to construct a two-dimensional account of a famous clash between Penghulu Dalam Munan, an Iban leader, and D.J.S. Bailey, a Brooke district

[1] Benedict Sandin, *The Sea Dayaks of Borneo under White Rajah Rule* (London: Macmillan, 1967).

officer, drawing on both the official record and the Iban oral version. Without Harrisson's initiative and support, the opportunity for such collaboration would probably have been lost forever, as such opportunities so often are.

Personally as well as professionally, the Sarawak of 1965-66 was a wonderful experience. My wife Barbara and I, a year into our marriage, arrived in Kuching in April, 1965, to begin a stay which, looking back, seems beyond idyllic. For the first week or so we lived in the Museum "guest house" on Satok Road, a modest, ant-infested structure on stilts, with a lovely row of orchids in front and a gibbon tethered to a tree on the side. The gibbon woke us up every morning with its ear-splitting howls, and we fed it bananas to make it stop, not realizing that gibbons routinely call at dawn.

Barbara was a trained teacher and soon got a job at Batu Lintang Teacher Training College, although only after some persuasion from Tom Harrisson, which was needed because the Batu Lintang authorities were not impressed by her American teaching credentials. At that time the government was training students with only a primary education to go upriver to teach in schools which were the first in many areas, and Barbara sometimes accompanied them on practice teaching stints in the *ulu*. Some of her students were Ibans, which once led to an interesting classroom exchange relevant to my own work. In a discussion of Iban history, an Iban student complained about how his elders kept questioning his manhood because he had never taken a human head. When his classmates asked whether, given the opportunity, he would like to do so, he said in effect "of course," creating visible consternation among his non-Iban listeners.

I was soon ensconced in a pleasant office in the then-new research wing of the Sarawak Museum, which housed the archives and the library. I spent most of my time there, poring over old issues of the *Sarawak Gazette,* working with Sandin, and chasing down documents in the small but invaluable Sarawak Archives with the help of archivist Loh Chee Yin. Now and then a Chinese funeral procession would rattle and screech by the Museum on its way to the cemetery. For lunch I biked downtown for a bowl of mee soup in one of Kuching's innumerable shophouse restaurants.

In the evening I bicycled home to a small house which we had rented from a customs official posted to Miri for a year. For sheer lyricism the address could not be topped: 923 Iris Gardens, 2 1/2 mile Rock Road, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia. "Confrontation" with Indonesia was under way. Down the road from us a British ambulance unit was installed in a row of shophouses. When Barbara got sick (not seriously as it turned out) they took her to the hospital, a clean, pleasant facility where, as a Sarawak Government employee, she paid the equivalent of one US dollar a day. As we wrote home about life in Kuching,

Barbara's parents began to forgive me for having dragged her off to the "wilds" of Borneo right after our marriage.

As these snippets suggest, our stay in Sarawak was altogether enjoyable, and my work on the book progressed rapidly. Towards the end I got out of the archives and Sandin took me on trips to interview Iban informants, most notably in the Ulu Ai. Although he was of course particularly partial to his own Saribas home region, he proved capable and knowledgeable in helping me flesh out the written sources with regard to the history of other Iban areas. I will never forget Sandin, who looked like what he was, a product of western mission education, on the *ruai* of a threadbare Ulu Ai longhouse with its lean, tattooed penghulu, looking for common ancestors. They sat together on a straw mat, counting off their genealogies, keeping track of the generations with bits of straw.

What emerged from the details of Brooke-era Iban history was a phenomenon with few if any parallels in the history of colonialism. An impoverished European regime ruling a great expanse of Borneo stood the then-fashionable European notion of a "civilizing mission" on its head, relying for its security needs on levies of warriors who were not paid but were allowed, in lieu of pay, to keep the heads of their enemies taken in combat, mainly from members of their own ethnic group, the Ibans. In the process they nurtured and strengthened what was a central element in Iban religion.

It is worth noting at this point that the ritual aspects of Iban headhunting were, so far as I know, never fully recorded in detail or related to other aspects of Iban history and culture. I say "were" because it is now almost certainly too late. In the course of a generally very complimentary review of *Rajahs and Rebels,*[2] Derek Freeman denied my assertion that "no anthropologist has studied the sociology of Iban headhunting."[3] He had indeed studied it, he said, in the course of his famous work on Iban agriculture, but he had never written up his field notes because "the symbolism of the allegorical narrative *(timang)* which is central to the [headhunting] cult is so complex and esoteric that it has taken a long time to work out...." In the event, Freeman never published his work on Iban headhunting. I have no idea whether his Iban religion notes have survived; if they did, they would surely be difficult for anyone else to interpret.

The pattern of state-sponsored headhunting was clear by the time of the Chinese rebellion in 1857, and it continued for over a century. The classic Brooke

[2] See Derek Freeman, review of *Rajahs and Rebels* in *The Journal of Asian Studies,* XXX 3 (May 1971), pp. 734-736.

[3] *Rajahs and Rebels,* p. 21.

model originated by the Second Rajah, Charles Brooke, featured massive expeditions with thousands of warriors hunting other Ibans (and less frequently *orang ulu)* because they were either in rebellion, or had disobeyed the Rajah's command not to migrate beyond certain limits. The last expedition in the old style did not take place until 1935, under the Third Rajah, Vyner Brooke, who in general failed to share his father's infatuation with the practice.[4] State-sponsored Iban headhunting would appear in new forms at the end of Japanese occupation, when the Ibans were unleashed against the defeated enemy, and also during the Malayan Emergency, when the British employed Iban trackers in Malaya and apparently motivated them in the same way that the Brookes had. I have never seen this latter aspect of the anti-communist struggle in Malaya documented, but it was common knowledge in the Sarawak of 1965.

Rajahs and Rebels ends, more or less, with the reign of Charles Brooke in 1917. Charles was the dominant figure of Brooke history and the architect of Sarawak's Iban policy. After him Sarawak drifted toward pale imitation of British Malaya. In any case I did not have access to adequate source material on the Third Rajah's reign, and if I had, I would not have had the time to take the story further. As it was, certain relevant material was left out of this book. One omission was the story of Asun's "rebellion," a last gasp of Iban restiveness stimulated by the hardships of the Great Depression, which thanks to smallholder rubber cultivation reached the most remote areas of the state. Also omitted were some observations on one of the great ironies of Brooke rule: that despite its famous conservatism, it nonetheless changed almost every aspect of Sarawak's social fabric. I wrote two articles in the *Sarawak Museum Journal* which covered these topics,[5] but they would have been better included in the book itself.

There is one important aspect of Booke rule that I neglected to recognize. I noted that Brooke policies "encouraged the preservation of traditional Iban values and practices of all kinds, those that inhibit Iban progress even today, as well those that remain a treasured legacy from the past."[6] But at a time when Sarawak was already being incorporated into Malaysia, I might have gone

[4] *Rajahs and Rebels,* p. 245.

[5] The two articles are Robert Pringle, "Asun's 'Rebellion': The Growing Pains of a Tribal Society in Brooke Sarawak, 1929-40," *SMJ* XVI 32-33 (ns) (1969) 346-76, and Robert Pringle, "The Brookes of Sarawak: Reformers in Spite of Themselves," *SMJ* XIX 38-39 (ns) (1971) 53-76.

[6] *Rajahs and Rebels,* p. 246.

somewhat further. Whatever might be said about the morality of Brooke rule – and in some ways it was morally superior to most mainstream colonial regimes — its policies left the Iban people as a whole habituated, almost addicted, to lethal divisions among themselves. Surely this heritage did not serve them well when, as the largest ethnic group in the state, they needed to find their political feet in order to help achieve a healthy balance of interests between Kuala Lumpur and Kuching. Of course this weakness had other causes, including the virtual nonexistence of education in Sarawak before World War II. But whatever its complete causation may have been, Iban disunity has not served either Sarawak or Malaysia well, contributing as it has to unwise, indeed reckless, environmental policies and the severe under-representation of Sarawak in national affairs. The anachronisms of Brooke rule did indeed have serious consequences in the long run.

With the exception of this Introduction to the New Edition, the balance of this edition, except for some corrected typos and minor errors, is as it was first published in 1970. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Resni Mona for her hard work in editing the new edition.

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 literarure 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 variery 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 berween 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 berween 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 Gagette* 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' by 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