

**THE PENSIANGAN MURUTS : A BRIEF STUDY  
OF THEIR KINSHIP AND  
MARRIAGE SYSTEMS**

The writer acknowledges, with appreciation the help and willing cooperation given by those whose names he has recorded at the back of this study. Also, the writer is glad of this opportunity of expressing his gratitude to Cik Vanda Maria of the Sociology/Anthropology Department of the University of Malaya, whose advice and guidance have been invaluable to him.

(An Academic Exercise submitted to the Department of Anthropology / Sociology, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, in fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts degree examination, session 1973/74).

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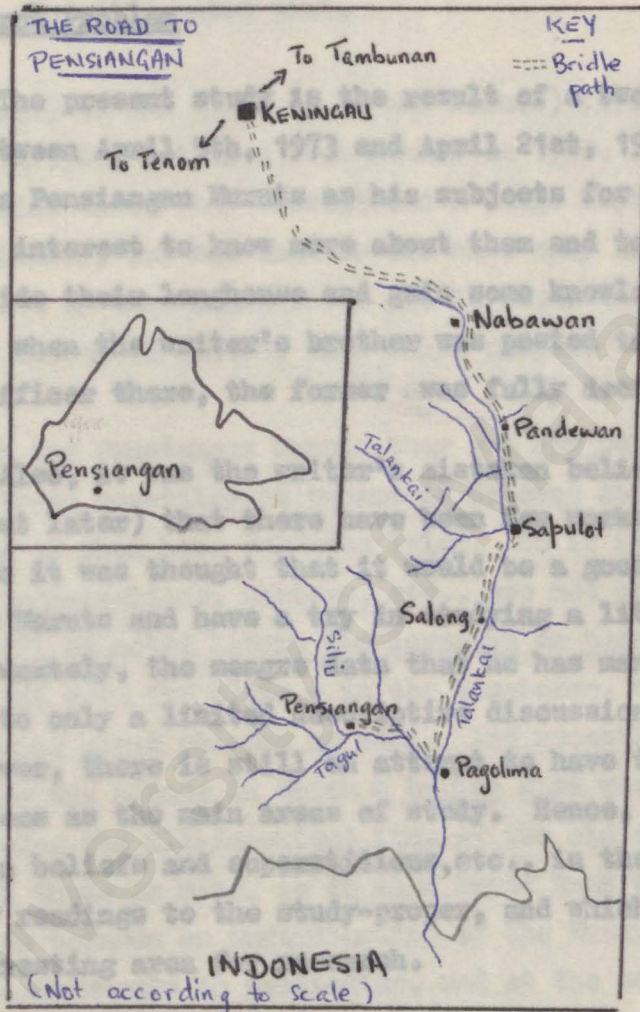
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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1



1. In fact, the writer's only beforehand information on the Muruts was both Ling's "The Muruts of Sarawak and British North Borneo", which of course does not mentioned much as regards the various customs and beliefs, especially concerning their marriage and kinship systems which were the writer's first intention to work on.

It is hoped that this study not only introduces the reader to the general customs and beliefs of the Pensiangan Muruts, but also provides a background for further and more detailed research on the Murut population in Sarawak.

## CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Problem

The present study is the result of a two-week stay in Pensiangan between April 5th, 1973 and April 21st, 1973. The writer has chosen the Pensiangan Muruts as his subjects for the research because of an interest to know more about them and to have a first hand look inside their longhouse and gain some knowledge on their way of life. And when the writer's brother was posted to be the Immigration Officer there, the former was fully decided upon the idea.

Also, it was the writer's mistaken belief then (so he was to find out later) that there have been few works written on the Muruts<sup>(1)</sup>. So it was thought that it would be a good idea if he should go out to the Muruts and have a try in studying a little bit about them. Unfortunately, the meagre data that he has managed to collect has left him to only a limited descriptive discussion of the Pensiangan Muruts. However, there is still an attempt to have the kinship and marriage systems as the main areas of study. Hence, the placing of such topics on beliefs and superstitions, etc., in the Appendices, as supplementary readings to the study-proper, and which on their own offer an interesting area for research.

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1. In fact, the writer's only beforehand information on the Muruts was Roth Ling's "The Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo", which of course does not mentioned much as regards the various customs and beliefs, especially concerning their marriage and kinship systems which were the writer's first intention to work on.



It is hoped that this study not only introduces the reader to the general customs and beliefs of the Pensiangan Muruts, but also provides a background for further and more detailed research on the Murut population in general. The Muruts are constantly face to face with changes. Jones<sup>(1)</sup> noted that.

"..... $\frac{2}{3}$  of the tribe (i.e. the Muruts) lived in Pensiangan and Keningau in 1921, but less than a-half in 1960. Earlier, 90% lived in district where they constituted a large majority of the district population, but now this is the case only in Pensiangan where no more than 21% of the Muruts live. It is clear that the Muruts have today greatly increased contact with other people."

With the Pensiangan Muruts, they are now being resettled to a Sabah Padi Board resettlement scheme at Nabawan and Sook. And in 1970 thousands of them have embraced Islam. So it is unlikely that their social organisations, customs, etc., are not changing with time. In fact, as will be noted later, the lansaran or papan has lost its importance - and even its place - in the longhouse, which itself has been experiencing great changes as well. And recently, the writer was told, there was a case in which a berian good was an outboard engine, replacing the all-important item of the old days, the Tiluan jar. So, with these in mind, it is also hoped that this brief study will do service towards an understanding of the Murut customs, that of the Pensiangan Muruts in particular, and at the same time gives a stimulus to anybody interested to do a much well-prepared and exhaustive study in the future.

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1. Butler, O: "The Peoples of North Borneo" London, Hutchinson 1929  
pg. 32.

2. Alliston, G: "Threatened Peoples" London, 1966 pg. 118

1. Jones, L.W : "Population of Borneo: A Study of the Peoples of Sarawak, Sabah and Brunei". pg. 70

3. Butler, O: op cit. pg. 31

In other words, a Murut, if asked his race would probably not state to which main tribe he belonged, but would give his local subdivision, generally a geographical description, according to the river on which he and his people lived. See Appendix F, pg. 87



## 1.2 Identifications of the Muruts

It has been said that the term 'Murut' comes from a Bajau word for 'hill', which is 'belud' <sup>(1)</sup>. This is because the Muruts inhabit the hilly areas of the country, and when they come down to the coastal regions to trade, the coastal Bajaus called them as 'orang belud'. And gradually, 'belud' is corrupted into 'Murut' and has remained so until today. Thus 'orang Murut' means 'men of the hills.'

However, the Muruts do not refer themselves as 'Muruts'. They have no previous wide conception of tribe or race, and appear to deny kinship with his neighbouring Muruts. <sup>(2)</sup> In other words, they do not see themselves as belonging to one major ethnic group, the Muruts, the way we see them. Their membership is only within their own village, and they prefer to call themselves as either 'ulun Selalir' or 'ulun Tagal' (as the case may be), the place name being almost invariably the name of the river near which they live. <sup>(3)</sup>

Often, 'Murut' is commonly used to refer to the whole Murut population in the Keningau, Tenom and Pensiangan districts of Sabah's Interior Residency. No differentiation is made regarding the many existing subgroups. In other words, these various subgroups have been lumped together as one under the word 'Murut', thus overlooking linguistic and cultural differences that exist among them.

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1. Rutter, O: "The Pagans of North Borneo" London, Hutchinson 1929 pg. 30.

2. Alliston, C: "Threatened Paradise" London. 1966 pg. 118

3. Harrison, T: "Ethnological Notes on the Muruts of the Sepulot River Sabah". JMBRAS Vol. 40 Part I. 1967 (July) pg. 112.

4. Rutter, O: op cit. pg. 31

In other words, a Murut, if asked his race would probably not state to which main tribe he belonged, but would give his local subdivision, generally a geographical description, according to the river on which he and his people lived. See Appendix F, pg. 87



The Highland Muruts differ from the Lowland Muruts, and both these are different from the Lun Daye group of Muruts living in the Sipitang - Sindumin district. So it is necessary to be clear of this identification problem first.

The Murut population can be found not only in Sabah, but also in Sarawak's Fifth Division, and the border regions of Kalimantan Indonesia. However, the following discussion affects only those in the two East Malaysian states. Even in Sabah, there are two Murut areas, each different from the other. These are the already mentioned Keningau, Tenom and Pensiangan districts, and the other one is the Sipitang - Sindumin region which is close to the Fifth Division. However, the Muruts of each area are known by different names. In Sarawak they are called Tagals, in the Interior Residency simply the Muruts, and in the Sipitang - Sindumin areas, the Lun Dayes. The interesting point here is that the Lun Dayes and Sarawak Muruts (i.e. the Tagals) belong to the same Murut subgroups. To put it into an equation form, we have

Tagals (Sarawak) = Lun Dayes (Sabah)

However, according to Prentice<sup>(1)</sup>, Sabah's Interior Muruts would be known as Tagals in Sarawak, thus suggesting that

Interior Muruts (Sabah) = Tagals (Sarawak)

Thus, from the above we can have a logical deduction of seeing

Lun Dayes (Sabah) = Interior Muruts (Sabah).

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1. Prentice, D.J. : "The Idahan Muruts" (a xerox copy borrowed from Sabah Museum, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah) page 1



This unfortunately is not so. These two Murut groups differ both in language and in custom. And they are usually seen as belonging to two different and completely separate groups. In fact when a person speaks of a Murut he usually speaks of an Interior Murut rather than a Lun Daye. A Lun Daye is always referred to as a Lun Daye and not a Murut, thereby suggesting that Lun Dayes and Muruts are two different ethnic group.<sup>(1)</sup> And following this, we can therefore dismiss the idea (see above) that the Sarawak Tagals are of the same group as Sabah's Interior Muruts.

Perhaps there is an explanation for this 'confusion' in identifying the Murut population. Perhaps in Sarawak there are actually two groups,<sup>(2)</sup> as different as Sabah's Interior Muruts and the Lun Dayes are. One group is that which has been said to be akin to the Lun Dayes, and they inhabit the Lawas and northern reaches of the Trusan River, which areas are close to the Sipitang-Sindumin area in Sabah. The other group is the Tagals who are more akin to the Interior Muruts of Sabah, and these occupy those areas along and around the southern part of the Trusan and the Kelalan, which are close to the area inhabited by the Interior Muruts. If the above explanations can be accepted we therefore can identify the Murut population as those living along the coast (comprising the Lun Dayes and those around Lawas), and those living far in the interior (comprising Sabah's Interior Muruts and the Sarawak Tagals, with the former can again be identified as either Lowland or Highland Muruts). And this, the writer holds, also explains the presence of a subgroup called Tagals among the Highland Muruts.

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1. Jay B. Crain, Ph.D: "The Mengalong Lun Dayeh Long-House", in the Sarawak Museum Journal, Volume 18, Nos. 36-37 (New Series), July-Dec. 1970, pg. 169-192.

2. JMERAS. Vol. 40 Part I 1967 July, pg. 111



We now have a question: If the coastal and hinterland Muruts be from one main stock (for obviously the above suggests that), how do we explain their marked differences in language and in customs, such that they can be seen as distinctly different? The answer, the writer believes, is historical. Perhaps the earliest Murut population lived along the coast near Lawas.<sup>(1)</sup> Being nomadic and to escape from inter-tribal wars and raids, or for some other reasons they migrated from the coastal areas northwards (where the Lun Dayes are now) and south eastwards into the interior where the Tagals and Sabah's Interior Muruts are now to be found. And that time and ecological factors (e.g. the presence of the southern ends of the Crocker Range) have resulted in their being distinctly different, such that they can be seen as belonging to entirely different groups.

- 
1. This is, of course, merely a speculation, especially in saying that Lawas was where the Muruts first settled. There is no concrete evidence on this. Rutter (Rutter: op cit. page ), however, mentioned that Lawas was once an important slave centre.

Furthermore, Rutter (British North Borneo. London, 1922, pg. 52) Seligman, C.G. (in his Introduction to Rutter's "The Pagans of North Borneo" page 6), and Hose-McDougall (The Pagan Tribes of Borneo. Vol. 2 London 1912, page 247), did mention of an earlier migration of people - supposedly the forefathers of the present Murut population in Borneo - who came from either mainland Asia, Formosa or the Philippines, and inhabit Borneo's coastal region. In this, two points are supported: (1) that the coastal region was first settled, for obviously if they have come from mainland Asia or the Philippines they certainly could not have inhabited the interior first and then moved towards the coast; (2) that Lawas was their first settlement, considering that there are today no other coastal region in Borneo being inhabited by the Murut population, except around Lawas and the neighbouring Sipitang - Sindumin area.

two major groups:

1. The Lowland Muruts
- and 2. The Highland Muruts

- 
1. Prentice, D.J.: op cit pages 2 - 5  
Rutter, C.: "The Pagans of North Borneo": pg. 34-37;  
"British North Borneo" pg. 63-64.

He however, did not mention the Ranken subgroup in either these books.



Another possible evidence is the fact that all these groups (the Lun Dayes, coastal Sarawak Muruts, the Tagals, and Sabah's Interior Muruts) have something in common in the structure of their longhouse, and which is unique only to them. This is the lansaran or panan, a springy middle portion of the house where festive and ceremonial dances are held, and therefore holds an important position in any longhouse.

However, the present paper does not aim to find out as to whether the above mentioned Murut groups have come from a common stock or not. It is open to any body interested. But it is hoped that at least the 'confusion' resulting in trying to identify the Murut population as is usually done - as just 'Muruts', and by overlooking their linguistic and cultural differences, is now a little less confusing than it was earlier.

### 1:3 Classification and Distribution of Sabah's Murut Population<sup>(1)</sup>

The following is adopted from Rutter's 'The Pagans of North Borneo'. The Lun Dayes are not included, and are treated here as a separate group, because of its distinct variation in language and in customs from the Interior Muruts. The classifications is of course arbitrary, for although each subdivision or subgroup shows variations in customs, culture and language, there is considerable overlapping and the variations mentioned may occur within the limits of a subgroup.

The Muruts may be conveniently divided into the following two major groups:

1. The Lowland Muruts
- and 2. The Highland Muruts

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1. Prentice, D.J: op cit pages 2 - 5  
Rutter, O: 'The Pagans of North Borneo'; pg. 34-37;  
'British North Borneo' pg. 65-66.

He however, did not mention the Baukan subgroup in either these books.



1. The Lowland Muruts have migrated to the Sabah side. They are closely allied to the Tagals.

These consist of 3 subgroups, namely:-

- a) the Timugons, who occupy the villages of the Tenom Plain and in the valley of the middle Padas as far as Beaufort;
- b) the Keningau Muruts, who are also called Dabai or Nabay Muruts, and who inhabit the neighbourhood of Keningau and along the Sook and Dalit watersheds;
- c) the Baukans, who live in the upper reaches of the Sook River and its tributaries.

2. The Highland Muruts

These again can be subdivided into various subgroups, namely the following:-

- a) The Rundum Muruts, these include the Tagals and the Pensiangan Muruts<sup>(1)</sup>. They are distributed over the headwaters of the Tagal, Talankai and Selalir Rivers, a large area stretching from the north of Rundum Station to Pensiangan and the Kalimantan border.

- b) The Sapulut Muruts,<sup>(2)</sup> who inhabit the country from the south of the Sook Plain to the Sapulut River, and that watered by the tributaries on the left bank of the Lagungan or Pensiangan River.

- c) The Kolurs, of the headwaters of the Padas River, the main body of this group is in the Kalimantan side of the border, but

- 
1. Rutter 'British North Borneo' pg. 65 - 66 has these as different subgroups.
  2. Prentice, op cit. pg. 3, grouped them under the Peluans.

For the present Study the writer included them as Pensiangan Muruts, because of their close and constant contact with the latter. Also they are closely akin in language and in custom.



a small number of them have migrated to the Sabah side. They are closely allied to the Tagals.

d) The Peluans, inhabiting the hills above the Padas River in the neighbourhood of Tenom, and extending eastwards to the country watered by the Dalit River, a tributary of the Sook, and westwards over the divide between the Padas and Mengalong Rivers.

e) The Kwijau<sup>(1)</sup>, a hybrid tribe formed by intermarriage between the Muruts and Kadazans. They have racial affinities to both the Muruts and Kadazans, yet are akin to neither. Their villages form a belt between the country of the southernmost inland Kadazans and the most northern settlements of the Muruts, and stretch from Keningau towards the Tambunan Plain. There are very slight differences in customs and language between the northernmost Kwijan village and the last of the Kadazan communities; but on the other hand, the Kwijaus of the Keningau Plain approximate very closely to their Murut neighbours, while the intermediate are halfway in customs and language. The Kwijaus are recognised by both the Kadazans and Muruts as a separate tribe, and the hybrid element is clear to any close observer.

In the above subdivisions of the highland Muruts, the Rundum and Sapulot groups are closely akin in language and custom,

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1. G.C. Woolley : Adat Bagi Mengatorkan Hak Waris diantara Suku Kwijau di Pendalaman. pg. 1. Native Bulletin Affairs. No. 6 (Reprinted ) 1962 Kota Kinabalu.

2. Rutter, 'The Pagans of North Borneo' footnote 2 pg.

3. There are 3 MAS flights a week, each flight takes about 25 minutes long.

4. A village of 4 houses, one of which is a Government 'Rest House'.



and are known collectively as Semambu or Sumambug<sup>(1)</sup>. They occupy a country of a more or less the same character - a region of rivers, navigable but broken by rapids, and switchback hills, densely covered with forests.

#### 1.4 Area Selected For Study

##### 1. Pensiangan Town

The word 'Pensiangan' is derived from the Murut siang (river), pen being a prefix and an a substantive - forming suffix, <sup>(2)</sup> The word therefore denotes "a place where the rivers meet", which is where the town is actually situated - at the confluence of the Tagal (or Sidalun) and Siliu Rivers.

a) Communication : It is considered as one of Sabah's remotest town. To reach it one has to fly over from Keningau to Sapulot,<sup>(3)</sup> then walk 14 miles to Salong<sup>(4)</sup> from where a boat has to be hired for the remaining parts of the journey. For, for the first two hours, the journey will be downriver (on the Pensiangan River), passing through several very fast rapids. On reaching Pagolima (or Pagolongan) the journey takes a turn and this time the boat has to negotiate against the faster and more dangerous (especially after a heavy rain) Sidalun. From Pagolima to Pensiangan takes another two hours or so, depending on the condition of the river.

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1. The Kolurs, being closely allied to the Tagals of the Rundum group might also be included here.
  2. Rutter, 'The Pagans of North Borneo' footnote 2 pg.
  3. There are 3 MAS flights a week. Each flight takes about 25 - five minutes long.
  4. A village of 4 houses, one of which is a Government 'Rest House'.



b) History: Remote as it is, Pensiangan has an important place in Sabah's History.<sup>(1)</sup> By 1915 it was found that the Rundum station<sup>(2)</sup> was too isolated for an efficient administration of the Muruts. A move was therefore made to shift the government station to Pensiangan. This was, however, delayed when the Muruts rose up against the Chartered Company and began what was later called the Rundum Rebellion. Though it was soon put down, it was not until 1917 that Pensiangan became an administrative centre and has remained so until today.

During the second World War, it became an important Japanese base, and when Confrontation took place in 1963 it again became an important military base, this time for the Malaysian and Allied forces. From Pensiangan to the nearest Indonesian village across the border takes about a day's boat journey. Today, if the condition of the river permits, there is usually a visit from the Indonesian Muruts, bringing along with them goods for trade like oil and padi.

In the near future, however, there is a possibility that Pensiangan, like Rundum, might become an abandoned and forgotten station. For some years now the Sabah Government, through the State's Padi Board is gradually resettling the Pensiangan Muruts to a resettlement scheme at Nabawan-Sook.<sup>(3)</sup>

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1. Tregonning, K.G.P.: a) Under Chartered Company's Rule Singapore 1958  
b) A History of Modern Sabah (2nd edition)  
Kuala Lumpur, 1965.

2. Opened in 1910

3. The Nabawan Scheme : see Chapter 5, pg. 63 of this study.



c) Administrative facilities: Pensiangan has all the administrative facilities like a district office, a police station (apart from the regular police, there are also Border Scouts), post office (mails are thrice a week), a hospital, immigration office, and a school. There are also a Sabah Foundation office, a mosque and three Chinese-owned shops.

d) Population: According to the 1970 census, Pensiangan has over 5000 Muruts. However, with the introduction of the Nabawan Resettlement Scheme the number is decreasing and perhaps comes around to only about 2000 today. <sup>(1)</sup>

Besides the Muruts, there are also the Chinese families who run the shops. They have been there for a very long time and speak Murut fluently. Then of course there are the 'temporary residents' who work with the Government at the district office, police station, immigrations, hospital and the school. Except for the District Officer who has to serve for three years there, all the others have a term of only six months.

### 1.5 Methodology Employed

Basically, three methods were employed towards the writing of this paper, namely :-

1. Interviews
2. Library research
3. Correspondence

- 
1. Nigel Coventry : "Pensiangan - the disappearing town of the Interior" in Borneo Bulletin of 10th February, 1973. pg. 12 - 13.



1. Interviews: These were done with the help of a list of questions the writer has prepared earlier. Aspects of the kinship and marriage systems were the main topics asked. After each interview this list was modified where necessary.

Interviews were conducted in the national language. This offered no difficulty because, except for one informant, all were able to speak it fluently. However, as a whole most of the information were obtained from the District Officer then, Encik Benjamin Mohammed and Ketua Kampung Haji Othman Pemiang who was at that time staying at the former's house, on his way to Sapulot.

Further information was made available by the writer's brother, then the Immigration Officer in Pensiangan, interviewing Native Chief Haji Abdul Rahim Lindung, Haji Abdul Rahman Goh, and Sgt. Thibaw.<sup>(1)</sup> Haji Lindung and Sgt. Thibaw added further information on the marriage customs, while Haji Goh gave the only information on the history or mythological origins of the Pensiangan Muruts. Also, the writer was able to obtain some general information in the course of his conversations with some of the people he met, and who have lived among the Muruts for some time.

1. Haji Lindung lives in Sapulot. The writer was not able to interview him then because he was busy handling cases in the Native Court which is held once a month and always draws a large crowd.

Haji Goh (a Chinese-Muslim who has been among the Pensiangan Muruts for a very long time and who speaks Murut fluently) and Sgt. Thibaw live in Pensiangan but were away when the writer was there.

<sup>(1)</sup> A little and which was available to him before the long vacation was Roth Ling's 'Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo', Kuala Lumpur 1963.



2. Library Research: This was done only after the above. The writer's idea at first was to obtain information from the Muruts themselves first and then try to clear away any doubts by reading any books or articles that deal on them. This of course is exactly the opposite of how a good research work should be done, which is getting hold of literary information first and then go out to check this. But that was how the writer did his, and it was his belief then (which, of course, he was to find out later to be quite wrong) that there are few books on the Muruts. And even these were difficult to get.<sup>(1)</sup>

However, on his return from Pensiangan he approached the Curator of Sabah Museum at Kota Kinabalu, and with the latter's kind help, was able to get hold of a few copies of Sabah Society Journal and a xerox-copy of Prentice's 'The Idahan Muruts'. After that, it was book research all along.

3. Correspondence: Obviously with his back-tracking sort of methodology, it is unavoidable that the writer should still be faced with vagueness over certain matters. Also, in the course of his writing of the present paper, he realised that he has overlooked certain matters which are of importance. Therefore to help overcome or at least lessen these, the writer decided to do some correspondence. Unfortunately, the response as a whole has been very discouraging, for until the final writing of this paper, the writer still has not received any reply to his letters.

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1. In fact, the only book the writer knew that deals with the Muruts a little and which was available to him before the long vacation was Roth Ling's 'Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo', Kuala Lumpur 1968.



## 1.6 Limitations and Weaknesses of Methodology

Three main factors led to a limited research work in Pensiangan - finance, time and mobility. And the writer's case was of no exception. In fact, had he not been able to borrow some money, he doubted if he had been able to carry out the research at all. And because there has been no pilot-study, the scope of the question.

Lack of fund has limited the writer's area of study to within the town area only. Contrary to what he has expected to find, Pensiangan does not have longhouses that shelter 10 - 20 families. To visit the faraway villages, a boat has to be hired and at least two men to handle it. The writer could not cover such additional expenses. Of course, there were villages on the way between Salong and Pensiangan; problem was that the writer was but a passenger being kindly given a 'lift', and to ask the owner of the boat to stop so that the writer could conduct his interviews would be asking just too much, especially considering that he was not the only passenger then.

Being during the long vacation, there was plenty of time, but the time to stay in Pensiangan has to be a short one, again because of a limited financial support. Food offered no problem because the writer was staying with his brother, but even this has its limits, for the latter's store was only meant for one person, and only sufficient enough until his term of duty in Pensiangan ends. To buy things in Pensiangan costs a lot, for they cost at least double the usual price because of transport expenses and so on. And certainly to bring along his own food that could last at least two weeks is out of the question, for the writer has to travel, by car, plane, walk and boat. Obviously within such a short period and within such a small area of study, nothing exhaustive could be done. Also, the writer was staying at his brother's place and not inside a longhouse among the subjects of his study.



Interviews, as was stated earlier, were guided by a list of questions the writer has prepared. This the writer has followed rather rigidly that when all questions have been answered, little addition was made to give the list a wider scope. As a whole, it can be said that the writer conducted the interviews as if following a <sup>structured</sup> questionnaire form, and has the respondents answering to only these questions. And because there has been no pilot-study, the scope of the questions were limited, but it was then thought that they have covered everything necessary. Only later was it realised that there still are a lot of things to be asked. Hence, the turn to library research and correspondence.

Cooperation given by the people was good, but the writer feels that this would have been better if he has been a government official or somebody. As it was, the writer was always afraid that his questions and even his way of asking would offend them, and he was always reminded of the fact that he was representing nobody but himself; and to the Muruts he was more of a visitor (visiting his brother) than a researcher. This, the writer believes, had brought about a certain degree of failure in the interviews and in interview-technique. And add to these factors the inexperience and ill-preparedness of the writer, the research do tend to become even more limited.

The only limitation to library research is, the writer thinks, the difficulty in getting hold of the relevant books. It was only when the writer was back in Campus that he was able to obtain Rutter and the others. This again was weakened by the fact that some of the informations mentioned in them were often no more useful to picture the present situations and conditions. This is especially true in the case of price-figures, of which the current equivalent is not obtainable, and which therefore the writer has retained, if only to show how it was in those days.



Correspondence, as was noted earlier, has been very discouraging and a disappointment. Although some of the questions have been answered through further readings, the writer is still very vague especially in relations to the Murut words and terminologies.

Thus, with all the above limitations and weaknesses, it is of no surprise that the present paper has still a lot of gaps to be filled and shortcomings to be overcome. However, despite all this it is hoped that it has somehow done service in introducing the Murut way of life to the reader, and in doing so perhaps open certain paths towards a more exhaustive and well-prepared research not only on the Pensiangan Muruts but also the Muruts in general. Also, the present study has no doubt shown and warned the reader of the pitfalls and barriers towards doing a good research work. He said that he was present when the story was told. According to him, during the Japanese occupation of Pensiangan the Japanese had asked all the longhouse chiefs in the district to come together and tell them of their past. In that meeting only one man was able to speak of their history. He was the headman from Saluan by name of Matangan, who was then about 70 years old.

The story goes that (according to Matangan) the Pensiangan Muruts are the descendants of a brother and sister who had escaped from a raiding of their longhouse and during which their parents were killed. Where exactly this village was situated it was not remembered, neither the place to where the brother and sister took refuge - except that it was believed to be on the Indonesian side of the border.

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1. See footnote, page 12 of this paper.

For Murut legends on Creation see Appendix A. pg 49.



## CHAPTER TWO: THE PENSIANGAN MURUTS

### 2.1 Mythological Background

None of those that the writer interviewed was able to tell him of their history, or of any legends and myths as to where they have originally come from. All of them said that they have always been in Pensiangan. In other words, they have always regarded themselves as fully 'native' to their present area, with no belief in a previous and different population.

However, a legend was obtained from Haji Abdul Rahman Goh,<sup>(1)</sup> The following is his story as he remembers it. He said that he was present when the story was told. According to him, during the Japanese occupation of Pensiangan the Japanese had asked all the longhouse chiefs in the district to come together and tell them of their past. In that meeting only one man was able to speak of their history. He was the headman from Saliau by name of Mutangon, who was then about 70 years old.

The story goes that (according to Mutangon) the Pensiangan Muruts are the descendents of a brother and sister who had escaped from a raiding of their longhouse and during which their parents were killed. Where exactly this village was situated it was not remembered, neither the place to where the brother and sister took refuge - except that it was believed to be on the Indonesian side of the border.

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1. See footnote, page 13 of this paper.

For Murut legends on Creation see Appendix A. pg. 69.



party. (1) The brother and sister then lived as husband and wife, and later a son was born to them. His name was forgotten, but it was said that he had a strange body : his head was that of a dog, and his body-hair like that of a dog's. However, he was a wise man and very talented. It was he who first made use of the barks of the bintangong tree as clothing materials. Before this the Muruts only used leaves to cover their body. And he was also the person who first knew how to make fire.

One day the parents told him of their past, how they have escaped from a raid on their longhouse and during which their parents were killed. On hearing the story, the son became very angry and promised to avenge the death of his grandparents and the sufferings that his parents have to undergo as result of the raid. And so he bid farewell to his parents and left for the village whose people had done the raiding. But on reaching there he realised his dog like appearance, and therefore did not dare to enter the village. He hid himself at the edge of the village, hoping to find a means in getting his revenge done. By and by along came two girls looking for firewoods near to the place where he was hiding. Seeing an opportunity, he kidnapped them and brought them back to his village. He made them his wives. Children came and as the years went by, their descendants migrated far and wide, some of them founding the present Pensiangan while others settled in what are now the districts of Sapulut and Kemabong. (2)

Thus, it was that Pensiangan Muruts have great respects and affection towards their dogs. They still do today, though to a lesser degree. Indeed, in the past it was considered a serious offence to hit and whatmore to kill a dog. And conflicts or feuds between longhouses would be settled only by the cutting of a dog's tail and drinking its blood. Of course such practices are no more today. It was abandoned (not known why) even before the coming of the Chartered Company. Dogs today though still allowed to move about freely in the longhouse are used to help a hunting



party.<sup>(1)</sup>

## 2.2 Local Organisation

### 1. Settlement and Housing

The Murut village in Pensiangan district seldom consist of a cluster of houses. In fact, except for Salong and Pagolima, the village is seldom more than one solitary house. Agis, for example, consists of a now dilapidated house, used by travellers for an overnight stay if conditions do not permit them to continue to Salong that same day. But usually, they prefer to bypass Agis and walk the two miles to Salong where there is a government resthouse.

The Murut house is usually situated near the river's bank. It has undergone modifications over the years. The communal longhouse<sup>(2)</sup> has given way to groups of smaller houses accommodating only 3 - 5 families. And often it is without the 'dancing floor' which forms an important section in the past.

- 
1. It is interesting to note that this story has come from a Chinese-Muslim and not from any of the Murut chiefs. Haji Pamiang, for example, has been a headman even before the war, but when the writer asked him for such a story he said that there is none, and that they have always been in Pensiangan. Also, it is unlikely that people like G.C. Woolley and N.B. Babaneau, two people who were in close contact with the Muruts for a very long time and well informed of their habits, customs, and so on should have been unable to record any such story. Then there is the question of settling the feuds. As far as the writer knows there have been no record of Murut feuds being settled by the cutting of a dog's tail and then drinking its blood. In short, the source of the story itself is questionable - until more information could substantiate it.

For information on settlement of Murut feuds, the reader is made to refer to Cyril Alliston, op cit., pg. 128 and Rutter, British North Borneo, pg. 337

2. Rutter, "The Pagans of North Borneo", pg. 62-65  
Prentice, D.J., op cit., pg. 10-11  
Clark, M.C "The Murut Home" MAN. Vol. 52  
Part I pg. 17-18; Part II, pg. 34-36.



The longhouse of the past consisted of a central passageway with compartments on both sides. This passageway opens out into a square common area in the centre of the house. And the middle of this area is occupied by a unique feature of the culture of all Highland Muruts - the dancing floor or lansaran or papan. This is sprung on crossbeams, sunk a little lower than the normal floor level. Its floor is springy like a trampoline and it is here that religious singing and dancing or jumping competitions (in which young men try to leap high enough to grasp some object suspended from the ceiling) take place. <sup>(1)</sup>

The following is a sketch plan of such a longhouse:

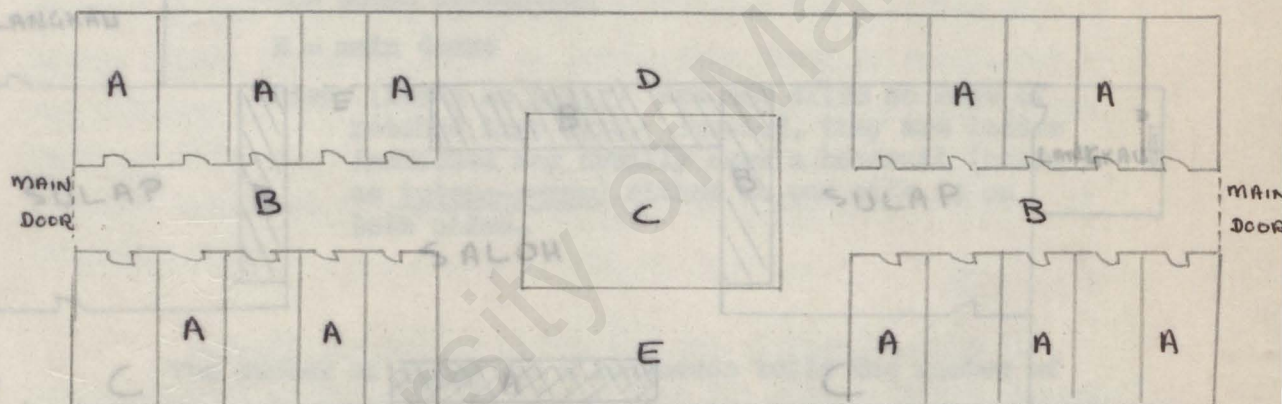


Figure 1 : A Murut longhouse (1929)

- Key:
- A = Rooms, each family to a room
  - B = passageway
  - C = dancing floor
  - D = common 'room', where the menfolks gather to gossip in the evenings and where the widowers and bachelors sleep
  - E = guest 'room'

— = door

# 1. Rutter, loc it

1. Based on a 'longhouse' the writer was fortunate enough to enter and make note of.



House is on stilts.

As was earlier said that the Murut longhouse has undergone modifications, and the following plan<sup>(1)</sup> of a 'modern' Murut house gives a marked difference of the changes. In fact, it is hard to conceive them as a 'longhouse' anymore, for if not for the fact that it is occupied by several families it could well pass out as a single house.

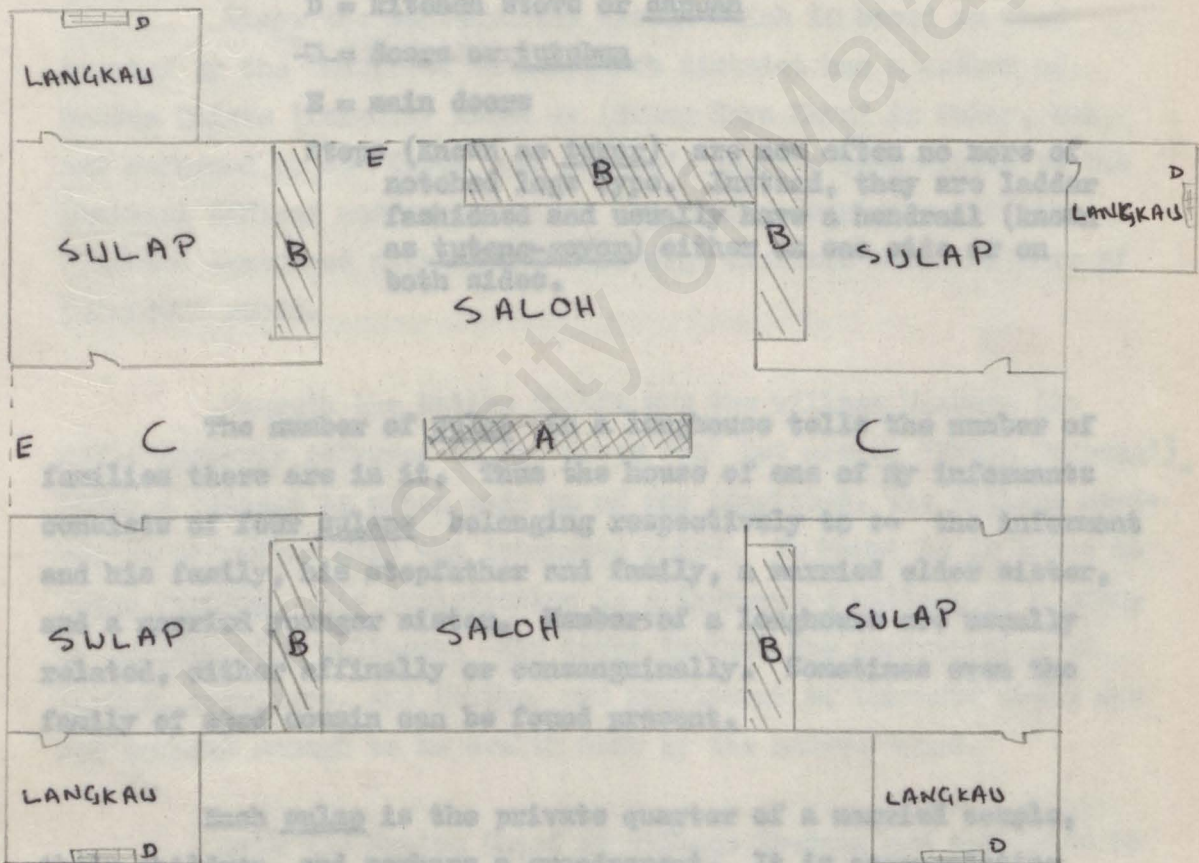


Figure 2 : A Murut longhouse (1973)

1. Based on a 'longhouse' the writer was fortunate enough to enter and make note of.



Key:

Sulap = living room, a family each

Langkau = kitchen, whose floor is at a lower level than the main one

Saloh = section where guests are served and tapai sessions take place

A = known as apar-apar, a structure where the tapai jars are tied to

B = a long raised platform known as pankau or bebantul; can be used either as a bench or a bed

C = the passageway or tetangga or tetamu

D = kitchen stove or dapuan

~~A~~ = doors or tutubun

E = main doors

Steps (Known as tukar) are now often no more of notched logs type. Instead, they are ladder fashioned and usually have a handrail (known as tutong-goyon) either on one side or on both sides.

The number of sulap in a longhouse tells the number of families there are in it. Thus the house of one of my informants consists of four sulaps belonging respectively to :- the informant and his family, his stepfather and family, a married elder sister, and a married younger sister. Members of a longhouse are usually related, either affinally or consanguinally. Sometimes even the family of a 3rd cousin can be found present.

Each sulap is the private quarter of a married couple, their children, and perhaps a grandparent. It is accommodating because the Murut family is seldom a big one, often of only 2 - 4 children. Each family supports itself, but can always ask for aid from the others in the longhouse.



## 2. Social Stratification

There appear to be no formal or clear class division among the Pensiangan Muruts.<sup>(1)</sup> Some families are, however, richer than the others and their wealth tends to perpetuate itself through inheritance and higher brideprices. According to one informant these people may be termed as 'antung' or 'olen keolon' which roughly refers to upper class people.

## 3. Political Organisation

Under the contemporary system which is based on that created by the Chartered Company, each district has a number of Native Chiefs (formerly known as 'Orang Kaya Kaya' in Malay, but now referred to as 'Ketua Anak Negeri') who are responsible to the District Officer and preside over the Native Courts in settling disputes concerned with native law, e.g. divorces and questions of inherited goods.

Beneath the Native Chiefs are the village Headmen (in Malay formerly referred to as 'Orang Tua' but now as 'Ketua Kampung'). Since a village is often made up of one longhouse, the village headman is therefore also the longhouse chief. In Murut he is known as Metua Nupahon. His jurisdiction is either over a village or a group of neighbouring villages. His tasks include the registration of births, marriages, and deaths, and settlement of lawsuits which are not serious enough to be dealt with by the Native Court.

Both the Native Chief or village Headman are appointed by the Government and received an annual honorarium. Both their posts are not inherited. However, this could act as a recommendation. Also, should be noted that before an appointment is made, agreement has to be obtained from the members of the longhouse or villages concerned.

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1. In the past slavery was practised.



#### 4. Economic Structure

a) The traditional subsistence economy has been replaced by a cash-economy. And among the Pensiangan Muruts, the usual areas of employment include the local administration (e.g. clerks, labourers), police (including the Field Force, Malaysian Rangers, and Border Scouts), and teaching.

The cultivation of rice is still being practised of course, and is still being done by the slash-and-burn method. Clearing and burning off takes place in July or earlier, while planting is done either in September or early October. Harvesting will be around February or March. Another important crop grown by the Muruts is tapioca (ubi kayu). These two crops form the two most important crop and often substitutes one another as food. Both can be processed into tapai, the all-important wine for the Muruts. Other crops, however, are also grown, and these include yams, bananas, fruits, sugarcane and pineapple.

Fishing and hunting are also done. Fishing methods include the use of tuba poison ( a communal affair with members of neighbouring longhouses also taking part), rod and line, and nets (especially the pukat type). Next to tuba poison, the use of these nets is most popular, and if one journeys between Salong and Pensiangan one will pass over many of these being fixed across the river.

Hunting today is with the use of guns. The blowpipe has not been in use for a long time. On the writer's way to Pensiangan, he has the opportunity to witness the killing of a mousedeer (pelandok). It was trapped between the dogs on the river-bank, and the Muruts in their boats on the river. Suddenly, one of the Muruts saw his chance and made his kill - with a spear.



## 5. Religion

a) Christianity: It did not obtain a foothold among the Muruts until after world War II. Active in the spreading of Christian influence was the Borneo Evangelical Missions (Sidang Injil Borneo), a body founded by Australian missionaries in 1928, with its first Headquarters in Lawas, Sarawak. European missionaries followed in 1954 to assist with the formalities, and about the same time official permission for the work to proceed was obtained from the colonial government then.

Conversions have been especially successful among the Lun Dayes who, it cannot be denied, have fared better than the Interior Muruts. Among the latter, though there have been conversions, this was only among those living in and around Keningan. Deep in the jungles of Pensiangan district, there might also be some conversions, but if there was it is very clear that nothing much have changed in the Murut way of life. The usual picture is of the Muruts still holding on to their traditional beliefs and customs. This might have been because no schools or mission hospitals have been built as follow-ups.

b) Islam: Influence of Islam is only a recent phenomenon among the Muruts. In earlier years there have been of course cases of conversions, but these were mainly in order to marry a Muslim woman, and affected were those who have come to the town areas.

However, in 1970, through the efforts of the United Sabah Islamic Association (USIA), thousands of Muruts in the Pensiangan district embraced Islam. Some of the prominent people have since then went for the Haj. Unfortunately, except for these few, like in the case of Christian influence, it is still very uncertain how much Islam has affected and changed their way of life. Thus, for example, they still hold on to their traditional expensive marriage system,



and some still practise the jar-burial. In fact, the visitor would hardly realised that he is among Muslims if not told that these people (almost the whole of the Pensiangan population) have embraced Islam a few years ago. There is a mosque in Pensiangan, but it is always empty - even on Fridays. Religious study on Islam is being taught in the schools, and the writer believe that the impact of Islam on the Muruts can only be seen among these young generation in future. As far as the adult world is concerned, one notices little of it.

c. Indigenous religion: Among the Pensiangan Muruts the single omnipotent deity is Kohlung, the chief of the world above, and who lives in a big house in Autulai, one of the two mountains - the other one being Mulandayoh - sacred to the pagan Muruts. There is, however, no direct worship of him. And there is no temples, no priests or priestesses. No sacrifices are made, and no idols or effigies of any deity have been found.



### CHAPTER THREE : KINSHIP SYSTEM

#### 3.1 Kingroups

Most villages in the Pensiangan district - at least those which the writer noticed between Sapulut and Pensiangan - seldom consist of a cluster of longhouses. Usually one longhouse makes up a village. As has been mentioned earlier,<sup>(1)</sup> members of the longhouse are related either through marriage or by blood. Even in a village of several longhouses the members are usually closely related. As such, and because of certain marriage restrictions which can be observed in the following chapter, the longhouse (and hence the village) is an exogamous unit. Exogamous because marriage partners have to be sought from other villages whose members are in no way related to them.

In the longhouse the main kingroup is the nuclear family. Each family occupies a sulap independently i.e. each sulap can be looked at as being a separate house, privately owned and occupied by a married couple and their offsprings, and often an aged parent as well. And each family supports itself, although aid from the others can be obtained. In fact, such activities as wedding preparations and tuba fishing are collective in nature, with every family in the longhouse contributing something towards their success. In other words, the extended family i.e. the longhouse (and therefore, the village) plays a secondary role in the life of the nuclear family.

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1. See Chapter 2, Section 2.2, pg. 23 of this paper.



### 3.2 Descent

Descent among the Pensiangan Muruts is bilateral. Lineage is traced along both sides, though there seems to be more emphasis on the male sides - as will be noted in the following section on inheritance.

### 3.3 Close and Distant Kins

Close kins are those known to be related consanguinally or affinally. And usually a fourth cousin is still looked upon as a close relative. Fifth cousins, however, are already considered distant, and therefore could be married to.

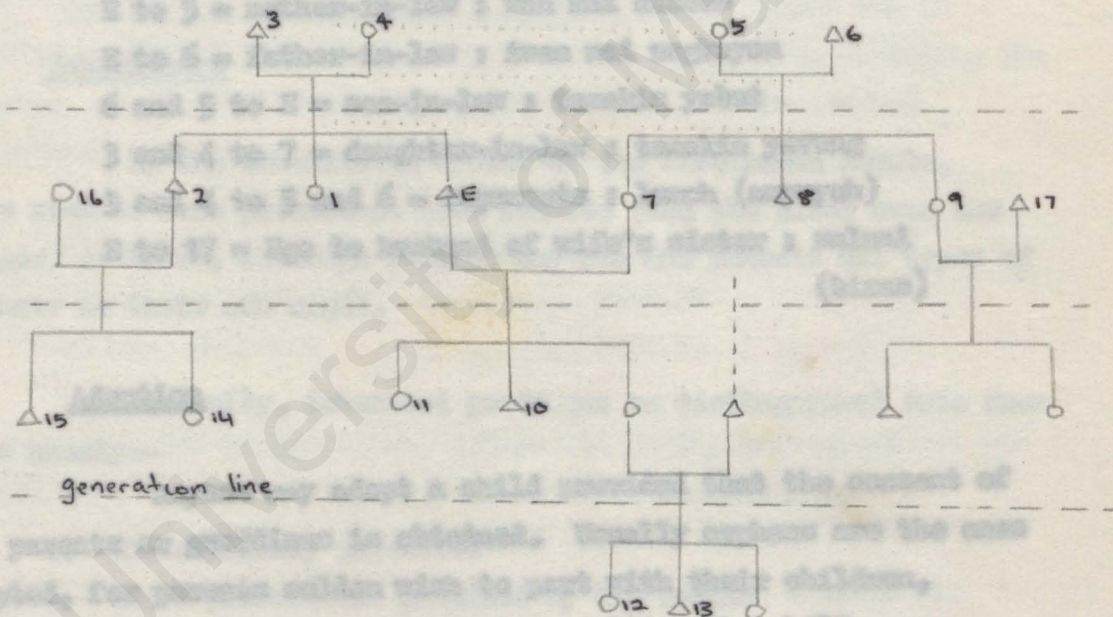
### 3.4 Kinship Terminology (of the Pensiangan Muruts)

The following terms are used both as terms of address and reference. However, in the case of the former, the name of the person addressed to is often added. Spellings used are not the standard type (as is the case throughout the present paper) for the writer has written them as he has heard them being said and which, perhaps, are only nearest to what they actually sound. And those terms which have been bracketed are those terms given to the writer, but which he is still vague of in their usage. The writer has tried to get this problems cleared, but unfortunately there has been no replies to his letters.

<u>Murut Term</u>	<u>English equivalent</u>
inandu .....	a married female
andu .....	a married male
aman .....	'uncle', for males in parents' generation as a whole. Also used as term of address for non-kins older than oneself.
inan .....	'auntie', same as for 'aman'



sangkaka .....	term of reference for 1st and 2nd cousins
sangkakaan .....	term of reference for 3rd and 4th cousins
pahaka .....	a relative, including those considered as 'distant'
beisan .....	parent-in-law to be
aduk pun .....	1st wife
aduk keinduwu .....	2nd wife
aduk keintalu .....	3rd wife
aduk keinapat .....	4th wife



**Figure 3 : Murut Kingroups**

E = Ego

E to 1 and 2 = siblings : shaka

elder sister/brother : yakak  
(akak)

younger sister/brother : yalik  
(alik)



E to 7 = wife : aduk

7 to E = husband : ungkuyon

E to 8 and 9 = brother - and sister-in-law  
respectively ; langan

E to 10 = son : anak ungkuyan

E to 11 = daughter : anak duondo

E to 12 = granddaughter : (not available)

E to 13 = grandson : (not available)

12 and 13 to 7 = grand mother : aru

12 and 13 to E = grandfather : aki

E to 3 = father : ana

E to 4 = mother : ina

E to 5 = mother-in-law : wan mai duondo

E to 6 = father-in-law : iwan mai ungkuyon

6 and 5 to E = son-in-law : tamakin yabut

3 and 4 to 7 = daughter-in-law : tamakin yavung

3 and 4 to 5 and 6 = coparents : lunoh (ampuyoh)

E to 17 = Ego to husband of wife's sister : saluai  
(biras)

### 3.5 Adoption

Anyone may adopt a child provided that the consent of its parents or guardians is obtained. Usually orphans are the ones adopted, for parents seldom wish to part with their children, regarding such an act as equivalent to selling the child.

Once adopted, a child has no right in the family of its own parents, but for purposes of marriage must accept the bars of its new relationship as well as those of the old one, which is understandable considering that they are not allowed to marry a person with whom a relationship can be traced to him, either through a marriage or by blood. Once adopted, the child may not be passed on for readoption and usually is treated as a true-born child of



If there are two sons and four daughters, while the land is the adopting family. And as will be seen in the following section on inheritance, among the Pensiangan Muruts the adopted child has only one third of the inheritance rights of the other children.

### 3.6 Succession

This has been touched in an earlier discussion on the political organisation of the Pensiangan Muruts.<sup>(1)</sup> It need only be stressed here that succession to the post of village headman is not inherited but on the general acceptance of the people of the long-house, i.e. the village. And in the case of the Native Chief, his position is through the appointment of the Government.

### 3.7 Inheritance

In the inheritance system of the Pensiangan Muruts, males seem to have precedence over females (and the elder over the younger) as heirs, although females may own and inherit all types of property in their own right.

Generally, inherited goods can be distinguished into four types namely:-

1. those already inherited
2. those possessions obtained by the couple
3. those possessions obtained during marriage
- and 4. those possessions obtained individually

1. Those possessions already inherited: Possessions handed down for generations go to the son, or if there be more than one, the eldest. If, however, the family has no sons, the daughter may receive the inheritance. If the family is childless, a close relative may get the inheritance.

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1. See Chapter 2, page 24 of present study.



Land: If there are two sons and four daughters, while the land is only an acre, dividing it equally would be<sup>a</sup> problem. To overcome this, the Muruts have introduced a solution in which the land may be sold, the price of which can then be divided equally among the children.

Jars and Other small Items: These will be divided among the children the eldest receiving a greater portion of the whole thing.

Debt: Any debts owed by the deceased will be paid by the one who receive the inheritance. If he is unable to pay, some of the inherited goods will be used to pay the debts. These are not to be sold.

2. Those Possessions Obtained by the Couple: These can be divided among the children, and if there are any, also including the adopted, or stepchildren. Thus, for example, the couple had possessions amounting to \$650.00. Its allocations will be:-

a) own's children	.....	\$300.00
b) adopted children	.....	\$200.00
c) step children	.....	\$150.00

If, however, the deceased has, before his death, determined how his possessions should be divided, this must be carried out.

If the deceased has no children, siblings or cousins can receive the heritage on considerations by the Native Court.

An adopted child can claim his inherited goods on reaching the age of eighteen.

House: If there is no children, a close relative will receive it. If there are any, then the children get it. This house obviously refers to the gulan that the deceased has occupied.



3. Those Possessions Obtained during Marriage: Such goods may be equally divided among the children if both the parents have died. If only the husband dies, then the wife should have a share. And if the children are still underaged, a brother of the deceased takes care of the possessions until they are of age and thereby able to make their claim of the goods.

If the deceased has two wives, the possessions must then be divided between them in the following:-

- a) the first wife, if there is no children, gets  $\frac{2}{3}$
- b) the second wife, if there is no children gets  $\frac{1}{3}$
- c) if both wives have children, then the goods have to be equally divided among the children also and it is up to the wives to settle this.

If there is no children, then the family or persons who take care of the funeral and its expenses has the share of the possessions. Possessions from a previous marriage are to be equally divided between the couple.

4. Those Possessions Obtained Individually: These belong to the individuals who have obtained them. Thus, if it is the wife who obtains a jar, the jar belongs to her. Similarly in the case of the husband, and with their goods.

Possessions obtained by the son or daughter belong to him or her respectively. The parents have no share in them. Only if the son/daughter dies does either of them has a share. This also rules in the case of stepchildren and adopted children.

Distribution of the goods: a) If the deceased leaves a wife, a male relative is responsible for the distribution of the goods, with the wife of the deceased getting a share. If the deceased has no children, then the relative gets his share of the goods.



b) If the deceased has children, then the possessions or goods are distributed among them.

#### CHAPTER FOUR : MARRIAGE CUSTOM

c) If the children come of the same mother or father, then the children of the first wife gets the most share, followed by that of the second, the third, and so on.

d) If there is also a stepson or an adopted one, then their share is as follows:-

- 1) Stepson ..... 3 parts
- ii) adopted son ..... 3 parts

Debts: All debts are due to be paid just before the distribution of the goods. This done, the remaining are given to the rightful claimants.

Islam came to Peninsular in 1970, but it seems to have little impact on the way of life of the Muruts. With a few exceptions, they still hold on to their traditional beliefs and customs.

#### 4.1 Marriage restrictions

Marriage between cousins is not allowed and will be considered as incest (sumbang) and the couple will be fined by the Native Court as recorded in the Native Laws of Peninsular district.

a) First cousins will be fined one buffalo as well as a year jail sentence;



#### CHAPTER FOUR : MARRIAGE SYSTEM

The Pensiangan Muruts have experienced some changes in their marriage customs. During the headhunting days even marriage between first cousins was allowed. The two important qualities that the Murut youth had to have in order to marry were strength and courage, for if he wants to marry a girl from his village, he has to give his prospective in-laws the head of an enemy; and if he wants to marry a girl from another village, he has to kidnap the girl and bring her back to his own village. Often this is the cause of inter-village raids.

However, with the turn of the century and with European influence slowly creeping deep into the country, and especially after the district was made a Government station and administered by a District Officer, the marriage system began to change, and by the time the War came into the area, it was already what it is today.

Islam came to Pensiangan in 1970, but it seems to have little impact on the way of life of the Muruts. With a few exceptions, they still hold on to their traditional beliefs and customs.

##### 4.1 Marriage restrictions

Marriage between cousins is not allowed and will be considered as incest (sumbang) and the couple will be fined by the Native Court as accorded in the Native Laws of Pensiangan district. Hence:

- a) first cousins will be fined one buffalo as well as a year jail sentence;



- b) Second cousins will have to pay a buffalo
- c) Third cousins will be sentenced to two months jail.

They however, could be bailed out with the payment of either a cow or a buffalo.<sup>(1)</sup>

To marry a stepdaughter is also considered as incest, and the couple concerned would both be sentenced to a year in jail, plus the fine of a buffalo. Similarly between a mother and a stepson.

A Murut could, if an arrangement of such is agreed upon, take the widow of a brother as his wife, but there has been as yet no such cases being recorded.

Sexual relations and marriage are especially forbidden between:-  
 i) siblings, full or half-siblings; ii) a parent and an offspring;  
 iii) an uncle or aunt and a niece or nephew respectively. Fine is usually the payment of \$500.00 and a buffalo each. This buffalo will be slaughtered and served to the people in time of a feast or an occasion which involves the whole village or even neighbouring ones. Failure to pay means a year in jail - but the payment of the buffalo is a must.

#### 4.2 Procedures or Stages of a Marriage

Generally, the marriage customs of the Pensiangan Muruts can be divided into the following stages:-

1. Preliminary Negotiations and Engagement
2. The Wedding itself

- 
1. This used to be a pig "sebesar 5 jangkal." This refers to the pig's size; 1 jangkal is the distance between the thumb and forefinger spread wide. And the pig is measured across its stomach.



## 1. Preliminary Negotiations and Engagement

Arrangements for an engagement is in the hands of the parents or close relatives of the persons to be engaged. The parents of the suitor will approach the parents of the girl and tell them of their aim. The suitor himself need not come along at this stage. And no 'gifts' need be brought along by the suitor's party. If the girl's agreement is obtained, then the date for the tadin tamung or tetamung will be decided upon.

However, if the suitor is an adult or already has a wife, then he has to come along during the negotiation stage, bringing with him 'gifts' like 2 - 3 old jars, clothings, money, and such not too expensive goods. If these gifts are accepted by the girl, then it means she has agreed to the engagement proposal. And so date for the sending of the brideprice will be settled - and this will also be the wedding day date.

Engagement among the Pensiangan Muruts can be distinguished into the following types:-

- a) Infant Betrothal
- b) Adolescent Betrothal
- c) Adult Betrothal
- d) Betrothal of a married man

- a) Infant Betrothal<sup>(1)</sup> This includes also those below 6 year old.

Actually this is not an engagement in the real sense of the word, i.e. as its meaning is usually taken to be. Agreement is mutual (the people concerned have no part in the negotiations) and on

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1. Rutter, The Pagans of North Borneo, pg. 145 - 147  
Prentice, op cit, pg. 21



the understanding that when the children have grown up, a proper engagement will be held. However, as signs that this agreement has been made the boys's parents will give some 'gifts' to the girl's parents. These gifts are non-returnable nor are to be repaid if later the agreement is broken off. Causes of this break-off could be the death of one or the other of the party (in which case a substitute - usually a sibling or a close relative of the deceased - is taken if agreed upon by the other side), or because neither likes or prefers the other. Among the Muruts, complete freedom is given to the young people in their choice of a partner, and parents never compel or insist either a son to marry a suggested wife, or a daughter to accept an eligible suitor.

b) Adolescent Betrothal: This is known as tamung or tetamung. Usually the boy and girl will be around 6 - 8 years old. Hence period of engagement is long until the two are considered off-age already. This will be when the boy is about 14 - 16 years old and the girl 12 - 14 years.

Engagement is made with the boy, his parents and relatives going over to the girl's place where they will stay for the night. With them they will bring along 2 - 3 old jars, some beads and clothings. The sending of these gifts is known as tadin tetamung. Acceptance of these objects means the acceptance of the proposal. And so date for the wedding will then be discussed and agreed upon.

The following morning the suitor's party will take leave. And it is the custom for the girl's side to provide the departing party with some food for the journey back. These would include padi, rice and pickles of meat or fish. There is no merrymaking at this stage.

If later the girl decides to break off the engagement, those gifts she has accepted and taken have to be returned. And if it is the boy who breaks off the engagement, then those goods will be forfeited.



c) Adult Betrothal: In this case, period of engagement is shorter and is rarely up to a year. This is because the boy and girl will already be of marriageable age, i.e. 12 - 14 years old. Perhaps it can be interpreted that this engagement period is only to give opportunity for the suitor to obtain the required brideprice and so on.

Proceedings are similar to (b), above, i.e. as in the case for adolescent betrothal.

d) Betrothal of a Married Man: Here, the man will come along with his close relatives or parents, bringing with them the necessary gifts. As before, acceptance of these gifts means agreement to the betrothal. If such an agreement is reached, the man may brought the girl back to his house - as his wife. Payment of the brideprice will be settled later. And sometimes the last of the brideprice might be given when she has already born him several children.

## 2. The Wedding and Pattern of Residence

The wedding is the day when the brideprice is paid. Brideprice is called pampulut or pulut, and the sending of this pulut is called tadin pampulut. The pulut can be given in part, in which case it is known as belui, or in full, in which case it is known as tapai tinau or just tinau. If the suitor can pay all the brideprice at one time, then there is no belui, only tinau. Hence of these two, tinau is more important. Often when the pulut is paid in part, tinau might take place even when the couple already have some children. In other words, tinau could take place even years after belui.

The following is the complete list<sup>(1)</sup> of goods brought

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1. As shown to the writer by Enok Liman himself. The prices quoted were as found in the list (1969).



along by one of my informants, Encik Liman, during his tinau. In his case there was no belui.

1.	Tajau tiluan	.....1 buah	\$800.00
2.	Tajau binukul	.....1 buah	700.00
3.	Tajau tiowon	.....1 buah	
4.	Tajau mandila lair	.....1 buah	300.00
5.	Tajau balayung	.....2 buah	600.00
6.	Tajau bulu laun	.....1 buah	
7.	Tajau ginohol	.....1 buah	
8.	Tajau sinalapa	.....1 buah	
9.	Tajau pinupuok amas	.....1 buah	
10.	Tajau limau marsulau	.....1 buah	
11.	Tajau sangangon	.....1 buah	
12.	Tajau guliabai	.....1 buah	
13.	Tajau akap	.....1 buah	
14.	Gong besi (satu ada rantai, satu tiada)	2 buah	
15.	Gong tembaga	.....2 buah	
16.	Gong gulok	.....2 buah	
17.	Kilintangan	.....2 buah	
18.	Sapi	.....1 ekor	
19.	Philips radio transistor	.....1 buah	250.00
20.	Manik olot	.....2 buah	100.00
21.	Manik bulut	.....5 buah	150.00
22.	Periok/kuali	.....5 buah	
23.	Pipirok linggit	.....1 buah	100.00
24.	Anting-anting mas	.....6 buah	
25.	Bau tinah 1 salupai	.....4 buah	100.00
26.	Bisin besar	.....3 buah	30.00
27.	Manik bau tinah	.....2 buah	40.00
28.	Kain Berkayu	.....4 buah	
29.	Peti kayu	.....3 buah	
30.	Salapa (celapa pinang)	.....1 buah	



- |     |                           |                      |
|-----|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 31. | Kain-kain                 | .....50 helai .....  |
| 32. | Cincin mas                | ..... 3 bentuk ..... |
| 33. | Tapi pinongkoloh          | .....5 buah .....    |
| 34. | Baju sampoi/pinongkoloh.. | 3 buah .....         |
| 35. | Baju bermanik .....       | 2 helai .....        |
| 36. | Tajau Tenom/tajau kedai.. | 22 buah .....        |

From the above list, the jars are the most important items, and of these the first three - tiluan, binukul and tiowan - are more or less 'compulsory' goods. In the early 1950's the tiluan jar costs only \$50.00!

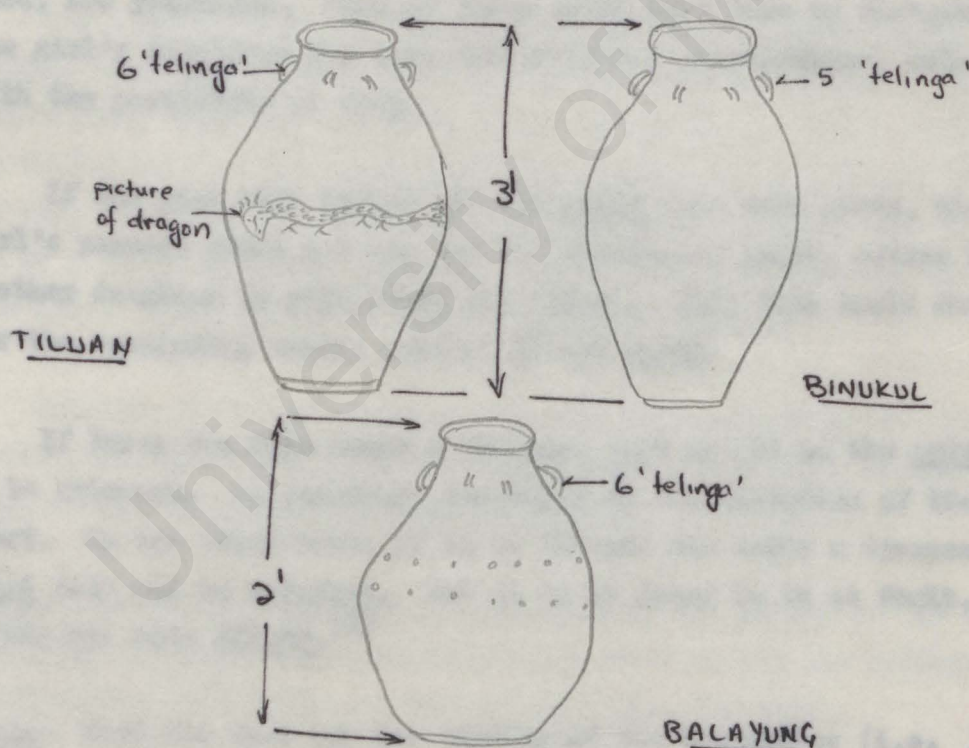


Figure 4 : Important Murut Jars <sup>(1)</sup>

1. Zaini Md. Isa: "Kebudayaan dan Adat Resam Kedazan dan Murut," Kota Bharu, Kelantan, 1969, pg. 89



Generally pulut may include the various types of jars (with tiluan, binukul and tiowon a must), beads, clothes, a cow or buffalo, gongs, traditional Murut dresses, and other miscellaneous items for daily usage. Obviously getting all these goods offers a problem, especially financially. But this is minimised by all sharing the burden of getting the goods a one way or another. Most often the suitor's parents will seek the help of close relatives, especially the womenfolks. Or, if a sister of the boy has been married, pulut received for her marriage are borrowed. And as has been said earlier, not all the pulut may be given at a time, thus lessening further the difficulties met by the suitor in getting hold of the necessary pulut.

The pulut will be received by the girl's parents or, if they have died, her guardians. Some of these goods will then be distributed to the girl's relatives who have helped in the preparations, mainly helping with the provisions of food.

If the girl dies before all the pulut have been given, then the girl's parents could not ask for the remaining goods, unless they have another daughter to substitute the former. Only then could they ask for the remaining unpaid portion of the pulut.

If later the wife seeks a divorce, part or all of the pulut have to be returned. Or sometimes according to the direction of the Native Court. On the other hand, if it is the man who seeks a divorce the pulut will not be returned. But if he is found to be at fault, he has to pay his wife \$30.00. <sup>(1)</sup>

Belui: When the date for the sending of the brideprice (i.e. tadin puluton) approaches, a middleman called kawnan will be sent by the girl's parents to the suitor's side. This kawnan will be provided with food like rice and pickles which he will give to the suitor's family and relatives. He will then tell them of the decisions made by the girl's parents and remind them of some of the goods wanted as brideprice.



Agreements and decisions made by the suitor's side will be passed onto the girl's side by the kawman. So as to keep note of the days until the day the pulut are given, both sides will make what is known as a tibuku. This is a rattan tied into knots, each knot representing a day. And as each day passes, a knot will be opened.

As was noted earlier, pulut can be given at one time, or in two stages. If it is given in two stages, the first stage is called belui, and during this stage only part of the pulut will be given. The remaining portion of the payment may be done at a later stage which is called tinau. Tinau marks the end or complete settlement of the brideprice. As is often the case, belui takes place, and by the time tinau is held, the couple might already have children of their own.

For a belui it is preferred that the items include tiluan and binukul or a tiowon jar. However, if agreement is obtained from the girl's side, these may be given later during tinau. During a belui the suitor will be accompanied by his parents and relatives. On the way, when they are about to reach the girl's place, they will be met by a group of people from the girl's side, and who will serve them with food. This custom is called nangatur daitatan.

Reaching the girl's place, they will be received by the girl's parents, and after the goods exchanged hands, food will be served, tapai drunk. Merrymaking lasts 3 - 4 days.

Tinau: This is the most significant part of the giving of the brideprice, and it marks the completion of payment of all the brideprice. And obviously this stage is even merrier than the belui.

As during belui, nangatur daitatan is also held at this stage.

Over at the girl's place a special platform called sangian is constructed and connected to the house. The floor is of bamboo. A bridge or gangway is then built from this sangian towards the river,



but not reaching it. Often it is only about 15 feet long. This gangway is called tarulan.

Before entering the girl's house, the groom and company will be made to walk on this tarulan and a light meal will be served at the Sangian. After that the couple will sit on a slightly raised place on the sangian. The pulut will be handed over, counted, and taken note of, at the end of which they will proceed to enter the longhouse. At the door, they will undergo another ceremonial ritual. This time an old man from the groom's side will cut or break one of two compartments (the right side) of a piece of bamboo containing some water and hung at the door entrance. This bamboo is called as totolok and is about four to five feet long. The couple will then wash their face and head with the water from this totolok, after which the old man followed, and then the others from the groom's party. When this is over, same procedures are done by the girl's side, but this time the left part of the totolok is broken. The whole thing implies blessings to the newlyweds and also upon everybody present, so that all will have good fortune, happiness and long life.

After the breaking of the totolok, celebrations will begin and usually this will take 4 days and 3 nights. Tapai will be drunk, and there will be dances and singing. At the end of the celebrations the groom's side will then take leave and begin their journey home. Coming with them will be the newlyweds. Like during belai, the departing party will be provided with rice, padi, pickles of fish and meat, and other kinds of food and small items for the journey home. And with the tinau over, all the brideprice have been paid and settled by the groom.

Over at the groom's place there will be more merrymaking to welcome the newlyweds, and usually this is no less merrier than that over at the bride's place.



It is customary for the wife to follow the husband and live at his place i.e. a patrilocal pattern of residence is practised by the Pensiangan Muruts. However, she could visit her folks anytime she wishes and for any period of time. Often the wife visits her parents alone and stay with them for a very long time. If the husband is dissatisfied and thinks that his wife does not want to come back again, then he may and can bring the matter to the Native Court on the charge of the wife having committed what they termed as 'mungskir laki'. When this happens and the wife still does not want to return to the husband, she has to return the pulut. If she agrees to return, then the case is settled and she need not give back the pulut.

#### 4.3 Marrying a Divorcee

A divorcee is called nalian.

Such a marriage is allowed if the parents of the divorcee agrees to it and that the divorcee procedures have been approved and settled by the Native Court. Amount of the brideprice will be a little less, but marriage proceedings will be similar to that of a first marriage.

A young divorcee and who has not born a child will receive the full amount of pulut as when she first marries.

#### 4.4 Nanduli Nahandu

This refers to a marriage between a couple who were at first divorced and then decided to reconcile and live together again. For such a marriage the old brideprice will be considered null and void. If, however, it is the wife who initiates or decides on the remarriage, she has to give a buffalo to the husband.



#### 4.5: Marrying a Widow

A widow is called navalu. A widow has to observe a period called olig. This refers to the mourning period which is usually 2 - 3 months, and during which she is not allowed to remarry.

A man wanting to marry a widow need not go through an engagement. The suitor (and a company of relatives and his parents) may approach the widow's parents and ask for her hand. If an agreement is reached, then he may bring back the widow to his place as his wife. Pulut will be settled later. Usually, payment of pulut is similar to that of a first marriage, both in its amount and proceedings.

Among the Pensiangan Muruts parents of the deceased can marry the widow to an elder brother or a younger one or someone closely related to him. If this arrangement is agreed upon by the widow's parents then the deceased's parents need to pay the remaining unpaid brideprice if any. If the family disagrees, the deceased's parents will have to let go the widow, and they need not settle any brideprice still unpaid.

#### 4.6: Marriage of a suitor from another place (outside Pensiangan)

If a person from another place wants to marry a girl from Pensiangan, he must first of all agree to pay some of the main brideprice (e.g. the tiluan or binukul jars especially). Or he could agree to stay at the girl's place after the marriage until all the brideprice have been paid. After that he may take his wife wherever he pleases. However, if the girl disagrees to the marriage then there is no question of it ever going to take place, even if the man could pay all the required brideprice at one time. Choice of a partner is in the hands of the girl and the parents could not - there rarely has been a case of forced marriage among the Pensiangan Muruts - insist upon her marrying someone she disagrees to, no matter how eligible the suitor is to them.



#### 4.7: Marriage of a Muslim suitor

If a Muslim man wants to marry a Pensiangan Murut girl, there are two alternatives:- a) the girl embraces <sup>Islam</sup> (b) the man leaves his religion, if the girl does not want to become a Muslim, and if he so greatly desire to marry her.<sup>(1)</sup> But usually the first alternative is taken. Either case, however, if the suitor could not pay his brideprice, he has to stay at the girl's place and work for his in-laws, i.e. he offers his services to them. Also, his presence with the family's reaches ensures that he will not fail to pay the brideprice, or that he will neglect his wife.

#### 4.8: Polygamy (Bangan)

The Pensiangan Muruts practise polygamy.<sup>(2)</sup> A person is allowed to marry as many wives as he can - so long as he can afford it - but there have been rare cases of any one having 4 wives or more. The usual case among them is to have two wives.

Reasons for having more than one wife include:-

- a) to help the first wife in the daily chores, about the house and in the farm;
- b) the first wife fails to born any children;
- c) on the insistence of the first wife. Often this comes together with either or both of the two reasons above. And usually she would choose a close kin e.g. a sister or a cousin.

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1. Islamic law bars a Muslim from marrying another who does not follow the Books i.e the Torah, the Bible, and the Quran, unless the latter changes his/her religion. A Muslim woman, however, is barred from marrying either a Christian or a Jew, unless the latter changes his religion, or she hers.
  2. The more correct term is of course polygyny, which refers to a man being married to more than one wife. Polygamy suggests also the existence of polygandry - a woman married to more than one husband - which does not prevail among the Pensiangan Muruts.



To take a second wife, the husband need to have the permission of the first wife, and he has to give her parents a buffalo or a cow, and she such things of ornamental values, clothes or those things which she asks for. These goods given to the in-laws and the first wife are called pampang. If the husband remarries without getting the permission of his first wife, then he might be brought into the Native Court and made to pay \$50.00 - as was one case in 1972.

Similarly, if he wants to get a third wife, he needs to pay pampang to the in-laws (parents of his second wife) and his second wife herself. The first in-laws and wife need not be given any pampang again. And so on everytime the man wants to marry again.

Later wives are expected to be respectful to the first wife, who to them is referred to as 'aduk pun'. All the wives live and sleep in the same sulap. The first wife will address the other wives as yalik (adik), and then she in turn is addressed to as yakak (kakak)<sup>(1)</sup>

Tadin puluton and wedding ceremonies are similar to those of the first marriage. There is, however, no engagement. Relatives of the man may accompany him and ask for the hand of the girl. If an engagement is reached, he may bring her back as his wife. Pulut may be settled later.

#### 4.9: Adultery (Lapan)

The Pensiangan Muruts recognise several degrees of lapan

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1. This follows the Malay custom of addressing someone older as 'kakak' or 'abang' and someone younger as 'adik', even if there be no affinal or consanguinal relations between them. They are used to show respect and politeness.



or as they often prefer to term it 'lapanu bini orang' (i.e. disturbing other people's wife). Cases of lapanu are referred to in the Native Court in such terms.

Generally, the following types of lapanu may be distinguished:- (a) whereby there is no doubt that the couple have committed such an offence. In this case each will be fined \$150.00, and in addition each has to pay sagit<sup>(1)</sup> of \$50.00, a compensation of \$100.00 to the injured parties. Failure to pay means a year in jail.

(b) whereby the situation is such that the couple have the opportunity of committing adultery. They will be seen as having intentions of committing it. Thus, if a married woman is found to be anywhere alone with a man not her husband she will be presumed guilty of adultery.

The compensatory payment and fine will be less, usually \$50.00 to \$100.00, but the amount of sagit will be the same, i.e. \$50.00.

(c) an offence known as hambai. This refers to the exchange in the smoking of a common cigarette between two persons, one of whom is married. Evidence is insufficient to accuse the couple of committing adultery, but they are considered as having committed it or that they have the intentions of doing so. Say, for example, someone A meets man B together with woman C who is not B's wife. And B and C are seen to have smoked a common cigarette between them; then B and C can be

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1. "This word .... common to all Dusun and Murut dialects defies translation. It is something between a fine and compensation, and may be defined as customary or traditional payment in goods or money, as acknowledgement of a transgression, paid to the aggrieved party, which may be an individual; or in the case of an offence against public morals, the community." - Rutter, The Pagans of North Borneo, page 139.  
Rates are recent ones.



accused of having committed hambai. If found guilty (which usually is) by the Native Court, each will be fined \$5 to \$15.

However, such a case seldom takes place. No such case was recorded in the Native Court files of Pensiangan for 1972.

#### 4.10 Divorces

It is difficult to take its meaning in the usual, Western sense, and the Pensiangan Muruts prefer to term it as 'mungkir laki' (which may be taken as to mean breach of promise or trust), and this is the usual terms used in the Native Court proceedings in Pensiangan for such related matters. Thus, divorce among the Pensiangan Muruts may be defined as the decision of one party to leave the other for some reason or other, the fault of which might not be theirs. And it is 'mungkir laki' because it is usually the wife who decides to leave the husband. Of course there are cases where the husband simply left the wife. In fact in 1972 there was a case where the husband simply left the wife. After seven months the wife brought the matter to the Native Court and the husband was made to pay \$30.00 to her.

Among the recorded causes for a divorce are:-

- a) disagreement between the wives;
- b) a jealous husband;
- c) incompatibility;
- d) a jealous mother-in-law e.g she might claim the daughter-in-law as having an affair with her (i.e the former) husband;
- e) a 'stepdaughter treatment' from the mother-in-law
- f) the wife is taken back by the parents because the husband fails to settle his pulut within the agreed period;
- g) adultery, which is the strongest cause for a divorce.

When it is the husband who seeks a divorce, then he could not ask for the return of his pulut. However, if it is the wife who initiates it, he could do so. The amount of the pulut returned would depend on the



amount spent by the girl's side in the preparations for the marriage, e.g. expenses on food. Thus, say, for example the pulut amounted to a thousand dollars and that the preparations had cost the girl's side eight hundred dollars. In this case, the man could only ask for a claim of two hundred dollars, i.e. total cost of pulut minus sum met for the preparations.

Divorce proceedings, however, usually go through the Native Court and settlements are at the direction of the Court.

In cases where the wife leaves the husband because of some differences or because she has been taken back by her parents, the pulut need not be returned if the wife agrees to come back to the husband.

If there be any children, they will be given into the custody of the father. However, if they are already old enough to be able to decide <sup>for</sup> themselves (above 10 years old), then they may choose either to follow their father or mother.

#### 4.11 Premarital Sex

In this case, each will be fined \$40.00 for having brought shame to the girl's parents. However, if they agree to marry, no fine will be imposed. Only the boy has to pay the full amount of brideprice.

If the boy disagrees to the marriage, and if the girl is pregnant, the boy will have to pay not only a fine of \$40.00 but also the full amount of brideprice.



#### 4.12 Eloping with Someone's wife

Each will be fined \$150.00 and besides has to pay sagit of \$50.00. If the woman asks for a divorce from her husband, then she has to return the brideprice she had received from him. And the man who elopes with her has to pay the full amount of brideprice to the women's parents.

#### 4.13 Mourning and Remarriage

A widow must not remarry again after the death of her husband, at least not until the mourning period is over, which is usually 2 - 3 months long. If however, her parents-in-law agree to her remarrying before this period - called olir - is over, which is seldom the case, she may do so.

A widower wishing to remarry would often seek a close relation of the former wife, preferably a sister. However, there will be no forced marriage, and if the substitute disagrees to such an arrangements, then that is that. There is no question of the marriage ever taking place. If, on the other hand, such a marriage is agreed upon, pulut has to be paid afresh, and if later he decides to take another wife, permission of the in-laws will have to be obtained, failing which he could be brought into Court.



## CHAPTER FIVE : SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

This brief study of the Pensiangan Murut is mainly exploratory and descriptive in nature. Exploratory because the writer has tried to gain insight into what he believes has been a much neglected subject, in the hope of familiarising the reader with the general way of life of the Pensiangan Muruts. Since the writer does not attempt to uncover everything in the life-style or even that of the kinship and marriage patterns (which form the core of the present study) of the Pensiangan Muruts, the study should provide introductory material for other researchers who wish to conduct a more prolonged and detailed study of the Muruts in Sabah. This study is also broadly descriptive because, as was probably observed in the preceding chapters, there has been little attempt to analyse or compare the kinship and marriage systems in relation to similar studies done in South East Asia. At most the writer has attempted to put into record the general life and customs of the Pensiangan Muruts, especially in relation to their kinship and marriage system.

It is with regret that this study has not followed any systematic research design. The writer had little time to prepare for the fieldwork. There was little review of any literature, and no attempt was made to conduct a pilot-study, to approach people who might have information on them, such as members of the Sabah State Museum.

Furthermore, as it turned out to be, things were not as simple and easy in the field as had been imagined. For one thing lack of fund has limited the area of study to within the town of Pensiangan only; for another, the Murut longhouses did not hold as large a number of families as the writer had expected to find. Most consist of only 3 - 5 families. However, the writer has tried to overcome the problems by employing his brother after the fieldwork period was over, mainly to investigate further on issues left out by the former,



and also to clarify certain points discussed in books relating to the kinship and marriage patterns of the Pensiangan Muruts. Also, the writer has tried to communicate with government officials and others for further clarifications on these issues. This, however, turned out to be a disappointment for, except for a few of them, there has been no reply to his letters.

Brevity and lack of explanation by some writers in accounting for the differences in the usage of the word 'Murut' for the Murut population in both Sarawak and Sabah was an obvious setback in the writer's earlier attempt to clarify the Interior Muruts of Sabah in relation to the other Murut population. The writer was introduced into the problem by Prentice<sup>(1)</sup> who stated that

"In Sabah it - the term 'Murut' - refers to the groups inhabiting the Interior Residency South of Keningau (who are known in Sarawak as 'Tagals'), while in Sarawak it refers to the groups living in the Lawas and Trusan areas of the Fifth Division (known in Sabah as 'Lun Daye'). Both types extend for an unknown distance southeast towards into Kalimantan, where they are indiscriminately referred to as 'Murut' or simply 'Dayak'."

And nowhere in his book did Prentice clearly distinguish the various Murut groups as found in the two states.

It is clear from the above that without stating where exactly the Tagals live, it appears that they inhabit the Lawas and Trusan areas, that they are those commonly referred to as the 'Sarawak Muruts', which is of course wrong. The core of the problem is probably the failure by some writers to distinguish the two main groups of Murut

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1. Prentice, op cit. pg. 1



population in Sarawak. They take it for granted that the coastal Muruts represent the total Murut population. Also, they do not see the Murut population in one state in the light of that in the other. What is being suggested here is that any discussion on the Murut population in either of the state of Sarawak or Sabah should also include those in the other state as well. Also, the obvious distinction between them should be clearly pointed out. Thus it would have been clearer if Prentice had stated that in Sarawak the Murut population can be divided into those living along the coastal region and those living in the interior, and that in, Sarawak 'Murut' refers to the former population, and that this group is akin to the neighbouring Lun Dayes in Sabah. And it would have been more meaningful if it had been pointed out that the latter group of Sarawak's Murut population are more commonly known as Tagals and they are akin to the Interior Muruts of Sabah, to whom the term 'Murut' is generally used in Sabah. And it would have been clearer if mention is made of the distinct differences between the coastal Muruts and those in the interior of both the states.

During a chance meeting with a Fifth Division Sarawakian<sup>(1)</sup> the writer was told that there are actually two Murut groups in Sarawak. Those generally called Muruts are those living in the lower

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1. The writer did not ask any Sarawak friends earlier because he thought that it was unnecessary, for after all books he referred to do point out that what is a Murut in Sabah is not in Sarawak (and vice versa). And his whole discussion on this subject was based mainly upon Prentice's (the first book available to him) statements, which he found rather confusing because of its brevity.



reaches of the Trusan and Limbang Rivers, and those in and around Lawas district. This group is that group which in Sabah would be called as Lun Dayes, who inhabit the neighbouring Sipitang-Sindumin district. The other group is commonly distinguished as the Tagals, and they are akin to Sabah's Interior Muruts, that group which in Sabah is commonly referred to as the Muruts.

From the above, it will be noted that in each of the states of Sabah and Sarawak, there are two Murut populations. And that one of these has a name by which it is commonly known. Thus in Sarawak one group is known as the Tagals, while in Sabah one group is referred to as the Lun Dayes. The other two groups, on the other hand, have been referred to by one single term - Murut, thus overlooking their linguistic and cultural differences. And this is obviously the cause of failing to see the differences between the two. However, the writer feels that a more specific term can be used to distinguish the two, by taking into account their geographical location. The suggestion made here then is that the term 'Coastal Muruts' be used in place of 'Sarawak Muruts', and 'Interior Muruts' in place of 'Sabah Muruts'. This is probably more meaningful and appropriate - 'Coastal' because they inhabit the coastal region, though of course not necessarily along the beaches. This region covers those areas until the slopes of the mountain ranges. And 'Interior' because the whole area is within the Interior Residency. (1)

The writer has made use of the term 'Pensiangan Muruts' to describe the subjects of study. This is in line with the way in which the Muruts see themselves, their tendency to link themselves with the name of the place from which they come from. A specific term like this is probably better than the more general term 'Highland Muruts'.

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1. Sipitang-Sindumin district is today also within the Interior Residency, but until Sabah became a Colony it is included when in the West Coast Residency.



of which the Pensiangan groups is only a part, or 'Interior Muruts' which is too general a term since discussion does not include the Lowland Muruts.

The village of the Pensiangan Muruts most often consist of only one longhouse. As such the members are usually close kins, related by blood or through a marriage. Either way, they trace their relatives from both parents, i.e. bilateral; and despite this close relationship between the families in the longhouse, the nuclear family is still the most important unit. Collective activities, however, are practised, especially when it comes to preparing a wedding, either on the reception side or on that which has to provide the brideprice. Expenses incurred for such are too large for a single family to handle. Also, during a tuba fishing, every family will join in including those from neighbouring villages. Or when a visitor comes to visit a longhouse, every family in that longhouse will provide food for the visitor, even if the latter comes to visit only one of the families. All this obviously show the feeling of not only being related to one another but also that of being belonging to the longhouse, to the community as a whole. Such feelings no doubt is a factor towards their solidarity - an important factor during the headhunting days. Also, economically, it lessen the burden of the individual family in, say, preparing for the wedding or providing food for the visitor. When one considers that they practise a subsistence economy, the importance of all this is brought to the fore. And politically, close relationship among the members ensures a good choice of who the headman or Metua Nupahon should be, thereby ensuring a good leadership.

The Pensiangan Muruts with their close network of relationship, tend to give precedence to males and senior offsprings to senior wives over later ones, and also to true offsprings over adopted or step children, when it comes to the distribution of goods to be inherited. Thus the daughter receives her share if there is no son, and when there are many sons, the eldest, gets a larger portion of the goods.



And similarly, senior wives gets more share of the goods than later ones. However, this does not mean that inequality prevails in all aspects, for in the case of possessions obtained individually, each is the rightful owner of what he or she has obtained through personal efforts. In short, the distribution of goods left by the deceased tend to give some share in one way or another to almost everybody - from the members of his family to his nearest relatives and even to the person who bears the expenses of his funeral. Of course, precedence is given to those nearer to the deceased. And the fact that the Muruts distinguish 4 types of inherited goods (i.e. those already inherited, obtained by the couple, obtained during marriage, and obtained individually) ensures that the rightful claimants receive their equal share of the goods.

One very prominent - and important - point is no doubt noted in the marriage practices of the Pensiangan Muruts. This is the right of the individual to choose his or her own partner for a marriage. No matter how eligible the suitor is, unless the girl agrees to marry him, there will be no question of any marriage ever taking place, even if it is the girl's parents greatest desire to have the suitor as their in-laws. No previous negotiations or engagements made by both parents will change the situations. In other words, among the Pensiangan Muruts, marriage is decided by those, two people who are to be married and not anybody else. This individual freedom is something which most other societies (even today) do not give, but which the Muruts have upheld and respect even today. According to one informant this is because the girl will attempt to commit suicide if she is forced to marry someone she does not like. The logic it seems is that if the girl dies, the parents lose a daughter, and hence a possible wealth through the pulut. Therefore, the decision to marry is left to her.

The increasing impact of education among the young Murut generation and more contact with peoples of other communities may



finally bring about the abandonment of infant and even adolescent betrothal. The Muruts may in future want to become engaged or married after they have reached 16 years or even older. This is not impossible, considering that the jars are losing their importance as brideprice goods. Money may, in the future, be an important item in the brideprice requirements, and this the youth would not get without working. And a boy of 12 or 14 years, with little education, will find it difficult - if not impossible - to get a job. So, the years he has to spend in school, and more years he has to work may finally cause him to marry at a much older age than is the practice today.

Marriage among the Pensiangan Muruts is indeed an expensive affair, and there are those who prefer to leave Pensiangan and marry somewhere else, given the chance. However, it might have been noticed that the 'expensiveness' of the marriage is due to the rising prices of the jars, and the higher prices of goods in Pensiangan. In other words, the 'expensiveness' is due to the high prices of the goods which constitute the pulut. But considering that most of these jars are inherited goods, the marriage is after all not as expensive as it looks at first. Also, it is not necessary that all the pulut be given at one time. The prospective husband is given the time and opportunity to collect the required pulut as he can afford it, thus lessening the burden of the 'expensiveness'. Just the same this 'expensiveness' might be lessened in future when the Muruts have fully realised the losing importance of the jars and see the growing influence of the use of money and cash in everyday dealings. Change in what constitute the pulut will no doubt also affect the costs of a marriage.

This expensive nature of the system, however, indirectly protects the womenfolk from 'irresponsible' husband. Thus, if the husband is unable to pay the brideprice he could not take his wife away from her people but has to stay and offers his services to them.



And if he wants to take a second wife, he not only has to worry about another 'expensive wedding', but also about the things he has to give his first wife and in-laws as pampang. So, although the Murut is allowed to marry as many as he wishes, his financial resources might limit his wife to only one. And obviously the structure of the longhouse, and the village for that matter, does not enable him to keep a mistress.

Furthermore, the fact that every new marriage, whether to a divorcee or a widow, requires fresh brideprice may have also limited the number of wives the Murut man wishes to have. And premarital sex - and hence a possible illegitimate child - is prevented or at least discouraged by the imposition of the rule that the responsible person, if he disagrees in marrying her, should pay not only a fine of \$40.00 (which is not an easy sum to find in Pensiangan) but also the full amount of brideprice. And if he agrees, he need not pay the fine, but he has to pay the full brideprice. This certainly is a strong enough deterrent for the 'adventurous' Murut youth to indulge in 'sex before marriage'. In other words, the expensiveness of the marriage is such that implicitly it prevents the Muruts from activities which they consider as 'immoral'. Social control among them seems to be very strong - as seen in what they referred to as a hambai case.

However, it is of course not without its own disadvantages. Thus, given the opportunities, the Murut males may prefer to leave Pensiangan and marry somewhere else where it is cheaper. Also males from outside Pensiangan may be discouraged from marrying maids from Pensiangan because of this expensiveness. Either way, the Pensiangan people will be left with more unmarried womenfolk. Perhaps it is because of this that polygamy is allowed among them, thereby preventing any moral decadence that might result from too many unmarried maids.



It might also have been noticed that the Pensiangan Muruts do not have a formal declaration announcing the couple as husband and wife - as in the Christian way of saying 'I do', or in the Muslim way of the Tok Kadhi saying 'Aku nikahkan dikau.....etc. etc.....' and then the groom replying "Aku terima nikahnya .....etc. etc., .....". Rather, what seems to have determined their marriage are the pulut, i.e. the brideprice. And what seems to have been said is something like "Here are the pulut (or some of the pulut, as the case may be) you have asked for. So now may I have your daughter?" The couple are then seated side by side on a raised part of the sangian, while the pulut are counted and taken note of. After that both sides break the totolok, followed by days of tapai drinking, singing and dancing to celebrate the occasion. As long as the husband still owes his parents-in-laws some pulut, he may one day loses his wife. Her parents may take her back, until the remaining pulut are given. But once tinau is completed, the girl's parents could not take her back without possible charges being made by the husband on the grounds of the girl having committed 'mundir laki'. If such a divorce takes place, the pulut have to be returned, thus showing again the determining aspect of the pulut on the marriage system. After a divorce the wife goes back to her folks and her ties with the husband's people will automatically end.

When a divorce has taken place, the Murut seem to have an impressive way of settling it in the interest of the children's welfare. This is seen in the rule that the father has custody of the children if they are still underaged; and if they have already reached adolescence, they are given the choice of following either the father or the mother. The importance of this kind of settlement is that the welfare of the children is continuously looked after until they are married. The father could remarry, thus providing a continuous maternal care to the children. The mother, however, would find remarrying a little more difficult, especially if she is



already 'old'. And giving the children the right to choose either parent in case of a divorce ensures that they will choose one who has cared and will care for them until the time when they have a family of their own. However, it should be noted here that the children could visit the other parent (e.g. the mother, if they have decided to follow the father) any time they wish. So, even though there has been a divorce, the children can still be in contact with both parents.

The Pensiangan Muruts are today being gradually resettled at Nabawan under the Nabawan Resettlement Scheme of the Sabah Padi Board.<sup>(1)</sup> This scheme aims at resettling the entire Murut population of Pensiangan District who are scattered in various villages of border territory into Nabawan so that they could be more easily administered by the Government and at the same time be taught new skills. This way they could become self-supporting members of the community and eventually contribute to the economy and well being of the country as a whole.

On entrance to the Scheme, a family will be provided:-

- a)  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre of house lot with a timber house provided;
- b) 10 acres of land for permanent crops;
- c) 2 acres of padi land;
- d) a certain amount of cash loans, payable when their lands are productive. Period given is from 10 - 15 years.

It is clear from the above that the Pensiangan Muruts are really facing changes. They were the last group of population to receive

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1. The Sabah Padi Board is made to handle this by the Government.



outside influence (with the opening of the Rundum Station in 1910), but within just six decades, they have lost the original structure of their longhouse.<sup>(1)</sup> Not only is it now accommodating 4 - 5 families, it has also but lost the once most important part of the longhouse - the lansaran. If there is a lansaran today in a Murut village, it is built separately from the longhouse and is used only to celebrate such occasions as the annual tamu besar or an official event. Pensiangan town as one large lansaran building, but its dilapidated condition clearly shows that it has not been in use for many years. And Pensiangan is where most of the Murut population lived!

However, the longhouse is not the only area which has experienced some changes. With the introduction of the Nabawan Scheme there can be no doubt that their very social life and organisation will be affected. In short the very existence of the Pensiangan Muruts will feel the changes brought about by the Scheme. To what extent the writer can only be speculative. The scheme is only a few years old and therefore its impact will not be clearly seen until the next half a decade or so. Also, it is interesting to note that just as there is a constant flow of Pensiangan Muruts leaving for Nabawan, there seems to be at the same time a constant flow of them coming back to Pensiangan! So, it is unlikely that Pensiangan will be completely abandoned<sup>(2)</sup> by the Muruts, which therefore means they could still maintain their traditions. And if the State Government carries out its proposed project of Making a road linking Pensiangan to Tomani

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1. In Nabawan the house is semi-detached, with two families to each house.
  2. It will, however, lost its status as a Government station. The writer was informed that the administration will also be shifted to Nabawan.



near Tenom and to Merotai near Tawau,<sup>(1)</sup> then it is possible that the Muruts will be reluctant to move to Nabawan. This means a division of the Murut population. Those who preferred to stay might hold more strongly to their traditional customs and way of life, and among them change will be a slow and gradual process. On the other hand, those who preferred to make Nabawan their permanent home will find themselves in a society which places importance to cash, to money rather than their tiluan or binukul jars. True Nabawan would still be mainly populated by the Muruts, but their economic structure is such that they could no longer hold onto the values of their jars. They could not pay their loans with them, and it will not be jars that they will get on selling the products of their lands. And so we find jars losing its importance, except perhaps as tanai containers. As part of the brideprice goods, jars will be replaced by cash or such up-to-date luxuries like radio sets or even television sets. As a whole, the writer believes that among the Pensiangan Muruts changes occur namely upon the already mentioned longhouse structure, and within their marriage system. Chief factors leading to these are, the writer holds, the Nabawan Scheme (which gives them access to areas outside their all-Murut community) and Islam (which the United Sabah Islamic Association or USIA has spread among them and leaving its mark). Of course factors like education and mobility are also important causes but these are provided by the scheme and so should not be separated from it. Perhaps the impact is not felt or seen among the present older generation, but there can be no doubt that the younger generation will be moving towards a world very much different from what their parents or grandparents have experienced.

If USIA is successful in its efforts - apart from just converting the Muruts into Muslims - then the possibility of the latter abandoning a great deal of their marriage customs will be great. One of those obvious things likely to be abandoned is their rather expensive

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1. Malaysian Business, October 1973, pg. 9



marriage in the form of brideprice goods. Islam might lead to the Muruts to what other Muslim communities practice: a marriage through a standard maskahwin. Perhaps even the form of the wedding itself will changed. In Sarawak we see more and more of the younger Iban generation forming a traditional wedding after or before the 'modern' western version.<sup>(1)</sup> Similarly, among the younger Murut generation, weddings might both be in the usual traditional way and a modified version of a Muslim wedding, or perhaps even only the latter.<sup>(2)</sup>

So, it can be seen here - as far as the Pensiangan Muruts are concerned - that the future of the Muruts will be determined by the success or failure of the Nabawan Scheme in passing onto them new skills and make them a self-supporting community so that not only will they bring their own development and betterment but also that of the country as a whole. Playing an important role as an agent of change too is USIA's efforts in establishing Islam among them. USIA have been successful in converting thousands of the Pensiangan Muruts in 1970, but how far is it successful in making them be truly influenced by Islam? The answer is yet to be seen, for although USIA have sent religious teachers to teach in the schools there (in Pensiangan, Nabawan and those in Sapulut), and although there is a mosque in Pensiangan (and a likely one too at Nabawan in the future), it is clearly seen that the Muruts still practise and believe in their traditional customs.

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1. Unlike the Muruts, though, the Ibans have not lost their traditional longhouse atmosphere.

2. This can be seen happening in almost every Malaysian community. The effect of 'modernisation' is there.

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1. See footnote Chapter One, page 6 of the present study.



interior regions of the country (then supporting the view that they have come from Indonesia in the south), and then moving towards

There have been no recent studies on the Pensiangan Muruts other than that concerning their various customs like kinship and marriage patterns. Early this year (1973) a Japanese undergraduate did make a study of their economy in considerable detail. The writer was told by the District Officer then that it was the core of her research. But her work is unlikely to be read by us here. So, what is needed in future are studies relating to their customs in so far as they are relevant to an understanding of the other aspects of their society like their economy and socio-political organisation. Thus, for example, a study can be made of their kinship and marriage systems from the point of view of their economy and socio-political organisation, rather than just studying them from the anthropological sort of view. Such studies are the writer believes especially needed now that a greater number of the Pensiangan Muruts have moved to Nabawan, and that USIA is putting more efforts to establish Islam among them. The writer thinks that a study concerning the impact of these two - the Scheme and Islam through USIA's efforts - is a valuable area for future researchers.

The writer also suggest for a future research to be done on the history of the Murut population and as a whole tracing their (or at least that of their 'forefathers') earliest migration trends and development, as has been done on the Ibans of Sarawak. They have always regarded themselves native to the place which they are inhabiting, but history<sup>(1)</sup> showed that they are the possible descendants of a late migration of people from either the Philippines in the north or Indonesia in the south, or direct from mainland Asia. There have been two versions on the route of migration of the Murut population in East Malaysia. One is that they first inhabit the

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1. See footnote Chapter One, page 6 of the present study.



interior regions of the country (thus supporting the view that they have come from Indonesia in the south), and then moving towards the coastal region where the Lun Dayeh and Sarawak's Coastal Muruts can be found today. Another version is that they first settled on the coasts and then moved inwards into the Interior (thus supporting the view that they come from mainland Asia or the Philippines - but in the case of the latter, it is interesting to note that there is no Murut district or area in the north of Sabah, though situated closest to the Philippines). Either way a study to find out how come the Coastal Muruts differ distinctly in both language and in customs from the Interior Muruts, and yet come under the term 'Murut' offers a good area for study. This might even help in overcoming, once and for all, the seemingly confusing usage of the term 'Murut'.

people were created, but they agreed on three points, viz., (a) that the first two people were a brother and sister; (b) that there was a great flood; and (c) that the idea to have sex was after the brother (in both cases a younger one) had seen two animals<sup>(1)</sup> mating. And in the case of the story told by Pusiang, it also agrees in one point with the story of Haji Goh concerning the forefathers of the Pensiangan Muruts - that a dog or a dog-like figure was the result of the union between the brother and sister.

The Pensiangan versions also agree with the Piliungan version in that there was in the beginning a great flood which destroyed everything.

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1. A lizard is of course not an animal in its proper sense, but like the squirrel is not a ground animal either. So, as opposed to those animals as tigers, elephants, deer and other such animals of the jungle, the writer have grouped the lizard and squirrel as 'animals' simply for convenience.



However, unlike the former versions, the latter has it that the first two people were not related.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: Murut legends on the first people on this earth.

1. The writer has managed to collect from various sources only four legends concerning the Murut versions on the creation of this world's population. Of these, two come from the Pensiangan, one from the Timugons (a lowland Murut group in Sabah), and one from a Lawas Murut (i.e. of the coastal Murut in Sarawak which is akin to Sabah's Lun Dayes).

The Pensiangan versions do not mention on how the first two people were created, but they agreed on three points, via., (a) that the first two people were a brother and sister; (b) that there was a great flood; and (c) that the idea to have sex was after the brother (in both cases a younger one) have seen two animals<sup>(1)</sup> mating. And in the case of the story told by Pamiang, it also agrees in one point with the story of Haji Goh concerning the forefathers of the Pensiangan Muruts - that a dog or a dog-like figure was the result of the union between the brother and sister.

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1. Taken from Rutter, The Peoples of North Borneo, pp. 242 - 243.



However, unlike the former versions, the latter has it that the first two people were not related.

The Timugon version, however, agrees with the Lawas version which speaks of Man having been created from clay.

1. Legends of Creation from Pensiangan <sup>(1)</sup>

a) (As told to Mr. Babaneau by Temandel of Tagul).

In the beginning of things there was a great flood which destroys everything and left, when it subsided, only two people alive, a girl and her younger brother. One day the youth went out hunting with his blowpipe. He found no animals to shoot, but came upon two lizards (bengarang) mating. A new desire was awakened in him and he returned to his sister, and for days was silent, refusing to eat. The girl grew concerned and asked him what he wanted. He pointed,

"Is it my skirt you want?"

"A little more (sikit lagi)," he answered.

"Is it my belt?"

"A little more."

"Is it my navel?"

"A little more."

"Well," said the girl, when she understood, "since you cannot eat and I am worried about you<sup>you</sup> may; but you must only pretend."

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1. Taken from Rutter, The Pagans of North Borneo, pg. 248 - 249.



The boy agreed and did as she told him. But while he was 'pretending', a wasp came and sting him from behind. He gave a jump forward from the middle ..... The result was that twins were born, and that is the origin of the present human race.

"But that," the narrator observed, "is a long time ago."

b) (As told by Pamiang<sup>(1)</sup>)

After the flood there remained only a woman and her younger brother. The latter went hunting, saw 2 squirrels (basing) mating. This affected him very strangely, and he went home and asked his sister what it meant. She immediately told him.

"Is it pleasant (amis)?" he asked

"Quite pleasant," she replied, and he found she was right.

The result of the union was a dog.

## 2. The Timungan Version of Creation<sup>(2)</sup>

The Timungan creation myth commences with a great flood which destroys the whole of humanity, except for one man. He survives by climbing a miraculous coconut tree which grows tall as the water rise. On three occasions, after the waters have started receding, he throws down a coconut to see whether the earth is dry enough for him to climb down. The first two coconuts sink into the mud, but the

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1. The same Haji Osman Pamiang, one of my informants

2. Prentice, op. cit. pg. 8



(1)  
third bounces and rolls away, so he descends. He then meets a supernatural being in the form of a woman disfigured by ringworm. She tells him that they are the only two people on earth and suggests that they marry in order to revive the human race. However, repelled by her ringworm and not believing that the rest of mankind is dead, the man leaves her to search for his friends. In his absence, the woman makes a doll in her image (but without the ringworm), using clay for the flesh and bamboo for the bones. She then chews a betelnut and spits the red juice over the doll, which comes to life as a beautiful maiden. She then returns to heaven just as the man comes back from his fruitless search. He falls in love with the maid, thinking that she is the woman cured of ringworm and marries her. As their children grow up, he sends them off in pairs to establish new settlement and thus the world is repopulated.

[ Prentice, 1969b: 415 - 429)<sup>(1)</sup> ].

This legend explains why mankind is subject to sickness and death. Had the mythical hero followed the woman's advice, man would now be immortal, because of his supernatural ancestry. However, as a result of man's own foolishness, his body is made of clay, and must revert to clay when he dies.

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1. Refers to Prentice D.J. : The Murut Languages of Sabah  
Ph. D. Thesis, Australian National  
University, Canberra. xii + 518  
pages (to be published)
1. Taken from The Sabah Murut  
(New series) No. 22 (Old series), June 1970, pp. 205 - 207.



### 3. Rang Dungo: A Murut Story of Creation

(As told by Bigar Anak Beboi, B.E.M. - who in turn was told by an old Murut at Lawas, Mr. Bigar is a Land Dayak who speaks both Murut and English fluently.)

In the beginning the world was empty and the earth flat. It was as flat as a football field from side to side, for there was no river, streams, mountains or hills to make it uneven. The sun was made to rule the day, the stars and moon to rule the night. After the world was made, only trees, grass, and other plants grew on the face of the earth. No creeping or living things were yet made. The world was quiet and lonely.

One day God came down to earth. He took some clay and made it into dolls of various forms, sizes and shapes - one male and one female of each kind. He then told them to breathe, move, and walk. Good, clean clay became kind and gentle creatures, but those made of bad and dirty clay became wild, dangerous and poisonous.

Lastly, God made one man. He made him from the best and purest clay. He breathed on him. The man began to live, move and walk. God called him Rang Dungo, which means the father of nations.

1. Taken from The Sarawak Museum Journal, Vol. VII, No. 7  
(New series) No. 22 (Old series), June 1956, pg. 205 - 207.



He gave <sup>him</sup> the power of thinking. He made him to rule over all the creatures on earth. They know no hunger, for the fruits from various trees were plentiful enough to feed on all the year round.

Rang Dungo was happy to live, sleep, play and eat together with all the kind and gentle creatures. But those which were wild and dangerous began to move away and live separately. All the kind and gentle creatures hated them, for they lived and fed on flesh. Many were killed by them.

Presently Rang Dungo began to get tired of living with all these creatures for everyone had its own mate to live and play with, while he had none. He longed to live and play with a mate of his kind. Day after day he became sadder. So one day he left the others to roam over the place, seeking for something - although he did not particularly know what to look for.

When God saw him in such circumstances he pitied him. He then told him to go to a mountain, the only mountain that existed at that time.

Rang Dungo obeyed the command. After walking for many days he came to the foot of the mountain. This mountain was a very high, solid rock. He saw on the top, a white and shining egg. It was as bright as a sun. It was called "Teror Cho" which means "the egg of the sun". The egg was as big as Rang Dungo's head.

Rang Dungo took a pole and poked the egg. But before the pole touched the egg, it was burnt. He took another, but it also was burnt by the heat from the egg. He tried many poles, but all were useless. Finally he despaired and gave it up. Then God pitied him. He told him to fetch a banana tree and put it at the end of the pole, then poke.



The banana tree contained some water and could not easily be burnt. Rang Dungo followed the advice of God and was at last successful. When the pole touched the egg, it rolled down from the top of the mountain to the ground near his feet. Rang Dungo picked it up and examined it. It was transparent; it could be looked into very clearly. There were many white, black, brown, and dark colours or people in it. They were all tiny. Rang Dungo took the egg with him. At night he slept with it. During the day he carried it with his hand. One night while Rang Dungo was asleep, the egg broke. A young and beautiful girl came out from it. When he woke up he found the egg was gone and a girl was sleeping at his side instead. He was very happy indeed to find her there.

They slept and played together, were happy and contented. They became husband and wife.

As years went by they had many children. But as soon as one was born, he disappeared; none lived with them. Rang Dungo was very unhappy and annoyed by this. He began to dig the earth, and made a very long ditch, thinking it might save his children from further disappearance. Where he dug became rivers and streams, mountains and hills. While he was digging, many people came out from the holes. They were white, brown and dark. They were males and females. Each of them talked a different language.

Rang Dungo Could not understand what they were talking about. He was very annoyed with them; so he cast them into the sea. Some drifted far out into the sea; these became European, Chinese, Indian and other races of distant lands. Some were stranded on the sea beach nearby; they became Muruts, Tagals, Kelabits, Sea Dayaks, Dusuns and various other Borneo people.



There was one white man who live with the dark people. He brought them to live near a foot of a very high mountain. This mountain was Batu Lawi, of solid rock.<sup>(1)</sup> There were many holes inside it where they all lived.

They fought with many kinds of people beyond the sea. This white man taught them to make swords, spears and other useful instruments to use. He taught them to plant rice and to hunt animals for food. As years went by, they increased and spread all over the world.

Important even birds include the bird and the bird (related to sickness), the bird (for cuts, wounds, and fatal bleeding), the bird (in connection with journeys), and the bird (also for journeys).

Even animals are the bird, bird, and a variety of snakes. From the insect world are included the scorpion and centipede. Should any of these actually cross the bird's path while on a journey, it is a most serious matter and he must postpone the journey until four days have passed. If, however, the even animal does not cross his path, then he may sit down, light a fire, have a smoke, and after that continue his journey. This is the explanation given to the custom of the bird lighting a fire whenever a halt, is made upon the way.

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1. 6,650 feet, some 80 miles south of Lawas, bordering Fourth and Fifth Divisions, Sarawak.

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1. Obviously many of these folklores are no more practised or believed today.



APPENDIX B : Some Other Aspects of the Customs and Beliefs of the

Pensiangan Muruts <sup>(1)</sup>

1. Belief in Omens

Their omenism or kapi is mainly related to sound, and importance is placed more on the repetition of calls rather than their position and directions, or other movement. Generally, odd number calls are considered bad omens, while even number calls are good ones.

Important omen birds include the kisi and the mengapi (related to sickness), the blantil (for cuts, wounds, or fatal bleeding), the sahap (in connection with journeys), and the munur (also for journeys).

Omen animals are the roe-deer, mouse-deer, and a variety of snakes. From the insect world are included the scorpion and centipede. Should any of these actually cross the Murut's path while on a journey, it is a most serious matter and he must postpone the journey until four days have passed. If, however, the omen animal does not cross his path, then he may sit down, light a fire, have a smoke, and after that continue his journey. This is the explanation given to the custom of the Muruts lighting a fire whenever a halt, is made upon the road.

If a deer is seen before it barks, this is a lucky sign; otherwise, it foretells disaster.

- 
1. Obviously many of these folklores are no more practised or believed today.



## 2. Belief in Augury

The Muruts hold that the secret of the future may be learned from the liver of the pig.<sup>(1)</sup> Before any action of importance is undertaken by a village community, it is customary to slaughter a pig, and in headhunting times one was killed for every two men engaged upon a raid; the combatant bathed in the blood and the carcass was then cut open for the headman to inspect its liver. If the liver was marked with deep lines it was considered to foretell a misfortune; if it contained hollows one of the party at least would die; if diseased, the warriors would be wounded; if flabby their bodies would be sluggish and inert when the time came for action. But if the liver was firm, and red and unblemished, it portended nothing but success. If a favourable liver was not forthcoming at first, two more pigs were slaughtered and the livers observed, and if these also foretold disaster, the enterprise was abandoned.

## 3. Belief in Dreams

It is considered unlucky to dream of crocodiles or of falling; to dream of being hurt while out hunting foretells a wound on a raiding expedition. Equally unpropitious is dreaming of a hawk

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1. Pigs are not found in Pensiangan nowadays. And between Sapulut and Pensiangan, the writer only saw pigs at Pagolina, but obviously these were not reared for use in augury. So, the writer holds that this practice has been abandoned by the Muruts.



on the night just before a raid is to be made. On the other hand, to dream of running after and catching a pretty girl means that good fortune is close at hand.

#### 4. Belief in Evil Spirits

Like most people, the Muruts too believe in a host of evil spirits which control their daily life. There is never a strange tree or hill or rock which is not the habitation of some evil spirits, visible or invisible. And so to guard against them, every household has its family charm; and most individuals would have an amulet of some sort with them.

#### 5. Belief in a Medicine-Man <sup>(1)</sup>

Among the Pensiangan Muruts the medicine-man is known as Lumahon. Usually this lumahon is a woman.

Before becoming a lumahon, she will receive a dream, in which she is told by a vision of man to take a certain stone or stick from a particular place. Incanting certain 'magic formulae' this stone or stick will be able to cure any sickness.

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1. Today, the Hospital is preferred, even though Lumahons are still approached by some. The hospital in Pensiangan is always a busy place. This is because when a child is brought there and admitted, the parents usually stayed with him, and would remain there until the child is better and allowed to go home. There are also regular visits by the hospital staff to the various villages in the district.



In Pensiangan, <sup>the writer</sup> was informed, there is an old woman called Tilung who is an expert lumahon. It is said that before becoming one she had a dream in which visions of ten figures came to her one by one, and each of these told her how to cure a certain disease. Whenever she wants their help she will call them by beating a plate.

## 6. Belief in Reincarnations

The Muruts believe that there is life after death. They believe that at death the dead person's spirit will depart from the body and has a life thereafter.

The home of the departed spirit is believed to be on the slopes of Mountains Mulundayoh and Antulai. Mount Antulai or Mt. Aru as it is often known is the stepping stone to the next world where life is easier and food is plenty. Here in Mt. Aru (Mt. of Ghosts) the spirit is born again until, after seven such reincarnations, it finally becomes the Orang Tua (or Headman) of the World, absorbing everyone and everything.

Members of the dead person will have to observe certain taboos, like nobody is to wear nice clothings or go outside the village. People from other villages are also not allowed to visit the village if they do because of an urgent or important matter, then they have to make sure that they do not wear nice clothings, and should leave the village as soon as their mission is done. This taboo period lasts for four days, at the end of which the jar will be brought to the burial ground (known as lahagan)



## APPENDIX C: On Death and Burial

When a man is dying the relatives will beat upon the posts of the house and call upon his name, in the hope of inducing his spirit to remain in the body.

The beating of gongs and the wailing of women is the customary mode of announcing that a death has taken place. The corpse is washed and dressed in its finest before interment.

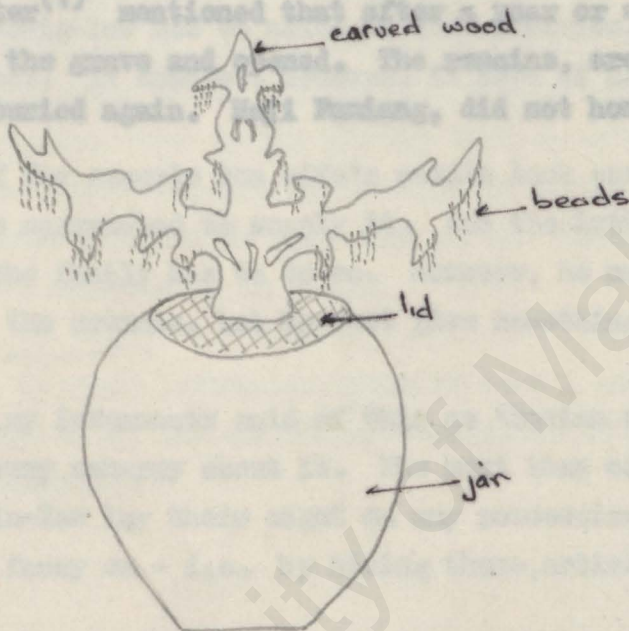
Normally, interment in the jar takes place 2 days after death. A man during his lifetime may express a desire to be buried in a particular jar and his wish would be respected. The jar is carefully broken at the neck to allow the corpse to be placed inside, doubled up, and is then closed with a wooden lid, and sealed with a certain gum of a tree. This gum is known as litak. Clay is then placed over the whole lid, after which a small lamp is lighted so as to frighten away any evil spirits. This burial jar is called bangkalon, and is elaborately decorated with a carving and beads.

Relatives of the dead person will have to observe certain taboos, like nobody is to wear nice clothings or go outside the village. People from other villages are also not allowed to visit the village; if they do because of an urgent or important matter, then they have to make sure that they do not wear nice clothings, and should leave the village as soon as their mission is done. This taboo period lasts for four days, at the end of which the jar will be brought to the burial ground (known as labangan)



However, according to Haji Fuding, there are some who do not practice this jar burial custom. No, for one, does not, even before becoming a Muslim, he says. In this case, the body is placed in a hollowed trunk (which is halved). This coffin called *sewang* is then buried.

Butter<sup>(1)</sup> mentioned that if the body is made of carved wood or so, this coffin is taken from the grave and buried. The remains are then placed in a jar and buried again. Haji Fuding, did not however mention this.



**FIGURE 5 : A MURUT BURIAL JAR ( BANGKALAN )**

This jar is placed in a small, raised house decorated with banners or *kipol* and paintings. At the end of one or two years, the jar is removed from the house and buried in the ground underneath it.

1. Butter, *The Peoples of North Borneo*, pg. 220 - mentioned that the *sewang* is a part of it. Although he says in one place - 1 - the *sewang* is a part of it. In a way a small *sewang*.



However, according to Haji Pamiang, there are some who do not practice this jar burial custom. He, for one, does not, even before becoming a Muslim, he says. In this case, the body is placed in a hollowed trunk (which is halved). This coffin called cemiang is then buried.

Rutter<sup>(1)</sup> mentioned that after a year or so, this coffin is taken from the grave and opened. The remains, are then placed in a jar and buried again. Haji Pamiang, did not however mentioned this.

Thus, if for example the wife's people lack something, the son-in-law is approached to supply it. And the latter who is now a member of the family has to do so. However, he may refuse if he cannot spare the article, but he must give something else in its place.

Most of my informants said of this as 'Borisan sarapai anti', and sounded very unhappy about it. The worst they can do is not to let the parents-in-law lay their right on any possession that the latter might have a fancy on - i.e. by hiding these articles!

Haji Pamiang did not say that this practice is 'Borisan sarapai anti'. He said that actually the parents-in-law too has to give something in return. According to him it is just a process of exchanging belongings and helping each other; only thing is that while the parents-in-law could ask for and take anything from the son-in-law, the latter could not do the same to his parents-in-law. So if the parents-in-law saw and liked the radio transistor the son-in-law has just bought, he will ask for it in exchange perhaps for a fighting cock or a certain amount of padi. The son-in-law has to comply to this arrangement. It is because there is an

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1. Rutter, The Pagans of North Borneo, pg. 220 he considered as the bridesprice or even part of it. Although heavier on one side - i.e. the son-in-law - it is in a way a mutual agreement.



#### APPENDIX D: More on the Brideprice and the Wedding

##### 'Berian Sempai Mati'

This is of course a Malay expression, meaning 'Brideprice unto death'. This refers to the customary continual payments by the woman's husband to his parents-in-laws. As long as the marriage lasts, the son-in-law has to abide to this practice, whether he likes it or not. An account, however, is kept of all such payments.

Thus, if for example the wife's people lack something, the son-in-law is approached to supply it. And the latter who is now a member of the family has to do so. However, he may refuse if he cannot spare the article, but he must give something else in its place.

Most of my informants said of this as 'Berian sampai mati', and sounded very unhappy about it. The most they can do is not to let the parents-in-law lay their sight on any possession that the latter might have a fancy on - i.e. by hiding these articles!

Haji Pamiang did not agree that this practice is 'Berian sampai mati'. He said that actually the parents-in-law too has to give something in return. According to him it is just a process of exchanging belongings and helping each other; only thing is that while the parents-in-law could ask for and take anything from the son-in-law, the latter could not do the same to his parents-in-law. So if the parents-in-law saw and liked the radio transistor the son-in-law has just bought, he will ask for it in exchange perhaps for a fighting cock or a certain amount of padi. The son-in-law has to comply to this arrangement. It is because there is an exchange of goods that Haji Pamiang dismissed the idea of 'Berian sampai mati'. The radio transistor could not be considered as the brideprice or even part of it. Although heavier on one side - i.e. the son-in-law - it is in a way a mutual agreement.



In whatever way this practice is interpreted, custom or a sense of shame prevents it from being abused excessively.

### Wedding

According to Sgt. Thibaw, members of the groom's party will have to pay - except for those things prepared and set out on the sangian - everything put out by the bride's side, and which they wish to take or eat. Thus, for example, before entering the bride's house, they have to pay for any food or article, placed at or near the door. Payment may be in kind or cash, but is seldom a big sum. This practice is only done on the first day of tinau and before the merrymaking is begun.

None of <sup>the writer's</sup> other informants spoke of such a practice, and since no record of it can be found, <sup>The</sup> ~~Writer~~ think it is better to leave it out of discussion.



APPENDIX E : ILAU - A Feast in respect of the spirits of a  
new house

When a new house is occupied, all families occupying it will hold a feast lasting from 2 to 3 days. This feast is called Ilaú and is held to pay respects to the spirits of the house, so that no misfortune will come to the families giving the feast.

It is also an opportunity to thank those people who have been asked to help towards the building of the house. They are not paid in cash or in kind; so when the house is completed, a feast is thrown in appreciation for the help given.

During this time a buffalo will be killed, tapai drunk and songs sung. There will also be cock fightings. And with small sharp blades tied to the legs of the fighting birds, there is usually a lot of food to eat!

This feast may take place weeks or even months after the house is completed and occupied, depending on how quick the families can afford it. But it is never skipped.

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1. Tom Harrison, "Ethnological Notes on the Muruts of the Sepulut River, Sabah". JMRAS. Vol. 70, Part 1, 1967. July pg. 112.



APPENDIX F : Murut, Tagal and what?<sup>(1)</sup>

The Sapulut Muruts speak a 'language' reaching from Loembis, fifteen days walk southward into Kalimantan over some of the roughest going in Borneo, or north to Keningau in Sabah which from Bigor is seven to eight days walk. But these people did not until European times, consider themselves in any sense or shape as one group. The British made them more so. There was no previous wide conceptions of tribe or race; the use of a broad term like Muruts is now accepted as an external classification. In discussion, the Native Chief Lindung (now Haji Abdul Rahim Lindung): (i) rejected any special significance for the off-repeated sub-term Tagal or any other such term, pointing out that the Tagul (not Tagal) is a small tributary above Pensiangan, of no special significance and in no way a centre or nexus of any large or small group; (ii) suggested that the "proper" term for his "people" would be Ulun ('lun) Kirong, which simply means "man (of the) hills." But when we referred this discussion back to the old man, Tinon, he rejected (ii) as flatly as his son had (i). There was never any feeling of or formula for any wide hill or other people, he stressed. The only classification meaningful to him was by river. He listed as relevant (a) Ulun Salio, broadly the Pensiangan people, and named from a small river near there; (b) Ulun Talankai, from close to the present Sapulut

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1. Tom Harrisson, "Ethnological Notes on the Muruts of the Sapulut River, Sabah". JMBRAS. Vol. 70, Part 1, 1967. July pg. 112.



government station, where the Sapulut River joins the Sambakong (flowing into Kalimantan), in this stretch called Talankai (elsewhere Nabawan); and (c) Ulu Sapulut, the people now living up that river - once over 20 large and now 6 smallish longhouses, including his present home, Bigor.

1. K.K. Haji Osman Pandang, Ketua Kampung, Kampung Dayasing
2. K.K. Gayang, Ketua Kampung, Kampung Bahulu
3. Enik Liman, Pensiangan
4. Enik Yahya Bawau, Kampung Panti
5. Enik Md. Asah Mustapha, Sapulut
6. Enik Benjamin Mohamed, Pegawai Daerah Pensiangan

Interviewed by Enik Jusman Musa Mohamed, then the Immigration Officer in Pensiangan on behalf of the writer was:-

7. Native Chief Haji Abdul Rahim Lindang, Sapulut
8. Haji Abdul Rahim Goh, Pensiangan
9. Sgt. Thibaw, Pensiangan



Correspondence was made with the following (those who replied only):-

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The following people are interviewed:-

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2. K.K. Gayang, Ketua Kampung, Kampung Bubuluan
3. Encik Liman, Pensiangan
4. Encik Yakub Banaran, Kampung Pagolima
5. Encikgu Md. Amboh Mustapha, Sapulot
6. Encik Benjamin Mohammed, Pegawai Daerah Pensiangan

Interviewed by Encik Jasmani Amran Mohammed, then the Immigration Officer in Pensiangan on behalf of the writer were:-

7. Native Chief Haji Abdul Rahim Lindung, Sapulot
8. Haji Abdul Rahim Goh, Pensiangan
9. Sgt. Thibaw, Pensiangan



Correspondence was made with the following (those who replied only):-

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