

Background to a Revolt: Brunei and the Surrounding Territory.

by Tom Harrison, D.S.O., O.B.E.

Chapters	Page No.
1. Do's and Don'ts for Non-Bornean You	2
2. The Brunei Background	4
3. A Jumble of Jungle and Swamp: The Hinterland that Coastal Maze	8
4. A Tangle of Peoples: Kedayans in Revolt The Bisayas, an Intermediate Group Ibans or "Sea Dayaks" The Hill Peoples: Murut and Kelabit Kenyahs and Kayans of the Great Rivers Nomadic Punans The Inland Outlook: A Summary	12
5. Everyday Borneo Malay Words and Phrases English—Borneo Malay Numbers, Weights & Measures, Time Malay "feed-back" terms	18

Chapter 1

Do's and Don'ts For Non-Borneon You

This booklet is not intended to be everybody's mug of tea (or tuak, the native rice wine). It is written simply as background information for those genuinely interested in Brunei and the surrounding territory. It aims to explain, fairly briefly, the accidents of past history and the complexities of human geography which have, in effect, brought you, the reader, to be here in 1963.

But as a beginning chapter, and again at the end, I have added information which everyone can read, even if they hate Borneo or are bored stiff with Brunei, surely one of the darnedest bits of the world's third largest, second wettest and first roughest island. In this way, I optimistically hope to bait the trap and so get a few extras to read the chapters which lie between. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are the real meat in this equatorial sandwich.

Even in remote inland parts of Borneo the people nowadays have a pretty fair idea of how other people behave. They sometimes think the white man "nuts". But they give him the benefit of the doubt as long as he carries on reasonably—roughly with as much consideration for his neighbours as he would be expected to show in Wigan or the Isle of Wight. But there are a few serious mistakes to avoid at all costs (inclusive of your head); and some things well worth remembering to DO if you want to be liked—let alone loved!

Do's

1. Do always try to be very good natured rather than irritable. Bad temper gets you precisely nowhere (in Borneo). Talk normally even if you are angry. Never shout.
2. Act and be as funny as you like, so long as it isn't at the expense of anyone else. (Especially of the female sex). But don't be indecent in public!
3. Do realise that the local people are every bit as proud of their way of life as you are of yours. This is important too, among the inland tribes. They are not savages or aborigines. They are intelligent, sensible, nice people, so long as you don't treat them as kids or "abos" they'll do anything for you. But you'll be in trouble if you forget this for long!
4. Relax and don't worry much about taboos or the rules. So long as you behave like a little gent, the Bornean will always give you a second chance if you make an honest mistake. They are a freedom loving and friendly people. Relax and feel at home with them. But don't take any liberties.
5. Be generous, give out fags or other small gifts (if you like) but don't expect a big show of gratitude. If a chap thanks you too much he is probably a sponger or a spiv; tell him to beat it!
6. Repay kindness by kindness—on the spot; if someone gives you something in the interior, it is polite to return a gift of similar value then and there. Otherwise misunderstanding can follow. The Dayak idea of give and take is often different from ours. Of course, if you have been friends with a family for weeks, and they make you a parting gift, that is another matter. Remember though that things which may seem - of little or no value to you can mean a lot to a Murut or Kayan! (This does not apply to chickens and vegetables: if offered you, though).

Don'ts

7. Don't bathe naked; wear shorts or a sarong..
8. Don't relieve yourself in public—go behind the tree.
9. Don't use your left hand if you are invited to a (Malay) feast or special meal without cutlery; much the same applies in the interior also.
10. Don't press anyone to drink alcohol — it is against the code of Islam and some of the evangelical Christians.
11. Don't make fun of animals (inland). Some of the tribes believe that dressing up a cat or teasing a goat can lead to great floods, hail, and everyone being turned into stone.
12. Don't shoot birds or animals without local permission; and divide up the flesh with the locals always. (Avoid handling pork publicly anywhere in the coastal belt. Fish are free for all).
13. Don't take fruit off trees without local permission, every fruit tree has an owner in Borneo (This is especially important in areas inhabited by Ibans, Bisayas and Kedayans, see Chapter 4).
14. Don't be ashamed to let any local help you, especially over log bridges, river fords and other difficulties. They know best.
15. Don't be ashamed to ask for any other advice or guidance. The people are nearly always truthful and sensible.
16. Don't try and show you're brave, especially if it comes to shooting rapids or other upriver boat-work. The local people are top experts, do what they advise, please. They're bold enough as it is.
17. Don't wear your shoes inside a Malay home, unless specially permitted. But always keep your shoes on in a longhouse if you want to avoid hookworm.
18. Don't pick out or pull-off leeches. Scrape them along the skin surface or make them drop off with a little salt-bag (burning cigarette method is only 70% efficient).
19. Don't worry about snakes, leave well alone. But if you see one rear up and show orange-yellow inside its hood, that's a King Cobra. Kill it dead or go for your life—they're deadly and they'll go for you unprovoked (no other Borneo snake will).
20. If you have to pinch someone's bottom—count TEN and then pinch your own. (All Malays and nearly all other Borneans have strong views on female morality. One easy way to cause serious trouble is to start something girl-wise. Too bad...but that's it, fellows).

Chapter 2

The Brunei Background

The blood-stained story of Brunei's ancient Sultanate begins centuries ago. Then a great junk trade with China (mainly the Cantonese ports) and Indo-China brought vast quantities of stoneware and precious porcelain, metals, fine silks and fatty mandarins to trade with the inland tribes for rhinoceros horn, hornbill-ivory (more valuable than jade), bezoar stones from monkey's guts, edible birds' nests from the great caves at Niah (in Sarawak) and from Gomentan (near Sandakan in North Borneo), camphor-wood, sandalwood, spices and gums tapped from the areas of virgin jungle which clothe three-quarters of the world's third largest island. This luscious statement of the human past is not fine prose, but hard fact. The evidence lies richly in the ground at Kota Batu, ancient capital of Brunei, ten minutes by land-rover past the High Commissioner's House in Residency Road. Here Sarawak Museum excavations have produced great quantities of Chinese T'ang, Sung and Ming porcelains, beads and other remains, as well as a much smaller number of relics of early Buddhist and Hindu contact, up to the advent of Islam about 1425 A.D.

At one time then, the Brunei Sultanate controlled, at least along the coastal plains, a wide empire: over Borneo, the Southern Philippines and parts of many adjoining islands. It is partly out of memories glimmering from this past glory that Azahari and his kind banked the fires which burned out across the oil-soaked modern state as armed rebellion in little more than one thousand years after the date on the earliest coin found at Kota Batu (of these coins, 36 proved datable by Chinese Emperor's reigns, including two for 723—768 A.D., eleven for 999—1023 A.D.; and all pre-Islamic—latest date 1402 A.D.).

Almost nothing is known of the personalities in these earlier days of Kota Batu, which means "stone fort". You can still trace the outlines of the great walls of squared laterite running through the rubber gardens where gun shots rang out again in December, 1962. The first Sultans were probably Bisayas or Muruts. There were no Malays in Borneo in those days. Nearly all the people who later became Malay were local folk who took this title later on conversion "to Islam—a process ("masok melayu") that continues today among the quite numerous remaining "pagans" of the upper Belait, Tutong and Temburong rivers inside Brunei.

The first fully Mohammedan Sultan, Mohamed, was succeeded by his brother, Akmed who married a Chinese princess, daughter of the famed Admiral Ong Sum Ping who led a junk fleet to Kota Batu about 1460 A.D. Their daughter married an Arabian Sheikh missionary, Berkat, a direct descendant of the Prophet. Berkat strengthened Islamic observance and built a proper mosque when he came to the throne as third Sultan. After his son, Suleiman, also strictly religious, came grandson Bulkiah, a more broad-minded man by all accounts. Bulkiah is more usually known in the Malay texts and tales as Nakoda Ragam, "the Singing Captain". He was a genuine adventurer and something of an eccentric. He sailed the seven seas of Malaysia with a gantang measure of pepper seeds, for each one of which he named an island which he added to his own area-of influence. He was the greatest Brunei imperialist. He nominally ruled over the other main Brunei sultanates such as Sambas and Pontianak in what is now Kalimantan. The Sultan of Sulu in what is now the piratical bottom end of the Philippines, was his vassal.

It was Sultan Bulkiah whose caparisoned elephants came down to meet the first-ever white-skinned to reach Brunei—the relics of Magellan's fleet in 1521, on the first circumnavigation of the globe. Pigafetta's chronicles of the epic voyage recorded the then population of Kampong Ayer as 25,000 families. There are still 15,000 people in this strange and rather beautiful village on stilts at the entrance to Brunei town. Until 1910 Kampong Ayer really was Brunei. It is only since then that the town has come on to dry ground.

Bulkiah died by the scratch of a poisoned gold pin. His wife, daughter of the Sulu Sultan, committed suicide when the boat crew sought to seduce her widowhood. Both are said to be buried in the splendid stone-grave which is now carefully preserved on the hill-side above Kota Batu—5 minutes walk to the left at mile 2 past the Residency.

The sixth Mohammedan sultan, Bulkiah's son had 42 sons on his own account, Of whom probably one of the weakest, Saif-UI-Rejal succeeded. But his brother Raja Sakam, seems to have exercised great influence over him. Even the Brunei official history calls him "very arbitrary and licentious". Through treachery by two other Pengirans, the Spaniards took Kota Batu in 1580. The sultan and his supporters fled a hundred miles down the coast to Suai near Niah. Though things were patched up subsequently this was really the first beginning of the decline of Brunei as a great power in its own right.

Sultan Saif-UI-Rejars eldest daughter was born mad. Their following son, Shah Brunei, who succeeded was sane enough—but sterile. For all his efforts he could have no offspring. So he presently abdicated in favour of his brother Hassan, a man described as "most arbitrary, powerful and magnificent". He kept up the great pomp of the court, but some of the substance was withering away, despite his four royal wives, many concubines and "a palace full of female servants".

The tenth and eleventh Mohammedan sultans carried on very well, but difficulties arose with the twelfth, Sultan Mohamed Ali, on account of his grandson. This youth, Pengiran di-Gedong Omar, was so insolent that a major revolt broke out. All the males of the royal line were garrotted in the palace garden, except for two infants. The royal palace was -burned to the ground.

Another noble seized power and proclaimed himself the thirteenth sultan, Abdul Mubin. The Brunei Malays strongly supported by the Kedayans soon rebelled against his rule. Twelve years of civil war ensued. In the end, surrounded and besieged on Pulau Chermin, an island down the bay, he was taken alive. Asked to choose between the more normal strangulation and a knife under the shoulder-blade, he picked the kris.

Succession now returned to the line of the tenth ruler, Jalil-UI-Akbar; so it continued for the fourteenth & fifteenth rulers. The sixteenth, the younger of the two infant sons of Sultan Mohammed AH (ruler 12) then came into the royal chair. He presently abdicated in favour of his son-in-law, but this sultan died young and the father-in-law returned to the throne, to be succeeded by the very young Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin I, son of the son-in-law. The English sailor Dalrymple met him in 1762 and he died in 1795.

Nothing special happened in reigns nineteen, twenty and twenty-one. - The pace hotted up with twenty-two, Sultan Mohamed Alam, who usurped the throne from his nephew. He did not last long. When he went in 1828 AD he put the blight on Brunei for proper. His assassins having observed the niceties and offered him the garrotte, he requested only that they observe and record which way he fell in strangled death. He said that if he fell to the right, it augered well for the future of Brunei, but, if he fell to the left, that would be a very ill-omen -indeed for the sultanate.

He fell to the left.

The twenty-third ruler was Sultan Omar Ali Sai-fuddin II, who died in 1852. He allowed the first encroachments on his remaining territory by the* alert and enterprising Englishman, Sir James Brooke, who offered a chance of order as a change to what was fast becoming chaos. (See Chapter 3 below).

After 1852, the rulers went on in relatively uneventful succession until the accession of the present twenty-eighth Sultan, Sir Omar Ali Saifuddin III in 1950, aged 34. During his reign, Brunei has grown up into one of the richest small states on earth. Its prosperity is based almost entirely on the oil (9/10's of all exports), first struck at Seria in 1929. There is an enormous balance of trade. Revenue exceeds expenditure by 4 to 1. The 1961 budget surplus was over £10,000,000. Such a state of affairs was, until the 1962 revolt, the admiration and even envy of her neighbouring countries all relatively poor by comparison. (Brunei has nearly £100,000,000 in reserve assets right now).

Even in the great days of the Kota Batu, earlier back in the Sung dynasty or presently under Sultan Bulkiah, the "Singing Skipper," the Sultanate never really controlled this island's vast hinterland of mountain and rivers.

The coastal power was defeated by climate and geography, by the tangled mess of interior Borneo in the complex headwater system of rivers like the Padas in North Borneo, the Trusan and Limbang in Sarawak's Fifth Division (administered from Limbang) or the Baram with its main Tutoh and Tinjar tributaries in the Fourth Division (administered from Miri). The inland pagan peoples of very varied races barely accepted this remote control—in the days when the Kelabits of the upper Baram were as much as a month's journey away, and with half-a-dozen head-hunting wars going on between them and the South China sea.

Mostly the inlanders minded their own up-river business. But sometimes they broke out into positive revolt. For instance, by the middle of the last century, the war-like Kayan peoples who had moved into the Baram from Kalimantan (now Indonesian Borneo), had encroached downriver on to the doorstep of Brunei. They used the low pass between the top of the Meli-nau River, which flows into the Tutoh and the top of the Madalam, which flows into the Limbang to make a track two fathoms wide.

Across this low watershed, they pulled war-boats up to 60 feet long and built a strong stockade fort at Nanga Medamit, only a (modern) day by outboard upriver from Limbang—and in the 1962 revolt held by 1/2 Ghurkhas. In March of the fifth year of the reign of the 24th Mohammedan ruler of Brunei, Sultan Abdul -Mumin, about 3000 Kayans occupied the Damit fort and threatened to assault Brunei itself. As Spenser St John, himself the first British Consul-General to Brunei, wrote a few years later (in 1862):

"A force of about three thousand of these wild warriors kept the capital in a state of great alarm"

Eventually Brunei "bought off" the threat by giving the Kayans one whole village of Limbang Muruts to loot, pillage and rob. They went home sated with fresh human heads. One hundred and five years later the great-grand-sons of these same Kayans rallied with the Kenyans, Kelabits and other upriver tribes to "form the Irregular Forces which blocked all escape routes out of Brunei. And it was a Kenyan—Kayan Unit, which actually blocked this same route when in 1962 it could be used again by rebels seeking to escape upriver.

Those who sought to do the escaping in 1962 were (almost exclusively the people called Kedayans. The name differs from Kayan only by the insert of two, letters, "ed." But there any resemblance ends. The Kedayans are not pagans but Mohammedans. They are not of inland origin, but with a strong strain of immigrants from Indonesia back over four centuries. They have hitherto been industrious, able and peaceful farmers of the coastal lowlands, from the Lawas district in the north, through Brunei and south to Miri, Sabot and Niah in Sarawak's Fourth Division. It is all these Kedayan areas and these areas almost exclusively—which have been involved in the 1962 revolt.

Let us quiz down into what makes a Kayan of to day show 100% loyalty and a Kedayan at least 80% latent or violent discontent. But first, it is necessary to take a quick look at the sort of country all these people are living in.

Chapter 3

Jumble of Jungle and Swamp

Modern Brunei covers 2,226 square miles, lying between latitudes 4 and 5 North of the Equator. It is divided into two large enclaves, Brunei proper, which is the administrative districts of Belait, Tutong and Brunei with Muara; and the separated Temburong district cut off by land from the main sector by the Limbang river which is in Sarawak. Sarawak territory also surrounds the State to the East (Lawas), south (Baram and Tutoh rivers), and Miri (including the declining oil-field but important refinery at Lutong).

Compare this with Sarawak's land area of just under 50,000 square miles or North Borneo's nearly 30,000 square miles. On the other hand Brunei has much the highest population density; about 80,000 persons or nearly 40 to the square mile. Sarawak has some 900,000 persons, which gives well under 20 to the square mile. North Borneo with some half million bodies has approximately the same sort of density pattern as Sarawak, at 16 to the square mile.

There are three main reasons, of course, why Sarawak and North Borneo even came to exist as separate countries. First, the Brunei Sultanate itself went into a long period of corruption and decline, losing even nominal control of the head-hunting tribes inland and the pirates (both pagan and Mohammedan), who came to roam and ravage the whole West Borneo coast. Second, the whole island of Borneo itself is such a vast and complicated piece of dry land that it is at the best of times very difficult to administer or even control—most of it in large units. Third, the arrival of the Portuguese and Spanish, and later other Europeans, severed the great trade with the Asian mainland to the North and brought West Borneo down from a tremendous export import economy back to an almost stone-age of total near stagnation, a backwater of dimmed vitality and local anarchy.

As a result of these three influences, plus the past lack of any inland sympathy for the philosophy of Islam, Brunei was either forced or delighted (often both) to sell off or cede chunks of its more difficult or immediately less profitable land to outsiders. The greatest of these outsiders in our present story was the first White Rajah of Sarawak, Sir James Brooke. Starting in 1839 with nothing except nerve at Kuching (400 miles south-west of Brunei) he and later his nephew, Charles, the second Rajah, built up a great, prosperous and happy multi-racial state at the geographical and spiritual—expense of Brunei. The last piece of territory to be added to Sarawak was Limbang, where the Brooke flag was raised, by popular acclaim, in March 1890—within a long cannon shot of the Sultan's royal palace, already so reduced in power.

Because of the all round difficulties and the hard feelings of other neighbouring peoples—built up (or down) over the centuries—it was not, therefore, unnatural for the great Sultanate of Brunei to become fragmented. Moreover, the strength and power of Brunei under its Mohammedan rulers—as indeed their pre-Mohammedan predecessors—were centred almost entirely along the coastal plain of Borneo and whatever other easily accessible territories which came under Brunei's power. It was not the habit of the coastal rulers and princes to travel inland. It was not necessary for them to do so. The geography of West travel are by river. This is so all the way from Brunei Bay down to Tanjong Datu at the far corner in the South-West, now the boundary line between Sarawak and Indonesian Kalimantan. :

The Hinterland

The people of the hinterland, in consequence, had to come down to the coast, and on to the river-lines, to bring trade produce which could be exported "and to gather in return that which was imported from overseas. The system gave great profit and riches to those who controlled the coastline, and made it all the less necessary for them to take any action further inland. This state of affairs, in fact, actually led to an increase in irresponsibility and to something approaching anarchy in the interior over the centuries. Headhunting and war expeditions of all sorts became more and more of a menace to the whole of Borneo's internal stability.

With improved techniques introduced by iron and by rice agriculture, the population began to increase. New and war-like races spread and slowly multiplied through the island, notably the Sea Dayaks from the extreme South-East, and the Kayans further inland; and northward, up in North Borneo, the Dusuns did likewise.

This is, today, still very much the picture of Malay control and contact all through Brunei and the surrounding territories of West Borneo. It is rare to find a Mohammedan of any kind far from the coastal plain. Not more than a few hundred live above the limits of tidal navigability in the whole area. The hinterland has been left to the Dayak types of people. The coastal belt and flatlands have been left largely and often exclusively to the Malays and to the related Kedayans and others (who will be discussed in the next chapter).

By the same token, there was little necessity for developing communications far inland until the much newer economic thinking of very recent times. Here again geography played an important part. With the best intention in the world and the finest modern equipment, it requires a very large budget and a great deal the middle of Borneo. Except in the north of North of engineering know-how to start making a road through Borneo, where there is no alternative communication by river, little enterprise of this sort has been attempted even in the energetic years of expansion since the Japanese war. Rivers and coast remain the communication lines for the larger forms of commerce. Where the rivers are not readily navigable, as in the Lawas district of Sarawak, produce must be carried from the hinterland by back-aching journeys up over the mountains. The peoples of the interior have become extremely skilful at making such trading journeys, which are part of their whole tradition of living. For example, it is an everyday affair to work buffaloes and hump-back cattle down from the Bah Kalalan in the extreme headwaters of the Trusan. It takes as much as 14 days to move a beast, entirely over jungle trails down to Lawas. From Lawas, this is an important source of meat supply to Brunei. Indeed, many of these cattle are brought to Bah Kalalan across the border from the rich plains in the North-West corner of Kalimantan. Brunei often eats Indonesian protein!

This sort of overland inland trade is part of the pattern of thinking and living of inland Borneo. It also had much to do with the development of the interior and it has a good deal to do with very recent events in and around Brunei. As a consequence of this remoteness and difficulty of communication, the peoples of the hinterland have lived outside the coastal and Mohammedan

tradition. They have, at the same time, developed a vast knowledge of this hinterland and of the ways of moving about over its very difficult terrain, whether on foot or in dug-out canoe. But this knowledge has not been shared by those living on the coast, who quite sensibly let things be brought down to them by people who are (or were) ready to bring them by way of trade!

So it is that in 1963, the coastal peoples know very little about that much greater part of the island which is above the limits of tidewaters and easy access. While at the same time, the million or more so of more people living in this hinterland central Borneo (mostly over the Kalimantan border) are very familiar with great tracts of country, and with the ways of crossing this country to come down into the coastal plain at various places on both sides of the island.

From this, it must not be thought that all the interior is honeycombed with tracks or navigable river courses. That is not the case, at all; owing to the difficult terrain, (accentuated by head-hunting and the other disturbances already mentioned), large sections of Borneo's interior remain uninhabited. This is noticeable if you fly in an aircraft taking off on almost any inland course from Marudi or Lawas or Limbang. As long as the plane is over the coastal plain, there will be plenty of the marks of cultivation—rice, rubber and probably pepper. But once you come into the more difficult upper waters and steeper valleys, it is easy to fly for twenty minutes in a Twin Pioneer without seeing a sign of human occupation below. All that you see below is an unending sequence of broken jungle canopy. It has been argued, that a monkey starting from about the Long Lama on the Baram could practically get down to Tarakan on the extreme East coast of Borneo, keeping to the trees the whole way, without being involved in any sort of clearing or coming within human hearing. The great mountains of Mulu, Murud, and the twin pinnacle peaks of Batu Lawi, major mountain massifs in Sarawak's Fourth and Fifth Divisions, are entirely uninhabited right down to their foothills. Nor are there any normal tracks over these mountains. In the old days, they were much travelled by rhinoceros hunters. But the rhinoceros has been virtually exterminated in West Borneo now their horns were so valued as aphrodisiac by the Chinese (though one wouldn't have thought they needed any really?).

Therefore, those wishing to move inland from the coast are faced with toughish problems. These problems are accentuated if the inland people do not want them, to move in their direction. Even with the best will in the world, and maximum local co-operation, travel inward in Borneo is not easy. As you ascend the rivers, they become more rapid and soon involve the use of long boats with constant pulling and poling. While once you get away from the river lines, there are seldom stretches where you can walk on anything like flat country. Much of the going is up and down, very steep, slippery and made more uncomfortable by leeches, mosquitoes galore and other biting insects adnauseam.

That Coastal Maze

I have emphasized, in what has just been written, the discomforts and difficulties in the Borneo interior. But I am trying to look at the matter from the point of view of an outsider, a newcomer.

If you are really interested in travelling in the interior (as I personally am), it is in fact enormous fun. But if you are travelling in retreat from hostile action or in order to escape into elsewhere, there is darned little to recommend this sort of activity. Twenty times better to try and smuggle a way along the coast, even if it is only in a little sailing boat.

The trouble here is the land has or winter monsoon, which blasts down from the North East into Brunei Bay and the West coast of Borneo from October to March. This monsoon affects the whole business of living on the coastal plain as well. The winds and rains which swing across the South China Sea can not only make coastal movement in non-mechanised vessels difficult, but also keep the whole swamp and coastal area thoroughly soaked and slushy for about bad six months. In knowing this coastal swamp and coastline there is another sort of experience, another sort of highly specialised knowledge, quite different from that of the inland peoples of the rivers and mountains. The coastal people who live in or near the great mangrove and nipah palm labyrinth areas round Brunei Bay, have their own almost secret knowledge of the many different ways of getting through this complex and soggy country. By getting their produce such as attap thatch, nibong logs, firewood, charcoal from mangrove etc., out of it, they learn the hard way. If the coast people find the inland awkward, the people of the inland are completely lost in the swamp.

This is another difficulty for Outsiders, coming fresh into Borneo. It is most difficult to block an "escape route" through one of these swamps. And it can be extremely uncomfortable to try and "move from what look like quite nice points A to B on a map. Sad experience sometimes proves that between A and B lie slimy Y and zoolithic Z, both of which can include four and five feet mud wallows, buffalo pools, and soft spots into which a man with heavy equipment can quite well drown himself.

Chapter 4

A Tangle of Peoples

I have already said my piece about the origin of the Brunei Malays in the great Sultanate of Brunei, which once ruled over so much of this part of the world. Obviously the proud tradition of this Sultanate has influenced greatly the outlook of the Brunei Malays as a people. It is only necessary here to add that the Brunei Malay is not necessarily the same sort of person as the Malay from the mainland. There are many local differences. In fact, a Malay from Selangor or Negri Sembilan would probably be unable to understand an ordinary conversation going on between two Brunei Malays in a kampong anywhere outside the capital city of Brunei. These differences are not necessarily fundamental; but they are very significant.

Such differences become even more important when we stop talking about the Malays and begin to consider other very varied groups of peoples who equally share Brunei living space and the surrounding countryside. One element in this is, like the Brunei Malays, Mohammedan; the Kedayans.

Kedayans In Revolt

The Kedayans occupy, a large and economically powerful part of the coastal plain of Brunei and stretch northward through the Limbang and Lawas districts to Merapok and Weston in the Southern extremity of North Borneo. In the other direction, they extend in a sub-coastal strip down the Fourth Division of Sarawak through Miri and Sibuti, including Bekenu, over the Niah and Suai rivers into the Bintulu district far down in the huge Fourth Division of Sarawak. Very little has been known about these Kedayans. Perhaps they are the least studied group in all Borneo. It is these quiet blokes who had so much to do with the recent trouble in Brunei and Northern Sarawakas they had done once before in the reign of the thirteenth Sultan, Abdul Mumin, the Damned (Chap. 2)

In fact, the whole area covered by the 1962 rebellion can be placed on the map and closely fitted in with the distribution of Kedayans. Only a tiny fraction of the people inland from the Kedayans took any active part in the rebellion (mostly in the neglected Temburong district of Brunei). The vast majority of people living inland from the Kedayans were immediately hostile to the idea of the rebellion and rallied positively to the assistance of those seeking to quell it many as "Irregulars", in the "Army" I had the privilege to command. The Kedayans are Mohammedans subject to ordinary Islamic law. But in their own view, they have to some extent been treated as "second class citizens" in West Borneo, especially by their own Malay cousins. It is certainly a fact that they are very little represented in public affairs and 'high places. The voice of the Kedayans has seldom been heard in the land. That has helped to make them more susceptible to propaganda based on their own self-contained outlook and way of life. The Kedayans are certainly among the best agriculturists in coastal Borneo, truly industrious people. They have a high level of rice agriculture, nearly all irrigated wet padi. They are excellent with buffaloes and other animals. The peculiar position in which they are placed, somewhere near "second class citizens", is partly due—as so often in Borneo—to tradition and the past. The story so often told against the Kedayans is the legend of the great cock fight between the Sultan of Brunei and the Sultan of Java, some five hundred years ago. It is said that on this cock fight each royal gambler betted fifty of his own people. Some versions put the figure as high as five hundred. The Sultan of Java's cock lost. So he had to pay-fifty (or five hundred) Javanese to the Sultan of Brunei, to make good his bet. It is from Indonesian stock that the present Kedayan population are commonly - supposed to have originated!

The Kedayans also adore making and spinning large wooden tops. They stage inter-village contests with tops, great occasions—a far echo perhaps of now forgotten cock-fighting. They also excel in making snares for animals and scarers against birds out to eat their beloved padi crop.

Some observers also claim that they can see a physical resemblance between the Kedayans and the Indonesians. In particular, that they are darker skinned than the ordinary Malays. If this is so, it has not yet been proved by scientific observation. And it may well be that the darker skin coloration is often due to their long periods of hard work in the rice fields out in the open sun.

Whatever the facts, the Kedayans have been allowed to continue in their own way of life without much consideration from others. That is the way they themselves wanted it until recently. But some of the results have, as we can all now see, proved to be unfortunate.

The Bisayas, an Intermediate Group

There is only one other group of people in the 'general area of Brunei and the immediately surrounding territory which is also commonly Mohammedan. These people are the Bisayas. The Bisayas live in the lower reaches of the Padas river in North Borneo, where they are largely Mohammedan. Another important group of them appears in the middle Limbang around Ukong and Danau, and they are closely related to the peoples called Tutong and Belait in Brunei. The southern Bisayas and many of the Tutongs and Belaits are still pagans, not Mohammedans. Others have been converted to Mohammedanism in recent times. The Bisayas have a particular way of life of their own, 'which is characterised by a peculiar type of house.

A Bisaya house is something between a long-house -and the ordinary separate house favoured by the Malay /or Kedayan. You could call it a "big box house." This is usually very neatly made and consists of from three to six related families. There is a thin wall or intersection of bamboo down the centre, with a more public place on one side and a more private part on -the other. It is not a long-house in the lengthy sense of "the word. But it has clearly originated from the same -source as the typical inland long-house and is unlike any sort of strictly coastal homestead, whether Mohammedan, Chinese or European

Bisayas, in fact, belong to the great group of Dayak peoples. They are of a different origin altogether than the Kedayans. But by their presence on the coast they have become greatly influenced and produced a sort of transitional way of life between the upriver and the coastal plain systems.

The Bisayas are also important in the wider history of this part of the world. They claim that they founded the Brunei Sultanate generations before Islam. And in about the 13th century it was a group of Bisayas who migrated in several long boats northward

into the -Philippines. Many Philippine folk tales and some actual manuscripts (called Marathas), suggest that this is the true story. The culture of what are now known as the Visayan Islands, composing a large part of the - Southern Philippines, " with millions of population, certainly owes a great deal in origin and power to this early link with West Borneo. In fact, if the peoples of Brunei Bay wished to start an argument about those Sulu claims on North Borneo, there are powerful historical reasons why Borneans can reply that they were and are hereditary arbitrators and controllers of the Southern Philippines—not the other way round.

The Limbang Bisayas, with their Tutong and Belait off-shoots are, incidentally, great growers of fruit, specialising in durian, rambutan, jack fruit and so on. They make much use of sago, from the pith of the sago palm. They are not nearly so dependent upon rice economy as the Kedayans or the inland tribes. It As a, common sight in Bisaya villages to see sago platforms along the river, where the women tread out the pith of the palm. In this respect the Bisayas are similar to peoples called Melanau in the Rejang river delta of Sarawak. It is probable in fact that Melanau and the Bisayans have a common origin.

The Bisayas have a very elaborate form of tonal gong music, which has fascinated the few western musical students who have heard it. They are also notable collectors of ancient bronzes and brass. Some Bisayans have valuable, assemblages of old gongs, vases and canon some of which were made far centuries ago in the foundries which still survive, decrepity, in Kampong Ayer.

It was a Bisaya who in November 1858 killed White Rajah Sir James Brooke's greatest enemy, Pengiran Makhota during one of the prince's concubine collecting tours in the Limbang river. This paved the way to greater Brooke expansion from Kuching, capital of Sarawak, northward towards Brunei proper.

The Ibans or "Sea Dayaks"

Once we get behind the coastal belt we come into somewhat different and rather more rugged citizens, Their origin is probably much the same as the Bisayas. But they have been relatively little affected by coastal and other outside points or view. The characteristic living unit of these inland people is the long-house. Only down-river some of the old long-house pagan people have taken to making single houses either earlier under the influence of Islam or much more recently under that of Christianity. The results are usually deplorable!

The Ibans are badly named 'Sea Dayaks'. Most of them live well inland. They are planters of hill padi on elaborate rotation of shifting cultivation. Their name arose from a misunderstanding when some were met at sea as pirates by some of the first Europeans to enter these waters, the Ibans are a very individualistic, enterprising people with a thoroughly democratic society and no hereditary form of chieftainship. The most characteristic feature of the Iban man is the tattoo on his throat, this is not done by any other -tribe. However the young men are giving up this sort of thing nowadays. Their favourite sport is still cock-fighting; the less lively top contests they leave to the Kedayans instead.

The Hill People: Kelabits and Muruts

The Ibans mainly inhabit the lower reaches of the hinterland, both in Brunei and Sarawak. They like to use boats where possible. Further inland, they meet with the Muruts and Kelabits. These are closely related people who can understand each others dialects; whereas a Kelabit cannot understand an Iban at all, unless he has learnt the language. And none of these languages of which there are more than fifteen distinct dialects in West and internal Borneo, are intelligible to a Malay. Malay has become in recent years a lingua franca, widely understood. And this is only since 1945. Of the other languages Murut Kelabit is perhaps the most difficult, as it makes use of complicated speech rhythms and pauses.

The Muruts, who live mostly between five hundred and two thousand feet in the up-river areas, are now nearly all evangelical Christians, under the influence of the mission at La was, run from Australia. They do not retain many of their old customs, and tend to be rigid Sabbatarians and follow a very strict version of the Old Testament Code. They are not even allowed to grow tobacco leaf for export sale a good hill crop in the past. But most of them still live in long-houses, rather simpler than those made by their Kelabit relations.

Except at Long Seridan and on the Madihit, the Kelabits mostly live above two thousand feet up to the highest permanently inhabited village in Borneo, Bario at 3,500 feet. They are a very vigorous people, powerfully built from constant heavy walking. They have managed to blend, to some extent, the new way of life with the old. Many of the men still wear hornbill and leopard teeth ear-rings. Many of the women still wear beautiful hats made of ancient beads. Some of these beads are more than one thousand years old, traded from the Middle East and China through Brunei's ancient capital, then all that way up into the interior the opposite way round from the buffaloes of today.

The Kelabit long-house is the most distinctive in Borneo. It does not have a large outside platform running all the way along on one edge for drying the padi and other foods as is the characteristic of the Iban and some of the lowland Murut. The Kelabit country is too high and cold (and wet!) for that sort of thing. The house is a closely inbuilt and integrated unit. Its most striking feature is that though there is a long central wall dividing the public section in the front from the private section at the back, (as in most long-houses), at the same time, there are no separate walls between the rooms ("bilek") at the back. That is to say, though there is private family life, each family with its own fire in the back section of the house, you can walk just as easily from one end to the other of the long-house along the back as along the front. All is open to all, although a stranger should only enter the back half of the house when he is invited.

The Muruts and Kelabits are hill people with a high standard of living. Some of them, especially those living above 2,500 feet, are very advanced agriculturists, with rich rice irrigation, a wide variety of vegetables, fish ponds, buffalo and other cattle, goats, pigs, fowls and even ducks. It is possible for a welcome guest to live for weeks at a time in a Kelabit long-house without needing to think about the use of a tin opener. Hospitality and good humour are specialities of these hill people, as through most of the interior.

The Kelabits are also extraordinary in putting up all sorts of stone monuments and other major memorials to their dead, though this impressive habit has been discouraged by the La was mission. It was among the Kelabits that the first British parachutists arrived

early in 1945 to raise a determined opposition against the Japanese. Then, under their chief Lawai Bisarai (still going strong in 1963), they immediately and without hesitation declared their loyalty to the British. Within a matter of months we had raised a massive guerrilla operation, based on the interior, operating outward against the Japanese. In this the Kelabits were quickly followed by the Kayans and Kenyahs, Punans, Muruts and other peoples. (The middle Trusan Muruts were particularly brave in 1945).

Kenyahs and Kayans of the Great Rivers

The Kenyahs and Kayans live mainly on the great river Baram and its tributaries the Tutoh and Tinjar. They never live away from navigable rivers. Some of their long-houses, such as that at Long Laput (near Long Lama) are enormous. These lie rather outside the area most outsiders are likely to see. With massive hardwood posts, and sometimes as many as fifty families in one house, such houses are among the most impressive dwellings to see in Borneo, if you have the chance.

The Kenyahs and Kayans do not occur in Brunei or North Borneo. But they are very numerous indeed outside Sarawak across the Kalimantan border (over 200,000 of them). In 1962, as in 1945, they showed themselves 100% loyal and determined that there should be no armed unrest or outside interference in their part of this jungle world. They have a strong aristocratic leadership, which makes them comparatively easy to organise. A few big chiefs in the Baram control thousands of citizens by a system of traditional power tempered with common sense and good leadership. These folk are also notable craftsmen, wood carvers, boatmen and makers of the finest parang swords.

The outstanding Kenyahs are Temonggong Oyau Lawai Jau and Penghulu Gau, and the outstanding Kayans Penghulus Kebing and Jok Ngau. All these people made a major contribution towards preventing any spread of the 1962 rebellion. A thousand of them at once took up arms to patrol all the escape routes out of the disturbed area and towards the Indonesian border. The results were conspicuously successful. They are alert to the problems of 1963 onward.

The Nomadic Punans

Finally, mention must be made of one other group, though few are ever likely, to see them unless they stay some time in this part of the world. These are the nomadic Punans, who make no permanent settlements. The Punans live in the headwaters of the Belait river in Brunei and more numerous over the Baram water shed and up in the extreme headwaters of the Limbang around the Madihit and Magoh rivers. Punans have no settled agriculture. They live off wild sago, wild vegetables and what they can hunt with the blow-pipe and their intelligent though scruffy dogs. They speak a special language of their own. They are shy. Their skins tend to become very pale, almost white, because they hate to come out into the sunlight from the jungle. But they are by no means primitive people in the all-round sense. For instance, they make no permanent dwellings but camp in little lean-to's night by night. Yet on the other hand, they make the most beautiful black and white woven mats to be found in Borneo or for that matter anywhere in the world. They are superb craftsmen of the blow-pipe. They can make lovely specimens of the parang sword, most popular of Borneo souvenirs.

The Inland Outlook; a Summary

So much for a brief panorama of the tangles of peoples involved in recent events in this part of Borneo. It remains to be said that though there are many important differences between them, which have only been sketched here, basically they are all considerably the same.

Of these people I have described only the Kedayans are fully Mohammedans. They are sub-coastal folk never going far inland. The varied other tribes, covering the vast interior area are all either pagan or Christians

All these inland peoples share in common, as well as the long-house, an energetic if elementary system of rice agriculture, a great deal of jungle skill and handicraft ability. They are all very industrious enterprising men and women. The children are rapidly forging ahead in modern education, some are doing extremely well in the lately opened secondary schools at Limbang, Miri and elsewhere. There is nothing "primitive" or "aboriginal" about a Kelabit or Kayan. On the other hand he is not to be mistaken for a Kedayan or a North Borneo Kadazan.

Although independent minded practical people, the inlanders are generally reluctant to criticise government or voice any protest without long and mature thought. They prefer to live and let live. The mortal mistake that the Japanese made was to interfere with their private affairs; and above all to confiscate their beloved shotguns or cut down the supply of ammunition. Every modern inlander has his own shotgun and can use it with effect. But if infuriated he can fall back on the blow-pipe and those nasty poison darts. Head-hunting has long been out of vogue. Yet the warrior tradition remains strong under the surface. That is one reason why they rallied so splendidly to do their bit in helping block the intended "escape routes from Brunei in 1962.

So fundamentally it is very reasonable to integrate the groups into a common conception, whether this be Sarawak, Brunei or the wider vision of Malaysia. On the other hand, it is essential to recognise the difference between these peoples, however small or ridiculous these may seem to an outsider. To these peoples themselves, their own local characteristics, special ideas and outlooks do matter a great deal.

If pushed around, they are prepared to go to the limit to protect and preserve what they think their own prestige and position even if all that is meant is the privilege to be left alone in peace, regardless of a world tottering or shouting all around them. Indeed the louder the shouts, the more the totter, all the more they are liable to feel it might be best to go back to what for instance they did in the Japanese occupation i.e. make their own clothes of bark and pineapple fibre, smelt their own iron ore, mine their own spring salt and mind their own business.

Chapter 5

Everyday Borneo Malay Words and Phrases

There are several good, cheap English—Malay— English phrase books. The following lists are simply to help the very beginner for the first few days.

There is one point worth special mention for those with experience in the Federation. In Malaya Kita means "we" (non-collective sense); throughout Borneo Kita means "YOU", whereas you in Malaya is engkau (a word rarely heard in Borneo). In both variants, collective "we" is kami. So be careful not to get your wires crossed with we.

There are also considerable differences between the way Malay is spoken in Borneo e.g. between Brunei and Kuching. As we have already seen (Chapters 2- 3), most Bornean Malays were originally of "Dayak" or other stock, not directly related to the Malays of the mainland. So a great many Dayak type words are incorporated in local Bornean Malay dialects, making these sometimes very close to Iban (Sea Dayak) which is the most "Malayan" of the inland languages. Note also that in Borneo the terminal K is always sounded-unlike Malaya. Thus Sarawak is "correct. Sarawa sounds silly locally

English—Borneo Malay

Good morning	Selamat pagi
Good afternoon	Selamat tengah hari
Good evening	Selamat petang
Good night	Selamat malam
Where are you going?	Pergi ka-mana?
Which way to	Jalan kamaria ka
Thank you	Jerima kaseh
Same to you	Sama-sama
What is your name?_	Siapa nama kita?
My name is	Nama saya
What do you do?	Apa kerja kita?
I am a government servant	Saya - kerja parintah
I am a kampong man	Saya orang kampong
I	Saya
You	Kita
He	Dia
We	Kami
Male	Laki2 (lelaki)
Female	Perempuan
Children	Kanak-kanak
My husband	Laki saya
My wife	Bini saya
Are you married (to male)	Babini kita sudah?
Are you married (to female)	Balaki kita sudah?
Have you seen (or met) any rebels?	Maiiat kita orang jahat itu?
No, I have not	Saya tida nampak
Have you heard of rebels-around here?	Ada kariiu dengar penderhaka2 itu ada di-sini? or Ada kita mandangar abis-sidia di-sini?
I have definitely not heard of any	Tida ada sama sekali
Do you have any information about them?	Ada kita tau rahsia abis-sidia?
Yes	Au; (ya-lah)
No	Tida (indak in Brunei)
Is that correct?	Betulka, tida?
Is he telling lies?	Orang itu dia bohong, tida?
How much Is this?	Berapa harga ini?
That is too much	Bukan main mahal
This is cheap	Ini-lah murah
Don't try and fool me	Jangan pusing
Have you any other kinds? -(of goods)	Ada bangsa lain?
Sorry (beg your pardon)	Ma'af (minta ma'af)
That man is dead	Itu orang sudah mati
He is wounded	Dia ada luka
I want to go home	Saya mahu pulang
Please be quiet	Jangan bising
Beer	Beer
Coffee	Coppi
Milk	Susu
Sugar	Gula

Numbers, Weights and

Measures, Time

Number	Satu(1), Dua(2), Tiga(3), Umpat(4), Lima(5), Anam (6), Tujoh(7), Lapan(8), Sembilan (9), Sa-puloh(10), dua-puloh(20), sa-ratus(100), sa-ribu(1,000); satengah (half), suku(quarter).
Money :	Satu ringgit (\$1.00); sen (cent)
Weights & Measures :	Kati (11/3 pounds), gantang (pint measure of rice), there is nothing in this language for a pint of bitter! Inchi (Inch), Kaki(foot), Ha (yard), Batu(mile).
Time	Bulan puasa (the Mohammedan month of fast starts 23 Jan. 63), minit (minute), jam (hour), hari (day). Kalmarin (yesterday), besok (tomorrow), lusa (day after tomorrow), minggu (week), tahun (year).
What time is it? It is ten-thirty	Pukul berepa jam? (Ini-la) pukul sa-puloh sa-tengah

Malay "feed back" Terms

These are some words or phrases you are likely to hear in West Borneo, either as an explanations or addressed direct to you.

Data	A senior courtesy title; usually a leading administrator or politician
Haji	A religious title, for one who has done the haj to Mecca (here a haji usually wears a white skull cap, anyway on Fridays)
Pengiran	A Brunei term of nobility
Makan siap, tuan	Food is ready, sir
Belom sedia	Not prepared (yet)
Saya banyak takut	I am very afraid
Tida berani	Not brave (I am not prepared to have a go)
Dudok dulu	Pray be seated now
Nanti dulu	Wait a minute please
Ada baik	All is well
Boleh	O.K.
Tida boleh	No can do (also tida dapat)
Angkat naik tangga, Bujang	Pull up the ladder, Jack (I'm alright)
Boleh naik tangga	Do come up the steps (ladder)
Sudan rosak	It is broken
Hujan kuat ini hari	Heavy rain today, eh?
Orang sakit	A sick man (or sick people)
Perempuah jahat	A naughty girl (tart)
Tida apa	Not to worry

By the way, Malay, in various jungle forms is how spoken all through Borneo. Even far inland, most men and some women can understand it. As it is a very easy language to learn in the conversational ("bazaar Malay") form, anyone likely to be here a few months should study the subject. In one month an average Englishman (or Scot!) can know quite enough Malay to get a lot more fun out of being here. The other languages are: difficult and localised (see Chapter 3).