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A History of the Fort at Long Akah: Contact, Collaboration and Power

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ABSTRACT

This paper traces history through the fort at Long Akah during the various eras of the Brooke administration, the colonial government and the Sarawak State government. This study takes its cue from the notion of the fort as a vehicle for a distinctive history of an area and uses indigenous oral histories and recollections as "alternative history." Forts were built during and after pacification and this process was dependent on the collaboration of local leaders whose influence was ritually prescribed by the *adat*. The forts functioned as a place where taxes were paid, where court cases were heard, and where trading took place. While the fort at Long Akah represented locally a locus of power for the Brooke administration, it will be seen that this power was located in a crucial local collaboration in governance, which depended on the role of local leaders.

Keywords: Baram, fort, peace-making, power, trade,

INTRODUCTION

Figure 1: Fort at Long Akah 2012 (Photo: Anthony Lawai Karing)

This paper will trace history through the fort during the various eras of the Brooke administration, the colonial government and the Sarawak State government. It was the place where the resident and the district officer were based during their tours of the Baram district. It served as an office and a training

ground for the up-river agent (URA). The fort hosted the Z special Semut 2 forces as they fought together with local volunteers to liberate Sarawak during the Japanese Occupation. It served as a centre for operations during the war of Confrontation with Indonesia. The shops at the bazaar close by were run by Chinese, Malays and Kenyah. It was here that local people traded forest products and rice in exchange for sundry goods such as sugar, salt, cooking oil and soap. As a history with glimpses of social memory, there is also a focus on the people, who are connected to the fort through the longhouse at Long San, ten minutes upriver by boat. Their story is intimately connected to their ancestor Tama Bulan Weng, who established the first fort of the upper Baram at Long Daloh on the Pata River. This history endorses the notion that the Brooke regime depended on its local allies for power (Mashman 2020), and the forts represented a hybrid negotiated form of governance between local people and the Brooke state (Ting 2014). This argument also can be carried over to subsequent eras of government, with the presence of Temenggong Oyong Lawai Jau at Long San which became a place of focus for the villages of the upper Baram and during his term of office. It became the centre for Orang Ulu culture, with Indonesian Kenyah artists carving and painting the longhouse and the church. The Roman Catholic Mission established a church, school and clinic which enabled at least two generations of Orang Ulu students to get a basic primary school education. With the death of the Temenggong in 1974, the out-migration of newly-educated young people, and the establishment of the road, the fort and the bazaar declined in the 1970s and 1980s.

Long Akah is within Miri division and was part of the Baram district. The fort at Long Akah was at the transit point for a number of routes to important centres taken both by river and on forest paths: the first route down the Baram River by boat led to the administrative headquarters at Marudi at Fort Hose and eventually to the coast at Kuala Baram. From Ridan near Marudi was a footpath that connected with the Tutong River in Brunei. Another route to Brunei was through the Tutoh River and along the Medalam and Limbang rivers. From Long Akah there was also a route to the Tinjar, which led to Belaga by river and through forest tracks. The Akah and Selungo rivers gave access to the Kelabit highland villages around Mount Murud Kecil. The Moh and Julan rivers provided routes to the Apo Kayan in Dutch Borneo through the Iwan river. The last navigable point of the Baram upriver was at Lio Mato. From there the footpath led to the Kelabit highlands and to the Bahau and Krayan rivers in Dutch Borneo (Figure 2).

Since the establishment of the road in the 1980s**,** Long Akah can be reached from Miri on the coast in about five hours. It is also served by a twice weekly air service for Miri. Long Akah is close to the village of Long San which has a rural health clinic, a primary and secondary school and a Roman Catholic mission and Borneo Evangelical (BEM) church. Today, several ethnic groups, predominantly Kenyah, Kayan and Penan, collectively known as Orang Ulu live in the village of Long San.

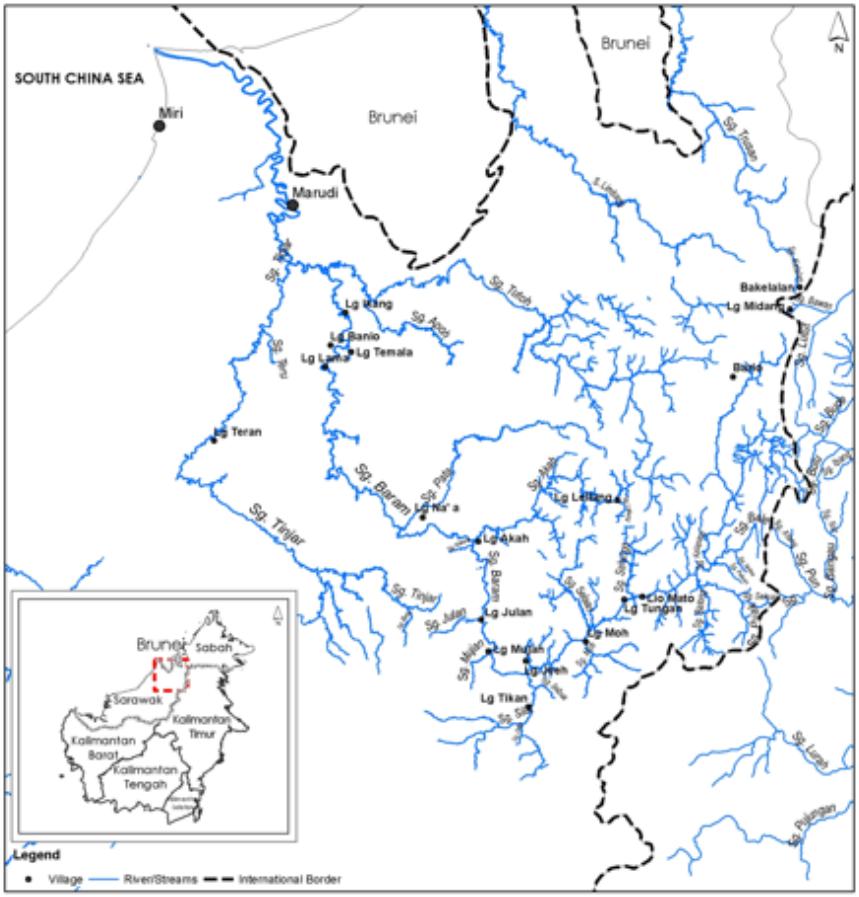

Figure 2: Map of Long Akah and the Baram (Map: Lee Guan Heng)

LITERATURE REVIEW

This history examines not just building of the fort but will set the fort in the context of the transition from Brunei rule to Brooke government and the successive eras of colonial and contemporary governments. A major source for the written history of this era in the Baram is the *Sarawak Gazette*. The limitations of the accounts in the *Sarawak Gazette* are that the reports are influenced not only by colonial bias of the expatriate officers but also by the bias of the specific interests of local leaders and native officers who acted as the collaborators with the district office and as go-betweens for the remoter people living up-river. It is also important to bear in mind that from the 1880s to 1912, the source of the reports was the resident based at Fort Hose in Marudi. After this, headquarters of the Fourth Division Resident shifted to Miri on 12 December 1912 and Marudi became the centre for the District Office for the Baram District.

There are no comprehensive written histories of the Baram region. Tom Harrisson collected a number of oral histories from Kenyah sources in the 1940s and 1950s and these have been documented and are conserved at the Central Borneo Archive at Cornell University Echols Collection. Despite the lack of information on the context and sources for these manuscripts, these are a rich source for Kenyah perspectives on their history.

Richard Goldman's essay is a useful introduction to the history of trade in the Baram from the perspective of Marudi bazaar (Goldman 1968). Daniel Chew's ethnographic account of Chinese traders

in the outstations provides insights into the challenges of the lives of Chinese pioneers upriver (Chew 1990). Jerome Rousseau's panoramic history of Central Borneo (1990) provides useful pointers regarding warfare and migrations of Kenyah and Kayan groups across Borneo. James Ritchie's book on Temenggong Oyong Lawai Jau provides an outline of the history of the Temenggong and his family as told by his descendants and provides view of his importance as a local leader based close to the fort at Long Akah (Ritchie 2006). Fong Ah Ong's history of the Baram basin (2008) covers significant eras in the history of Miri and the Chinese community, but barely touches on upriver life. Peter Metcalf's book (Metcalf 2010) serves as a useful background study to the ethnography and history of area, while he focusses more particularly on the Berawan people of the Tinjar, a tributary of the Baram. Helen Godfrey's study of trade in the Baram stresses the agency of its inhabitants and the incoming Chinese and Iban in creating the commercial transformation of the district after the years of cession to Sarawak. Her attention to the details of overland tracks and local knowledge of forest products highlights the strong position of the indigenous people in the trade chain (Godfrey 2014).

John Ting's doctoral thesis is a unique historical architectural and ethnographic study important to understanding the processes of the making of the forts in Sarawak and uncovers that many forts, when they moved on from being a temporary edifice, were constructed with prefabricated parts made by carpenters in Kuching (Ting 2014: 278). His case study of the history of the fort at Skrang and its relocation to Simanggang represents an in-depth exploration of the significance of making forts in the emergent Brooke state. He analyses not only the form of the fort but discusses its architecture in relation to its many functions. In his formulation of a postcolonial framework for his study, he highlights the importance of an ethnographic approach utilizing the perspectives of indigenous peoples. He illustrates how the making of the fort reflected a precarious negotiated form of government that relied on local allies. He concludes that although forts were built according to standard patterns, each fort presents its unique angle on colonial government based on its history and the influence of local and migrant groups (Ting 2014: 281). This study takes its cue from the notion of the fort as a vehicle for a distinctive history of an area and uses indigenous oral histories and recollections as "alternative history" (Tuhiwai Smith 2004:34). Forts were built during and after pacification and this process was dependent on the collaboration of local leaders whose influence was ritually prescribed by the *adat* (Mashman 2020). So, while the fort at Long Akah represented locally a locus of power for the Brooke administration, it will be seen that this power was dependent on a crucial local collaboration in governance.

METHODOLOGY

Interviews were conducted with members of the Kenyah and Kelabit diaspora in Kuala Lumpur, Kuching and Miri in December 2019 and January 2020 and information was also taken from earlier interviews in the upper Baram in 2018. During January 2020, two extensive focus group meetings were held with elders from Long San in Miri and I draw on their reminiscences. This was supported by email correspondence during the research period in early 2020. Field work at Long San proved impossible because of the movement control order imposed in 2020 due to the Covid19 virus.

THE FORT IN THE PATA -THE PRECURSOR TO THE FORT AT LONG AKAH

The first time a fort in the upper Baram at Long Akah was mooted was in June 1888. This happened when it was reported that the entire Baram population had paid taxes for 1887 and 1888, indicating acceptance of the Brooke regime. The Baram was peaceful, except for friction between local longhouses and wandering Iban jungle produce collectors (Pringle 2010:268). The purpose of this fort would be to defend the frontier with Dutch Borneo and protect the local populations. At the same time, it was felt that the presence of such a fort close to the frontier, would encourage a sense of security in border areas and encourage trade from over the border. Furthermore, the presence of an upriver fort would also ease the workload of the Baram Resident's office in Marudi:

> I am disposed to think that there would be little risk in establishing the station even as far up as Long Akah, which Mr. Daubeny reports to be the most suitable location, particularly if it is impressed on the chiefs and people widely that, the station will be for their protection. (Everett 1888:77).

The rationale at this time for establishing the fort was that the Baram was thought to be a peaceful area, and a lucrative trade might be established with remote tribes living in the headwaters of rivers flowing in Dutch Borneo. It took some time for this to come into fruition. This may have been due to the instability during the 1890s created by the large numbers of displaced peoples, mainly Kenyah Badang, moving into the Tinjar and Silat river systems as a consequence of the expeditions of 1895 and 1896 against the peoples of the Usun Apau (Mashman 2019: 425). In addition, at this time there were continual hostilities between incoming Iban gutta percha collectors working close to Kayan and Kenyah settlements (Godfrey 2014:126). Thus, the Resident was preoccupied with establishing peace with many different groups as the peace-makings of 1896, 1897, 1898 with the Badeng and with the Kelabit in 1898.

The building of the first fort in the upper Baram was the fort at Long Daloh in the Pata close to the longhouse of Penghulu Tama Bulan Wang. Penghulu Tama Bulan Wang was an important local chief in the history of the Baram as he escorted Resident Charles Hose on his momentous journeys into the interior, particularly into Madang country in the headwaters of the Silat and he was responsible for organizing a number of peace-making ceremonies. The fort at Long Akah went on to be identified, with his powerful descendant, Temenggong Oyong Lawai Jau.

Tama Bulan's forbears, the Kenyah Long Tekan people, originated from the Usun Apau and migrated to the estuary of the Tekan stream and the Silat river, at a place called Long Tekan. Tama Bulan consolidated his family at a longhouse at Long Daloh on the Pata (Galvin 1975:81). Plans for the fort in the Pata were reported in 1898. The local community at Tama Bulan's longhouse would obtain the "heavy timber" as required. There was a short-term plan for the fort as it was anticipated that if the people from Long Daloh moved onto the main Baram River within the following decade, the fort would be taken with them (Hose 1898a:139). This reflects an indigenous practice of building and dismantling longhouses to accommodate frequent migrations, which was carried over to the forts (Ting 2014:203). The location for this fort was not Resident Charles Hose's ideal choice: he would have preferred to locate this fort at Long Akah or Long Silat. However, he weighed this against Tama Bulan's strong feelings that the fort should be based at Long Daloh. Tama Bulan was more than an ally for Charles Hose, he was an advisor and a major influence on the peoples of the Baram. Hose had no choice but to comply with Tama Bulan's wishes once the Rajah had given the go-ahead for this fort to be built. The Pata River was well populated and Tama Bulan had over two thousand followers. This location had some advantages as it was not far from the Silat or the Kelabit country (Hose 1898b:170). The fort built near his longhouse on the Pata river, was a meeting point for trading activities. However, this was no mere shed nor storehouse, but a fort, built of belian in a strategic and scenic location as Charles Hose reports:

> I reached Tama Bulan's house on 28TH and examined the new Fort which has been built by the Kenyahs in the Pata. It is very well constructed and nearly all the wood used is billian, the position is a good one, and the view exceedingly pretty; the height above the river is about seventy feet (Hose 1899:102).

Such a building, erected with government support at Long Daloh, Tama Bulan's village, enhanced the prestige and stature of Tama Bulan. Its presence was a physical manifestation of the political coalition between Tama Bulan, Penghulu – an appointed leader over a number of Kenyah tribes – and Charles Hose, the Resident. It was referred to as a fort and later in 1904 as a government bungalow, which made

a convenient place for government representatives to stop as they collected taxes (Douglas 1905a:12). As indicated in the map below, Charles Hose marked this site on his 1900 map of the Baram district, but omitted the fort at Marudi, suggesting this was a place of some importance to himself, given the very particular nature of his relationship with Tama Bulan Wang (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Map of Fort on Pata (Map: Charles Hose (1900))

There is a Kenyah oral history about the building of this fort, by the local people, narrating that Hose proposed to Tama Bulan the fort at Long Daloh in the Pata be built as the Kelabit had problems going to Marudi to pay their tax:

> Tama Bulan consented to this and returned, He promptly asked the Kayans and the Kenyahs to gather materials and they built the *kubu* in an ulu style. A Brunei named Yacob was stationed to record payment of tax. It was Tama Bulan who actually received the tax. The Kelabit came to pay their taxes there for about ten years. When that Kubu broke down another was built at Lio Mato[1].

It is also interesting to note that a Brunei Malay was stationed at the fort to keep records for the government, demonstrating the need of the Brooke administration for accountability. The fact that Kelabit went to the Pata river to pay tax is supported by a Kelabit oral history which describes the journey from Long Semiyang to Long Lutin on the Patah using a footpath following the headwaters of Akah river (Mashman 2018:165).

THE BUILDING OF THE FORT AT LONG AKAH

Curiously a blockhouse or fort existed at Long Akah, but there appears to be no report of the making of this in the monthly Baram reports of the *Sarawak Gazette*. A fort existed at Long Akah as recorded in 1905: "A force assembled at the *fort* at Long Akah to prepare for a punitive expedition to Dutch Borneo" (Douglas 1905b:148). It was also described as a block-house "I made the block-house at Long Akah my headquarters" (Douglas 1907:31). Yet these early accounts of the fort seem to escape the attention of the official gazetteers of the fort in the official history of the *Sarawak Gazette*, who write the fort at Long Akah was built in 1914 and rebuilt in 1930. Indeed, the dates given in the Sarawak Gazette for the

[1]Harrisson Manuscript 48/4. *The Kalabits are Subdued*. Echols Collection. Cornell University.p17

fort at Long Akah state that the first fort was built when C.D. Adams was Resident2 which could have been any time from 1914 to 1922. This is borne out by a report in the *Gazette* of the visit of Penghulu Oyong Jau, nephew to Tama Bulan, visiting the Marudi fort.

> Oyong Jau, Kenyah Chief accompanied by Aban Tingang and all their families arrived to pay in tax. Most of the women had never been down to the fort before. The *Penghulu* paid in tax to amount $1,050. He reported that the block-house at Long Akar was nearly finished only the *ataps* remaining to be put on (Aplin 1914a:5).

The use of the term *ataps* suggest a temporary roofing made of palm leaves rather than the more permanent use of belian shingles. The term block-house implies that this fort was a small one-storey building. Oyong Jau and his followers had moved to live opposite the fort at this time (Aplin 1914b:84), and this suggests the Long Tekan people were involved in the building of the fort. Thus, the fort at Long Daloh was abandoned and the fort at Long Akah was rebuilt in fulfilment of the earlier understanding when the fort at Long Daloh was originally built, that it eventually should be moved to the main Baram River, when the Long Tekan people moved there. (Hose 1898a:139).

The fort was rebuilt in 1930 by contract under supervision of the Resident and the Public Works Department. The progress of its construction was indicated in a series of reports indicating the detailed attention of the Resident who personally pegged out the site (Pollard 1930a:77). In the next report, the posts were erected and its "imposing structure" was commended (Pollard 1930b:105). A *dapor* or outhouse used for cooking was the last feature to be added (Pollard 1931a :20). The final report sums up the achievement of the aims of its construction: "The Fort is very well built and will last for years, and the grounds are much better kept than formerly." (Pollard 1931b:67). The fort represented the function of government in the interior and it was essential that its structure was solid and "imposing" and its grounds reflected a colonial sense of propriety and order. The ideal, as expressed by Douglas for Lio Mato, was that a fort should look "clean and civilized" (Douglas 1911: 22).

It is likely that the fort in 1930 was reconstructed using prefabricated parts made by Chinese and Malay carpenters as a two-storey building (Ting 2014: 202). It was two storeys high and built with a corner tower at a 45-degree angle. This type of fort is similar in style to the fort built at Lio Mato.

Figure 4: Fort of Long Akah 2017 (Photo: Abraham Ngu)

The description that follows is based on the vestiges of the two- storey fort at Long Akah (Figure 4). The ground floor was divided in to a large main room and two smaller ones (Figure 5). The main room

[2] Forts of the Baram. *Sarawak Gazette*, October 31,1961:196.

had a low partition which facilitated barter trading (*tamu*) and a smaller room was used to store goods. Another small room was a lock-up for prisoners. A staircase led to the second floor. The second floor was the office and living quarters of the visiting resident, district officer or native officer. The court room had a decorated dais with ornate Kenyah designs for the officiating magistrate (Figure 6). Between the overhanging roof and the timber walls was a long gap reinforced with trellis work made of belian timber to provide ventilation (Figure 6). The original roof was made of belian shingles, but this has been replaced with a metal roof. The men associated with rebuilding the fort in local narratives were called Sulaiman and Ismael Osman (the latter, a URA locally known as Seman) and their names also recur in the stories about the building of Lio Mato. John Wan Usang recalls that the fort had not changed in the 1960s very much from its earlier times, "I remember the wood used to build the fort was rough – possibly was hand hewn and the walls thick. There was a raised platform to sit on."

Figure 5: Ground floor of Fort of Long Akah 2015 (Photo: Christine Horn)

Figure 6: The Upstairs Court Room 2015 (Photo: Christine Horn)

THE EARLY YEARS OF THE FORT: MIGRATIONS ON THE BARAM RIVER

The forts were established during periods of pacification and were places where the Brooke regime could impose law and order at the local level. The regime wanted settlements to move to the proximity of the forts so that communities could be monitored. The forts were also venues where hostile groups could meet for peace-makings. For example, in 1907, there was the first recorded peace-making ceremony recorded at the fort at Long Akah when Utang Ratu, a Kelabit of Pa Mein, swore his loyalty to the government in the presence of Penghulus Lawai Jau and Wan Bayer and Bua Hassan, the chief of the Baram Bruneis. Utang Ratu promised to move down closer to Panglah, on the Tutoh, to comply with the wishes of the Brooke administration that remote people should move closer to the fort as the seat of governance (King 1908:41). However, nothing came of this. According to Kelabit narratives, the Pa Mein people refused to move away from their salt springs to relocate downriver (Lian Saging 1976/77:183). It also took some time for the Kenyah to move from the tributaries to the main river, to be closer to the fort. The idea that the Long Tekan should move to Long Palai after harvest was also proposed in 1907, "and make one large village of the following Kenyah tribes: Long Tikan, Leppu Sang, Long Belukun, Teppu Ann, Leppu Ga, Leppu Likan, Leppu Jingan, Leppu Abong and Leppu Lutong." (Douglas 1907:31). However, this did not happen and the issue of where people should move to was still being discussed when T.S. King visited a year later in 1908 (King 1908 :41). A Kelabit oral history comments on Tama Lawai Jau's reluctance to move onto the main Baram river at this time, possibly because land there was not so fertile (Mashman 2018:169).

Nonetheless, Douglas observed in 1910 that people had begun to move down the Akah and the Silat, tributaries of the main Baram river. "All these people are moving towards the main river and building fine new houses" (1910:26). Two years later, he reported that, "Information was received from Penghulu Tama Lawai Jau that he and his people were all moving out of the Pata River into the *Ulu* Baram and that they had already reached Long Pata" (Douglas 1912a:101). By 1914, Penghulu Oyong Tama Lawai Jau's longhouse was located opposite the Chinese settlement at Long Akah (Aplin 1914b:84).

THE CHINESE BAZAAR AT LONG AKAH AND UPRIVER TRADE

In tracing the history of early settlements in Sarawak, there was a pattern whereby after a fort was built, a trading centre would become soon established (Pringle 2010:91). It is difficult to identify a date for the establishment for the Long Akah bazaar. Chinese boat traders had been visiting Long Akah before 1905 when the Long Lama bazaar was established. Chan Boh Siong who was said to be one of the pioneers of Long Lama bazaar was a former boat trader at Long Akah (Chew 1990:77). A bazaar at Long Akah is mentioned in 1912, when there was a bazaar of 8 shops, all of which were destroyed by a fire originating in Ah Choon's shop (Douglas 1912b:265). By 1920, it was reported that a new bazaar would be built at Long Akah, at the same time that bazaars were being built at Long Lobang and Long Ayah on the Tinjar, and Long Apoh (Adams 1919:247). Chinese traders had managed to negotiate the rapids and penetrate into the Kayan and Kenyah heartlands as Chew notes (Chew 1990:76). For example, Yap Poh Chai, the son of a Long Akah trader was born in 1920 in Marudi. At the age of 16 without any schooling he became a boat trader in the upper Baram plying between Long Akah, Lio Mato and Long Lellang. His boat was large and he took with him several local assistants as boat hands and had to wait patiently for water levels to be safe to negotiate the hazardous rapids. He would only go to Marudi about twice a year, when he had collected enough jungle produce such as gutta percha, damar and bezoar stones. Boat traders such as Yap Poh Chai adapted to riverine life and played an important part in the expansion of trade in the early twentieth century (Chew 1990:96). They took huge risks in providing goods on credit as their clients might subvert the system and take their wares to sell elsewhere in the bazaar and avoiding paying back the debts, they owed the boat traders (Chew 1990:118).

Chinese trading practices came closely under government scrutiny. Traders were not allowed to go beyond certain areas for which they had not been licensed, thus court cases were brought against those

who ventured beyond Long Akah and the Kelabit highlands. Traders were encouraged to settle permanently in bazaars. In 1919 traders at Long Akah were instructed to build a new bazaar and if they did not, they would be declared bankrupt and sent down river (Chew 1990:125). They were admonished for selling medicines to the upriver people "at the most exorbitant prices." (Carpenter 1923a:214). Brooke officers were concerned that trade should be conducted fairly and monitored instruments used for weighing and measuring during their journeys upriver (Owen 1924b:296). Forts such as Marudi, Long Akah and Lio Mato were places where enforcement could take place as traders had to often pass by or stop at these forts where they might be inspected. The courts were used as a means for settling disagreements and numerous cases of debt and cheating were dealt with in the Baram district as Godfrey notes (2014:116). Local court cases were heard at Long Akah by visiting officers for the whole of the upriver district.

THE TAMU AT LONG AKAH

As the Brooke administration began to regulate trade, the *tamu*, which was a barter trade meeting, was conducted officially under government supervision. The *tamu* was based on a time-honoured system of trade in the interior, whereby the Penan in the deep interior traded goods with neighbouring groups. It is possible to detect the emergence of a Kayan and Kenyah trading class such as Muing Tingang and Penghulu Lanyau through success at the *tamu*, who went on to occupy shophouses at Long Akah, alongside their Chinese counterparts. In the 1920s the trade meetings with the Penan at Long Akah, Long Malinau in the Tutoh, and on the Akah and Selungoh rivers were organized through the Baram Resident's office. These were meetings supported by a travelling paramedical assistant known as a dresser. The Resident was escorted by a native officer or upriver agent and Kayans and Kenyahs were intermediaries at the *tamu* who paid tax on behalf of the Penan, which the government officers perceived was against Penan interests (Woodward 1926:153).These meetings continued into the 1930s and the attempts of the government to regulate trade, for example by sacking Penghulu Aban Wan of Long San for violating trading regulations, had little effect on the government's attempt to control trade (Anonymous 1936 :315). Hudden noted that when he travelled the *tamu* circuit to Long Akah, Lio Mato and Long Malinau that attendance of the *tamu* was poor and surreptitious trading was going on which defied government regulations (Hudden 1936:96). Elders from Long San recalled Muing Tingang was always asserting that the Kenyah should not be short-changed by the Chinese in trade. At the same time, they also admitted that the Orang Ulu themselves used to soak the jelutong in water before sending it to the bazaar so that that would fetch a better price as the water made it heavier.[3]

THE ROLE OF THE FORT IN GOVERNMENT – THE URA

A precursory glance at the outstation reports for the Baram can provide some insight into the local component in the management of the area under the jurisdiction of the fort. This is a further illustration of the way governance was dependent on local collaboration. The up-river agents (URA) were like the native officers, in that they served as intermediaries between the local chiefs and the European administrators and ensured that longhouse chiefs cooperated with government (Talib 1995:289). The URA were considered in the same breath as the community leaders such as the Penghulu and Temenggong as "the ears and eyes" of the government. In the colonial era, each Baram fort had a designated URA posted to look after each station. The URA were consulted by the local people who held them in high esteem (Ding n.d. 89). The URA was a jack of all trades a police man, a judge of local matters to be taken to the district office, and alternative place to the headman to take grievances, or he

[3]For the reader who is interested in learning more about the attempts to regulate trade through the *tamu*, they should refer to Jayl Langub's article on the *tamu* (Langub 2013).

might just be a caretaker making sure the fort and grounds were well maintained.4 In the Baram, a number of early URA at the forts were of Lakiput origin such as Bernard Collin Belawing, Melai Usang, Ismail Seman and Tama Usang Bakar. The latter two were both Muslim Lakiput from Kpg. Benawa. In addition, there URA who were Bisaya from Long Linei on the Tutoh river, such as Tama Raud Abang, Datu Mohammed Zen Galau.

DATU MOHAMMED ZEN GALAU AND THE URA AT LONG AKAH

Datu Mohammed Zen Galau who rose in his career in the Sarawak Administration from being URA to become a prominent leader to be honoured with a school, a kindergarten and a kampong named after him. He was fluent in speaking Kelabit, Kenyah, Iban, Malay and few other local dialects and as well as Bisaya. He was very well-versed in the Orang Ulu cultures as well as the Iban, Chinese and Malay culture and was very well respected and able to advise people and resolve disputes (Ding nd:90).

Galau, as he was called in his early career, was the upriver agent or URA most commonly associated with Long Akah in the early days of the fort. He was first referred to as an "inspector" collecting items for a major Sarawak exhibition in Singapore indicating that he was a person held in trust by his superiors Douglas 1922:104). He was literate and when he was stationed for periods at Long Akah he sent regular reports to the Resident. In one of these, he informed the acting Resident H.L. Owen of an influenza epidemic that had killed five of the Long Tekan Kenyah (Owen 1924a:169). As a representative of the Resident's office, Galau had extensive travelling duties, which demonstrate how the Fort at Long Akah was a base for the administration over a very wide area; from the Silat river, to the Akah and to the Kelabit highlands. For example, Galau had to journey to the Silat river with the Penghulus Tama Wan Bayer and Tingang Wan to the Silat to tell the Kenyah and Kayan living there to move to the main Baram River (Carpenter 1923b :252). He went to ask the upriver groups to go to Marudi to pay their gun licences and tax (Owen 1925a:59). When the Kelabit did not do this, he had no choice but to trek up into the highlands to find out why they had not come (Owen 1925b:115). He was an important point of contact between the administration and the Kelabit indicating his seniority over whoever was stationed at this time at the Fort at Lio Mato. He brought a murderer of a Brian from over the border together with his Pa Trap kin to be dealt with by the administration in Marudi (Ermen 1926:16). He travelled extensively with the Resident H.L. Owen to all the villages of Kelabit country with Native Officer Wan Mohammed, collecting taxes and then breaking the journey at Lio Mato and Long Akah and collecting taxes again. (Owen 1926:297). After some leave back in his village of Long Linei, he was certified to be fit for service and was stationed again at Long Akah on a temporary basis as native officer (Pollard 1930a:77). During this term of duty, he was tasked with investigating rumours of an impending attack from people from over the border in the Kelabit highlands (Pollard 1930b:105) A couple of years later, he had to deal with a man who had run amok and killed four people (Pollard 1931c:253) and to assist at the court hearing (Pollard 1932a:17). He escorted the district officer D.C. White as he went to Miri to meet the Rajah with all the leading chiefs of the Baram (White 1933:57). He was the person who was entrusted to seek opinions in each village in the Kelabit highlands regarding the appointment of a new Penghulu, to replace the deceased Penghulu Tingang (Hudden 1936:96). He was also highly regarded by the colonial officers who took over Sarawak after the Japanese occupation, He was asked to escort H.P.K. Jacks on the first trip of the British Colonial administration after the Japanese Occupation to the upper Baram and the highlands. [5] He obtained an MBE for his services and it was hoped that he would continue to "make available to the government his unrivalled knowledge of

[4]Retired civil servant Datu Ose Murang personal communication.

[5] The Ulu Baram and the Kelabit Country. The Visit of the District officer. *Sarawak Gazette*. December 2, 1946:57-59.

the district and its people" (Drake 1952:110). With his ethnically mixed background, he exemplified the potential for the upward mobility of the junior members of the civil service.

Belawing Tingang is another URA who was a significant figure in the history of Long Akah. In 1913 at the age of 15, he was enrolled in the Good Shepherd School in Marudi where he was baptised as a Catholic. From then on he became known as Bernard Collin Belawing. He was Lakiput with Iban and Tanjong ancestry. His first post at the age of 19 was as a policeman in Miri. After returning to his village for a while at Kuala Tutoh, where he married, he went to take up the post of URA at Long Akah in the early 1940s. He looked after the stores at the fort during 1945 when the allied soldiers were based there. He met and married his second wife Asong Paren, a local Kenyah, one of the granddaughters of Tama Bulan Wang. He opened the first school at the fort in 1946. In later years, Belawing was requested by then Penghulu Gau Jau to teach at the first school at Long Ikang in the 1950s. He also taught the Catholic faith to the people of Long Ikan where he stayed until 1956 when returned he to his home village at Kuala Tutoh.

LOCAL MEMORIES OF THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION

When the Japanese occupied the Baram in 1941 they asked the people to join them as soldiers. This was the response of Penghulu Muing Ajang:6 "We the people of the Ulu did not fight against the Japanese. We could not join as soldiers because we do not have enough men to feed our families at home. If there is other work which we can help maybe we accept it." The Penghulu agreed to supply the Japanese with food. He was summoned to three meetings with the Japanese governor and was given a medal by the Japanese. One of the worst aspects of this period was that the Japanese forced the Baram people to surrender their guns, on the pretext that cartridges were not available. This meant that people went hungry. They were also deprived of salt (Harrisson 1966:377). Ping Keling was around eight to ten years old at the time of the Japanese Occupation. She reminisced, "It was a tough time, we couldn't get commodities. There was no cooking oil, no salt, no matches. Our clothes were made of bark cloth *talun*. It was easily torn. We planted tapioca and made it into flour to sell to the Japanese soldiers." Veronica Bungan, a friend of Ping Keling, remembered that the Japanese came regularly to the longhouse. People were forced to give them rice and tapioca. The Japanese who visited went straight to the longhouse rather than the fort, as it was where people were living. Their purpose was to scrounge food from the local people as they were hungry. The fort was left empty at this time. Veronica continues her story: "We were very hungry as we didn't plant much padi. Barely only enough to sell to the Japanese. They took all we had." She remembers it as a time when people's daily activities were curtailed, "We didn't go hunting as we were scared of encountering the Japanese in the forest. There was no fishing nets *jala* -we could only go fishing with a simple rod made from a palm."

Veronica remembers being very frightened of the Japanese soldiers "If someone was ill, they had a strange way of healing people – they would stroke their sword blades on peoples' necks." She would escape to hide in the attic of the longhouse where the mats were kept. People were scared of the Japanese. Ping remembers when the planes came flying over people would hide in cavities in the riverbank. She also recalled that there was a handsome young Japanese soldier who would come to the longhouse who was well-liked. He was escorted by the Malay shopkeepers *towkay* Midin and Ahmad from Long Akah bazaar. People liked this young soldier -they made him feel welcome. There was a particular girl he liked, Balu Dayang Supang. He wanted to take her with him but her family would not let her go.

[6] Also known as Weng Ajang, Wing Ajang. In 1950 he was made Temenggong, paramount chief of all the Orang Ulu and became known as Temenggong Oyong Lawai Jau.

The elders from Long San recalled the arrival of the European soldiers. People heard from the Kelabit, that Major Carter and Major Harrisson had landed by parachute in Bario. The Japanese had just left Long Akah for downriver. Penghulu Muing Ajang informed Tom Harrisson that he had gathered his people to come to Long Akah. He sent notice for two men from each longhouse to come and join the European soldiers but no one came, so he gathered a force from his own people (Harrisson 1966:375). The elders of Long San remembered it was an anxious time of decision making – the question was whether these white soldiers should be handed over to the Japanese.

THE REOCCUPATION OF THE FORT AT LONG AKAH 1945

"This substantial old fort built of bellian wood was a logical choice for a HQ."

(Courtney1993:88)

The fort at Long Akah became the base for the Semut 2 operatives who reached there on May 1, 1945 (Figure 7). They were members of the Australian based Z specials, who had first parachuted into Bario on 25 March 1945 led by Major Tom Harrisson. The leader of overall operations and Semut 2 was Major Toby Carter, a New Zealand engineer who had worked for Sarawak Shell as an oilfield surveyor. Major Bill Sochon was with Semut 2 at this initial stage, but went on to lead the operations of Semut 3, based in Belaga. He had worked in Sarawak before the war in the Police and Prison service as Assistant Superintendent. Sochon and Carter made the arduous journey from Bario, through Long Lellang to Long Akah. The downriver journey on the fast-flowing Akah river was done in stages using fresh boats at each overnight longhouse stop. They won favour with the locals, by paying the boat crews 50 cents a day in Straits dollars, which was more than they had ever been paid by the Japanese. They received a warm welcome at the longhouses where they stopped with pigs roasted in their honour and they realized they would have no trouble in raising an army of irregulars to assist them with their mission. The only problem was a lack of weapons (Courtney 1993:87). Sochon describes the moment when he first caught site of the fort, while travelling by river, some four days after leaving Long Lellang: **"**Eventually on the fourth day (May 1) the old Sarawak Government *kubu* (fort) at Long Akah swung into view as we reached the final bend." (Courtney 1993:88).

Once Sochon arrived at Long Akah, he and Carter who had arrived in an advance group four days earlier, went to visit Penghulu Muing Ajang at Long San. They needed to gain his support, as he was an influential chief over the whole of the upper Baram area. They spent anxious hours waiting until the small hours of the morning to see if the Penghulu and his chiefs would agree to assist the Semut operations. Once the Penghulu announced their unanimous support, news spread quickly and many headmen came by boat to the fort to pledge their loyalty and support to Carter. The operatives had to delay further action as they had to wait for an airdrop of radio equipment to replace a damaged transmitter and they spent time training local guerrillas to use .303 rifles (Courtney 1993:88).

Figure 7: Fort at Long Akah in 1945 (*Photo: Sarawak Museum)*

The fort was an important base for the Semut 2 as the presence of the Z special forces demonstrated to all in the vicinity, they had taken control of the area. Datuk Stephen Wan Ullok, a six-year-old boy at the time, recollects "The fort was kept lit up at night by the allies … you could see it from the longhouse at night." At the fort, Bill Sochon was keenly aware of the historical significance of the Semut 2 occupation of the fort and carved a wooden plaque to commemorate the event in history (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Wooden plaque carved by Bill Sochon (Photo Lim (2005: 369)).

It marked "the reoccupation of fort at Long Akah and the reestablishment of the Sarawak Government by HM forces." The names carved on the plaque were as follows Major G.S. Carter, Captain W.L.P. Sochon of the British Army and Warrant Officer II D.L. Horsnell, and Sergeants C.W. Pare, K.W. Hallam J.K.Barrie, The Soen Hin , Abu Kassim of the Allied Intelligence Bureau (Courtney 1993:89). This plaque was originally at the fort for many years, but seems to have disappeared around thirty years ago.

There are random local recollections of this time. There is a local memory attached to a banyan *lunuk* tree on the opposite bank of the river to the fort. Lt W.S. Eldie got stuck in this tree as he parachuted to land at Long Akah. He needed local people to climb the tree and help him down with a rope. He became known as "Tuan Lunuk". Ping Keling remembers that parachute cloth was used in the longhouse for

making clothes. Cloth had been in short supply and this was much more durable than bark cloth. Another memory from Anthony Lawai was that his grandfather, a Kayan, Uloi Jau who had previously helped Ismail Seman rebuild the fort, became a cook and laundryman for the Semut 2 forces and was paid 20 dollars a month. William Jallong recalled how the local population came to support the Z Special forces:

> The local people made the *padang* in front of the fort, by clearing land for the white soldiers. They asked for our help. The reply was, 'If you get together 500 guns for us then we can help you. Many Orang Ulu helped. We managed to get together 500 men. They had to give back the guns after the war.

On 19 May, supplies were dropped and the locals who helped the operatives with collecting their supplies were rewarded with parachute cloth. Among these items was replacement radio equipment. Hallam and Pare organized the radio in a rubber plantation over 300 metres from the fort. They became the subject of great scrutiny by the local Kenyah who would talk very loudly and prevent the operatives from communicating effectively by radio. Hallam and Pare played a practical joke by giving the crowd of men, who were wearing bark-cloth loincloths, a mild electric shock through wires that were wound a hand rail against which these men were leaning. The locals retaliated by blowing blow pipe darts at the operatives while they were washing their shirts in the river (Courtney 1993:90).

On 22 June, Semut 3 leader Bill Sochon, assisted by Keith Barrie and Abu Kassim left Long Akah to journey by river to Long Pawan and then to travel on foot to Belaga. After a very long and difficult journey, they reached Belaga on 1 June 1945 to establish operations as Semut 3 (Fong 2008 :406). The Semut 2 forces master-minded operations against the Japanese in the Baram and Tutoh rivers engaging local guerillas to support them. In early July, the Semut 2 team captured a Japanese communications station at Long Lama, on their journey down river to take control over Marudi. Men from Long San participated on the attack on Long Lama. The soldiers surrounded the fort that was the wireless station. Many of the Japanese escaped. However, the allies took control of the fort and the wireless centre the holes from the bullet holes could be seen at the Long Lama fort. There was an unhappy consequence of the attack on Long Lama. The longhouse at Long Pilah was targeted by the Japanese and some of its inhabitants were wounded. They were brought to Long Akah for treatment, as was a Japanese soldier who was also wounded. He was later sent to Labuan. Carter led the battle for Marudi with 7 European operatives and fifty local guerrillas. They managed to ambush and kill 20 Japanese soldiers and were forced to withdraw upriver, but a well-equipped force of Japanese retaliated by killing 17 local Malay residents of Marudi. Eventually Carter was able to retake control of Miri on 14 July with the help of the Australian 9th division infantry (Fong 2008:405). Some 123 Japanese were killed as a consequence of the action of Semut 2 and approximately another 100 as a result of actions taken by local Dayak and Orang Ulu (Long 1989:107). Not long after the war the Penghulu was given three medals for his service by Sir Anthony Abell. He then became known as the Orang Ulu Paramount Chief, Temenggong Oyong Lawai Jau (Figure 9).

This was a significant endorsement of his leadership, which had been effective in bringing disparate groups of Orang Ulu together to fight the Japanese as a common enemy. Working alongside the European soldiers had given the Orang Ulu exposure to people who lived by different belief systems and prepared them for the changes of the post war years.

Figure 9: Senator Dato Sri Temenggong Oyong Lawai Jau (Photo: Sarawak Museum)

POST WAR YEARS – A GUEST AT THE FORT WHO WORKED WITH THE PENAN

Former Councillor Anthony Lawai used to spend time at the fort at Long Akah as a child, with his grandfather, Uloi Jau who was charged with looking after the building in the 1950s. He remembers a particular visitor, Rodney Needham, who had a strong friendship with his grandfather. He would go and stay at the fort at Long Akah: "He'd come and help us harvesting. He would spend a lot of time with us in between visits to Penan every two weeks."

Rodney Needham was an anthropologist at the University of Oxford, who was awarded a DPhil for his research on the Penan. He was based for this research mainly in the upper Baram, from May 1951 to May 1952. In 1951, Commissioner-General for the U.K. in South East Asia, Malcolm MacDonald visited Long San. MacDonald recalls Needham as a young anthropologist among the Penan:

> As we breakfasted that morning at Long San, this remarkable young man, Rodney Needham by name, described how he had lived since our meeting with nomadic Penans on the upper Baram. He still resides in the deep jungle with a group of them, having ingratiated himself so successfully among them that they accepted him as a member of their tribe. He travelled, hunted, ate, gossiped and lodged with them… Needham had grown fond of his Penan friends (MacDonald 1968:299).

This impression of Needham is supported by a reminiscence by Kirk Endicott. He had the reputation for going native during fieldwork. He went to live with 'his' people as they did, wearing very little "and starving half the time" (Endicott 2007:17). Needham had "no particular brief for (evangelical Christian) missionaries" who were working in the area, but was keen to testify to MacDonald that their teaching of basic health and literacy was a force for good (MacDonald 1968:301).

In 1958 Needham returned to continue his Penan research and spent three months doing fieldwork, [7] travelling to Long Akah and Lio Mato, to Western Penan Kelame' in the Akah River, the newly settled Penan Silat, and the Muslim Penan in Beluru. Needham spent some time at Long Akah and his report testifies to significant changes he saw between 1951 and 1958. In 1958, he saw an improvement in prosperity indicated by people's clothes, the new outboard engines and the increase in trade in the bazaars. Malaria, venereal disease and yaws had been eradicated, although conjunctivitis and septicaemia were rife. He recommended that a travelling doctor be posted to the Baram to deal with the health issues of rural people. Communications had improved with the airstrip at Long Akah, which was used by the mission planes of the Borneo Evangelical Mission, who helped to send medical emergencies to hospital downriver.

He outlined the problems experienced by the Penan in their trading relationships in which they were exploited by their Kayan and Kenyah overlords but could not see any way of remedying the situation other than to continue the supervision of the *tamu*. He anticipated that any change brought in to further adjust trading relationships would have to be acceptable to the Temenggong who would wish to protect his traditional rights, his prestige and his fortune. He touched on the problematic relationship of indebtedness they had with Muing Tingang. He discussed in detail the possibilities of Penan settlement and a Penan reserve, changes in religious practices and education. The Penan were at a fragile stage in their history and much of his report highlights problems still faced by the Penan today. It is significant that he chose to stay at the fort and make his base rather than the Long San longhouse. For him to stay with the Kenyah leaders at Long San may have compromised his research given the complicated relationships between the Penan with the Long San people, which he touches on in his report.

POST WAR YEARS -BECOMING ROMAN CATHOLIC AND THE FIRST SCHOOL

It is said that URA Belawing Tingang was the person who most influenced the Temenggong -at that time he was known as Penghulu Muing Ajang and the longhouse at Long San to become Catholic. He convinced Penghulu Muing Ajang and his followers to embrace the Catholic faith (*sembayang father*) and abandon their old belief system. Thus, Belawing led some young men two each from every longhouse, Long San, Long Selatong, Long Apu, Long Julan, Long Anap, Long Palai, and Long Tap paddled downriver to Marudi to fetch Father Henry Jensen to Long San to convert the Kenyah under the leadership of Penghulu Muing Ajang in the middle Baram into Catholicism in 1947.[8]

Penghulu Muing Ajang encouraged the establishment of the first school held the fort at Long Akah. Belawing Tingang was the first teacher at the Long Akah school. In the days after the end of the Japanese occupation, the lower floor was used as a school and the upper floor was used by the British Army's repatriating force (Ding n.d.: 187). Later the school took over most of the fort. Datuk Stephen Wan Ullok was an early pupil at the school, "Cikgu Tom Sylvester was my teacher, he was a Long Kiput who became Moslem." This was Guru Belawing's nephew, also known as Guru Selin (Guru Selin @Tom Sylvester) who probably taught together with Guru Belawing. William Jallong Lian went to the school at the fort at around the same time and remembers the following:

> There was Guru Selin and Guru Ta'ie a Malay teacher from Miri. We learnt the Malay language. There were 105 students. We used rocks as slates to write on and smaller stones as writing tools. There were benches for us to sit on. There was a black board and chalk for the teacher. I was in my late teens. All the pupils at the school were teenagers. At that time, there was only one girl at the school, Lohong Ngau.

[7] See Rodney Needham *Further notes on the welfare and administration of the Penan.* Report to the Colonial Government of Sarawak 1959.
[8] Henry Belawing personal communication.

> In the first year of school, we started off in the classroom downstairs and in the second year, we went upstairs. The teachers were paid by the government. We students didn't have to pay fees. The classes ran from 8am -12noon. The teachers were very kind. They did not use any physical punishment. I used to give the teachers papayas from our garden and they were good to me.

The Roman Catholic Mission took over the school in 1948 and eventually the new school building was opened in 1954 by F.B.K. Drake the District Officer for Baram district. The building was constructed of solid wood with the help of Brother Alexander (Drake 1954: 31). The school became a centre for the education of the Chinese, Kenyah and Penan students of the area. Some nine years later the school was inspected and was considered to be of a high standard. The school building was:

> elaborate, perhaps over-elaborate for the position and importance of the school…. There are not enough children in Long San to support such a large school and the pupils in Primary V and VI are almost without exception overaged (Smith 1963:308).

The phenomenon of having adult pupils in primary classes was not unusual in rural Sarawak at this time. Parents were expected to provide a supply of rice to sustain their school-going children. If there was a shortage of rice in the household, pupils could not go to school (Griffin 1950:179). The experience of pupils at rural school recalled by Manson Toynbee, group headmaster for the Baram in 1958, is typical for pupils in rural primary schools in the Baram right up into the 1970s. Pupils would only go back to their villages two or three times a year – and if they lived far away only once a year. Primary school students would take turns collect wood for fuel, light the hearth, cook their own meals. Their day would begin with work parties maintaining the school grounds. After that pupils would have a morning bath in the river, wash their clothes and then have breakfast before school. Lessons would take place from 7.30am until 1pm and then after lunch and a short rest, pupils would work on the school garden to ensure there were sufficient supplies of vegetables. There would be sports activities held in the late afternoon, then another bath in the river, followed by dinner and private study. Toynbee notes that children were unsupervised and didn't seem to need supervision (Toynbee 1997:90-92). Francisca Bilong a pupil at Long San school in the 1960s recalls her experiences which suggest that things became much stricter when the nuns took over the school:

> I was a boarder at Long San school. We were taught by nuns who were so strict that some of the girls refused to go back to school after a term there. I was envious of my cousin who didn't go to school but stayed at home. In fact, I was the eldest and being a girl, I was expected to look after my siblings if my parents went to the farm. Nonetheless my parents still encouraged me to go to school rather against their own needs and interests. We girls were called to do quite a few tasks such as sweeping the church and sweeping at the clinic. It was tough. We had to get up very early make sure we had enough firewood, cook our food, go to church- then have a full day of lessons. We would wash our own clothes collect firewood, gather food.

Another student John Wan Usang from Long San who went on to school at Long Lama was aware of the changing times and the tensions between following tradition and the modern fashions down river:

> The Temenggong would summon us when we got back at the end of term from Long Lama. We got scolded if we'd deviated from the traditional hairstyle of a straight fringe and a long cue at the back … We were keen to try out new hairstyles in the Elvis mode. He would summon us to his section of the verandah and asked us if we could *ngajat*. The verandah exits were sealed- there was no escape -we were forced to learn to dance.

The Temenggong was all too aware of the challenges of modernity and the importance of maintaining aspects of Orang Ulu culture and traditions. Schoolgirls were urged to maintain their extended earlobes and not follow the fashion having them cut, boys were expected to wear the traditional hairstyle with a

straight fringe and a long cue at the back. Girls and boys learnt cultural dancing on Saturday evenings at school and were encouraged to perform. During the Temenggong's time there was a flourishing of the arts at Long San, manifested in the traditional art work at his house. In 1953, Robert Nicholl commented that "his spacious chambers decorated by artists from Indonesia are quite without peer" (Nicholl 1953:208). Sadly, this house was burnt down in a fire in 1955, but the Temenggong managed to replace this artwork as observed by DO Mc Sporran in 1962: "above the wall is a magnificent series of painted carvings by Indonesian Kenyah craftsmen and Tama Berhasap of Long Jegan" (Mc Sporran 1962:159). Elders remember that the walls were decorated with motifs of animals depicting stylized dogs and tigers which were the protectors of the chiefly class of people.

All that remains of this patronage of the arts is his rice barn at Long San. The Roman Catholic church also reflected a local love for traditional motifs with similar embellishment in the interior of the church. This blending of traditional culture with Christian belief came about through the influence of the Temenggong whose vision was for his people to became Christian, to modernise their outlook through education and improved farming techniques but to retain aspects of their traditions such as traditional weddings and naming ceremonies.

FORMATION OF MALAYSIA – CONSULTATIONS IN THE BARAM

When the idea of Malaysia was brought to Temenggong Oyong Lawai Jau, he was initially doubtful. He was concerned that his own people might get left behind "in a small part of this new garden of Malaysia and overshadowed by the tall trees; already bearing fruit in the rest of the country." (Galvin 1975:81-88). The Cobbold Commission was briefed to find out how people felt about joining the proposed Federation of Malaysia. Before meeting the Cobbold commission, the Temenggong summoned a meeting of local chiefs and the local priest, who expressed the apprehension that if Malaysia was formed, he might have to leave. It is suggested that this was a factor that influenced the Temenggong's reservation about Sarawak forming the Malaysian Federation as the church had bestowed a school and a church (Ritchie 2006:55) The Cobbold Commission concluded that the Orang Ulu did not want independence because they felt they still needed the British to stay "until they were able to look after themselves" (Cobbold Commission 1993:31).

Despite his reservations, the Temenggong had to accept and promote the concept of Malaysia to his people. In fact, the Temenggong became a member of the Dewan Negara when Sarawak jointly formed Malaysia in 1963 (Galvin 1975:81-88). The Temenggong represented the Orang Ulu on the national and international stage and demonstrated that at Long San, he was the human face of local power as guardian of the *adat* and tradition (Galvin 1975:87). He understood the trappings of power and was able to use these to his full advantage. He was compared to the British statesman Winston Churchill in his boldness, authority and eloquence (Harrisson 1966:374). His longhouse was likened to the glamorous British stately home Chatsworth (Nicholl 1953:208). He was the one who had mobilized the men of the Baram to defend Miri and Marudi during times of military threat in 1945 and later 1962 as will be described below. The fort provided an adjunct to his power, a place where court cases were heard, where visiting government officers and others such as Rodney Needham chose to stay, if they wished to distance themselves from the more luxurious surroundings of the longhouse at Long San.

MEMORIES OF CONFRONTATION

The impact of the War of Confrontation in Borneo from 1963 to 1966 between the newly emergent countries of Malaysia and Indonesia was felt in the border areas of Sarawak where much of the action took place. Long Akah was at a potentially vulnerable location as there were many routes through the border with Indonesia and Brunei. During this time, there was a great deal of activity around the fort at Long Akah. There was a military camp at Long Akah located about a kilometre away from the fort. People in Long San remembered the Kings Light Infantry Green jackets and the 1st Battalion 2nd

Gurkha Rifles -1/2GR who served in the early days of the conflict -although military groups came and went throughout this period. The longhouse was protected by an encampment of Gurkhas.

Border scouts were recruited from Long Akah, Long San and the surrounding villages. Their role was, in Tom Harrisson's words, to "serve as an auxiliary with expert local knowledge -aggressive within Sarawak's own territory and opposing any intruders" for training under the command of D squadron, 22nd SAS (Heimann 1998:344). They were first recruited in mid 1963 and were put under training by the SAS. Among those men people recall who joined the border scouts were Kallang Lenjau, Gau Engang, Mering Ngau, Arang Apui and Usang Laeng. In the 1940s, these men were able-bodied men who had come together to liberate Sarawak from the Japanese, in the 1960s they were men were coming together to fight incursions from over the border.

There was shooting practice held across the river. As a young boy Ho Thian Seng grew up at his father's shop, Chop Hong Ann at the bazaar at Long Akah and remembers watching the shooting practice. "I saw machine guns and mortar launchers. There were big green tents around the fort. The soldiers wore green uniforms. As young boys we were fascinated by the training sessions. We went to collect empty mortar shells. I suppose it was quite dangerous."

At the initial stages of the conflict, border scouts were sent out on missions on their own across the border to gather intelligence for the security forces. In early 1964 they came to work together with the Gurkhas and the SAS (Heimann 1998:345-346). The airstrip was a busy place with choppers constantly landing. The helicopters enhanced the capability of the security forces as the terrain was difficult and vast areas needed to be covered. With the use of helicopters and rural bases built at a distance from local settlements such as Bario, Lio Mato and Long Akah operations became decentralized. This meant that the helicopters and forward troops were kept together, instead of flying in and out from a central base. The advantage of this was that pilots were familiar with operations at the ground level, they got to know the terrain and were ready to respond to every emergency (James and Sheil-Small 1979:86).

The airfield had been built in 1957 at Long Akah, however the surface was not stable and it was considered unsuitable for scheduled flights by Borneo Airways. In 1962, a RAF twin pioneer bearing the Cobbold Commission got stuck and had to be dug out. In 1964, an aircraft was seriously damaged on landing because of problems with the surface which was described by an engineer as "a raft of grass flaring on slime" (Tan 2008:226). It was decided that the Gurkha engineers of 69th Gurkha Independent Field Squadron would extend the airstrip and improve the drainage and covered with pierced steel planking. In September 1965, two bulldozers, a tractor and a roller were dropped by a Beverley transport plane of No 34 Squadron and an Argosy of No 215 Squadron of the Far East Air force. Although Gabriel Tan writes these were "the heaviest objects to be airdropped in Borneo" (Tan 2008:226), John Wan Usang remembers the bulldozers coming down in component parts and rebuilt on site. "Bulldozers were parachuted down in pieces. Drums of petrol were parachuted in and broke we salvaged the kerosene." There were a number of logistical challenges involved in the rebuilding of the airstrip which included the transporting of the pierced steel planking by launch to Long Lama. It was then picked by longboat and transported to Long Akah (Tan 2008:226).

Arang Apui who is in his eighties and who lives in Long Jeh remembers an incident during his time as a border scout:

> There was the sad news that two border scouts and a Gurkha were killed at the border…. when Tom Harrisson heard about this he was very angry and physically attacked Commanding Officer Thomas. He tore the epaulettes off his shirt. He said the local staff had been in adequately trained. He said two weeks practice was not enough.

This calls to mind a reference to an incident on the border area near Long Banga on December 10 1963, when two members of the security forces were killed in an attack on 40 Indonesians in the mountainous area close to Long Banga (Tan 2008:119). Tom Harrisson acted as an advisor to the security forces utilizing his combat experience during the Japanese Occupation. As a founder of the border scouts, he would have felt strongly about their training and their abilities in the field. He advocated for rigorous weapons training: "Firepower must be sufficiently strong and well-handled to give confidence and to counter trained intruders with automatic weapons" (Heimann 1998:344). This is further supported in a field report by Superintendent John Cross, Commandant of the border scouts which indicated that they had insufficient training and there was no proper structure of command (Cross 1964).

Members of the Long San and Long Akah communities have vivid memories of the experiences of this time. Ho Thian Seng recalls:

> I do have memories of going over to "sell," or rather to barter trade freshly baked loaves of bread made by my mother to the British soldiers who were stationed there. I exchanged the bread for canned food. There were canned sweets, cheese, juice, stews…. That was my first encounter with cheese and not knowing how to eat it, I used it as fishing bait.

The exchange of food and tasting food from tins or chocolate is a theme that recurs when local people speak about this time. The Long San community remember special fishing trips. In the dry season before padi planting all the kampong people from all around would go fishing together using hand grenades in the river instead of the traditional method of using *tuba* poison. The fish would be smoked and dried over a fire. It would sustain people over the busy planting period.

MIGRATIONS DOWNRIVER

The Confrontation undoubtedly heralded an era of huge changes for Long Akah and Long San. Students in school saw larger vistas and were attracted to the many opportunities for training farther afield, which eventually contribute to the depopulation of the area. Some students had already made the difficult journey downriver to go to school, which meant separation from their families. One such person is Datuk Stephen Wan Ullok who was seven years old when Long San became Roman Catholic in 1947. His own father had died during the Japanese Occupation. He had a painful parting from Long San in 1951 when he left to go to school in Kuching at Batu Lintang. "It was sad when I last said goodbye to my mother. I knew I wouldn't see her again. She was ill and being nursed at Kuala Tutoh. She didn't want me to leave and go to Kuching to school."

In later years, others made similar journeys as they left home to train to serve in government jobs or in the private sector. Francisca Bilong went on to work as a ground stewardess for Malaysian Airlines, based in Kuching, attracting the attention of passengers with her elongated earlobes, heavy earrings and radiant long hair. Her class-mate Ho Thian Seng, the youngest in his family, followed a similar trajectory, which led him to study in the UK and eventually live and work in Singapore, epitomizing the way that the younger generation of the Chinese community in Long Akah shifted their focus to enterprises downriver.

My schooling journey can be likened to the Baram River and I always tell that to people. The Baram river flows out to the sea. I went to primary school in Long San. Went down the Baram river to lower secondary school in Long Lama. Having completed Form 3 in Long Lama I followed the Baram River to Marudi where I studied in Marudi Secondary School for my 'O' level. After my 'O' level I followed the Baram river to Miri where I completed my 'A' level. I then went on the Liverpool for my university studies. I studied engineering. When I left school in Long San, my parents retired and left the shop and went to Miri. That was 1966.

The bazaar gradually became abandoned as people began to find different ways of trading in Miri. The village economy began to rely on the Long San diaspora living on the coast sending money and goods. The fort fell into disrepair but took on the again the role of a rest house, a place of temporary lodging for Penan visiting Long San to take their children to school or the clinic. In 2011 and 2016 appeals were made to the Sarawak Museum for extensive repairs by Former Councillor Anthony Lawai and his family (see Appendix 1 and 2).

WHAT DID THE FORT MEAN TO PEOPLE?

For those travelling downriver to Marudi, in particular for the Kelabit from Long Lellang, the fort at Long Akah was an important stage in their journey, after the gruelling journey down the rapids of the Akah river. Pemanca Freddy Abun remembers the journeys of his youth:

> We wouldn't have survived without the fort. It was a long dangerous journey to Long Akah taking six days- four days when we had boat engines. We were grateful to stop there and rest. The village of Long San was still two rapids away. We would take produce such as *damar,* wild rubber, and tobacco all the way to Marudi where we would get the best prices. We stayed at the fort downstairs so we were ready to go and bale out water and retie the boats to adjust with the rising water, if it rained. We brought our own sleeping mats and our own firewood with us.

To these travellers, the fort was a stage in a hazardous journey, a place of rest and safety. To others, the fort was a place they had been taught to fear. The court at the fort was where justice was meted out and transgressors of the law were punished. John Usang Wan recalls that naughty children were told that their parents would send them to court if they misbehaved. Francisca Bilong remembers the fort as a young schoolgirl, "As we went to the bazaar we could see the fort. We were told not look inside. There were two women locked up in the fort who were there because they had committed adultery, people said." Thus, the fort with its lock-up cell was the sort of place where things happened to people who stepped out of line, who violated what was consider acceptable behaviour. It represented a place beyond the longhouse, a place of punishment, of government and perhaps justice. "My memory of visiting the fort was when I was six or so …with my mother. There were lots of people there. Perhaps there was a big court case on," recalled John Usang Wan. Court cases were randomly remembered as fragmentary almost painful memories that people did not wish to elaborate. An early memory came from one the oldest men interviewed regarding a child whose parents had not married. "There was one court case, Tuan Griffin9 came. It was a paternity case regarding a child. The father of the child denied he was the father." A later case was recalled by elders discussing as a group: **"**There was a time in the era of Aban Asang in the 1970s when someone was locked in fort. There was case of jealousy and a man was shot and the culprit was put in the lock up."

CONCLUSION

The reference to the presence of the Fort at Long Akah in 1905 predates the official records which date it to 1914 when the Long Tekan people moved to the vicinity of Long Akah. Situated at the hub of different routes into different rivers systems and across borders, it served as a strategic location for trade and governance. Its social roots are deep in the history of the of the Long Tekan Kenyah at Long San whose ancestor Tama Bulan Wang was a crucial ally and source of power for the Brooke regime. His fort at Long Daloh on the Pata River was an important centre for the payment of tax, an action which symbolized loyalty to the Brooke regime, not just for the Kenyah and Kayan on the Pata River but also for the Kelabit who took an overland route to reach it. The fort at Long Akah that followed, attracted the growth of a bazaar with not only Chinese shops but Malay and Kenyah shops as well. In the1930s,

[9] A.F.R. Griffin was DO Baram 1948, Resident 4th Division 1949. Then he had another term as Acting Resident 4th Division 1953-54 (Batty-Smith 1999:59).

the fort was the place where junior local staff learned the ropes of the Sarawak Civil Service as URA, for example the young Zen Galau distinguished himself as an exemplary native officer and Belawing Tingang as a pioneering teacher and catechist. The fort hosted the forces of Semut 2 from the Z specials in 1945 and the allied forces during Confrontation. The local people came together in these eras to fight with support these forces, whose presence were also a force for change.

In its heyday the fort is remembered as representing the power of local government as the place where taxes were paid, and where law and order were maintained through the court. For many, the Temenggong represented a local source of power that complemented the presence of the fort. There were gala occasions when illustrious statesmen such as the Governor, or Malcolm Mc Donald or Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie visited the longhouse. With the passing of the Temenggong, outmigration from Long San and the development of the road in 1980s, the bazaar and the fort became deserted, except for when the Penan used it as a rest house. The question that remains is what happened to local statesmen, local leadership and local government? There is another story to be told about the local economy, politics, the rise of the state and the abandonment of fort. The fort should be rebuilt to provide a reason for the telling its illustrious story, so the local contributions to the recent history of the upper Baram may not be forgotten.

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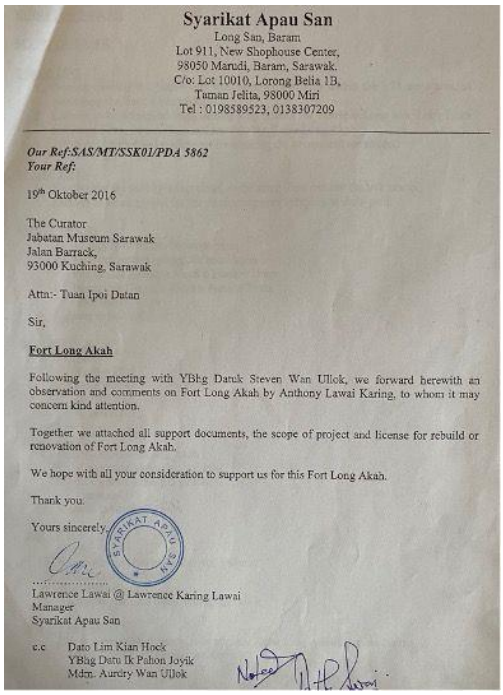
Appendix 1: Request for Renovation to the Fort written by Lawrence Lawai to the Sarawak Museum



Syarikat Apau San
Long San, Baram
Lot 911, New Shophouse Center,
98050 Marudi, Baram, Sarawak.
C/o: Lot 10010, Lorong Belia 1B,
Taman Jelita, 98000 Miri
Tel : 0198589523, 0138307209

Our Ref:SAS/MT/SSK01/PDA 5862
Your Ref:

19th Oktober 2016

The Curator
Jabatan Museum Sarawak
Jalan Barrack,
93000 Kuching, Sarawak

Attn:- Tuan Ipoi Datan

Sir,

Fort Long Akah

Following the meeting with YBhg Datuk Steven Wan Ullok, we forward herewith an observation and comments on Fort Long Akah by Anthony Lawai Karing, to whom it may concern kind attention.

Together we attached all support documents, the scope of project and license for rebuild or renovation of Fort Long Akah.

We hope with all your consideration to support us for this Fort Long Akah.

Thank you.

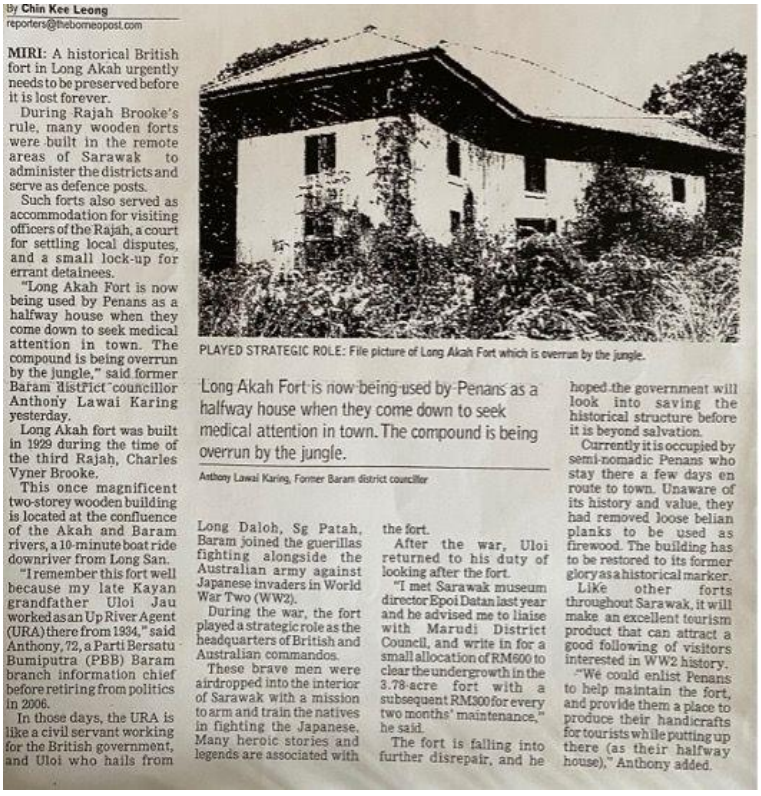
Yours sincerely,

SYARIKAT APAU SAN

.....
Lawrence Lawai @ Lawrence Karing Lawai
Manager
Syarikat Apau San

c.c Dato Lim Kian Hock
YBhg Datu Ik Pahon Joyik
Mdm. Aurdry Wan Ullok

Appendix 2: Borneo Post 2/5/2011



By Chin Kee Leong
reporters@theborneopost.com

MIRI: A historical British fort in Long Akah urgently needs to be preserved before it is lost forever.

During Rajah Brooke's rule, many wooden forts were built in the remote areas of Sarawak to administer the districts and serve as defence posts.

Such forts also served as accommodation for visiting officers of the Rajah, a court for settling local disputes, and a small lock-up for errant detainees.

"Long Akah Fort is now being used by Penans as a halfway house when they come down to seek medical attention in town. The compound is being overrun by the jungle," said former Baram district councillor Anthony Lawai Karing yesterday.

Long Akah fort was built in 1929 during the time of the third Rajah, Charles Vyner Brooke.

This once magnificent two-storey wooden building is located at the confluence of the Akah and Baram rivers, a 10-minute boat ride downriver from Long San.

"I remember this fort well because my late Kayan grandfather Uloi Jau worked as an Up River Agent (URA) there from 1934," said Anthony, 72, a Parti Bersatu Bumiputra (PBB) Baram branch information chief before retiring from politics in 2006.

In those days, the URA is like a civil servant working for the British government, and Uloi who hails from Long Daloh, Sg Patah, Baram joined the guerillas fighting alongside the Australian army against Japanese invaders in World War Two (WW2).

During the war, the fort played a strategic role as the headquarters of British and Australian commandos.

These brave men were airdropped into the interior of Sarawak with a mission to arm and train the natives in fighting the Japanese. Many heroic stories and legends are associated with the fort.

After the war, Uloi returned to his duty of looking after the fort.

"I met Sarawak museum director Epoi Datan last year and he advised me to liaise with Marudi District Council, and write in for a small allocation of RM600 to clear the undergrowth in the 3.78-acre fort with a subsequent RM300 for every two months' maintenance," he said.

The fort is falling into further disrepair, and he hoped the government will look into saving the historical structure before it is beyond salvation.

Currently it is occupied by semi-nomadic Penans who stay there a few days en route to town. Unaware of its history and value, they had removed loose belian planks to be used as firewood. The building has to be restored to its former glory as a historical marker.

Like other forts throughout Sarawak, it will make an excellent tourism product that can attract a good following of visitors interested in WW2 history.

"We could enlist Penans to help maintain the fort, and provide them a place to produce their handicrafts for tourists while putting up there (as their halfway house)," Anthony added.

PLAYED STRATEGIC ROLE: File picture of Long Akah Fort which is overrun by the jungle.

> Long Akah Fort is now being used by Penans as a halfway house when they come down to seek medical attention in town. The compound is being overrun by the jungle.
>
> Anthony Lawai Karing, Former Baram district councillor