

Engagements with Sarawak: Reminiscences of Research on a Malaysian Borneo State

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Introduction

It is often difficult to look back and capture memories and experiences extending to well over 40 years of professional involvement in research, in this case with reference to Sarawak and the wider Borneo. The tendency in one's twilight years is to paint a more positive picture of the past than perhaps is warranted, to seek current rationalisations and justifications for what was undertaken and hopefully achieved. In these reminiscences I want to emphasise that whatever planning you might attempt to do for the future, research is often inspired and directed by fortuitous encounters with others, with opportunities which suddenly and unexpectedly present themselves, and with ideas, thoughts and reflections, sometimes generated by a chance reading of a particular article or book. Although in my preparations for field research in Borneo, I had support and advice from a wide range of helpful and gracious scholars who spent a significant amount of time responding to my questions and giving me guidance, the training element of British doctoral research in social science in the early 1970s was somewhat ad hoc, even unpredictable. It is interesting how much has changed since those days when there was no formal training in the methods and practices of field research: much depended upon the personal relationship with the supervisor; there was very little monitoring of progress; the period for writing up the doctoral thesis was open-ended.

My first remarks about my journey back in time are to the effect that I hadn't made a conscious and firm decision about what I wanted to do with my life. Specifically, I might never have become involved in research on Borneo had it not been for two senior individuals moving me in different directions in 1970-71 when I was studying in London. I'll come to this in a moment.

Early encounters in Hull with Southeast Asia

What happens before and during the preparations for field research is, of course, vital for the subsequent course of data collection and analysis. I had had some exposure to literature on Southeast Asia during my undergraduate days at the University of Hull from 1967 to 1970, a few years after the Southeast Asian Studies programme and a Centre for Southeast Asian Studies had been established there in 1963. In 1968-70 I took lectures and tutorials in Southeast Asian geography delivered by Dr James Jackson and Dr George Elliston. It so happened that they had both carried out work on Sarawak: George Elliston had studied the Sarawak fishing industry (1967) and then in the early 1970s was appointed from Hull to a post in Universiti Malaya; and James Jackson had not only written an important book on the geography of Sarawak as a newly developing state (1969), but had then moved across the border, and undertaken a historical-geographical study of Chinese gold-mining in the former Dutch West Borneo (1970). In addition, Jackson's major study of the development of Chinese commercial agriculture in colonial Malaya, which was based on his Ph.D thesis at Universiti Malaya where he had been a lecturer, was an exemplar of how a detailed historical-geographical approach can demonstrate the ways in which immigrant pioneers create socio-cultural and economic landscapes (1968). He was such an important influence in my early career that I subsequently dedicated a book to him (1998). Furthermore, in the early years there were several general books on Southeast Asian geography which were used as undergraduate texts.

I also followed a course in the sociology and social anthropology of Southeast Asia organised by Professor Mervyn Jaspán (who had lived, worked and undertaken research in Sukarno's Indonesia, particularly

in Java and Sumatra, in the 1950s and 1960s), and Lewis Hill (who had previously carried out research in the Sudan, but prior to that had completed a postgraduate library-based thesis at Oxford on the Kuki-Chin populations of upper Burma under the supervision of Professor Rodney Needham). Unfortunately, unlike geography, the provision of books that might serve as teaching texts was non-existent in the sociology and anthropology of Southeast Asia. Recommending and providing course material had to be somewhat innovative, but I was immediately attracted in my studies to the early reports on Sarawak completed under the auspices of the Colonial Social Science Research Council (CSSRC) in the 1950s. These now-classic studies were undertaken by J.D. [Derek] Freeman on the Baleh Iban (1953, 1955a, 1955b, 1970, 1981), H.S. [Stephen] Morris on the Coastal Melanau of Oya and Mukah (1953, 1977, 1991), W.R. [Bill] Geddes on the Sadong Land Dayak (Bidayuh) (1954, 1957), and T'ien Ju-K'ang on the Kuching Chinese (1953), as well as the general social science research report on Sarawak produced by E.R. [Edmund] Leach (1948, 1950). Moreover, the first anthropological monograph that I ever read and reviewed on Southeast Asia as an undergraduate student was Raymond Firth's *Malay Fishermen: Their Peasant Economy* (1946); it was Firth, then at the London School of Economics (LSE), in the early years of post-war anthropological endeavour in the British-administered territories of what was eventually to become the Federation of Malaysia, who had been instrumental, as secretary of the CSSRC, in commissioning the Sarawak studies.

However, at the suggestion of my supervisor, Mervyn Jaspan, I ended up writing a final-year dissertation on the Samin movement of north-central Java, a rural response and resistance to social change in the context of Dutch colonialism. In pursuit of information I had also written to and received helpful replies from Professor Harry J. Benda and Dr The Siauwi Giap, both of whom had written on the subject. This provided an opportunity to read around the emerging historical and sociological literature on what was then referred to as 'peasant movements', 'rural rebellion' and 'local resistance' to change, well before James Scott's *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* appeared in 1976.

So here were the foundations of my introduction to a region which was to exercise me for the rest of my career. Yet I was never sure that I wanted to travel to Southeast Asia as a young 20-year-old; it was all too exotic and unsettling for me, and the idea of going to Borneo was furthest from my mind. I had rarely travelled abroad; most of my holidays as a teenager had been spent in the Cotswold Hills and the Welsh borders. My parents wanted me to become a schoolteacher and stay in my home county of Norfolk in East Anglia and so, after finishing my BA in Hull (1967-70), I got a place to study for a one-year Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) in the Department of Education there.

London and Southeast Asia

Then my life changed. On the basis of my final year dissertation, Mervyn Jaspán suddenly suggested that I apply for a Governing Body Postgraduate Exhibition at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London and register for an MA in area studies, focusing on anthropology, geography and Indonesian language. After an interview, I was awarded the scholarship and went to SOAS, ending up in a one-room bedsit north of Finsbury Park, commuting to lectures, sitting in reading rooms in Gordon Square, Russell Square, Bedford Square and Tottenham Court Road, and still uncertain whether or not I wanted a future academic career in a university. I had long conversations with my mother and father on the phone asking me what on earth I wanted to do with my life studying some distant part of the world.

Nevertheless, it was all thoroughly absorbing. Barbara E. Ward, always energetic and engaging, and who had undertaken research on Hong Kong boat people, was my anthropology tutor, and we also had special sessions delivered by Professor Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, who had recently returned from field research among Kalinga and Ifugao in northern Luzon in the Philippines; Dr Andrew Turton, who presented to us his recent field materials on northern Thailand, and was dissecting Stanley Tambiah's study of Buddhism and the spirit cults and the work of American cultural anthropologists on central Thailand; and Dr (later Professor) Shigeru Iijima, a visiting Japanese anthropologist

who had worked among the Karen of northern Thailand from 1963 (I took to Shigeru immediately and ended up buying a car from him: a Ford Anglia for £100). We even enjoyed lectures from Professor D.G.E. Hall, long retired from the University of London in 1959, but still academically active. On the geography side was Professor Charles Fisher, a not unfriendly but rather shy and distant individual who based his thoughtful lectures on his monumental volume *South-east Asia: A Social, Economic, and Political Geography* (1964); Dr Ronald Ng, fresh from field research in northeast Thailand; and Professor B.W. Hodder, who had worked for over four years in the Department of Geography at Universiti Malaya in the 1950s under Professor E.H.G. Dobby, and subsequently developed a distinguished career in African geography. I also attended Indonesian language tutorials delivered by a charming and helpful Indonesian who worked for the BBC.

For my MA dissertation, I developed further the work I had been doing in Hull on the Samin movement of north-central Java, which I subsequently published in the Dutch journal *Bijdragen tot de Taal, Land- en Volkenkunde* (1973). I was awarded a distinction in the examinations and dissertation. Life seemed rosy. In the later stages of my studies, I had applied for and been awarded a SOAS scholarship to stay in London and undertake doctoral research with Barbara Ward, with whom I got on well, on some historical-anthropological aspects of rural society in north-central Java; at the same time, I secured a Social Science Research Council (SSRC) Ph.D studentship to return to Hull and possibly work on Borneo; and again, with my wavering between a secondary school teaching career and a research-based university post, I was also accepted to do a PGCE at the Institute of Education in London, specialising in teaching overseas.

London or Hull; Sarawak or Kalimantan?

Then my future was marked out by what, for me, were chance events. Barbara Ward was appointed to a fellowship at Clare College, Cambridge in 1971, so I was left without an appointed supervisor and no alternative supervision to handle research in Indonesia. My accommodation arrangement in London looked like falling through as well. I happened to

be visiting friends in Hull in the late spring of 1971 and Mervyn Jaspán invited me to lunch. He was very persuasive. Enthusiastic about building postgraduate research on Indonesia at Hull, he proposed that I should go to Indonesian Kalimantan; it was a field wide open for British research, he argued. I was still hankering after the possibility of research in Java, or even taking up a teaching career overseas. So, with some indecision I ended up back in Hull in October 1971 with only the vaguest idea of what I wanted to do, but something on Borneo seemed to be getting increasingly likely. Then the autobiography gets even more complicated.

Mervyn Jaspán had visited Sarawak in late 1971. He spent a brief time at the Sarawak Museum with Benedict Sandin, the then government ethnologist and curator, who had succeeded Tom Harrisson from 1966. Jaspán, with Sandin, had also visited Lubok Antu near the border with West Kalimantan and then went on to spend a few nights at the nearby Iban longhouse of Nanga San. There is a background to this. During his field research among the Rejang of southwest Sumatra in the early 1960s, Jaspán, among many other things, had collected material on Rejang 'writing' and on their Ka-ga-nga texts. Subsequently in the mid-1960s he was in contact with Harrisson and Sandin who had been working on what they rather misleadingly referred to as 'Iban writing boards'. Jaspán and Harrisson agreed to collaborate on a comparative project on 'indigenous writing systems'. The research never materialised, but Jaspán had the idea to resurrect the project in 1971 and visit Sandin at the Museum and examine some of the Iban 'writing boards' in the collections. After his Sarawak trip Jaspán then returned to Hull, enthusiastic about sending me to do research on Iban communities in the Sarawak borderlands, starting at Nanga San, and then crossing the border to Nanga Badau in West Kalimantan. Precisely what I was to do was not determined, but, given the terms of my three-year studentship, I had to leave for Southeast Asia in August 1972. My preparation was somewhat haphazard and my domestic situation needed considerable thought because I got married in April 1972, had taken my wife Judy to Hull with me for a few months and then had the matter of finding funds for her to accompany me on field research. In the event, I managed to obtain additional support and we went to Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia together.

I knew from other colleagues even before leaving for field research that there was a security problem along the border between Sarawak and Kalimantan in the aftermath of Indonesia's 'Confrontation' with Malaysia, as well as subsequent communist guerrilla activities and incursions into Sarawak from Kalimantan, the stationing of Malaysian and Indonesian troops in their respective border territories, and the imposition of a curfew in villages on the Indonesian side. I became uneasy. But a possible solution seemed to present itself. Whilst preparing in Hull for field research, I had enjoyed the company of Paul Beavitt, who had been then recently appointed to a lectureship in Southeast Asian sociology there and had done field research among the Iban of Saratok for his Ph.D.

Here coincidences abound. Paul Beavitt was under the supervision of Dr Stephen Morris at the LSE who had undertaken a classic early study of the coastal Melanau of Sarawak; Stephen Morris' wife happened to be Barbara Ward, my former MA supervisor and tutor at SOAS. Paul consulted with Stephen Morris who suggested informally that I might think about doing research among the Punan Bah in Sarawak. Morris' interest was obvious in that the populations referred to by Edmund Leach as 'Kajang' in the Upper Rejang region, which included the Punan Bah, had historical and cultural connections with the coastal Melanau whom Morris had studied. This looked to be a possibility and had I gone to the Upper Rejang, which ultimately I did not, then I wonder what might have happened to Ida Nicolaisen who subsequently did undertake fieldwork among the Punan Bah from early 1973. The Punan Bah proposal would have removed me from the uncertainties of 'borderlands' research and I could have worked through the Sarawak Museum, and more easily established connections and support there.

However, field research in the Upper Rejang was not to be. Differences of opinion among my mentors about what I should do and where I should go made life increasingly fraught. In the event, I did not manage to spend time with the Punan Bah; my supervisor's view prevailed and Indonesia would be my ultimate destination. Thus, I went first to Sarawak for a month and visited Iban longhouses, then to West Kalimantan in 1972 and travelled along the Kapuas River, ending up doing research among the 'Maloh' or 'Embaloh' to the east of the Kapuas Lakes (in the Embaloh, Leboyan and Palin river systems), and

the Taman ‘Maloh’ of the region upstream of Putus Sibau. I also visited Iban longhouses in the Upper Embaloh, and a scattering of Kantu, Desa, Mualang, Seberuang, Bidayuh and ‘Malayic’ Dayak villages, along the Kapuas River and some of its tributaries. So, I embarked on fieldwork not really knowing until much later what I might be researching. What is more, the possibility of travelling across the border between Lubok Antu and Nanga Badau was eventually ruled out because of the security situation. When I arrived in Sarawak I was informed that I would have to enter West Kalimantan by flying from Kuching to Pontianak.

Preparations

I must have undertaken some formal preparation before arriving in Borneo? As I remember it, my main supervisory guidance was ‘Read anything and everything you can on Borneo’; ‘Do not engage with any preconceived theories, paradigms, or concepts, and let ideas and issues emerge from the field research’; ‘Contact scholars who have been to Borneo and seek advice’; ‘Read some fieldwork manuals, like *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* (Royal Anthropological Institute, 1951)’; ‘Do some language training’; ‘Attend relevant lectures in anthropology, sociology, geography, and history’ (here, I well remember attending anthropology lectures delivered by John Clammer, who later ended up in the National University of Singapore, and then moved on to a professorship at Sophia University in Japan, and Talal Asad, who was subsequently appointed to a professorship at City University New York). My supervisory sessions with Mervyn Jaspán were somewhat unpredictable. He was an erudite man, a skilled linguist, generous with his time, extremely knowledgeable on Indonesia and a fluent Indonesian speaker. But I was sometimes unsure what was expected of me; it was all very informal, no set work, other than the request for oral reports on what I had been reading and what contacts I had made; and for a couple of months during supervisory sessions we sat together reading sections of Tjilik Riwayat’s *Kalimantan Memanggil* (1958) to improve my Indonesian language.

That’s about it; so I immersed myself in the literature, not entirely clear about the specific relevance of some of what I was reading in

relation to what I might eventually end up doing; took informal Malay language classes offered in Hull; arranged a personalised reading course in the Dutch language; followed a linguistics and phonetics course; went off to visit Professor Edmund Leach and Anthony Richards in Cambridge (Leach wanted to know if I was a serious anthropology student, and Richards showed me drafts of his Iban-English dictionary); travelled to the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden and met Jan Avé, keeper of the Indonesian and Southeast Asian collections, with whom I established a long friendship and collaboration until his retirement to France in 1986 (Avé was a thoroughly loveable man, generous in all respects, mischievous, funny, loved French wine, and was a joy to work with); wrote to Professor Derek Freeman, Dr George Appell, Tom Harrison, Dr Alf Hudson and his wife Judith, Professor Rodney Needham, P. Donatus Dunselman and Dr Karl Helbig, among many others, all of whom responded graciously to me; fortuitously I met George Appell on his stay in Hull from his visiting post at Aarhus University in Denmark, and also Herb and Pat Whittier (fresh from fieldwork among the Apo Kayan Kenyah in East Kalimantan) when they were visiting Paul Beavitt. The field of Borneo studies was small in those days, and you could reach most people who might be of help to you by letter and, where possible, face to face.

Outside academic preparation, other major elements of pre-fieldwork training, which I would have found useful, were almost non-existent. For me they were primarily to do with practical matters and bodily functions and activities: keeping fit, eating, drinking, sleeping, bathing and other ablutions. It is obvious that physical (and mental) health is a major factor in fieldwork; if you are not healthy, then field research can be severely disrupted. I remember being given a brief talk on health and hygiene in the tropics by a specialist in tropical medicine, and the vaccinations which were needed; a fieldwork medical kit was also provided, including pills which were supposed to treat snakebite (which seemed to be a wholly unlikely antidote). We went through the full range of what to guard against: malaria, dengue fever, typhoid, cholera, (severe) diarrhoea, amoebic dysentery, tuberculosis, hepatitis, jaundice, skin infections of all kinds, tropical ulcers and so on. In the event, whilst reasonably healthy in Sarawak I came down with all kinds of infections in Kalimantan; I

contracted malaria, succumbed to a severe kidney infection which nearly killed me had it not been for a supply of antibiotics, developed several tropical ulcers and suffered from dysentery for two weeks. My mother always said I was a sickly child, too used to urban life. On the other hand, my wife, slim and of robust country stock, remained exceedingly healthy, apart from tropical ulcers.

One of the main problems was getting enough nutritious foods. Travelling light over long distances, you can only take a relatively small supply. We were not part of sponsored professional exploration with several longboats, and adept guides and carriers; we were individual travellers, hitching rides when we could, walking long distances through the forest, and, if affordable on a modest budget, hiring a vehicle or a boat. My wife and I lost a lot of weight, but we kept popping multivitamin tablets. Reasonably regular rice supplies helped keep up energy, and some tinned food (fish, usually mackerel; corned beef), and bottled chilli sauce and the occasional bar of chocolate; but the generosity of the people we lived with could not compensate for days when hunting and fishing were unsuccessful and protein and nutrients in short supply. We became used to a rather monotonous diet for extended periods of time, sometimes relying on rice and green or root vegetables. We also learned to be especially omnivorous when we needed meat: deer and wild boar were available on occasion, but anything from gibbon, monkey and civet cat to water snakes were acceptable in the local cuisine.

On the other hand, managing the copious quantities of *ai' tuak* (from fermented glutinous rice) and palm (*ijuk*) toddy, consumed by the Iban particularly during ritual events and major ceremonies, required considerable training. Perhaps British (especially male) undergraduates assume they can handle their alcohol consumption. Usually I had to socialise with the men; for my wife it was a little easier in that the demands on women to drink were not so heavy. Her diary often refers to me returning to the *bilik* late at night after an all-male session and worse for wear. The entry for 'alcohol' in *The Encyclopaedia of Iban Studies* says 'when it is consumed in quantities, during major ceremonies, whether sweet or sour, it produces extreme intoxication, which commonly includes physical trauma and delirium' (2001: 26). I can vouch for that! I remember once attending a three-day *gawai* in an Iban longhouse near

Betong with excessive alcohol and a lack of sleep; and whilst bathing in the shallow river, I quite simply collapsed, cutting my elbow on sharp stones, which subsequently became infected. Training and of course common sense, if this is possible during a major Iban celebration, are all-important.

What is more, sleeping under all kinds of conditions was sometimes a strain, especially becoming accustomed to the noise and the lack of privacy. Sleeping on a woven mat on the floor (with the help of an inflatable pillow), under a mosquito net with your partner, enclosed by sleeping Iban under other nets, sometimes up to ten people in a room, with human noises, giggles, snoring, and the sounds of animals under and around the longhouse, do require a degree of endurance and getting used to.

There is also a skill in bathing in a river, with other longhouse members surrounding you, and the children in particular taking great interest in what you are doing; ensuring if it's muddy and slippery that you emerge cleaner than when you went in (even though you might have to balance on a notched log-ladder to get to the riverbank), and taking care that you can change out of sarongs and shorts whilst maintaining a degree of modesty. My wife developed the necessary deftness in changing from a wet sarong to a dry one. However, she never quite remembered that washing clothes in a flowing river requires laundry to be secured on a rock or other stable surface. On quite a few occasions amused girls would return washed underwear to us which had decided that it preferred to float downriver.

A visit to the toilet was sometimes hilarious; often we would walk into the forest with a piece of pink toilet roll (we never could get used to other ways of cleansing), followed by a group of curious children. Ultimately there was no way of handling the audience other than to go behind a tree and squat. Sometimes a sore backside from stinging insects was a necessary hazard in this operation, or beating off inquisitive longhouse dogs. A wooden cabinet with a door and adequate ventilation, constructed on a floating raft tethered to the river bank, was a preferable alternative, also cooler, but not advisable when the river was in flood. Another experience was a fixed *tandas* by the river and in the vicinity of the longhouse, suffering from over-use especially during a *gawai*, and on

one occasion inhabited by a friendly scorpion. By far the most interesting nightly manoeuvre was to venture onto the open verandah (*tanju*) in darkness, on a precariously joined split-bamboo floor, sometimes with gaps, and in various stages of decay, in search of relief. On one occasion I managed to get my ankle lodged between slats and had to summon help loudly in the middle of the night. I had not realised that ablutions and toilet-related activities could be so adventurous and great occasions for local amusement.

First encounters with Sarawak

My wife and I arrived in Kuching from Singapore on the Straits Steamship MV Petaling on 12 August 1972. There were of course elements in that first experience of sailing along the Kuching River, an ambience of winding rivers and dense nipa palm-covered embankments that resonated with what I had read about Borneo in the popular travel literature. My wife and I enjoyed a privileged welcome, greeted by the driver of the Chartered Bank car, and a weekend at the Bank House. I happened to have a connection with Hilary, a fellow student at Hull University whose father, John Clifford, was the manager of the bank. During the stay in Sarawak he and his wife, Meg, more or less adopted us and took a parental interest in our welfare. This included picnics at Santubong and Tanjung Po, guided tours of important landmarks in Kuching and beyond, lunches and dinners at the Sarawak Club and the Aurora Hotel with local residents whom the Cliffords thought might be of help to us, including Leonard Linggi Jugah (now Tan Sri Datuk Amar Dr), who was also a Hull graduate, and Edward Enggu, the then director of the Borneo Literature Bureau, and James Wong Kim Min (later Datuk Amar). The club became the focus of our social world and we spent several evenings there with the Cliffords' two sons, David and Alistair, who were visiting during their vacation. Aside from the club our favourite lunch spot with good food and prices within our modest budget was the central market, and coffee breaks from work in the museum were a short walk away at the Aurora coffee house.

For those who conducted research in Sarawak in the 1970s, the museum was the centre of our institutional world, our study centre,

library and archive resource, a source of inspiration in its magnificent ethnographic and archaeological collections, the major sponsor and means of support, especially in arranging transport to other parts of the state and introductions to administrative staff, particularly district officers such as the helpful David Impi in Lubok Antu, and to local-level leaders, and longhouse and village headmen. In a sense, the museum was also my wife's and my home for a month (outside the field trips to Lubok Antu, Simanggang [Sri Aman] and Betong), in that we lived in the annexe at the rear of the curator's bungalow on a hilltop overlooking what was then Pig Lane (Jalan Babi), now Park Lane. Known locally as the Segu Bungalow (Banglo Segu) it had been the home of Tom and Barbara Harrisson in the 1950s and early 1960s up to his retirement as curator in 1966. It was then the residence of Benedict Sandin for a time. Apparently Harrisson had had the annexe built in 1956 as a Dayak rest house and a place where upriver artists and craftsmen, primarily Orang Ulu (Kayan, Kenyah, Kelabit) could stay while they were working for the museum. Sandin and his wife no longer lived in the main bungalow when we were residing there.

It so happened that when we were residents we shared annexe space with Carol Rubenstein, an American poet, who was working on a project with the Sarawak Museum on *Poems of Indigenous Peoples of Sarawak: Some of the Songs and Chants*, which appeared as a special monograph in two volumes of *The Sarawak Museum Journal* in 1973. Carol decided without our prompting that, in the negotiation of the limited space, she would graciously allow us the air-conditioned bedroom; she took the outer verandah under a mosquito net, and on some nights, despite the protection, endured persistent mosquito attack. I remember that Carol had a constant supply of snacks: coffee, herbal tea, Milo, biscuits, crackers and cheese, cakes, soup; she was adept at cooking wheatgerm omelettes with corned beef, and instructed us on the importance of keeping a good supply of tablets against worms and ringworm. Jok Bato, a Kenyah-Kayan artist who had family and ancestral connections in Kalimantan, was also staying with us, in a small sleeping place at the back of the annexe whilst he was carrying out some mural work for the museum. I purchased a large white cotton sheet on which he painted an exquisite and complex mural for us, which we still treasure. We often sat

with him on the verandah watching him at work and drinking his *tuak*. When he had finished his contract he moved to a hostel in Kuching and we used to visit him frequently, sharing drinks with him and his Kayan and Kenyah friends. Carol had also engaged him privately for three months to undertake some work for her.

The annexe was a place for visiting researchers to call in. Stephanie Morgan appeared, fresh from her travels in West Kalimantan with superb photographs of Taman Maloh and Kayan in the Upper Kapuas. Peter Eaton dropped by when he was undertaking his comparative research on education, development and school leavers in Sarawak and New Guinea. At the museum, Stephen Morris, with whom we had pleasant curries together in India Street, and who had a wonderful sense of humour and a dry wit, was engaged along with Cliff Sather and Hatta Solhee in gathering data for the Miri-Bintulu regional planning study. And Paul Beavitt made a surprise appearance as he was passing through on his Southeast Asian travels, giving us useful guidance on getting around Sarawak by bus.

My work in the museum consisted primarily of poring over issues of *The Sarawak Gazette* and archival materials to record any information on trans-border connections between Dutch West Borneo and the Brooke Raj, and subsequently between the Indonesian province of West Kalimantan and the British Crown Colony of Sarawak. In this endeavour what had impressed me in their relevance to what I thought I was intending to do were the monographs of Robert Pringle (1970) and Benedict Sandin (1967) on the migrations and encounters of the Iban across western and northwestern Borneo. What cropped up in the literature as well were the connections and hostilities between the Iban and the Maloh, not only in references in *The Sarawak Gazette* but more especially in two papers on the Maloh which Tom Harrisson had published in *The Sarawak Museum Journal*, primarily using the material which Sandin had collected in his conversations with three Maloh silversmiths who had visited Kuching and the Museum in 1962-63 (1965, 1966). The Maloh were fluent Iban speakers. They had stayed with Tom Harrisson at his residence in Pig Lane and had also made some items of silverware and other objects illustrative of Maloh culture for the museum. It was this published material, some of which I was already

aware of prior to my arrival in Sarawak, which eventually steered me in the direction of undertaking a historical-anthropological study of the Maloh and their connections with the Iban in West Kalimantan. And I had the great good fortune to meet with two of the three visitors to the museum, Tulung Daun and Kanderan, in the Taman 'Maloh' village of Siut in the Upper Kapuas in 1973 (a photograph of them is provided in Harrison, 1965, plate XXXVI). They recalled their productive and interesting stay in Kuching in 1962-63 and memories of the 'formidable' Harrison and their long discussions in Iban with Sandin.

In those early years I was a brief sojourner in Sarawak, gaining knowledge and inspiration from visits to Iban longhouses. I had a smattering of the Iban language and had used Burr Baughman's *Speaking Iban* (1963) as a useful resource. But I worked mainly in Malay and also used interpreters; my field notes were written out in longhand with an accompanying carbon copy. One copy stayed with me and the other was either left with friends in Kuching to be picked up later, or posted to the UK with fingers crossed. I had to send regular reports and updates to Mervyn Jaspán. What occurs to me over the years and in subsequent fieldwork in Sarawak and in other parts of Borneo is just how much our communication systems have improved; it's an obvious point but worth making in terms of fieldwork constants and methods. In those days long periods were spent getting from one place to another by bus, Land Rover, and longboat. Letters and postcards were sent out infrequently, sometimes taking a couple of months to get to their destination; the occasional newspaper sent from home was a lifeline to at least keep in touch with events outside our small world. Access to telephones was infrequent. The transistor radio was essential for local and foreign news. Photographs and slides were sometimes difficult to get developed (slide film was a particular problem), some had to be posted, and we were never sure of their quality until they were safely back in our hands. Now with computers and handphones, Skype, Facebook and Twitter we ensure that communication is instantaneous with the availability of an endless flow of information.

What also struck me in my visits to Iban longhouses was how impressively Derek Freeman had captured the major social and cultural characteristics of the Iban (1970), but also how different communities

varied in relation to the different external influences to which they had been subject. This was obvious in comparing the longhouse of Nanga San near Lubok Antu, which had retained a considerable amount of the culture which had been reported in the literature, and longhouses near Betong, which had been subject to longer established economic impacts and to the influences of the Anglican Church and its school. My wife and I had travelled to Lubok Antu with Benedict Sandin but subsequently returned to Kuching by bus. Benedict had organised his own visit to the Ulu Ai to gather genealogies and oral traditions, but first he accompanied us by longboat to introduce us to the *tuai rumah*, Luyoh, at Nanga San. My wife had recorded in her diary our first meeting with Benedict Sandin at the museum two days after our arrival: 'he smokes Consulate, he has a very easy manner and we were soon put at ease.' We both liked Benedict very much. He was an amiable travelling companion and we had a very productive and interesting time with him.

In Betong we stayed with the Reverend (now Canon) Michael Woods, the minister at St Augustine's Anglican Church, who had been my senior at the Grammar School in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, and he took us off by Land Rover to stay in a 32-door Iban longhouse. Michael was very innovative, enormously good company with a terrific sense of humour, breeding fighting cocks and selling them to the Iban to top up the church coffers. Though we shared rice dishes with him, he seemed much more adept at whipping up a meal of beans on toast, topped with an egg. We have kept in contact ever since (he has now retired to Kuching and can still be found at St Thomas's) and he kindly presided sympathetically at my late mother's funeral back in Norfolk.

Michael's mother had written to him in advance in late spring 1972, with an accompanying newspaper clipping, that we would be arriving in Sarawak. In first looking at our photograph in the local newspaper, which accompanied a feature article on a young married couple heading off for Borneo, Michael indicated when he met us that he pondered how we might cope with life in a longhouse. He clearly thought us impossibly naive. His not infrequent remark to my wife was 'Good Lord, woman, how are you going to survive?' Amusingly, when we were later in Pontianak in 1973 and visited, during their travels through Indonesia, by the British explorer Robin Hanbury-Tenison, the then chairman

of Survival International (see 1975: 101-103), and his wife, (the late) Marika Hanbury-Tenison, the then cookery correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph*, she remarked on my wife's appearance in her book *A Slice of Spice: Travels to the Indonesian Islands*, 'Judy astonished me. She had lived all her life in Great Yarmouth ... and as soon as they married she was whisked from her job as a secretary and brought to Kalimantan. For eight months they had been living in a Dayak community up the Kapuas River ... For an anthropologist, the living and travelling would have been quite tough, but for a girl from Great Yarmouth it must have been unbelievable. Yet there was Judy, tall and willowy, with blonde hair neatly tied with a yellow ribbon, a terribly English cotton frock and fingernails the length of a pampered socialite, looking as though the nearest thing to a jungle she had ever gone was Great Yarmouth beach on a Bank Holiday Monday' (1974: 60).

In this connection I cannot resist including another vignette. During the past ten years there have been exchanges between scholars of Iban culture, relating to the interpretations of Iban textile patterns and motifs. As part of this ongoing process, Michael Heppell sent a contribution to the discussion in an email of 16 January 2016 to my co-editor of the *Newsletter of the Association of Southeast Asian Studies in the United Kingdom* with a request to forward the email and attachment to me. In an aside he provides an amusing account of how one field researcher sees another in the context of the perceptions of the local people with whom we are living and working. Flattering in some respects, it again raises the issue of whether this naïve young couple from the UK was suited to arduous fieldwork in remote regions. I have edited his narrative.

Michael Heppell says about our meeting in Lubok Antu in mid-September 1972:

I visited Lubok Antu in Sarawak to pick up mail and top up supplies. When I arrived I saw numerous Iban men squatting along the 5 foot way looking out to an empty service way, obviously awaiting an event ... I collected my mail from the Fort and was surprised to be asked by a number of Iban about my "relative" visiting Lubok Antu. On my return to the bazaar, I saw the "relative" and a young woman nonchalantly walking along the service way as if strolling down 5th Avenue with the

Iban men goggling them. We met and Victor introduced himself and his wife. I learned that he was going to do fieldwork with the Maloh. And this is all I recollected of the conversation ... Three evenings after I returned upriver from Lubok Antu, a longhouse meeting was called and I and my wife Marguerite were told to attend. We sat down and after a time talk turned to Lubok Antu and the visitors. Various members of the longhouse who had got a free ride there and back reported glowingly on the handsome and elegant visitors and how I was the complete opposite. One man extolled Victor's wife as "Kumang *orang puteh*" (Kumang is the epitome of beauty and femininity). At the end of the meeting, the longhouse head implored us to improve our appearance when we travelled now that they knew how elegant Westerners really were so that we did not embarrass them any more ... Thereafter we were constantly and pointedly reminded of the Kings and how elegant they were ...

There you have it. When working and living in a longhouse *do not* let your dress standards drop! But of course it's no guarantee that your field research is going to be of high quality.

After a month in Sarawak we said our farewells to the museum staff and to the Cliffords, and through them to all the other friends we had made. We flew from Kuching to Pontianak, but I still had not finally decided what I was going to do: a study of the Iban along the border with Sarawak and cross-border relations; a study of the Maloh as the famous silversmiths whose main market in decorative silverware was their neighbouring Iban customers and the more distant Sarawak Iban; or a study of Iban-Maloh relationships, historically and currently. But that is another story.

A cursory survey of later fieldwork

Land development and resettlement in the 1980s

I do not wish to go into great detail on my subsequent research in Sarawak, but only to illustrate the changes which had taken place in the conditions and character of research (at least my own) between my earlier encounters in Sarawak and other parts of Borneo and later experiences during the 1980s and 1990s. After eventually leaving

Sarawak in late 1973 (we detoured there briefly after a year in West Kalimantan, en route to Singapore and the UK), I did not return for eight years. I was then teaching in Hull and attempting to make myself useful. I switched my interests to exploring library and archival materials on Kalimantan in Leiden, Den Haag and Amsterdam and spending a considerable amount of time annually from 1974 with Jan Avé at the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde. This eventually resulted in our co-authored bibliography with Joke de Wit on West Kalimantan (1983), and fed into the major exhibition on Borneo at the Rijksmuseum in 1985, which was opened by Sir David Attenborough and accompanied by co-authored and elaborated catalogue texts in English and Dutch (1986a, 1986b). I was also publishing vigorously throughout the 1970s, mainly articles, but also the edited book *Essays on Borneo Societies* (1978). I did not finish my Ph.D thesis until late 1979/early 1980, when I had my first sabbatical at Hull University and breathing space to tackle it.

It was following its completion that I returned to Sarawak in July 1981. The atmosphere in the Sarawak Museum was rather different from that which I remembered in the early 1970s. There had been a change in government policy with regard to overseas researchers seeking permission and sponsorship to work in Sarawak. From the mid-1970s, as the momentum of Malaysia's New Economic Policy gathered pace, the emphasis had shifted increasingly to the evaluation of research in terms of its benefits for the promotion of Sarawak's social and economic development objectives. Quite rightly the state government had become rather wary of foreign scholars conducting research there to further their own academic careers and interests without any noticeable attention to its value in promoting the well-being and livelihoods of the local populations. In my case, I had been engaged with rather purist British structural-functionalist concerns to do with bilateral kinship, marriage, residence and rank, and Anglo-Dutch-French structuralist preoccupations with the relationships between social structure and symbolism, social forms and religion, and the profane and the sacred, although I would offer a conditional observation that these were located within a more historical, transformational context and one which looked beyond one community and one ethnic group. But this project had a rather remote relationship to development policy and practice, which I

addressed later in a rather more wide-ranging mode (King, 1999).

On my return to the museum in 1981, the flow of overseas researchers had slowed. Some were granted permission to enter, but there were much tighter controls. In fact, during my one-month stay in Sarawak in that year, the only other foreign researcher who visited the museum was Jan Wisseman (Christie), who, in any case, had been based at Universiti Sains Malaysia. She was examining some of the archaeological finds from Harrison's excavations at Santubong, having previously examined upstream and downstream trade in Sumatra. We subsequently wrote a joint paper together on metal-working in Borneo (Christie and King, 1988). I had returned to Sarawak with the idea and proposal that there was something more to be done in understanding Bidayuh (Land Dayak) land tenure systems and changes in these, and that Geddes' work needed re-evaluation. However, yet again my plans changed and, as in the early 1970s, my research took a completely different direction. I described what I was doing as 'jobbing', a concept I explained in a paper in *The Sarawak Gazette* (1994a).

I talked with Dr Hatta Solhee (now Datu), Dr Peter Kedit, Jayl Langub and others on my arrival in Kuching in July 1981 and became convinced that I should switch my attention instead to current developments within the state within the parameters of the government's development agenda. And this is what I did, funded by a Leverhulme Fellowship and the Cambridge Evans Fund, as well as my own university; I had to inform my sponsors that my plans had altered. Over a five-year period from 1981 to 1986, comprising about 18 months in total, I was a regular visitor to Sarawak (and Brunei and Sabah) undertaking studies of resettlement, land development, and agricultural modernisation. This was not small-scale village-based, participant observation research, but something much wider. It demanded a considerable amount of travelling, working more closely with local social scientists and government agencies and practitioners, and cooperating with one of my economist colleagues in the UK. This was therefore larger-scale, comparative, partly survey-based, and interviewing key informants and techniques of rapid rural appraisal (King, 1986a, 1988).

During the course of the five years, we moved from the Mayang and Engkaroh tea projects and other Bidayuh land development schemes

(with the help of Mike de Alwis), to Lemanak, Skrang and Melugu Iban land development schemes, to the Batang Ai hydro-electric scheme and its associated resettlement programme, to resettlement in the lower Rejang inland of Sibul, to the plans for a further large-scale hydro-electric project and resettlement at Bakun and its effects on Belaga and surrounding communities, and to the Commonwealth Development Corporation and land development schemes in the Miri and Bintulu regions. It involved collaboration with a large number of government personnel, with the substantial support of Dr James Masing (now Tan Sri Datuk Amar) and Gabriel Adit, who were then working for the Sarawak Electricity Supply Corporation (SESCO) on the resettlement of Iban upriver of the dam, and the planning for the possible development of Bakun (1986b). We also collaborated with the Sarawak branch of Universiti Pertanian (Putra) Malaysia (UPM), based in Bintulu and headed by Abdul Rashid Abdullah (now Professor Datuk Dr), who would subsequently complete his doctorate with me in Hull, and then to go on to become vice-chancellor of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). Dr Rob Cramb and members of the Department of Agriculture were also exceedingly helpful; Sebastian Kelbling, a German volunteer, and others at the Sarawak Museum were of great service; and Dr Christina Eghenter, who had a research fellowship at Hull, gave very useful advice. Sebastian, on his departure from Kuching, came to Hull to do a master's degree with me, based on his Sarawak experience.

I well remember, for someone who does not cope well with heights, a helicopter journey from Kuching to Bakun over forest-covered Sarawak (at that time) with James Masing, landing beyond Bakun, immediately getting a longboat, and going upriver to float down late at night and bag animals (deer, pig) coming down to the water's edge to drink, suddenly putting a spotlight on them. What worried me somewhat, given that the river was fast-flowing with mini-rapids and side-streams feeding rough water into the mainstream, was that the longboat driver and the guide fastened on their life vests, but I was not offered a life support system! We got back to base without managing to shoot anything, though we had a couple of near misses; I was exhausted and relieved, and slept like a (slightly damp) log. Not satisfied with seeing the Rejang, the Baluy and Belaga from the air, on my return to Kuching I negotiated with Lucas

Chin (now Datuk) at the Sarawak Museum, who had always been most supportive and helpful, to arrange for Tuton Kaboy to accompany me back to Kapit and Belaga and the Bakun region. It was a journey full of adventure, almost capsizing as we shot over the Pelagus Rapids and then nearly dropping my shoulder bag carrying my passport and wallet into the river as I negotiated a precariously balanced wooden plank between the embankment and the express boat moored at Belaga in the darkness of early morning. Tuton also had a large number of friends and connections in Belaga which demanded that we spend social time with them imbibing his favourite refreshment, Guinness. He was great company and enormously helpful and I had a very productive time in Belaga, though somewhat unpredictable. But unpredictability is part and parcel of field research.

In the Batang Ai-Lemanak region, in the company of James Masing and Gabriel Adit, and subsequently Sidi and Heidi Munan, I was also introduced to the new phenomenon of dam-building and forest clearance activity, and the transformation of virgin and secondary forest into a state- and private-managed industrial-commercial estate system, based primarily on oil palm, cocoa and rubber, but also other subsidiary marketable crops. As an anthropologist I was dismayed by, yet resigned to, the fact that state-directed development, or in modern parlance 'agricultural modernisation', was overwhelming the Iban at a pace too rapid for them to handle (see King and Parnwell, 1990). But I felt that there was little I could do. I was convinced of the importance of producing working papers and articles in academic journals evaluating the state government's policies and some of its projects (which I subsequently referred to as 'the business of development'). The discourse of 'development' had become a mantra. But as an outsider who still wanted to be engaged in Sarawak and undertake research there, I suppose I became partly incorporated into the prevailing ideology, though I was also critical of it. So, I wrote or co-wrote a series of critical papers about rural development and agricultural diversification in Sarawak, fully recognising that, as an interfering outsider, this might fall on deaf ears. This is not to say that there were not successes in this developmental process, but clearly there were also failures. I suppose a couple of papers that I wrote in 1993 and 1995 tried to capture some of

the dilemmas. But these are now past their sell-by date.

Environmental change in the 1990s

My next project was even larger in scale and it too happened by chance, not by deliberate decision. Ian Douglas, Professor of Geography at the University of Manchester, got in touch with me and my colleague Dr Michael Parnwell in 1991 and asked if we would be interested in applying for a grant under a recently launched research initiative. Although Ian had had fieldwork experience in Southeast Asia, and in an earlier period of his career had been in the Department of Geography at Hull University, he needed support from researchers who had expertise in Borneo. We agreed to collaborate and we were awarded a substantial grant. Funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council's 'Global Environmental Change' programme, we undertook a two-year comparative study in both Sarawak and Sabah from January 1992 to December 1993. The objectives of the research were worked out over several months in 1991, and then subsequently revised following a review of our proposal. Early on we did not know where precisely we would base the research and decided that we would be guided by our local contacts in Sarawak and Sabah with whom we needed to work as joint field researchers.

The research team was substantial, comprising anthropologists, sociologists, geographers (some of whom had expertise in remote sensing imagery, aerial photography, GIS and digital methods, statistics, mapping, geology, hydrology), and development studies specialists; the core team comprised Ian Douglas, Keith Sutton, Jennifer Lim, Michael Parnwell, David Taylor and Terry Marsden, Abdul Rashid Abdullah and Dimbab Ngidang; local-level data was collected through questionnaire surveys, structured and unstructured interviews, and participant observation. It was based in the Centre for South-East Asian Studies at the University of Hull and the School of Geography in the University of Manchester. We worked along with government departments in Kuching and Kota Kinabalu and with staff at UPM in Bintulu. Case studies were undertaken among Iban villages in the Bintulu region and in communities in the Lahad Datu and Kinabatangan regions in eastern

Sabah. The major focus was to examine the susceptibility of tropical rainforests to change; changing climatic patterns, especially with regard to rainfall and drought; and the vulnerability of local populations to the effects of forest clearance and alterations in climate. In working closely with a broad range of government personnel with responsibilities in these areas, we also presented our findings in joint seminars (Douglas et al, 1995; King, 1996).

Many things to do with the field research stand out for me in personal recollections about my several visits to Sarawak during the 1980s up to mid-1990, but one enduring memory was simply being in Kuching and having time to share with Henry Gana Ngadi at his favourite seafood restaurant at Batu Lintang. When you are undertaking research, you also take time out and share food and drink with people whose company you enjoy, and you learn from them in an informal and leisurely way. We sampled many restaurants in that time that we had together. He studied for an MA at Hull with me and wrote his dissertation on Iban rites of passage in 1987-88. It was subsequently published posthumously by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka where he had worked, following his untimely death in September 1995 (Gana Ngadi, 1998). He was also working towards his Ph.D with me in the early 1990s, and I last saw him in Kuching in September 1994. He was a highly amusing character, extremely interested in and knowledgeable about Iban culture, a great storyteller and raconteur, as many Iban are, and someone whose company I enjoyed immensely; I always looked forward to meeting him. The dedication that he inserted in his book was very fitting and demonstrated what inspired and gave Henry's life meaning: 'To my ancestors, noble guardians of the people and culture'. I still miss him, and experience great sadness that he was unable to complete his doctoral thesis.

Studies in culture in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s

While not based directly on field research as such, there have been other projects which have required me to visit Sarawak. I have already indicated that in my collaborative work with Jan Avé I paid several visits to see him at the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden up

to his retirement in 1986. During that time I shared his enthusiasm for ethnographic collections on Borneo and we worked on some of the materials for our joint books on Borneo (Avé and King, 1986a, 1986b). Even after Jan had left Leiden in 1986 I returned to the Leiden Museum in 1987 and 1988 to work on the Borneo photo archive of Dr Hendrik Tillema (1989). Also in 1984 and 1985 I spent a considerable period of time at the Brunei Museum, following my initial visit in 1981, to assist in the cataloguing of some of their ethnographic collections which had been collected by P.M. Shariffuddin, the first director of the museum, and Tom Harrisson, after he had left the Sarawak Museum in 1966 (King and Bantong Antaran, 1987). In addition, during my visits to the Kuching Museum in the 1980s I frequently took notes on significant items in the collections, especially as these related to my work at the Brunei Museum. A large amount of this information remains unpublished, but it stems very much from my continuing interest in material culture.

I mention this because I feel that it was an important part of what I did in Sarawak, stimulated by the collections in the Sarawak Museum, and it also has relevance for an emerging interest that I developed from the early 1990s, in cultural change more generally, and specifically the relationships between culture, identity (ethnicity) and tourism development. It was in July 1992 that I organised two panels at the Second Biennial International Conference of the Borneo Research Council in Kota Kinabalu on 'Tourism in Borneo: Issues and Perspectives' (1994b). I have not undertaken sustained field research on tourism in Sarawak, but as all anthropologists are in some sense, and at various times, tourists, I have a store of information along with photographs, promotional literature, brochures, postcards, and guidebooks on tourism in Sarawak. My sojourns in Brunei from 2012 have also involved weekend excursions into neighbouring Sarawak (to Miri, Limbang and to Labuan and Sabah) for leisure and relaxation. A dimension of these experiences which has captured my interest is the frequent and substantial movement of Brunei residents (both citizens and expatriates) to neighbouring parts of Malaysia for touristic purposes and the implications of these connections for the adjacent territories and populations divided by a political border.

This interest in tourism in Southeast Asia (and specifically in Malaysia and Thailand) has stayed with me since the early 1990s and has more recently translated into a focus on heritage tourism and UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the region, of which Sarawak has one: Mulu National Park (King, 2016a). And who knows, perhaps a more detailed research project on tourist themes involving Sarawak will emerge in the near future? In anticipation of this I have recently drafted a comparative paper on tourism development in Malaysian Borneo, Kalimantan and Brunei Darussalam, reviewing research and the literature on tourism over the past 20 years (King, 2016b). There is much more to do, as we are sadly deficient in detailed research on tourism in Borneo.

A final note

During my long-established interest in Borneo I have had the opportunity to travel over large areas of Sarawak (and to spend time in Kalimantan, Sabah and Brunei Darussalam as well). On reflection, my travels and my interest in a range of projects gave me some insight into cultural diversity, the fluidity of identities and the complexities of boundary- and border-crossing. But I think this did sacrifice some in-depth understanding of the cultural subtleties of local social and cultural life. I suppose I was always looking for the ‘bigger picture’.

In conclusion, this final note also serves as an acknowledgement of those scholars whose work I have read and benefited from, and, in some cases, corresponded with by letter and email. These important contacts are in addition to those who have already been referred to in my narrative. Without the knowledge produced by these individuals, I would not have achieved what I hope I have achieved. I have collaborated with numerous individuals (both Malaysian and non-Malaysian), and have had the good fortune to meet many of them (often in the Sarawak Museum, the coffee house of the Aurora Hotel and the central market in Kuching, at conferences of the Borneo Research Council, and during sojourns and visits to various parts of the island). This is not a self-congratulatory exercise in demonstrating that I know many scholars in Borneo studies. I have gained much from talking with them and benefited from reading their work. Sometimes it provides a certain

comfortable confirmation of what you have been trying to argue, and at other times it is extremely disquieting in having to realise and accept how mistaken and misled you have been. Those who have not already been mentioned in this exercise of contemplation and self-realisation include Rita Armstrong, Jay Bernstein, Don Brown, James Chin, Liana Chua, Mark Cleary, Jay Crain, Michael Dove, Kelvin Egay, Spencer Empading Sanggin, Rick Fidler, Tim Hatch, Christine Helliwell, Hew Cheng Sim, Noboru Ishikawa, Monica Janowski, Welyne Jehom Jeffrey, Erik Jensen, Eva and Roger Kershaw, Joseph Ko, Valerie Mashman, Allen Maxwell, Robert Menua Saleh, Peter Metcalf, Ida Nicolaisen, Kazunori Oshima, Christine Padoch, Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan, Janet Rata Noel, Bob Reece, Patricia Regis, Jérôme Rousseau, Bernard Sellato, Kenneth Sillander, Simon Strickland, Vinson Sutlive, Motomitsu Uchibori, Reed Wadley, Zainal Kling, Wan Zawawi Ibrahim, and Heather Zeppel.

I have also had the privilege of supervising and examining the dissertations of over 40 postgraduate students who have undertaken research on Borneo. Had it not been for their work I would be somewhat impoverished; as a senior academic I constantly feel the need to be refreshed and re-energised. The impulse has come from those who have worked on Sarawak and they include Abdul Rashid Abdullah, Poline Bala, Madeline Berma, Stanley Bye Kadam Kiai, Henry Chan, Julian Davison, Henry Gana Ngadi, Traude Gavin, Amanda Harris, Fiona Harris, Jayum Jawan, William Kruse, Lim Khay Tiong, Ooi Keat Gin, Sabihah Osman, John Postill, Graham Saunders, Lucy Sebli, Naimah Talib, Diane Tillotson, Shanti Thambiah, Jegak Uli, and June Walker; those postgraduates who have worked in other parts of Borneo include Asiyah Kumpoh, Bantong Antaran, Fausto Barlocco, Eussoff Agaki Ismail, Hadi Abdullah, Clare Hall, Anna Hewgill, Anthony Horton, Sian Jay, Lars Kaskija, Anika Koenig, Trevor Millum, Jean Morrison, Nani Suryani Abu Bakar, Pudarno Binchin, Maureen da Silva, and Suniya Tamour. Some of those with whom I have worked and shared company on a regular basis have become firm friends, and this has been one of the joys of my research career.

My involvement in Borneo research experienced something of a hiatus from the mid-1990s when I began to spend more time in Singapore, peninsular Malaysia and Thailand (and especially undertaking

research on heritage in Melaka and Ipoh, and supervising research on Penang and Perak), though I also continued to call in for brief visits to friends in Sarawak, Brunei and Sabah and to deliver seminars and lectures and undertake some programme evaluation as external examiner or adviser. However, my interest in Borneo was rekindled following an invitation from the Malaysian Social Science Association to present a keynote address at their conference in Kuching in 2008 (King, 2009). This gave me the opportunity to reflect on what I had been doing in my research on Borneo since the early 1970s. My interest was further strengthened through my time spent at Universiti Brunei Darussalam in 2012, 2013 and 2015, when I was also able to visit Sarawak more frequently. This current engagement is not one based on detailed primary research. It has focused on taking stock of post-war anthropological and historical studies of Borneo; this exercise will undoubtedly continue for some time. But my sustained interest in tourism and heritage, as well as an emerging concern to examine cross-border movements and the comparative dimensions of tourism development, may serve to replenish and refresh my fieldwork experiences in Sarawak which began over 40 years ago.

Having said all of this, I wonder what I am trying to say about my encounter with Borneo. I have thoroughly enjoyed my engagement with the island and its people, of course. But had it not been for chance circumstances, opportunities and encounters, I would not be where I am now.



Luyoh's *bilik* family in the 1970s



Members of Nanga San at Luyoh's farm in the 1970s



With Sebastian Kelbling in Sarawak Museum (July 1983)



Back in the UK with Judy (October 1973).
Jok Bato's specially commissioned painting is in the background

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