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Title	Packaging myths for tourism : the case of the Rungus of Kudat, Sabah, Malaysia
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Qualification	PhD
Year	2000

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PACKAGING MYTHS FOR TOURISM:
THE CASE OF THE RUNGUS OF KUDAT,
SABAH, MALAYSIA

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PhD
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
2000



Declaration

I declare that this thesis
has been composed by myself
and is my own work throughout.

To the memory of H.M. Dahlan,
my teacher and my Dean

Acknowledgements

Blisit be God for all His Gifts - meaningful words carved onto the gate of the Edinburgh University Sports Centre, Pleasance. So too blessed be for all the people who, throughout my uncertain and meandering journey, became my lamp and source of inspiration. With the ever-present brightness and warmth in the distance, I felt encouraged to persevere and to endure, regardless.

Professor Patricia Jeffery and Professor Colin Bell, my supervisors; your relaxed and constructive guidance allowed my thoughts to develop and produce a coherent story. To Patricia, my self-confidence grew with your comforting presence and commitment. *Go for it*, which I call your signature tune, was like a hand reaching out, gently lifting or pushing me forward.

Professor Roger Jeffery, who undertook to be my second reader and boosted my fledging morale with such stimulating comments;

Maureen O'Malley, upon whom I imposed the unenviable task of proof-reading and turned my thesis around – for the better;

All the staff at the Department of Sociology and the Graduate School; I will treasure your kind assistance and sensitivity. To my fellow friends at the department, thank you for the comradeship and support.

Ella Waldrop, my friend in the pews; Margaret Crawford, my *ma*, whose concern and home-cooked dinners did not allow me to miss my mother; and my Mongolian family – Khasag, Uran, Javkhant and Zoright – it was serendipity at work the day Khasag asked me if I knew anybody who wanted to rent a room.

All the Rungus villagers at Matunggong who welcomed me to their homes, fed me, tolerated me, understood me - there is no PhD without all of you there for me. To Porodong, Kobuhi, Tako and Inombungan, *ohigak ginavoku tu mongitung koubasanan om kaavantangan amai om yoning sid yoku*. Also to Rev. Poong, whom I heard so much but did not meet until the last month of fieldwork;

University Kebangsaan Malaysia, for the study leave;

My family, Su Bang and Umi, whose love and occasional knocks on my head, encouraging me to hurry up and come home, made light the burden I carried for the last few years;

And my grandmother, who is with me in spirit, always.

Abstract

This thesis is about the images and dilemmas of Rungus tourism. The Rungus community of Kudat, Sabah, Malaysia has found its way into the country's development plans and tourism policies. Rungus faces and special features associated with Rungus lifestyle and livelihood appear in travel guidebooks, printed brochures and websites of Malaysian-based tour companies. What happens when the "most traditional ethnic group" in Sabah who lives in an area "rarely visited by tourists" – the Kudat district - becomes part of the media promotion and the tourist gaze?

For the Rungus community, the objective of participation in the tourism sector is to improve their economic livelihood and standard of living. The tour operators who include the Rungus as part of their tour itinerary are interested in the profit making potential of the Rungus as an isolated, unique and traditional community. The tourists, as consumers of the Rungus product, come to Rungus territory to seek the *authentic tourist experience* – the feeling of being whole and balanced through revisiting the past in the Rungus present.

The research focuses on two main aspects. The first aspect concerns the Rungus product. What is the product offered to the tourists and in what form? The second aspect concerns the Rungus dilemma, which basically involves two central issues: the problem of authenticity and the development paradox.

Data from the ethnographic fieldwork carried out in four tourist-designated villages showed that the Rungus villagers' hopes of tourism did not materialise. They could not depend on tourism for the desired additional cash income, as tourist arrivals were unpredictable and not regular. Instead, the villagers expressed discontentment over the features the tourism authorities have chosen to represent the Rungus people.

In terms of the development dilemma, the Rungus people are caught in a catch-22 situation: the success of Rungus tourism depends on the Rungus people's purportedly primitive existence. The Rungus want development and progress but the tourists want them to be undeveloped and traditional. The question is essentially one of presentation: what is the alternative to the present form of presentation of Rungus tourism?

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INTRODUCTION

Experience living in a traditional longhouse in the valley of Bavanggazo. If visitors take a ride to any of the three longhouses at Tinangol, they may meet a few bespectacled Rungus women sitting in one corner, engrossed in stringing beads and producing multi-coloured bangles and necklaces. At Kampung Sumangkap, an enterprising small village, visitors can observe traditional gongmaking and handicraft making. At Kampung Gombizau, visitors get to see beekeeping and the process of harvesting beeswax, honey and royal jelly.

This quotation, combined from a variety of sources¹ to form a story, introduces my research focus and community under study. The research focus is tourism and the community concerned is the Rungus community of Kudat, Sabah, Malaysia. The villages mentioned above - Bavanggazo, Tinangol, Gombizau and Sumangkap are the four villages I have chosen as my research location. Each has gained a place on the international tourist map as a representative of a specific aspect of Rungus lifestyle and livelihood.

The main objective of this thesis is to examine the Rungus villagers' participation in the transformation of themselves as a tourist attraction. Rungus faces, lifestyle and livelihood fill the pages of brochures, magazines and guidebooks, both printed and electronic. Unlike food, household items or vehicles, the Rungus as a tourism product cannot be exported and consumed by the purchasers in their own home countries. These purchasers instead have to cross territorial and cultural boundaries to consume the products they have bought or want to buy.

By becoming a tourist attraction, the Rungus people acquire similar "touristic" status as other attractions in Sabah, such as Mt. Kinabalu at Kundasang, Proboscis monkeys at Ulu Kinabatangan in Sandakan, primary rainforest at Danum Valley in Lahad Datu, Gomantong Caves in Sandakan, Rafflesia Centre in Tambunan and the Tunku Abdul Rahman Islands off the coast of Kota Kinabalu. Fortunately or unfortunately, the Rungus do not appear, as do the other attractions, on the milk

¹ These sources are from the STPC's website (<http://www.jaring.my.sabah/cult.htm>); Borneo Bulletin (January 1, 1998); STPC's 1997 brochure entitled *The Rungus and their Longhouse Lifestyle*.

cartons the government delivers to schoolchildren as part of its rural development programme. Examples of these attractions are shown below:

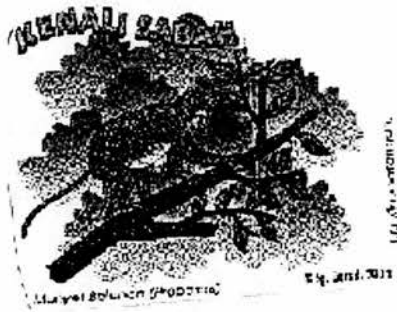
TO KNOW SABAH
THROUGH MILK CARTONS FOR SCHOOLCHILDREN



Mt. Kinabalu, Lahad Datu



Mt Kinabalu, Kundasang



Ulu Kinabatangan, Sandakan



Gomantong Caves, Sandakan



Tuaran



Mt. Kinabalu

Tropical Rainforest,
Danum Valley, Lahad Datu;
Proboscis Monkeys,
Ulu Kinabatangan, Sandakan;
Water Village,
Tuaran.

Pitcher Plant,
Mt Kinabalu, Kundasang;
Rafflesia,
Tambunan;
Birds' Nests,
Gomantong Caves, Sandakan;

This research is not primarily an impact study of tourism on the Rungus community. It is about the commodification and commoditisation of a living human community and way of life. Dahlan (1990: 142) defines commodification as the process of transforming cultural artefacts (or any other elements of cultural and historical heritage) into determinate commodities for sale and consumption. When these artefacts have been commodified, the producers need to market their commodities through advertisements and promotion. This public promotion of commodities with the aim of creating a market for the commodities is called commoditisation: “The process of transforming cultural artefacts (or any other elements of cultural or historical heritage) as use-value commodities into surplus-value commodities (Dahlan 1990: 142). Commodification takes place at the “factory or production site,” where both the tangible and non-tangible selected items are created or transformed into tangible objects or commodities. Commoditisation is an extension of commodification. The producers need to advertise and promote their commodities to the wider society that serves as a potential market. In the context of tourism, tourism commodities or tourism products refer to the cultural items that have been commodified (developed into tangible objects with a sale value [commodities]) and commoditised (advertised, promoted and marketed as commodities). Commodities do not exist in their own right for they are created, developed, promoted and marketed with the likes and dislikes of the people who are going to purchase and consume them as the guiding principle.

The Rungus have undergone the process of commodification and commoditisation. But the Rungus are human beings. They are self-conscious, reflexive and thinking people, unlike the tropical rainforest, proboscis monkeys, *orang utan*, caves, islands, mountains and so on. MacCannell (1984: 388-389) declares that:

When an ethnic group begins to sell itself or is forced to sell itself as a tourism commodity, hence, a tourist attraction, it ceases to evolve naturally. Your status as attraction affects the job you have, the way you are supposed to behave off the job, the kind of authentic clothes you wear, the way you wear your hair.

There may not be a problem if these touristic details of life are presented and performed in a clearly defined space by employed staff acting the lives and roles of the selected culture or community as in Open Air Museums, Heritage Centres or Cultural Villages. The Beamish Open Air Museum at County Durham, England, for example, promises to take visitors “back in time” as it is “no ordinary museum, but a living, working experience of life as it was in the Great North at the turn of the century” (Beamish Museum website: <http://www.countydurham.com/beamish/>). The Old Sturbridge Village at Sturbridge, Massachusetts, USA, another open air museum, re-creates “the daily work activities and community celebrations of a rural 19th century town in authentic - living history - fashion.” It invites the visitors to “step back in time” and enjoy the “more than 40 staffed exhibits” where “early America comes alive” (Old Sturbridge website: <http://www.osv.org/>). The Sarawak Cultural Village at Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, shares a similar open air museum concept. Its promoters, however, describe the Village as a “living museum with a difference” (Sarawak Cultural Village website: <http://www.sarawakculturalvillage.com/>). Its philosophy is to present the Village as a model village with a community of people living and working together in peace and harmony. This philosophy is operationalised through the construction of seven “ethnic houses built according to authentic styles and replete with real, traditional artefacts” and the simulation of their respective “authentic ways of life” (Sarawak Cultural Village website). The seven model houses, located around a man-made lake, include the Melanau Tall House, Orang Ulu Longhouse, Penan Hut, Iban Longhouse, Malay House, Chinese Farmhouse, and Bidayuh Longhouse. Each model house has a core of trained staff and skilled personnel to re-enact and perform the various cultural “commodities” selected to represent the particular ethnic group. In the Iban Longhouse for example, visitors will see people weaving the *Pua Kumbu*, making or playing Iban drums and gongs, demonstrating the making of the *kuih jala* (a savoury

cake) and *tuak* (rice wine) and of course, the relics of the Iban's legendary headhunting past – hanging skulls. In the Orang Ulu Longhouse, a different scene greets the visitors: demonstrations for beadwork, *sape* music, body tattooing, *parang ilang* (fighting sword) and *klirieng* (burial pole). Visitors have the opportunity for a hands-on experience of the cultural lifestyle of Sarawak's peoples through the various activities organised for visitor participation.

The Sarawak Cultural Village, like the Beamish Museum and Old Sturbridge Village, is a business enterprise specialising in the commodification and commoditisation of a way of life that is either no longer in existence, or manipulated in order to attract the interests of the market. The people managing and performing the tasks and activities are not inhabitants of these museums or Cultural Village. They may not be members of the ethnic group or community they represent. Instead they are employees on the company's pay roll. The Sarawak Cultural Village concept, in presenting the lifestyles of communities that still exist in the present time, raises one pertinent question: is it contributing to the perpetuation of ethnic stereotypes or the preservation of ethnic cultures?

There is a third method of presenting commodified ethnic communities to the tourism market. This is the model currently operationalised among several Iban longhouses in Sarawak, Malaysia. The Iban are the major ethnic group of Sarawak and like the Rungus people, the Iban also live in longhouses, which are different in structure and style from the Rungus longhouses.

There are at least four Iban longhouses in Sarawak that provide a longhouse package tour for tourists. Each of these longhouses forms a business contract with one specific tour operator who can then bring his or her clients for a tour of the Iban longhouse. The four longhouses are the Serubah and Nanga Kesit longhouses at Lemanak River, the Nanga Stamang longhouse at Engkari River and the Rumah Ngumbang longhouse at Ulu Ai River.

At Serubah and Nanga Kesit, there is a standard package with structured or pre-programmed activities for tourists when they arrive at the longhouse. These activities include a tour of the longhouse, cultural dances, handicraft sales, blowpipe demonstrations, cockfighting demonstrations, a jungle walk and games (at Nanga

Kesit only). Other cultural activities may be included: Iban bards chanting ritual poems, *miring* ceremony (a ritual food offering to the spirits), fishing, hunting and traditional Iban wedding. Tourists may also be present at an Iban longhouse during the *gawai* or harvest festival (Zeppel 1994: 60). At these two longhouses, tourists sleep in a separate longhouse that serves as a guesthouse, equipped with several modern amenities. At Nanga Stamang longhouse, tourists sleep in the longhouse itself but in separate rooms. The tour operator involved added two rooms to the existing longhouse to give tourists the opportunity to mingle with their Iban hosts and experience more of their daily life (Zeppel 1996: 3). For the Rumah Ngumbang Ulu Ai longhouse, tourists sleep in a separate guesthouse that accommodates not more than thirty people (Yong n.d.). Tourists are treated as guests of the local people, according to Yong (n.d.), the tour company in partnership with the longhouse inhabitants. Like the other three Iban longhouses above, the Rumah Ngumbang longhouse is also promoted as “River Safari Tours” (Zeppel 1996: 1; 1994: 59):

The focus of trips to Ulu Ai is the overall experience of upriver travel; travelling by longboat, visiting the longhouse, hiking in the jungle, visiting the farms and experiencing the day-to-day life of a small farming community (Yong n.d.).

From the examples of village-based culture tourism given above, we can discern at least four models of packaging “culture” to tourists:

- open air museum and the re-enactment of life in the past (Beamish and Old Sturbridge Village);
- cultural Village with non-residential ethnic houses meant for staging cultural demonstrations and performances specific to the ethnic community represented (Sarawak Cultural Village);
- residential village with separate longhouse serving as a guesthouse for visitors. The guesthouse is equipped with modern amenities for the comfort of these visitors (Nanga Kesit, Serubah and Rumah Ngumbang longhouses);
- residential village with visitors staying in the same longhouse as the longhouse inhabitants but in different rooms (Nanga Stamang).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Tourism is necessarily a form of ethnic relations in so far as the tourist belongs to a different ethnic group from the natives of the country he or she visits and interacts with. This cross-cultural contact in the name of tourism involves a specific form of tourism: ethnic and culture tourism. According to Barth (1969: 15), the critical focus of ethnic studies is “the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses.” In ethnic tourism, the boundary is still important but the cultural stuff forms the principal attraction of the host population for the tourist because it represents a special kind difference: the ethnic divide between the visitors and local people. The greater the difference, the more attractive the visited is to the visitor. Van den Berghe and Keyes (1984: 343) term this difference “cultural exoticism” which they define as:

- an experience that could not be duplicated in the tourist’s ordinary place of residence;
- making contact with a different reality, manifested in the undomesticated nature and behaviours of culturally distinctive strangers and relics of the past;
- incorporating this encounter with the exotic other into an authentic experience.

The tourists’ desire to achieve an “authentic” tourist experience through the exotic other causes them to choose a destination that purportedly has these potential attributes. This destination(s) is usually “out-of-the-way” places (Tsing 1993) that the tourism media have promoted as being “authentically traditional” and “exotically unique.” Their presence in the holiday destination involves, however minimally, meeting and interacting with the local population. As modern-day tourists show increasing interest in other cultures, small market towns or rural villages become the repositories of living cultures (Chamberlain 1993: 110).

Wood (1984: 361) views ethnic tourism as the quaint customs of indigenous and often exotic peoples and cultural tourism as aspects of local culture that are selected, reconstructed, packaged and sold to the tourists. Examples are festivals, costumes, cultural dances and music. The diversity of the cultural stuff provides tour

operators with a wide range of “ethnic options” (Wood and Deppen 1994: 3) to reconstruct the images of the host people according to the consumption needs of the tourism market. In ethnic tourism, this principle of difference contains an additional requirement. The boundary is necessary but not sufficient. The tourists want to visit people and places that are different not only in terms of lifestyle but also located at the “lower” stage of development. The “lower” the stage of development, the greater is the implication that the holiday destination has an “unpolluted and unspoilt” and hence, “unique and authentic culture.”

Many researchers interested in the complexities and dynamics of ethnic tourism have emphasised the tourists’ “search for the authentic” (Selwyn 1996; MacCannell 1976). But what does “authentic” mean? The Collins Concise Dictionary defines authentic as: of undisputed origin or authorship; genuine; trustworthy, reliable; one who acts independently [derived from Greek word, *authentēs*]; coming from the author [late Latin word, *authenticus*]. In other words, there are three inter-related aspects of authenticity: originality, reliability and autonomy. Two uncertainties emerged from the Collins’ definition above. First, on the question of change, does “authentic” include change or does it not accept change at all? Second, on the question of the tourist experience, the three dimensions listed above represent a partial definition of authenticity as they refer to the product and its producer(s) but exclude the consumption (tourism) experience and the consumer (tourist) concerned.

Selwyn (1996: 7) views authenticity from two levels. On one level, authenticity refers to the attributes conferred by the tourism authorities on the host culture. The visited culture is “authentic” because it is supposedly unaffected, unpolluted and unspoilt by modern elements and foreign forces of change. On another level, authenticity refers to the information provided by tourism agencies (travel and tour operators, tourist guides, tourism officials) and intellectual writers (museum curators, participant observers like anthropologists) on the host destinations. This information is “authentic” because these information sources proclaim themselves to be professionals and knowledgeable in the host destination. Urry (quoted in Selwyn 1996: 19), however, makes a distinction between these ‘professional’ sources of knowledge for the tourism market. In previous forms of

tourism, intellectual professionals such as museum curators played a major role in researching, re-producing and imparting “high culture knowledge” about other cultures. For present-day tourism or post-modern tourism in particular, there is an abundance of information supplied by the many agencies associated with travel and tour. Tour companies, travel agencies, hotels and airlines, communication and transport agencies, public tourism agencies and souvenir shops, among others, contribute to the wide availability of information about destinations and attractions world-wide. This “high street knowledge” allows for the democratisation of the tourist gaze (Urry quoted in Selwyn 1996: 19). The range and diversity of information supplied by these “high street” businesses give tourists the opportunity to form their opinions and decisions about what they have read.

Urry’s notion of democratisation of the tourist gaze links well with Fees’ perception of alienation felt by modern-day tourists. Fees (1996: 141) suggests that modern tourists, as a result of living in a modern, highly segmented society, experience a sense of alienation and rootlessness. To redress this feeling of alienation and disconnectedness from their everyday life, they look for places that are not modern and segmented. The “high street sources” mentioned above provide the would-be tourists with the information and knowledge they seek. Fees (1996: 141) notes that “authenticity” does not refer to the actual characteristics of the object but to the individual tourist’s perception of the object as “authentic.” Sweet (quoted in Laxson 1991: 387), extends Fees’ association of ethnic tourism with the modern-day tourists’ desire to overcome their alienation. She suggests that these tourists visit tribal peoples because they perceive these tribal people as living in “whole” societies. In supposedly whole societies, the mind and body are not separated, families are not fragmented, communities are unified and work is not an alienated activity. The tourist who is not oriented towards ethnic or culture tourism is not concerned about whether or not the mountain, beach or building is “authentic.” But for the tourist interested in ethnic tourism, his or her needs extend beyond the realm of pleasure and fun. He or she seeks to re-dress his or her feelings of alienation through an “authentic” experience with the local host in their “authentic” environment.

In ethnic tourism, the tourist's quest for authenticity accentuates the problem of authenticity because the local host is not simply "there" to serve the needs of the tourist. The host is on show, a living spectacle to be scrutinised, photographed, tape-recorded and interacted with in some particular ways (Van den Berghe and Keyes 1984: 345). Van den Berghe and Keyes (1984: 347) use the term *touree* to refer to the transformation of the local host into *performers*:

The *touree* not only interacts with the tourist across a cultural and linguistic gap to achieve a common end; the *touree* also plays at being himself for the enjoyment of the tourist. The *touree* literally makes a spectacle of himself.

Van den Berghe and Keyes (1984: 347) mention the inevitability of the "Heisenberg effect" associated with the proclamation of authenticity in ethnic tourism: "the search for the exotic is self-defeating because of the overwhelming influence of the observed on the observer." The *touree*, to the extent that he or she responds to the tourist, makes it his or her business to preserve a credible illusion to authenticity. As host, the *touree* fakes his or her art, dress, music, dancing, and religion to satisfy the ethnic tourist's thirst for authenticity at the very same time that the tourist invasion assaults his or her culture and subjects it to the homogenising process known as modernisation. The tourist quest, van den Berghe and Keyes (1984: 346) assert, is thus doomed by the very presence of tourists. Ethnic tourism spoils the very thing the tourist has come to see: the unspoiled natives (van den Berghe and Keyes 1984: 37). The tourist does not want to see *toourees* but this is what the tourist sees when he or she meets the local host. The local host becomes a *touree* in order to match the images the tourists are expected to have. The host's presentation of themselves in the name of ethnic tourism means that their presentation is merely a representation of the tourists' perception of the host's way of life. It is not a representation of the host's perception of their own way of life. Product development, as Evans-Pritchard (1989: 94) points out, is essentially based on "what the tourists want to see, not what is really there." Words like "traditional," "colourful," and "authentic" to refer to the local destination and people are based on the outsiders' worldview of what is "traditional" or "modern." The terms of reference are the outsiders', not the local people's worldview.

Laxson (1991: 365) and Esman (1984: 451) make a similar assertion on the question of product authenticity. Once the quaint customs of indigenous and exotic peoples become attractions for tourists, they cease to be authentic. MacCannell (1976) and Cohen (quoted in Selwyn 1996: 6) see the presentation of host culture as a form of “staged authenticity.” This staged authenticity is like the front section of a theatre where the actors and actresses perform their public roles with the help of a written script, special costumes, props and lighting. The back stage that is separated from the front stage by the curtain or wall is closed to the audience. The back stage is where the actors and actresses discard their roles and can be their individual selves. Ethnic tourism may be similar to a theatrical performance in a theatre, but in the host destination there is no curtain or wall to separate the front stage from the back stage. How do tourists know where the front stage ends and the back stage begins? How do the local hosts inform the tourists about the boundary between the public and private spheres?

From the discussion on authenticity, we can say that there are two dimensions attached to the meaning of authenticity. One, it can refer to the characteristics of the product as defined in the Collins Dictionary. The product is *original*, which means it is created and developed by the host themselves; it is an *accurate* representation of the host’s reality; and it is *autonomous*, which means the host themselves decide how they are going to participate and represent their culture. Two, authenticity can also refer to the *experience* gained from the visitation to the host destination. This experience includes the information and knowledge about the host destination that the tourists obtained from the tourism media and also the actual experience gained from the visitation itself.

In this thesis, I incorporate the definitions of the various theorists to formulate an operational definition of authenticity. The concept of authenticity in Rungus tourism consists of two dimensions:

- product authenticity: This includes originality, reliability and autonomy. Originality refers to the traits and characteristics said to be indigenously Rungus, that is, originated from and developed by the Rungus people themselves. Reliability means what is presented is an accurate reproduction or representation of the Rungus community, depending on the time frame referred to. Autonomy refers to the Rungus villagers' control in decision making with regard to the product to be sold.
- authentic tourist experience: This includes the intended outcomes the tourism authorities hope to deliver to the potential tourists when they "consume" the Rungus product. An authentic tourist experience entails learning about Rungus culture and feeling good and whole from this knowledge and actual experience of visiting the Rungus villages.

The Rungus brand of tourism promotes ethnic and culture tourism. The Rungus identity and ethnicity are incorporated into the cultural stuff selected and presented to the tourists. In the Rungus situation, the tourism authorities, through their printed and electronic media, claim that each of the four village specialisms – Bavanggazo longhouse, Tinangol handicraft, Gombizau bee rearing and Sumangkap gong making – represent authentic Rungus lifestyle and livelihood. The touristic representations and the villagers' participation in tourism raise several questions:

- on product authenticity: What do the tourism media mean when they promote the Rungus people and their lifestyle as "authentic"? Are the components of the Rungus tourism product – longhouse, handicraft, bee rearing and gong making – authentic, meaning original, accurate and autonomous?
- on the authenticity of the tourist experience: What does authentic tourist experience mean in the Rungus context and how is this actualised in the Rungus tourism product? What do the tourists themselves aim to achieve through their visit to Rungus territory and are they able to achieve this?
- on the Rungus themselves: What do the Rungus aim to achieve from tourism and are they able to achieve whatever it is they hope to achieve?
- on the tourism paradox: Is tourism a means of economic development or cultural degradation? Does it intensify or revise existing ethnic stereotypes? When the Rungus people develop through tourism, their needs and lifestyle will change accordingly. When this happens, their tourism product will lose its "authentic and unique" feature. If economic development sows the seeds of destruction for Rungus tourism, does this mean that the Rungus people should remain undeveloped for the sake of tourism?

- on an appropriate model: To enable the Rungus to achieve economic development through tourism and other non-tourist-related development projects, and, at the same time, preserve their cultural values and practices, what is the alternative model of participation for the Rungus in the tourism sector?

Tourism media – brochures, information pamphlets and travel guides – have one main purpose and that is to answer the readers’ question of why: “Why should I choose this destination and not another? Can it offer me what I need?” The consumer wanting to buy apples from a supermarket, for example, will head for the fruit compartment, select the best-looking apples because he or she thinks they are fresh and juicy. The reader, a potential tourist, will likewise head for the shelves that have reading material about the destination(s) he or she intends to visit. The reader’s ultimate decision on the choice of destination(s) depends on his or her idea of which destination offers the best, value-for-money tour experience.

The media producers, like the supermarket owners, know the psychology of consumer behaviour and marketing strategies well enough to entice the would-be tourist into believing that their packages are the best. Uzzell (1984: 79), writing of an alternative structuralist approach to the psychology of tourism marketing, states that “holiday companies attempt to attract holidaymakers not through the overt and superficial attributes of holiday destinations as portrayed in brochure photographs but by providing the reader with a range of cultural tools with which fantasy, meaning and identity can be created and constructed.” The *Swan Hellenic* cruise company in its “Jungle and Dragons’ Ocean Cruise to the Spice Islands” encourages the reader to imagine beyond the visual text: “Can you picture yourself exploring the enchanting Spice Islands?” “Can you see yourself discovering the tribal peoples of Torajaland?” Then comes the clinching point: “Can you see yourself on a Swan Hellenic cruise?” (website: <http://www.swan-hellenic.co.uk>). The holidaymaker becomes an active participant in the creation and maintenance of ideology and myth (Uzzell 1984: 79). This is so because the holidaymaker or tourist, as the consumer, will buy the holiday package (product) that “means something” (Williamson quoted in Uzzell 1984: 79) to him or her.

In Malaysia, the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB), the country's official tourism body, promotes Malaysia as a "Fascinating and Premier Tourist Destination" (website: <http://www.Malaysia.org.uk/intro.htm>) offering a range of contrasts. Malaysia is "a country racing towards the future, with skyscrapers reaching for the stratosphere" and a "well-planned infrastructure to help make the visit as convenient and comfortable as possible." Yet, it remains "untouched by time, as evidenced by the 100 million year-old rainforests and quaint traditional villages" and "treasures its natural and cultural heritage." Nearer home still, in the state of Sabah, where I did my research, the Sabah Tourism Promotion Corporation (STPC), the state's official tourism body, employs the same tourism language as MTPB. "Welcome to the Land below the Wind. Discover Southeast Asia's most unusual and newest holiday destination. Sabah is Malaysia's premier nature adventure destination" (STPC information pamphlet n.d.).

The tourism bodies, both public and private, have no qualms about making categorical statements and using superlatives to describe their tour attractions and packages. "You've earned your holiday," *TravelBag Adventures* (1998/99) informs the reader, "and rest assured that we will do everything we can to create a unique and unforgettable experience, which allows you to appreciate the best of a country and its people and give you a chance to participate, not just to spectate."

The subtle question, "why choose this destination and tour package?" that lies within the media texts has a correspondingly subtle answer - because it offers you what you are looking for, whether it is the oldest place on earth or latest human innovation or newest adventure. Can I adopt the same strategy and make similar claims for my thesis? *Why read my thesis? Because it offers the best value-for-time reading as it contains the newest theory and method and also the most significant findings in tourism research.* Travel media representing the various travel and tour companies are suffused with proclamations of newness, extraordinariness and specialness in almost all aspects such as pricing, services, facilities and packages. Although I am reluctant to make similar touristic superlative proclamations, I nevertheless believe that my research does contribute some new knowledge to the existing literature on tourism and in particular, the anthropology and sociology of tourism. My research is a grassroots, micro-based study of how the Rungus people,

individually and collectively, cope with and manage the touristic representations of themselves as “traditional,” “primitive,” “authentic” and “colourful.” The Rungus experience in tourism, however, is not separate from or outside the forces of international tourism and national development policies. I will relate the micro level experience within the context of these macro forces.

My review of the literature and fieldwork have made me realise, more than ever, that there is always more than one side to a story. My thesis presents only one side of the story and that is my observation and analysis of the way the Rungus people have involved themselves in the tourism industry. I could not have written about the Rungus in a way that showed I was a part of them and they a part of me had I not done the ethnographic fieldwork and lived with the Rungus villagers. Hence in a way, the story is not really *my story*, but the *Rungus villagers' story*. These villagers allowed me into their space and put up with my incessant questioning, ignorance and personal idiosyncrasies. The *new* contribution of my thesis, I think, is therefore not a new theory or method or even findings. The newness comes to the reader by way of the Rungus villagers' voices in the chapters that follow. The Rungus spoke of their life, past and present, their hopes and anxieties for the future, their perceptions of how tourism fit into their life and aspirations, their feelings about being a tourism commodity and the dilemmas associated with being a public exhibit and a private individual.

As tourism almost always involves telling stories about places and people other than one's own, it makes the stories the tourism media spin all the more significant to be studied and analysed. Readers may believe the words and pictures the media used are *representative* of the host destination. There may be a kernel of truth in these representations. Nevertheless, we should be careful not to be drawn into the tourism media's rhetoric and inclinations to present the host destination in a stereotyped and undifferentiated manner. Tourism authorities, with their priority in tourist needs, will only select those elements in the host destination that they think are economically relevant to the tourism market. These elements in turn are reconstructed, embellished and re-produced for tourist consumption and enjoyment. In her article (*The Scotsman* September 3; 1999: 6), Susanna O'Shea writes of this selective tendency of the tourism authorities. She cites the report by *Holiday Which?*

that criticises tour operators for “the omissions and economies with the truth in their brochures.” One newspaper headline, for example, claims that “few tourists go to Kudat ... where old culture lives on” (*Borneo Bulletin* January 31, 1987: 10). Yet, in the paragraphs that followed, the writer lists the cross-cultural contacts the inhabitants of Kudat, in particular the Rungus, had with foreigners over the last centuries: Chinese merchants in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Brunei Malay traders, Basel missionaries in the 1950s and 60s and the American Peace Corps in the 1960s. Could the Rungus’ “old culture” remain intact and unchanged despite these contacts and exposure to new ways of doing things? Were the Rungus people so resistant, rigid or unadaptive that they were able to prevent any imposition of foreign elements into their culture? On the other hand, if there was a change(s), what happened to this change? Did the new, foreign elements become so integrated that they became part of the “old culture?”

The Rungus people of Kudat, Sabah, Malaysia no longer exist as ordinary people living in ordinary rural villages. They have become a tourist attraction. Everything associated with the Rungus people - artefacts, tools, housing, activities, living conditions, dance, music, food and landscape - are subject to the tour operators’ selection procedures before they could be part of the Rungus tourism product. The Rungus have acquired an exchange value - monetary income for rights of visitation. Their everyday existence is like an open book, subject to public scrutiny or like a consumer commodity, subject to consumption demands. How do the Rungus cope with having strangers in their homes - strangers who come from all over the world, different socio-economic backgrounds and cultural milieus? For each day of their existence, as long as they are in the village, the villagers have two contrasting lives and roles to play - as ordinary folk and as a tourist attraction. Their dilemma lies in separating their contrasting roles. I say this is a dilemma to the Rungus people because the village is their home, not a formal workplace and they are its inhabitants, not employees or workers. Their village is not a cultural village or open-air museum which is basically a formal workplace with a formal organisation, management and employed staff. The Rungus village-cum-tourist destination is also unlike a conventional museum where the exhibits are dead specimens and relics of the past.

The written language and visual images in the tourism media therefore play a potentially significant role in the Rungus' existence, identity and ethnicity. The Rungus villagers not only have to put up with tourists' physical presence but also the latter's expectations of how they should live and behave. To know the effect and dilemma of the villagers who live in these tourist-designated villages, under the umbrella of a tailored identity and behavioural package, we will first have to know their "product" – what the Rungus are said to offer (as depicted in the tourism media) and do offer (as actualised in the village concerned).

The structure of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter One introduces the reader to the theme of my research, that is, concerning images and dilemmas. It begins with a review of the status of tourism within the academic community and the status of researchers doing research on tourism. Does tourism have an image problem and if so, why? If tourism has an image problem and is not considered a legitimate subject for research, does this mean that researchers doing tourism research also have an image problem and are not considered legitimate researchers? Is tourism research therefore of lesser quality than non-tourism research and are researchers doing tourism research of lesser standard than researchers doing non-tourism research? This discussion on the image of tourism involves a review of the concept *tourist* and tourism's position as a legitimate activity in international relations. In the final section, I introduce my fieldwork in terms of the research area and villages under study, methods of data collection and fieldwork schedule.

Chapter Two has four sections. The first section provides a general overview of the state of Sabah in historical and contemporary times and the peoples of Sabah. The second section introduces the Rungus people and the non-touristic aspects of their way of life, focusing on the Rungus' social organisation, economic activities and cultural characteristics of the Rungus. The third section places the Rungus in the context of change. Here, I choose the Basel Mission as a reference to base the contention of change in Rungus way of life. The final section provides a summary to the discussion in the three sections above.

Chapter Three examines the Malaysian and Sabah State governments' perspectives on tourism and their attitude towards Rungus tourism in particular. To complement the governments' special interest in tourism and Rungus tourism, I include in this chapter a review of the publications of research on tourism in Malaysia and the historical images associated with the contemporary touristic representations of the Rungus.

Chapter Four marks the beginning of data presentation from my ethnographic fieldwork. It starts with a brief description of the four villages - Bavanggazo, Tinangol, Gombizau and Sumangkap - in terms of their location, basic infrastructure and demographic characteristics. The second section describes the concept behind transforming the four villages into tourist destinations.

Chapter Five outlines the Rungus tourism product, both in theory (media representations) and in practice (product actualisation at village level). The four products are the "traditional" Rungus longhouse (Bavanggazo), "traditional" Rungus handicraft (Tinangol), bee rearing and honey collection (Gombizau) and gong making (Sumangkap). The chapter sets out to draw the attention of the readers to the underlying myths associated with each of these tourism products.

Chapter Six deals with the dual-dilemmas associated with Rungus tourism. The first section examines the production and the authenticity dilemma and the second section deals with the paradox of tourism and development.

Chapter Seven reviews the concept and nature of the Rungus villagers' participation in tourism. It summarises the main findings of the research and attempts to provide a perspective on the way forward for Rungus tourism.

This then is the structure and organisation of the thesis. On choosing the Rungus tour package, the tourists anticipate what is waiting for them in the village. The reader likewise anticipates how the story of the Rungus' experience in tourism will unfold through the chapters.

CHAPTER ONE

STATUS OF TOURISM AND TOURISM RESEARCH

1.1 DOUBLE TROUBLE : SOCIOLOGY AND RESEARCH ON TOURISM

What are you studying?
I am doing my PhD.
You're doing your PhD? What is it about?
Tourism.
Tourism? I didn't know you could study tourism.

The relationship between tourism and sociology “should be self-evident since tourism, as a social practice and a representation, as well as a system of action and decision making, is becoming an increasingly important dynamic of contemporary societies. Instead it is a relationship fraught with difficulties,” Lanfant (1993: 70) notes in her article on the methodological perspectives of the sociology of tourism. An article in *The Times Higher Education Supplement* (October 9, 1998: 16) states that “some people object to the word *social* in social science because *social* lies half-way between sociology and socialism - both of which have become as uncool as they were once trendy.” The raised eyebrows and sceptical responses I received from the people who asked me about my research are therefore not surprising. I am in a *double trouble* situation: doing sociological research (a discipline not too well understood by the general public) on tourism (a service industry not too well recognised as a serious field of study within the general academic community). Lanfant (1993: 85) describes the anxiety sociologists doing research on tourism feel over other sociologists’ perceptions of them doing research on tourism: “One could ask oneself if tourism is not just a pretext to stay in a chosen place. Is it really out of interest for tourism or is it out of interest in the place that the researcher is making it the object of his or her study?”

The sociologists’ rejection of the sociality of tourism, Lanfant (1993: 72) argues, “constitutes an epistemological obstacle, which we must examine in order to pursue our research for we are coming to that absurd situation where international tourism, a phenomenon that is increasingly being encountered by sociology, is disregarded by the discipline and really only studied by chance.” This is ironical

when “within every sociologist is a tourist yet sociologists do not regard tourism as a sociological object worthy of sociological investigation and attention” (Lanfant 1993: 72).

The period before the mid-1980s is commonly noted for the sociologists’ (and anthropologists’) lack of interest on tourism-related research. Several writers have expressed their concern over the matter: “When one looks at the social science literature on tourism, it is striking to see how little has been written by anthropologists” (Crick 1985: 76); “researchers everywhere have discovered tourists while anthropologists have gone to study other things” (Nunez 1989: 265). Why is there a detachment towards tourism, tourists and consequently, research on tourism? Nash (1981: 461) suggests four possible reasons:

- anthropologists perceive themselves to be intrepid fieldworkers, not tourists;
- tourism is a frivolous activity, hence to be avoided by serious-minded anthropologists;
- tourism is a modern phenomenon that has only recently acquired legitimacy and therefore not significantly noticed by anthropologists;
- anthropologists are not aware of the extent of tourism and its consequences.

It would be demeaning, Nash and Smith (1991: 14) suggest, for an anthropologist to be identified with what many think is a frivolous activity or with people who look in a less authoritative way on other people’s “ways.” When sociologists and anthropologists choose to do research on tourism, they focus on the changes caused by tourism and the negative effects these changes brought on the host societies. Cohen (1979: 19) refers to these researchers (Boorstin 1964; Mitford 1959; Turner & Ash 1975, among others) as cultural critics rather than sociologists. These critics view tourism as a cause of cultural, societal and environmental degradation and tourists as superficial nitwits who are easy to please and to cheat, who have limited contact with and little understanding of their surroundings. Preoccupied with the preservation of “native” societies and their “natural,” “exotic” cultures, these cultural critics resent the tourists’ presence in their (sociologist-anthropologist-researchers’) territory – the pre-industrial world. Nash (1981: 465) makes a similar point when he states that the anthropologists’ interests in tourism

have been rather parochial, which tended to reveal a “knee-jerk” response to the “imposition” of tourism in their favourite (pre-industrial and Third World) societies.

Harkin (1995) questions the supposedly novel intention of the anthropologist/sociologist-researchers to keep tourists away from the native societies. He refers to Levi-Strauss’ admonition to campers to “keep your greasy papers, indestructible bottles and gaping tins for the last beauty spots of Europe! Cover European landscapes with the blight of your camping sights” (quoted in Harkin 1995: 661). Why does the researcher think that the tourist’s but not the researcher’s presence in the host society will cause changes to the society concerned? In addition, the researcher, as a writer, will write about his or her research observations and experiences in a manner that is similar to travel writing, romantic poetry or rhetoric. He or she has an audience in mind and will select and present the relevant, unambiguous, perhaps non-sensitive data in a way that will make his or her final narrative coherent to the audience. Harkin (1995: 662) captures the similarity between the researcher’s value-loaded act of framing and narrating his or her experiences with the tourist’s choice of destination (or travel media’s promotional literature):

The qualities of the landscape valued and extolled by the narrator are the same ones valued by the tourist who, by his very act of valuation (that is framing and marking) degrades it. Exactly as the narrator himself degrades it by his narrative framing. Never again can this scene be viewed and described for the “first time.”

Nash (1981: 461) argues that tourism is a legitimate subject worthy of anthropological inquiry. Tourism involves travel, which inadvertently necessitates contact between cultures. When two cultures come into contact of any duration, acculturation occurs: “Each becomes somewhat like the other through the process of borrowing” (Nunez 1989: 266). Burns (1995: 112) notes that the type of contact between tourists and local people in the host destination is both dramatic and unusual. It is dramatic because the contrasts are so visually evident such as in the example of the local villagers in their “natural” and “primitive” setting (thatched hut, longhouse, none or minimal modern amenities) and the foreign tourists in their

“protective” gear (camera, video recorder, sunblock, inoculations, special provision of modern amenities). The contact is unusual because it is rare as the tourists and locals do not usually meet and staged as they only meet through tourism. Tourism therefore plays a potent role on the encounter and social interaction between the tourists and hosts, bringing about both positive and negative effects on the tourists and hosts. The practical-minded question, according to Nash (1981: 465), is how to accentuate the positive and to view tourism as a factor in the maintenance and change of the host society. This is essentially the subject matter of anthropologists and sociologists. The tourists and hosts bring to the encounter their own meanings and interpretations which directs the course of their interaction.

Nunez (1989: 275) echoes Nash’s sentiments when he calls upon anthropologists to exercise prudence in their research orientations and resist the temptation to condemn tourism as unnecessary, intrusive, exploitative and destructive. The rapid rise of international tourism especially from the mid-1980s, Nunez points out, has made the serendipitous approach to tourism studies within anthropology (and sociology) a thing of the past. MacCannell (1976: 177) has also spoken out for the case of tourism as a legitimate subject for sociological inquiry:

The sociologist and the tourist stare at each other across the human community, each one copying the methods of the other as he attempts to synthesise modern and traditional elements in a new holistic understanding of the human community and its place in the modern world.

The sociologist, anthropologist and tourist want to visit other societies, see how the people live and experience their daily life. Van den Berghe (1996: 551) regards tourism as “a mirror of anthropology. Both constitute a quest for the exotic other. Perhaps the anthropologists and tourists yearn to achieve better self-understanding by looking at others.” But their methods differ. Unlike the tourist, the anthropological or sociological researcher is not merely interested to know and experience a little of the cultures visited. He or she tries to be part of the people under study by becoming a participant-observer – living like them, sharing their daily life routines, eating their food, learning to speak their language, and most significant of all, trying to learn the meanings they give to the world around them

and to use these meanings to understand the patterns of social relations in the community. The researcher has an aim that goes beyond the tourist's orientation for a short stay, pleasure-based and limited interaction tour experience. Nor is the researcher interested in teaching new ways of thinking or doing things to the members of the society. Rather, he or she writes about his or her field experiences, analyses the data collected, develops theories, positions the findings and theoretical conclusions within the existing literature and shares these findings with fellow peers through publications and conference presentations. Crick (1985: 82) sums this tripartite role clearly: "The anthropologist in the field is a kind of participant, later (and even during) a kind of writer and often (before, during and after) an academic." In this way, the researcher can detach himself/herself from being a participant-observer to being an observer-participant. Again, Crick condenses this psychosocial mobility aptly: "The anthropologist is a participant, not a participant and not not a participant."

Sociologists' and anthropologists' growing awareness of the phenomenal rise of tourism in contemporary societies have engendered more research interests on tourism. As Lovel and Feuerstein (1992: 337) note, tourism has now begun to be examined from the economic, anthropological, social and cultural perspectives. There is also a shift in research orientation. Instead of the rigidly crude and deterministic approaches to the impacts of tourism, the researchers are adopting a more holistic and integrated approach to the study of tourism in human societies. Gone are the days "where we could lament the lack of serious research on tourism, but now social researchers like tourists themselves are flocking to tourist centres" (Greenwood 1989: 171).

Lanfant (1993: 84) observes that research in the sociology of tourism has taken on a new direction: "This is the work of young researchers who carry out multi-faceted field studies of tourism. The majority of these researchers come from the tourism generating countries but they have chosen to work in the host." Lanfant calls these young sociologist-researchers, *touristologues*, who like the tourists are interested in marginal and so-called traditional communities. The *touristologues'* presence in the locality, however, is not as clearly defined as the tourists' presence. Strangers in the research locality, the *touristologues* try to live among *people not like*

them, that is, the local people, to learn and make sense of their everyday life. At the same time, the *touristologues* are also studying *people like them*, the foreign tourists, who are visiting the local people. From the tourists, the *touristologues* may receive curious stares or resentful remarks. The local population, on the other hand, may mistake the *touristologues* as tourists or be sceptical of the *touristologues*' intentions and loyalty. How will the *touristologues* define their existence while in the field? Do they identify themselves with the tourists or with the local people? Lanfant (1993: 85) describes the *touristologue*'s dilemma clearly:

- the *touristologue* studying tourism and tourists is also an ethnologist or ethnographer studying the resident population as hosts;
- the 'ethnologist-in-the-*touristologue*' views the presence of tourists and the researcher studying tourism on the ethnologist's turf as an intrusion or interference. He or she believes the tourists and researcher on tourism have no respect for the local people, their customs and environment;
- the 'researcher-on-tourism-in-the-*touristologue*' does not look kindly at the ethnologist who regards tourism and tourists with disdain and disrespect.

The *touristologue* knows that ethnology perceives tourism as a nuisance or bad news and that the sociologist-anthropologist who is interested in a place while it is being changed by tourism is not regarded as a fully-fledged researcher by the academic profession¹. The *touristologue* is thus in an unenviable situation: "A newcomer in the scientific world, the *touristologue* appears to be a bastard, a sort of hybrid incapable of choosing between two motivations (ethnologist or tourist) of which one appears to be legitimate and the other a subject of suspicion." Lanfant (1993: 85) argues for the recognition of *touristologues*: "Why should we not give the same credit to these *touristologues* as we would willingly give to someone who follows a safer career? In the field, *touristologues* never lose sight of the ethnologist's rule of keeping one's distance."

Tourism as a service industry involves a network of different but inter-related segments that have their respective needs, capacities and roles. These segments are

located both in the tourist generating (tourists, home government, tour businesses) and tourist receiving (host population, host government, tour businesses) countries. The study of tourism is incomplete if it disregards this wider, multi-dimensional context. An integrated and holistic approach is necessary because tourism is “a bilateral exchange” (Lanfant 1993: 77); “a give-and-take transaction” (Nash 1981: 467); and “a journey of people, organised by people for the benefit of people” (Baswedan 1993: 42).

1.2 TOURIST AND TOURISM : MEANING AND RESEARCH ORIENTATIONS

Travel and tourism are extremely prominent features of the modern world. The World Tourism Organisation estimates that some 400 million international tourist trips are taken each year, making tourist travel among the largest and most significant movements of people in human history (McIntosh 1995: 4). By the year 2000, international tourist arrivals are estimated to increase to approximately 650 million (Theobald 1994; Pollock & Ritchie 1990). These tourism statistics indicate that in modern and post-industrial societies, tourism has become a social practice with great significance. McIntosh (1995: 25) notes that the tourism industry is anticipated to leave its economic signature in the coming millennium, turning the era into the Age of Travel.

The rapid rise in modern tourism has sparked off much theorising on the reasons why modern people display a high travel motivation. In connection with this focus is the discussion on who the tourists are. Tourists have been variously categorised as wanderlust or investigator, sunlust or sunseeker (Gray in Kanellakis 1975: 13; Barclay and Ferguson 1992: 381), seeking recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental or existential tourist experiences (Cohen 1979: 22).

¹ The other way could happen too: the tourists and the tour businesses may not take too kindly to the ethnologist-anthropologist in their midst. For example, one of the tour operators I interviewed criticised the ‘holier-than-thou’ attitude of anthropologists who looked down on tourists and tourism. He said that like the anthropologists, tourists want to visit other cultures to know and learn more about the people. Unlike the anthropologists, however, tourists do not want to live like the local people and experience discomfort in the process.

In the pre-industrial era, travel was predominantly confined to the upper classes or elites who travelled individually or in very small groups for trading purposes, educational intentions, cross-cultural alliances through marriages (Walji 1990) or for pleasure, culture and pilgrimages (Urry 1990: 4). Few people outside the upper classes travelled to see objects unconnected with work or business. After the Industrial Revolution, travel gradually developed into a mass, popular leisure activity. People in post-industrial societies have opportunities for travel or tour with their accumulation of disposable incomes and time, facilitated by the increase in infrastructure and organised travel services.

In modern or post-industrial societies, travel or tour becomes a non-work, non-remunerative pursuit. Travel gives the people an opportunity to leave their structured, established routines for a short period in pursuit of rest, recreation and fantasy (Urry 1990: 2). Travel takes on an added dimension. Travel for pleasure and recreation becomes a means to a greater end - self-fulfilment and spiritual renewal. A new perspective on travel begins to take shape. Travel for pleasure as a means to an end becomes a "tour." "Tour" denotes a circular movement: the individual leaves his or her usual place of residence and daily routine to go to a place (outside the usual residence) that is different from the home environment for the purpose of pleasure, recreation and self-fulfilment and after a duration (more than a night and less than a year), returns to his or her usual place of residence and resumes the daily routine. The traveller who embarks on this circular movement (tour) not for work or cash remuneration purposes is a tourist. He or she is free from primary obligations, gainful employment, study, family and community responsibilities (Nash 1981: 461-462). The tourist's tour requires a range of services and amenities provided by others. The provision of these services - transport, communications, accommodations, food and drinks, clothing, entertainment, souvenirs, attractions and activities - are undertaken by a network of businesses, each serving the tourist in their individual capacities. This organisation of the production and consumption of tourist-related services and attractions is called tourism. Tourism signifies the modern people's desire to take a break from familiar environment and ordinary routines and embark on a trip "to discover the unknown, explore new and strange

places, seek changes in the environment and undergo new experiences” (Murphy 1985: 3).

As travel and tour shift from a purposeful and elitist, hence “cultured” pursuit (educational and cultural learning, pilgrimages, and recuperative purposes), to a mass culture and popular pursuit (sun, sea, sand and sex), it becomes a leisure activity associated with pleasure and fun and frivolous behaviour. This view of tourism as a leisure activity has contributed to the predominantly bad reviews of tourism and tourists. Tourists “trample on sacred sites and photograph their remnants with arrogance and haste” and tourism is a leisure activity “indulged by the rich and famous or the uncouth or deviants who have no respect for the people and places visited” (Lovel and Feuerstein 1992: 347). The tourist, as the ultimate consumer, becomes so detached from the process of production that he or she does not think much of the production process itself as long as the final product serves its purpose. It is not surprising when Davidson (1994: 21), for example, notes that “tourism has an image problem.” MacCannell (quoted in Cohen 1979: 20) argues that the sociologists who accept the prevailing negative view of tourists and tourism have confused the data of their observations with their instruments of analysis whereby an understanding of the deeper cultural significance of tourism has been precluded.

Why do modern people leave their familiar surroundings and living comforts for a hierarchically different society that promises an unfamiliar, non-ordinary and uncertain experience? Several theorists have forwarded their views. But first, let us examine the word “modern.” Urry (1990: 90) quotes Berman: “To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises adventure, power, joy, growth, transformations of ourselves and the world. Such an environment is possible for modern people through their increasing ownership of disposable monetary resources, the availability of knowledge and the fast expanding network of infrastructural services and communication systems.” Urry points out that the more a society modernises, the more knowledge is available to its members. Modern people use this knowledge and increased awareness to reflect on their existence and the conditions they live in and to compare these with the outside world. Travel and tour provide them with the opportunity to transfer this theoretical knowledge into experience. Urry argues that modern people see travel as a right of their citizenship, both within

the national boundaries and beyond. Citizenship means acquiring rights and the legitimacy to exercise these rights. As citizens, modern people have the right to travel to and within all societies, to have access to travel facilities and services, to purchase a range of goods and services from different countries for their own consumption. Citizenship, in short, involves claims to consume other places, cultures and commodities. Hence, a modern person seeks self-development and self-actualisation through consuming other cultures.

Brosius (1993: 24) expresses a similar view on modern or industrial people's claim of citizenship rights, which he defines as the right to intervene in places outside their usual place of residence. In his article on the Penans of Sarawak, Malaysia, Brosius examines the process by which the Penan landscape has become commodified and how it is portrayed by the respective parties: the Penan themselves; Sarawak state and Malaysian federal governments; and Malaysian and Western environmentalists. Each party has its own rhetorical constructions of the Penans and the rainforests. Citing the case of Western environmentalists who, in the name of conservation and saving the Penans, portray them as "shy, gentle forest-dwelling and loincloth-wearing Penans," Brosius argues that these environmentalists saw their intervention in the Penan issue as their right as citizens of the Earth: "It is your country but our planet."

While Urry and Brosius emphasise the modern tourists' desire to translate their increased knowledge into practical experience, other theorists suggest that the tourists' urge to tour is a factor of modernity. MacCannell (1976) provides a substantive analysis on this perspective. According to MacCannell (1976: 91), in traditional societies, the good and bad are clearly defined. In modern societies, the good and bad are blurred due to social structural differentiation, which gives rise to ongoing moral evaluation and interpretation. The industrial person could retreat into his or her own niche at his or her workplace, neighbourhood bar and family. The modern person is losing his or her attachments to the workbench, neighbourhood, town, family, and at the same time, developing an interest in the real life of others. Consequently, the modern person feels alienated from the society in which he or she is a member. The modern person, says MacCannell (1976: 41), is condemned to look

elsewhere, everywhere for his authenticity, to see if he catches a glimpse of it reflected in the simplicity, poverty, chastity or purity of others.

How does the modern tourist know what he or she is looking for, or that he or she has found what he or she is looking for? The modern person knows, says MacCannell (1976: 110), because there are markers (pieces of information) about the sights (attractions). When he or she has chosen the sight, he or she is ready for the sightseeing tour. Sightseeing, according to MacCannell, is precisely what modern tourism is. It is a modern ritual born out of the modern people's need to seek a holistic and integrated structure to replace the structural fragmentation and alienation characteristic of modern life. Brett (1994: 121) elaborates on MacCannell's idea on sightseeing. The touristic representations of the host destination, according to Brett, re-present their originals to the world at large through imagery: through topographical painting, the panorama and book, newspaper, photos, picture postcard and travel brochure, film and video. Tour becomes a search for the original (authentic) of these representations. The search for the original is called sightseeing.

MacCannell (1976: 110) has termed his sightseeing analysis as the semiotics of attraction where the markers function as signs, as they "represent something to someone else." Uzzell (1984: 97) adopts this semiotic technique as his tool of analysis in his examination of tour brochures and their structural meanings. He argues that a marker becomes significantly relevant to the observer or reader if the latter shares the same cultural meaning as that intended by the marker or sign. A smoker for example continues to smoke regardless of the anti-smoking advertisements (sign) he or she sees on the television. He or she does not attach the same meaning "smoking is dangerous to health" to the act of smoking as with the producers of the advertisement. There is no direct, deterministic relationship between the object represented and the sign. The reader or observer has the opportunity to invent, interpret and attach his or her own meanings. There is therefore room for myth making and image creation. Berger (1972: 8-9) explains how this works:

What we know or believe affects the way we see things. Yet this seeing which comes before words is not a question of mechanically reacting to stimuli. We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice. As a result of this act, what we see is brought within our reach. We are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves.

This way of seeing, in the tourism context, is what Urry (1990: 1) calls the tourist gaze: “When we gaze at something, our gaze is socially organised and systematised. We just do not see or look but we see and look from a perspective, socially constructed through time and space. Hence, when a tourist visits a place, he or she will look at the environment with interest and curiosity. He or she will gaze at what is encountered.” Tourists as consumers, tend “to prefer a product whose image is congenial to them” (Hunt 1975: 2) and it will be used and enjoyed “when it joins with, meshes with, adds to, reinforces the way the consumer thinks about himself or herself” (Levy quoted in Hunt 1975: 2). In short, it is not the product’s inherent qualities or what it will do for the consumer but more significantly, what the product means to him or her (Spector quoted in Hunt 1975: 2). Ultimately, we can say that when the consumer-tourist buys a tourism product, he or she is not only buying the image of the other (host people) but also his or her own self-image that he or she sees as reflected in the product. Does this therefore mean the tourist and the host share a similar self-image?

Brett (1994: 126) provides some light on this fuzzy question. As a tourist attraction, the local hosts possess a split consciousness of self: self-for-others and a self-for-self. The self-for-others, the staged self, is what is presented to tourists (equivalent to Goffman’s [1969] front stage) and the self-for-self, the real self, is what is not presented to tourists (Goffman’s back stage). The tourists’ consumption of the local hosts’ self-for-others is therefore not the same as the hosts’ real self-for-self image. Brett theorises that the tourists may not have a problem as they only see the hosts’ self-for-others that is presented to them. But the local hosts will experience a tension because of their dual and often contradicting existence. They have to deal with shifting boundaries between their staged and real selves; where one ends and the other begins might not be an easy matter. MacCannell has already shown his sensitivity to the host people’s dilemma in his book *The Tourist* (1976). The

traditional folks, according to MacCannell (1976: 178), dramatise their backwardness as a way of fitting themselves in the total design of modern society as attractions. This dramatisation involves the social production of highly fictionalised versions of their everyday life, which consequently leads to a museumisation of their quaintness:

It is here, in this other change, paralleling the great technological innovations that flow in the opposite direction, that some new and unstudied problems are appearing: the moderns' nervous concern for the authenticity of their touristic experience; the traditional folks' difficulty in attempting to live someone else's version of their life.

MacCannell (1976: 105) prefers to view the tourist in a positive light and disagrees with Boorstin's thesis that the tourist is a superficial nitwit because he or she seeks inauthentic experiences. Instead, he argues that the tourist demands authenticity and seeks linkages between the sights presented to him or her. According to MacCannell (1976: 88), Goffman's (1969) front and back stage thesis for the presentation of self creates an aura or mysticism for the back stage by virtue of the fact that it is hidden or inaccessible to the audience. This concealment arouses the observer's curiosity and interest to venture into the "mysterious" back. In tourism, the tour establishment and local hosts need not expose nor conceal the latter's back stage (their real living conditions) to the tourists. MacCannell suggests that the tour establishment can create a non-authentic tourist space for the benefit of the tourist and re-produce it as an authentic representation of the host destination to the unsuspecting tourist, who accepts the staged authenticity as real. By introducing the concept "staged authenticity," MacCannell has de-mystified or removed the aura of Goffman's back stage. In addition, the idea that authenticity can be staged, like a theatrical production on a travelling tour, implies that the staging does not jeopardise or inauthenticate the "real thing." The venue or setting and the players may not be the "real place and people." Nevertheless the staged production is "real" because it contains all the "local and indigenous" ingredients. As McCrone and his colleagues (1995: 3) point out, "it seems to matter little which of these exhibits are "real" or not,

because ... the real measure is “authenticity,” a commodity which can easily be manufactured with the aid of special effects.”

Cohen (1979: 27-28), however, argues that the tourists may not totally accept or believe that the tourist space is “authentic” or “real.” Cohen points out that MacCannell does not mention the tour establishment’s manipulative methods to present a “false” back (staged authenticity) to the tourists. He argues that MacCannell’s idea of staged authenticity is only one component of a larger framework of the touristic situation. This larger framework, according to Cohen, consists of four types of touristic situations, which in turn are based on two main dimensions. These two dimensions are:

- nature of the scene the tourist enters (what is ready for the tourist) which in turn is divided into:
 - real scene (not manipulated by the tourist establishment and host);
 - staged scene (manipulated by the establishment and host).

- the tourist’s impression of the scene (what the tourist makes of what is ready for him or her) which is also divided into:
 - the tourist’s impression that the situation is a real one;
 - the tourist’s impression that the situation entered has been manipulated or staged by the establishment and host.

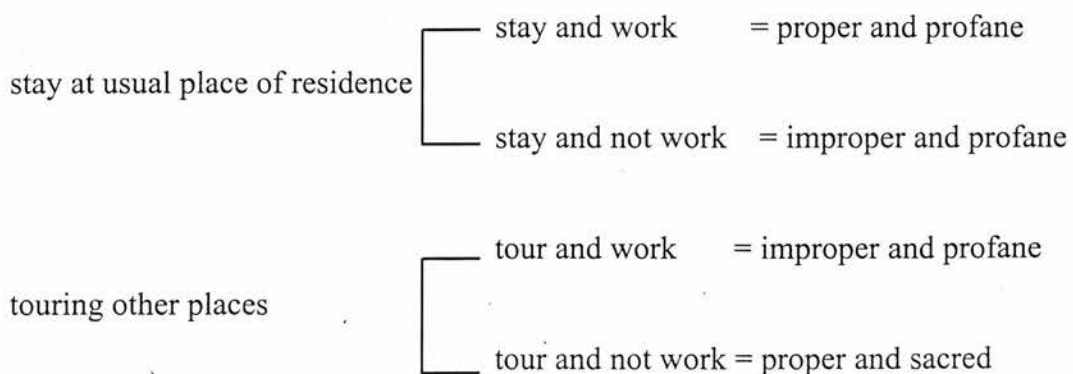
Table 1.1 below shows the four possible touristic situations based on the combinations of the above dimensions accompanied by their respective descriptions:

Table 1.1 Four Possible Touristic Situations

		Nature of Scene Entered	
		<i>Real</i>	<i>Staged</i>
Tourist Impression of Scene Entered	<i>Impression of real scene</i>	authentic (real-real)	staged authenticity (staged-real)
	<i>impression of staged scene</i>	denial of authenticity (real-staged)	contrived authenticity (staged-staged)

- authentic (real-real): This is a situation which is both “objectively real” as well as accepted as such by the tourists. It is encountered outside “tourist spaces”, for example, on off-the-beaten-track tours taken by young, authenticity-seeking tourists;
- staged authenticity (staged-real): This is the situation described by MacCannell – the tourist establishment stages the scene for the tourist, but the tourist is not aware of the staging and therefore accepts it as real. Cohen calls this situation “covert tourist space” because the tourist establishment is interested in presenting its contraptions as real and attempts to keep the tourists unaware of the staging;
- denial of authenticity (real-staged): This is the reverse of staged authenticity. The scene is “objectively real” but the tourist, who has learned from some dire previous experience that apparently authentic situations have been purposely manipulated to mislead the visitor, doubts its authenticity. The tourist develops a suspicion that he or she has been taken in, when in fact, this is not the case. Cohen calls this “staging suspicion” for the tourist is suspicious of all the presentations;
- contrived authenticity (staged-staged): The hosts or the tourist establishment admittedly stages the scene and the tourist is conscious of the staging. Cohen calls this situation “overt tourist space.” Examples are model villages, such as villages that have been especially established to show the tourist the traditional way of life of a people that has either disappeared or been adulterated (open air museum concept). Another example is the staged performance of traditional dances or rituals that are specially reconstructed for tourists outside the original setting.

Graburn (1989: 28-31; 1976), like Cohen and MacCannell, also has a positive attitude towards tourism and tourists in general. He moves away from the prevailing view that tourism represents a liminal zone - an anti-structure zone that is neither here nor there - which supposedly gives tourists the licence to indulge in permissive, playful or ludic behaviour. Instead, Graburn draws a parallel between the post-industrial people's need for contact with *other* human cultures and the non-industrial people's need for contact with the *spirit* world. In the latter, annual festivals and ceremonial rituals are important events to divert their attention from the daily, ordinary, secular and known routines to activities and practices that are out of the ordinary, unknown, sacred and periodical. These festivals have an aura of uniqueness and novelty by virtue of their irregularity and non-ordinariness. In post-industrial societies in particular, festivals lose their significance as people move away from the spiritual to secular activities. Instead of religious festivals and ceremonies, post-industrial people use tourism to get away from mundane routines. Pre-industrial and post-industrial people therefore display similar characteristics: the desire to get away from established daily routines and productive work which are familiar and ordinary to unfamiliar and non-ordinary activities. Graburn calls the ordinary, work-related routines as "profane activities in a secular world" and the non-ordinary, non-work-related experiences as "sacred activities in a spiritual world." Whether the travel motive is religious or touristic, the individuals concerned are not engaged in profane activities associated with subsistence and remunerative work. Rather, they engage in a spiritual stimulation that will endow a sense of feeling "whole" and connected within their own selves and with others. Below is a re-presentation of Graburn's thesis on tourism as a sacred journey:



The tourism establishment and the local hosts continue to engage in profane, secular activities (work) because they have to serve the tourists. The tourists have left their profane work behind for the time being to begin their sacred journey (tour) for the sake of pleasure and recreation (leisure) and self-fulfilment (spiritual renewal).

From the above theorising of the modern tourists' search for authenticity in the other, we can summarise two main elements associated with this motive. These two elements are time and organic solidarity (Harkin 1995: 654; Graburn 1976: 19 & 24). The search for the authentic - the "primitive," "natural," "rare," "handmade," "traditional" (Graburn 1976: 19) - inevitably entails a search for the past, that which is or has not become modern. Time or temporality gives a sense of history, a sense of returning to roots and developing a feeling of common or collective destiny between the hosts and the tourists through that shared tourist space (MacCannell's staged authenticity). The structural differentiation of modern life, while causing alienation among its modern people, gives rise to organic solidarity. Tourism thrives on differentiation for without differences, there is no attraction, hence no tourism. Difference is a novelty and according to Burns (1995: 115), it is a novelty for both the hosts and tourists. The tourists are dehumanised into unidentifiable objects with money to spend, with no serious intentions except to have fun and pleasure. The local hosts on the other hand are homogenised into an undifferentiated category of simple-minded, hospitable and backward people. Both the tourists' and local hosts' gaze are diverted from the "real" self-for-self to the "represented" self-for-other, to borrow Brett's concept.

According to Hollinshead (1990: 313), the greatest shortfall of tourism is the lack of understanding of tour operators and planners of what is meaningful to the host population. In the process of meeting the modern tourists' search for the authentic and primitive, tour operators, including the local hosts, develop the tendency to "speak only to the consumer and what the consumer wants" (Graburn 1976: 32). When this happens, the product is no longer the hosts' heritage or possession but the tourists' attraction or product. Such possibility gives rise to the idea of tourism as a means of perpetuating unequal relations between tourists and local hosts (Nash 1989: 37) or a form of imperialism (Nieto 1976: 124; Harkin 1995:

656) because of the domestication of the hosts or their subordination to the tourists' needs. The tourists are seen as imposing and active while the local hosts are submissive and passive, like "inert billiard balls" (Wood 1993: 66). This tourists-as-active and hosts-as-passive view needs qualification. Although tourism is a leisure pursuit, and hence not economically productive for the user or consumer, it nevertheless generates productive work for others. These include the home and host governments who will formulate tourism policies, introduce legislation concerning immigration and travel movements and provide allocations for infrastructure development; the travel and tour businesses in the home and host countries and world-wide; and the local people in the host destinations. Dominance and unequal power relations, therefore, do not only exist between the tourist generating and tourist receiving countries or between the tourists and local hosts. The phenomenon also exists within the host destinations, that is, between the host government and tourism businesses, between the tourism businesses and the local people who become part of the tourism attraction and among the local people themselves. Tourism has an existence that thrives on its own right: the tourist arrives and leaves, the host entertains and stays back and the tour operators move on to better sights but tourism continues to confront human societies so long as travel and tour serves the human beings' curiosity and interest to know about other places and their people.

The arguments against tourism as a cause of cultural degradation and the idea of passive hosts subjecting themselves to demonstration effects or imperialistic motives ignore the fact that the parties involved could be willing partners in the industry. The role of these parties and the impact of tourism on each of them have to be given equal consideration. De Kadt (quoted in Burns 1995: 125) argues that the frequent charge that tourism contributes to a degeneration of [culture] appears to be an exaggeration. Even though the tourists' demand stimulate curio production, airport art or performances of fake folklore, more often, the production of these cultural stuff into tourists' souvenirs revitalised the local hosts' consciousness of their own cultural artefacts and practices. De Kadt, however, questions the tourism establishment's claim of authenticity: "True authenticity cannot be achieved by conservation alone. To be authentic, the touristically claimed authentic cultural

reproductions must be rooted both in historical tradition and in the present day life” (quoted in Burns 1995: 125).

In summary to this section, we can say that the general conceptualisation of tourism in terms of tourist motive and practices pattern the research orientations on tourism. The main research theme revolves around the relationship between tourism and culture. Through tourism, culture becomes a commodity (through the process of commodification and commoditisation) or “culture by the pound” (Greenwood 1989: 171). When this happens, the local culture is transformed into “local colour,” joining the ranks of other touristic merchandise in the host destination such as wildlife, heritage buildings, forests, islands and highlands, as part of the “come-on” - the attractions designed to lure prospective tourists to the host destinations (Greenwood 1989: 172). The old, existing culture becomes an extension of the modern mass media. The tourism authorities, as cultural brokers, appropriate the local colour into their tourism packages for their business interests. Baswedan (1993: 47) draws a parallel between local colour and a bastard, the product of an illicit sexual relationship. “A bastard,” Baswedan notes, “does not belong to either parent. One parent leaves without accepting any responsibility for the child left behind.” The local colour, by its very name, is coloured by the illicit mixture of local and foreign, fact and fiction, living and staged. More significantly, in the tourism context, the tourist leaves the “coloured” or bastardised culture behind for the local people to take care of, a culture that is ahistorical and meaningless to them. Greenwood (1989: 173) has also suggested that “a fundamental characteristic of the capitalist system is that anything that can be priced can be bought and sold. It can be treated as a commodity. This offers no problem when the subject is razor blades or hotel accommodations. But when it is local culture, it is not so clear cut.”

Culture, an integrated system of meanings that help the members of the culture to view and understand the world around them, is something that people have internalised through the process of socialisation and taken for granted. Greenwood (1989: 179-180) points out that the commoditisation of culture robs the people of the very meanings by which they organise their lives: “No people anywhere can live without the meanings culture provides.” Through shared meanings, the group members develop a sense of collective representation and solidarity that allows them

to “converge and integrate as one social entity” (Dahlan 1990:131). This is not to say that culture is not contentious or that all its members unanimously accept its forms and meanings. There is occasion for diverse perspectives and contestation but generally, culture structures and regulates the lives of its members to ensure some maintenance of social order.

Dahlan (1990: 131) perceives this local culture as comprised of three components – behavioural, material and mental aspects – which serve the political and ethnic, economic and social, religious and aesthetic needs of the community. These three components and their respective qualities represent the “soul or the social mind of the community which is manifested in the symbolic order of the group.” When these three aspects of culture become commoditised, that is transformed from use-value commodities to exchange-value commodities, what happens to the qualities of the respective components of culture? Greenwood uses the term “shared meanings” while Dahlan (1990: 31) uses the term “collective soul or social mind” to refer to the significance of the local culture for the local community. When the components of culture become units of consumption by others who not only pay to consume these cultural components but, more significantly, do not belong to and do not share the system of meanings encoded in the cultural components, these meanings inadvertently become modified or altered. Greenwood expresses his concern over the massive and destructive alterations in local culture brought by the tourism industry. Culture brokers have appropriated facets of a lifestyle into the tourism package to help sales in the competitive market. Tourism simply packages the cultural realities of a people for sale along with their other resources. To treat culture as a natural resource or a commodity over which tourists have rights is a violation of the local people’s cultural rights. This cultural commoditisation, Greenwood argues, does not require the consent of the participants; anyone can do it. On a similar note, Dahlan (1990: 131) asks these questions: “Can anyone understand and appreciate fully a cultural artefact if he or she has not become native to the cultural milieu under which the cultural artefact is produced? Will the cultural artefacts serve tourism if the soul of the community that produces those artefacts is vulgarised? Can these artefacts ever serve tourism if the

commodification and commoditisation of these artefacts lack the aesthetic quality in the management of tourism?”

Greenwood's forceful stand against the commoditisation of culture may make him look like an anti-tourism activist. I do not think Greenwood has this role in mind. Rather, his analysis of the Alarde and the effect on the local people draws our attention to a pertinent question: what happens to the local culture and the people when one category of outsiders imposes their meanings on this culture? Greenwood and also Dahlan rightly point out that commoditisation of culture is problematic because outsiders – the economists, development planners, travel and tour business – do not see the local culture in the same way as the local people or for that matter, as the anthropologists and sociologists.

MacCannell (1984: 377) and Graburn (1984: 410) have also expressed their views on this matter. MacCannell views the commoditisation of local culture as an act of “reconstructing ethnicity” while Graburn calls it “secondary ethnicity.” By this they mean the tourism authorities or the host community themselves select certain ethnic attributes and subject these attributes to a process of manufacture, reproduction, re-creation or re-invention in order to meet the required specifications of the ethnically different tourism market. The motivation to produce products of reconstructed ethnicity, however, comes from without, that is, the tourism businesses and consumers. The act of reconstructing ethnicity does not manifest a renewed interest or revitalised consciousness in ethnic identity within the local population. It may, however, affect the natural evolution of the local culture and develop a sense of falseness among the local community for the re-constructed or staged ethnicity.

Boissevain (1996: 116), on the other hand, has a different view. Citing the Maltese situation, Boissevain maintains that the Maltese used the commoditisation of their celebrations as an opportunity to renegotiate their social and cultural boundaries. The meanings the Maltese gave for their celebrations have not changed even though they have sold their “culture by the pound.” This is because the Maltese have devised a new way of looking at their celebrations. They attached a dual meaning to every celebration: a ritual aspect which refers to the internal, rigid

elements performed only by experts or specialists like, for example, Maltese priests; and a play aspect, referring to the external, popular elements staged by the lay public.

Through the play aspect, the tourists and local Maltese could participate in the celebration and imagine with the crowd. Hence, Boissevain notes that commoditisation of culture does not necessarily lead to a destruction of the local culture. The Maltese have shown that by separating the audience and celebrations into different categories, they could still retain and maintain the existing meanings of their culture. Moreover, the play aspect of an otherwise solemn ritual allows the local Maltese to develop a sense of identity and a sense of *communitas* (Boissevain 1996: 116).

Likewise, in his research on the Balinese involvement in the tourism industry, McKean (1973; 1976; 1989) concludes that tourism is not a destructive force nor is the local population a passive victim of tourism. He argues that the Balinese traditions will prosper in direct proportion to the success of the tourist industry. McKean refers to the traditions as the arts, incorporating the dance, music, architecture, carving and painting. His findings indicate that the Balinese participated actively in the production and reproduction of their culture as a tourist attraction. He categorises the active responses the Balinese people developed towards tourism into cultural, economic and organisational responses. For cultural responses, McKean illustrates how the Balinese separated the audience into divine, local and tourists and their attempts to present different versions of their traditions to each of these categories. By doing so, the Balinese were able to keep the divine and the local from the 'playful' tourists. For economic responses, McKean shows how the Balinese utilized a significant portion of the income they earned from tourism to develop and improve their cultural activities and group performances. For organisational responses, McKean refers to the Indonesian government's attempts to consolidate the tourism industry and infrastructure in the country.

1.3 TOURISM AS A LEGITIMATE ACTIVITY

When the XXI United Nations General Assembly declared 1967 as the International Tourist Year, it formally acknowledged the significance of tourism as a

“basic and most desirable human activity deserving the praise and encouragement of all peoples and governments” (Bukhart & Medlik 1981). The Manila Declaration on World Tourism 1988 (Gunn 1994: 12) emphasised the important contributions tourism can make to the individual and society in the following ways:

- total fulfilment of the human being
- increase in knowledge and understanding
- equality of destiny of nations
- liberation of human spirit for respect of other identities
- respect for existence of cultures and heritage of peoples

The United Nations and Manila Declarations seem to re-assert the good points of tourism vis-à-vis the negative perceptions of tourism (frivolous, imperialistic and degrading). To revise or redefine the image of tourism, we need an alternative perspective on tourism that takes into account the fact that tourism is a human activity involving a network of diverse components with multitudinal aims and capacities. The social organisation of the tourism sector needs to incorporate all these dimensions if the UN and Manila Declarations were to be realised. Lanfant (1993) notes that all the parties involved are social actors who actively participate in the production and reproduction of touristic attractions and merchandise. The dynamics involved in this cross-cultural activity makes international tourism more than an economic, pleasure-based activity. International tourism is a social fact, affecting all aspects of life in both the tourist-generating and tourist-receiving countries. The meeting of these two different categories of people brings to the forefront the visible racial, ethnic, gender, class and cultural differences.

Coming from developed countries, modern-day tourists are associated with wealth and money. The tourist's identity while at a host destination is mostly one of money (Hutnyk 1996: 150). What do these *moneyed tourists* expect to learn from the *non-moneyed* people living in undeveloped places? Crick draws our attention to the hierarchical differences between the tourists and hosts: “For all the talk about sacred journeys, cultural understanding, freedom, play and so on, we must not forget the fundamental inequalities” (quoted in Hutnyk 1996: 218).

People do not just live in a society; they produce the society in order to live (Carrithers 1992: 1). Human society thus has a history and a past that has shaped the present. Changes imposed onto a society for the sake of tourism disregard the local history and local context. Human beings are reflective, thinking people. To present a society as unchanged is to take away the essential human capacity to change and adapt, replacing it with a belief that “human societies come into being spontaneously” (Carrithers 1992: 9). There is also a misperception that some people have the capacity to change while others are without this capacity and will only change with outside intervention.

An important goal of tourism is to bring development to the host community and territory (Gunn 1994: 12). Development cannot take place without the active participation of the community concerned, whose motivation to discard, revise, improve old ways of doing things must come from within themselves. The community members should feel they are important enough to take part in the planning and decision making of developments that will certainly have an impact on their lives. Development therefore means working towards change from within, based on local thoughts, conditions and needs. In this way, the community acquires autonomy to act as equal partners with the outside intermediaries in the tourism project. For this to occur, outsiders (Nieto 1976: 95) should not determine decisions and aims. Mediation from outside, especially domination by powerful agents does not allow the local community to be independent and self-reliant and autonomous. But here is the paradox of development. Development in the modern world is identified with modernisation, with economic growth and progress. To be developed means to be industrialised, modernised and technologically advanced; to be underdeveloped means the opposite. Development assumes an evolutionary, linear progression from a backward, undignified, underdeveloped condition towards a dominant, dignified and developed condition. When a society or community thinks it needs development, it implies that the people believe they are economically underdeveloped and backward. They believe that they should go through the same process, the same stages of growth and acquire the same material resources as the advanced, Western countries. The idea of *having more* (in material terms) instead of *being more* (in non-material or spiritual terms) comes to personify the rich versus the

poor (Rahnema quoted in Sachs 1992: 172). Esteva (quoted in Sachs 1992: 23) argues that this need to *have more* creates a false dependence among the community members on outside intervention. Culture with or without tourism will change because cultural change is effected by both internal and external factors. The question is speed and type of change. Tourism is not the sole cause of cultural dilution (Burns 1995: 127). Mass media, education, modernisation, development, information dissemination are among the main factors that may have preceded tourism in causing changes to the host destination.

Tourism has been recognised, particularly over the last two decades in many developing countries, as being a means of assisting in the process of development. To take advantage of rising statistics in tourist arrivals, these developing countries invest heavily in the tourism sector without giving careful and sustained consideration to its potential impacts and demands. In principle, a nation's tourism policy aims to integrate the economic, political, cultural, intellectual and environmental benefits of tourism cohesively with the local people and the nation in order to improve the quality of life and provide a foundation for peace and prosperity. In practice, the authorities believe that the success of the nation's economic and development aspirations through tourism depend directly on customer satisfaction with the products the nation has to offer. Each nation therefore strives to have the competitive edge in the 4 Ps - product, presentation, pricing and promotion. However, national tourism strategies are often detached or not integrated with the local needs and conditions.

The outcome of this importation of foreign-based inputs is the replication of prevailing conditions from the already established industrial countries to the industrialising tourist destinations, a paradox situation clearly noted by Turner and Ash (quoted in Urry 1990: 7): "These national tourism productions reflect universal communality whereby the pursuit of the unique and unrivalled ironically ends in uniformity." The paradox of this is that to survive in the 1990s and beyond, the tourism industry must provide top quality tourism products, superior service, achieve extraordinary responsiveness to the consumer, have an international outlook, create uniqueness, make sales and service forces into heroes, pursue fast-paced innovation and launch into a customer revolution (Edgell 1991: 194-196). Tourists have come to

expect more from every country, business, organisation and person employed in the tourism industry with respect to quality, accuracy, variety, convenience, value and professionalism. International trade, world travel and mass electronic communications have created tremendous pressures for a global homogenisation of products, lifestyles, architecture, food and eating habits, entertainment and many forms of everyday behaviour systems (Brent Ritchie 1991: 149-158).

From a tourism perspective, this creeping homogenisation has led to some concern that one of the most fundamental motivations for travel - the desire to observe and be part of a different environment for a short period of time - may be threatened. At the same time, many societies and cultural groups are consciously undertaking efforts to create and re-create unique and unrivalled cultural packages for tourist consumption. So there emerges a paradoxical situation in which cultural diversity is thriving in a sea of homogenisation. The question is how do the respective countries develop tourism packages that promote uniqueness in their cultural makeup, heritage and indigenous resources?

The alternative approach to tourism as a factor of change in community development recognises the "sociality of tourism." Since tourism involves the movement and meeting of people of different backgrounds, it is a sociological object and the subject matter of sociology. The sociological perspective on how people define themselves, how they construct their identities, and how these identities affect their interaction and relationships with others becomes more significant in the context of international tourism and globalisation. Urry (1994: 90) notes that "in tourism, part of the image of place is increasingly produced for actual or potential visitors, hence the question of how identities are constructed becomes pertinent given the fragmented and international nature of the tourism consumer market."

The principal theme of the sociology of tourism is the tension between the way aspects of host culture are constructed and produced for tourist consumption and how they exist in reality in the host culture. In making decisions over holiday choices, tourists rely on images and their perceived meanings to help them make the decision. By generating and transmitting a favourable image, the destination areas try to persuade the potential tourists to decide in favour of their destination. Here, policy

makers can make decisions and create images with little or no interference from the local people. As a chosen policy (Richter 1980: 144), tourism is not like other policies (agrarian, economic, language, education) imposed upon or by a reluctant government because of political pressures. But as people of the world become more educated and more informed, they are seeking to put in place new processes of government that are more directly responsive to the wishes of the population in question. There is increasing opposition toward economic development and wealth distribution policies that governments often formulate without representation by those being affected. Hence, there is a call for a tourism planning and development policy that reflects more accurately the wishes of the local population; fuller accounting of tourism costs and benefits; and an expanded concept of tourism policy in which tourism development is more thoroughly integrated with the overall economic and social policy of a country or region (Brent Ritchie 1991: 149).

The issue of identity and its commoditisation becomes pertinent when the rationale for community participation in tourism is community development. Community development is a process where the local people work in partnership with government to pursue joint development goals (Lovel and Feuerstein 1992: 337). Without meaningful partnership, control over planning and decision-making will be unilateral, top-down, external and separated from local conditions and needs. Chambers (1983: 10), for example, writes of the "brief rural visit" by urban-based professionals and government officers. Through these brief visits, the officers reconfirmed their preconceived ideas, formed new impressions and used these impressions to plan and decide on the type and nature of development projects.

Without community participation and autonomy in tourism planning and decision-making, tourism as a development strategy faces difficulty in moving away from the largely community exploitative model which undermines the aims of community development (Lovel and Feuerstein 1992: 349). There is much literature on development issues that cites the failure of development programs that ignore the social and cultural realities of the local community (Robins 1986: 10; Long 1985: 34). Social and cultural issues are often considered last in the design process and are the first to cause trouble during implementation (Cernea 1985: 5). Tourism encounters a similar situation. While infrastructural development and provision of

services require changes to be made to the local environment, as tourist destinations, tourism planning is, however, often premised on a non-integrated approach, focusing on the needs of the consumer market rather than the needs of the host country. If local involvement is only token or does not fit with local aspirations and conditions, the tourism policy and industry will face resistance and hostility from local people which may affect the industry's potential (Lynn 1992: 373).

Lanfant (1993: 77) has called for the need to see tourism as a form of international exchange without making any cultural, economic and national associations. The people of tourist-generating countries have the disposable resources and travel motivations to leave their homes for leisure and pleasure while the people of tourist-receiving countries, especially their governments, see the rising travel motivations as a source of foreign revenue and economic growth. These tourist-receiving countries are mainly underdeveloped or developing countries and economic development is high on their governments' plans. Their separate but mutually-related interests – travel motivations and development objectives – are realised through this international organisation called tourism. Each component in tourism has an equal role in bringing about development, that is total development of the human being and society at large. Lanfant's call for tourism to be seen as an international exchange requires a rethinking of the prevailing unilateral and negative views of tourism and tourists. The question is what kind of tourism model can be developed to fit this scenario of diverse interests?

In Sabah, the government authorities tend to attribute the failure of development programs to the socio-cultural characteristics of the "target" group – the people to be developed. Pang (1989: 131) cites the socio-cultural problems encountered by three Sabah-based government implementing agencies: limited needs and low work motivation, unwillingness to adapt to new environment, low work motivation, low commitment, preference for familiar and domestic habitat. This official tendency to blame the victim is similar to the idea of tourism as a negative force on human society. Why should one component bear full responsibility when other parties are involved? Unless the kind of development planned by outsiders corresponds with the needs and existing conditions of the community, there should

be no cause for surprise if the development plan fails to achieve its desired objectives. For development to happen:

It should be organic, that the existing authorities of a people should play their proper role in deciding what development objectives should be adopted and how they should be reached. Non-organic development, the attempt to start with a clean sheet, to disregard people's existing thinking and organisation, is fatal for any hope of sound and self-sustaining development (Jenkins 1990: 17).

Here, the concept of cultural relativism is relevant. The practices of one society or culture can only be understood and evaluated in terms of its own norms and values, not the norms and values of another society or the group doing the evaluation. MacCannell (1984: 376) quotes two poignant statements, the first from Russel Means, the leader of the American Indian Movement and the other quotation from Stokely Carmichael, head of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee:

No European can ever teach a Lakota to be a Lakota, a Hopi to be a Hopi;

An organisation which claims to speak for the needs of a community as does the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee must speak in the tone of that community, not as someone else's buffer zone. This is the significance of Black Power as a slogan. For once, Black people are going to use the words they want to use, not just the words Whites want to hear.

Both Means and Carmichael, according to MacCannell (1984: 376), are attempting to build or develop a correct image of "oppressed peoples" in opposition to forces of assimilation. MacCannell sees this attempt as a manifestation of "constructed ethnicity." The motivation and inspiration to construct ethnicity, based on the people's definitions, comes from within, which arises from increasing ethnic consciousness and the need for political mobilisation on ethnic terms. Reconstructed ethnicity, mentioned earlier, differs from constructed ethnicity. The former is an external imposition, which does not reflect an increasing sense of ethnic

consciousness or the need for political mobilisation because of the sense of being oppressed.

Another dimension connected with the paradox of tourism development concerns the role of the state in the tourism industry. In multi-ethnic societies, the state has a delicate role in ensuring its multi-ethnic population participates, contributes and benefits justly from tourism. Wood and Deppen (1994: 3) note that in such a society, the state's political interest in tourism is potentially fraught with contradictions. On the political context, the state wants its diverse people to unite or assimilate under a common language, ideology, religion and culture (as in the Malaysian case) in the name of national unity. But its economic interests in tourism forces it to use the ethnic and cultural diversities as a resource to develop tourist attractions in the country.

The state, tour businesses and the tourists represent the force behind the tourism industry. The tourist attraction – the local host population - stands under the weight of these forces of tourism. For the Rungus villagers, the basis of their dilemma in tourism is this: they want to move forward, *to be like everyone else*. The tourism authorities and tourists, however, want the Rungus *not to be like everyone else* but *to be like what the tourists want them to be* - “rarely visited,” “traditional” and “primitive.”

The rising sophistication and competitive nature of the tourism industry, the demanding expectations and standards of the tourism market raise the question of the place of the “little and peripheral” community in tourism. The development of the tourism industry has focused predominantly on product development, consumer needs and infrastructure improvement. There is a need for a re-examination of priorities. What is the position of the “little community” in this fast, ever-changing and sophisticated industry?

Grahn (1991: 33-35) has proposed a model for tourist participation that will enable both the tourists and hosts to achieve a “total quality tourist experience.” In his article on the role of tourism in preserving local or indigenous culture, Grahn notes that the common models of touristic presentations consist of cultural villages, open-air museums and homestays. He suggests an alternative model, which he calls

"Tourist Involvement in Preserving Existing Culture" (TIPEC). TIPEC, according to Grahn, is based on the principle that "it is not the activity that makes for a high quality experience but the qualities of the physical and social environment contributes a major part." In order to produce a tourist experience of high quality, the local physical and social environment (as part of the tourist attraction) must contain these three elements: challenge, control and taking part. By "challenge" and "control," Grahn means a situation that enables the tourist and host to confront his or her self in the face of unfamiliar conditions and experiences, while "taking part" means allowing them to join in the decision making and the implementation of the tourism activities. Grahn asserts that TIPEC is a form of recreation that provides high quality recreation while at the same time, allows for the preservation of cultural values, landscape, tradition, handicraft and housing development. This recreation or leisure, however, is more than just the pursuit of fun, pleasure and enjoyment. It works towards developing the individual's personality through his or her meaningful participation.

I agree with Grahn's three-dimensional model. If ethnic tourism aims to enable the tourists to learn and appreciate the hosts' way of life and the hosts' role is to impart this knowledge, the incorporation of these three elements in the tour package may help to achieve this aim. Does the Rungus product contain these three elements? If not, how can these elements be incorporated? I will use Grahn's model as a guide when I discuss the Rungus tourism package in later chapters. Before we start our journey to the Rungus territory, Matunggong, and see how the "little community," the Rungus villagers entertain the tourists, I outline my ethnographic research, data collection and fieldwork schedule.

1.4 ACCESS, DATA COLLECTION AND WORK SCHEDULE

Between 1991-95, I made short visits to several Rungus villages². I thought I would try to get to know the Rungus since I planned to do my PhD on the Rungus

² In July 1991, the faculty (Development Science) I was attached to moved to Kota Kinabalu from Kuala Lumpur to become part of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Sabah Campus. During my first lecture, I asked the first-year students if any of them were Rungus. One female student, Mainie Magusun, said she was a Rungus from Mompilis. From 1991-94, I organised short trips (3-4 days) to Mompilis and several nearby villages for students who took the Family and Kinship course.

community sometime in the near future. My base was Mompilis village in Matunggong, about seven kilometres from the Kota Kinabalu-Kudat main road. I lived in the longhouse with the village chief and his family, following the family and other villagers on their daily routines. Sometimes, I visited nearby villages or went to District Offices of Kudat and the Matunggong sub-district to interview the development officers.

Mompilis has two Rungus-styled longhouses³, that is, single storey longhouses made of forest materials such as split bamboo, tree bark, round wood, logs and *nipah* (palm) leaves. Kota Kinabalu-based tour companies like API Tours, Borneo Memories, Discovery Tours, Borneo Endeavour and Borneo Eco Tours⁴ occasionally brought their clients to Mompilis. During my short stays at Mompilis, I observed the tourists who came to the village and also the villagers' response and interaction with the tourists. The villagers showed the tourists the longhouse, their rooms, performed the Rungus dance and tried to sell their handicraft to the tourists. The tourists brought notebooks, pens and pencils, cigarettes and biscuits for the villagers. On some occasions, when the tour operators requested them to do so, several villagers dressed up in their Rungus costumes and posed for the tourists. The tour operators paid the performers M\$5.00 each. I asked the villagers their feelings towards these tourists. The villagers said they were happy to welcome the tourists. It gave them a chance to see people from other parts of the world and to learn from these visitors. They could also show these visitors the Rungus culture and sell their handicrafts.

From my pre-1995 data collection, I found myself preoccupied with two questions: why did the Rungus still live in longhouses and why did Rungus villages

³ Chapter Two provides a description on the longhouse structure.

⁴ During my PhD fieldwork in 1997, I had the opportunity to meet these tour operators and guides. Some said they remembered me when I was at Mompilis. When Bavanggazo Longhouse (to be discussed in later chapters) came into being in 1994, these tour operators had a choice in bringing their clients to a touristic longhouse or an ordinary longhouse. Sabudin from API Tours and Tang from Borneo Endeavour said that they usually offered the tourists a choice: to visit Mompilis, with an ordinary but real-life Rungus longhouse or Bavanggazo, with a touristic longhouse. Incidentally, Borneo Eco Tours, in its Bavanggazo Rungus longhouse tourism package, enclosed a picture of the Mompilis longhouse with the text. I know it is not the Bavanggazo longhouse as the woman in the picture is from Mompilis.

not have basic amenities like other Malaysian villages? I was further troubled by the comments I received from the development officials I met at the Kudat District Office. These officers had very unfavourable views of the Rungus. They said the Rungus were lazy, dirty, rigid and inflexible in their habits, complacent with their life and averse to change. The officers informed me that they usually spent as little time as possible in the Rungus villages as they could not tolerate the dirty conditions.

In September 1995, I arrived at the University of Edinburgh to begin life as a PhD student. My initial discussions with my supervisors were focused on ethnic and cultural issues in Rungus development. I gradually realised that I needed to have a specific aspect of development in mind. I did a library search on tourism in Malaysia and Sabah, particularly concerning the Rungus community. I found several publications on tourism in Malaysia, very few on tourism in Sabah and none at all on Rungus tourism. Can tourism help the Rungus to improve their living conditions and socio-economic status? How will the Rungus people, with their longhouse lifestyle and subsistence farming accommodate to the demands of tourism? Will their culture and ethnicity be affected when tourists come to the village to visit and tour around?

My plan was to spend the first year (1995-96) collecting secondary data, update the PhD proposal and audit some theory and methodology courses. In the second year, I would return to Sabah for a year to do the fieldwork and then return to Edinburgh for the write-up. However, in my first year, I decided to register for the MSc in Sociological Research Methods that required us to take six taught courses and submit a 20,000-word dissertation. For this dissertation, I did a literature review on tourism studies⁵.

My interest in community-based tourism developed from my literature review for the MSc dissertation. Through library searches, publications in journals,



books, magazines, attendance in seminars and courses, I became aware of the complexity of the connection between ethnicity and cultural identity on the one hand and tourism demands on the other. The demands of tourism disregard the realities and social differentiation existing in the host population.

To gain a wider perspective of community-based tourism, I began to re-examine the tourism literature, but now paying special attention to anthropological and sociological-based tourism studies. This re-examination of literature on the sociology of tourism, in particular, resulted in another surprise: the empirical observations of some theorists on the dearth of anthropological and sociological studies on tourism and the prevailing negative attitude towards tourism and tourists. My interest in tourism and its relevance for the Rungus people began to take shape.

In early November 1996, I returned to Malaysia to begin my fieldwork at the four research villages - Tinangol, Bavanggazo, Gombizau and Sumangkap. While in Kota Kinabalu, the state capital, I contacted tourism agencies and tour operators who could provide assistance and information on Rungus tourism. My first contact was Ritchie (pseudonym) of the Sabah Tourism Promotion Corporation (STPC). Through him, I collected information on the STPC's plans for Rungus tourism, tourism statistics and a list of Sabah-based tour operators, including the various tourist associations such as Sabah Tourist Association, Sabah Tourist Guide Association, Malaysian Association of Tours and Travel Agents, Sabah Chapter (MATTA).

There are forty tour companies in the STPC list⁶. Thirty-seven of them are based in Kota Kinabalu, two in Sandakan and one in Tawau. I am not certain of the

⁵ The dissertation is entitled "Tourism and Local Adaptation: A Literature Review" (1996). Tourism is a human activity, involving social interaction between peoples located in different social structures and cultural milieus. Local resources such as the people, landscape, natural surroundings, wildlife, heritage buildings, etc., are transformed and re-presented as sights and attractions for tourist consumption. This dissertation therefore sought to examine the local people's participation in the production of these representations. The social forces of tourism constitute the subject matter of sociology. Hence, I examined the existing literature on the sociology of tourism, especially in relation to community-based tourism. I used several tourism studies as case studies to review the nature of participation of the local people in community-based tourism. The studies showed how the local people used and modified their cultural practices and knowledge to accommodate to the needs and demands of the tourism market.

⁶ In the booklet produced by the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Development on *The Tourism Industry in Sabah: Basic Facts and Information* (n.d.), the number of registered tour operators as at January 1994 was 112 in total, with 73 based in Kota Kinabalu, 16 in Sandakan, 19 in Tawau and 4 in Lahad Datu. For registered tourist guides, the total was 113, with 101 in Kota Kinabalu, 8 in Sandakan, 1 in Tawau and 3 in Lahad Datu.

ownership of all these companies but from the names of the Directors or General Managers of the respective companies, I could say that most (33) of these top personnel are Chinese. I met the top personnel of five of the companies who have tour packages to Rungus villages. They are Borneo Eco Tours (Chinese Managing Director), Borneo Endeavour (Chinese Branch Manager), Discovery Tours (Suluk Marketing Manager), API Tours (Bajau Sales and Administrative Manager) and Home Away From Home (Malay Managing Director). I had more than one interview with Ritchie from STPC and the top personnel from Borneo Eco Tours, Borneo Endeavour and API Tours. Besides these five tour personnel, I also met the following personnel:

- President of the Sabah Tourist Guides Association who provided information on the categories and requirements of being a tourist guide. Almost all of the tourist guides registered with the Association were ethnic Sabahans with a handful of Chinese. There was no Rungus tourist guide;
- Research Officer of the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) in Kota Kinabalu;
- Head of the Rural Industries Unit responsible for the state's "one village one industry" programme for rural areas;
- Assistant District Officers and Community Development Officers at the Kudat District Office and Matunggong sub-district;
- Secretary of the Sabah Momogun Rungus Association (SAMORA), Kudat.
- President of the Protestant Church of Sabah, Kudat;
- Administrative Officer and the training instructor at the Pinawantai Handicraft Training Centre as well as the ten trainees;
- European representatives of the Basel Mission, Basel who were visiting Kudat.

I came to know about the four tourist villages from the tourism authorities, particularly Ritchie of STPC and the tour operators I met at Kota Kinabalu. Tang (pseudonym) of Borneo Endeavour informed me that he was bringing 40 students from the International School at Bangkok on the December 16-18, 1996 to Bavanggazo. Tang asked me to go to Bavanggazo so that I could observe and talk with the students when they were at Bavanggazo. On the December 15, 1996, I went to Bavanggazo with my family (my younger sister, my eldest sister and her family). Except for the road sign indicating the turning into Kg Tinangol, there was no other

sign to show the way to Bavanggazo. The gravel road was stony with potholes filled with water. After some time, we had to park the car and trudged up the steep and stony path.

There were two longhouses, located near each other. Nearby was a large model of a bamboo fish trap, *bubu* and a high wooden tower. A woman in her mid-fifties with brass coils (*saring tangan*) on her forearms came down from the longhouse and approached us. I informed her that we would like to meet “the village head,” Maran. She invited us to go into the longhouse. There were several people sitting at the public corridor (*apad*). A younger woman, perhaps in her mid-thirties, opened the door of the first room in the longhouse that was the gift shop. She thought we were tourists. Maran was not the Bavanggazo’s village chief but the chairperson of the Bavanggazo Village Development and Security Committee. He was also the chairperson of Bavanggazo Longhouse Co-operative. It was he who mooted the idea of building a longhouse for tourism purposes in late 1992. I introduced myself and mentioned the four key personnel above. Maran said there should be no problem. However, he stated that he needed to discuss this with the committee members.

Ino, the woman with the arm coils, was delighted to hear that Maran agreed in principle. “You can stay with me and my husband at our single house,” she said. When my family left for Kota Kinabalu, I felt I was left alone to face the uncertain journey ahead. One long year of living among strangers and without basic facilities like piped water, electricity, telephone, lay ahead. Uncertainties crept into my mind. Would I be accepted, treated amiably? Would I be able to cope and adapt? Was I sure of my research? You have to do what you have to do, I told myself. There was no turning back. A new chapter of my life had begun.

Together with the Bavanggazo villagers, I watched the cultural performance held in the longhouse for the visitors. The performances ended about two hours later and we went back to our individual houses. Maran allowed me to stay in one of the unoccupied houses owned by a Bavanggazo participant who was staying at Tinangol. I had filled my pail with water so I could brush my teeth in the room. I laid the mat on the bamboo flooring and in no time was in dreamland. I dreamt of voices calling “*inai, inai...*” I could not hear the man’s words. Then I heard knocks against the

wall. But why were the sounds so close to my ear? "*Otosi!, otosi!*" (quiet! quiet!). That's Ino's voice. This was no dream. I hurried out of the room and looked through the wooden poles. Ino was standing by her door. "*Inai, nokuro?*" (*inai*, what is the matter?), I asked. "*Aso no nunu,*" (nothing is wrong), she replied. "The man is drunk and he was knocking on your wall." No wonder the knocks seemed near and loud. Only the first night and already I had some adventure, I thought.

The next morning I went to Ino's house. She was unusually quiet. I thought it was something to do with last night's incident. I asked Ino about the man and she told me he was from another village and was visiting the people at Bavanggazo. Ino asked if I was afraid. I said no. I did not want to entertain the little voice in me that said I should be as I was a woman alone in a strange place. I had already devised several strategies. One of them was to act tough, brave and independent but not too bold or foolhardy. The second action was to place the pail of water and my luggage against the door. After the incident, I used a string to tie the door to the wall.

When I met Maran later in the morning, the look on his face told me something was not right. Maran said he had something to say but was ashamed to say it. I said it was better if he told me whatever he had in mind. Maran said he had a meeting with his fellow Bavanggazo participants and there were three people who did not agree to my staying at Bavanggazo. They said I was a woman: since Bavanggazo was not a residential village they feared for my safety. Strangers came to the village and who would be responsible if anything happened to me? The incident with the drunken man was evidence that there might be problems later on. I shuddered at Maran's words. A dark cloud fell over me and I felt this wave of panic choking me. How was I going to do my research on tourism? Calm down, I said to myself. It was not easy for Maran to break the news to me after his assurances. Fighting back the tears, I told him I understood. Maran said he and the rest of the participants wanted me to stay at Bavanggazo. As it was, I could do the research but could not live there. Maran said someone in the committee suggested I meet the President of the Sabah Momogun Rungus Association (SAMORA) in Kudat and the STPC for their recommendation. I said I would do that.

I trudged slowly up to Ino's house. No wonder she was quiet that morning. Ino and Turom were in their house. I informed them of the meeting with Maran. Turom said that the three people who opposed my stay at Bavanggazo felt threatened because I was studying the Rungus culture and writing about it. Turom quoted them: "She will take away our culture and what will happen to our future generations?" Turom said he could not understand their reasoning: "Here was someone who was willing to study the Rungus and record the traditions before it was too late. How could they say you were taking away their culture?" Turom was semi-literate and Ino illiterate but they understood my research and were willing to embrace me into their home.

Tinangol village was my best hope for accommodation. I was looking for the parish priest, Porod. I knew his son, Peter, through Prof. Rokiah Talib⁷ of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of Malaya at Kuala Lumpur. Peter was at that time doing his Masters under Prof. Rokiah. I had met Peter at University of Malaya on November 1996. Peter said I could stay with his family at Tinangol should I do my research there. Unfortunately Porod and his wife, Hinoon, were not in their house the two times I went to look for them. Then I remembered a young woman called Malin⁸ whom I had met at a function organised by the Sabah Women's Aid Organisation in Kota Kinabalu in early 1995. She lived in one of the Tinangol longhouses. Fortunately, Malin was at home and still remembered me. I explained my presence at Tinangol. I asked if I could stay with her family temporarily. She talked with her parents and they said okay. I was so happy.

We returned to Bavanggazo and I informed Turom and Ino that I would stay with Malin's family. They both did not agree and said it was better if I found some place else. They said Malin's father was a perennial drinker. It was already late evening and my head by then was throbbing. There was nothing more to say so I left the house and went to join the other Bavanggazo participants who were at the bench beside the welcome sign. The first batch of Borneo Endeavour's group of students

⁷ I met Prof. Rokiah in October 1996 at Edinburgh University. Prof. Rokiah was visiting Patricia Jeffery with regard to the Gender Studies Programme.

had left Bavanggazo. The second batch had just arrived and was waiting for dinner. My house-hunting woes had prevented me from participating in the fruit tree planting activity by the first batch that morning. Ino joined me at the public bench and she informed the others about my attempts to find a place to stay. A couple, Jom and Sinolian, said I could stay with them at their single house at Tinangol without rent. I would be good company for their daughters and grandchildren. *Grandchildren?* Just how many people are staying in the house, I wondered? Ino was very happy and she accepted the offer on my behalf.

The next morning, Turom and Ino were up at dawn. They were travelling to Kota Kinabalu with several other Bavanggazo participants for the Rungus Charity Night organised by the Malaysian Travel and Tour Companies' Association (MATTA). Turom was to play his *sundatang* (Rungus guitar) and Ino, her *turali* (nose flute). Dorin, the woman in her mid-thirties in charge of the handicraft shop at Bavanggazo longhouse, came to see me after Turom and Ino left. She said she heard I was going to stay at Jom's house. She told me Jom was a drinker and said I might not like this. Dorin said her parents, Sabar and Bihing, who were staying at Block Two, Tinangol Longhouse, had a room to spare. Sabar incidentally was the village chief for Tinangol village. She said this was good as I intended to do research at Tinangol too. So after breakfast, we went to Tinangol to see her father. I achieved two things on that visit. One, I had a place to stay for a monthly rent not inclusive of food of M\$50.00 on which I myself insisted. Two, I had permission to start my research at Tinangol immediately and as long as need be. Dorin helped me to clean the room upstairs. And so I was to live with Sabar and his wife in the longhouse. In time I became attuned to the noises and the human traffic in the longhouse. I was happy and comfortable.

I thought I had solved my housing until Peter came back for the Christmas holidays and looked for me. His family enthusiastically invited me to live with them

⁸ Malin worked as a research assistant for an NGO called Partners in Community Organisation (PACOS). PACOS is based in Kota Kinabalu. In January 1997 her research group started a year-long socio-economic survey among the indigenous communities residing in the Pitas area. Malin helped to interview about 10 couples at Tinangol and I gave her M\$50.

(without rent)⁹. I was hesitant, as I liked Sabar and Bihing. Peter's parents, Porod and Hinoon, said they would inform Sabar and Bihing that I would be staying with them. Bihing asked me why I needed to move. Was I not happy here? I did not know what to say so I apologised profusely. I lived with the Porod family for nine months. From September till October 1997, I stayed with Amy, my friend from Mompilis and her family at the government's quarters near the Matunggong Secretariat.

Tinangol instead of Bavanggazo became my adopted village. SAMORA did not reply or contact me. In early January 1997, Maran and the people asked me to stay at Bavanggazo for the duration of my research at Bavanggazo. Even though I had to walk daily to Bavanggazo, I said I was comfortable living at Tinangol. In retrospect, I view the initial refusal of some of the Bavanggazo villagers to allow me to stay at Bavanggazo as a blessing in disguise. There were about eighty resident families at Tinangol and thirty at Bavanggazo. Within three months (January – March 1997) I met and interviewed almost all the Bavanggazo and Tinangol residents. Staying at Tinangol made me a familiar figure almost instantaneously. In the longhouse it was easy to meet people and talk with them. The villagers were willing to sit, listen and entertain my questions as well as put up with my ignorance and limitations.

For Kg Gombizau and Sumangkap, I had no problems of access. There was no need for official letters or consultations with fellow villagers. Instead, Porod (a well known figure as he was the parish priest) brought me to see the village chiefs and explained my intentions. The chiefs granted me permission without much ado and offered me a place to stay too. I did not stay at Gombizau or Sumangkap but travelled daily on my motorcycle (which I bought in February 1997) to the village. I was not keen to stay mainly because these two villages had no toilet (the *tourist-me* showing its colour!). My timetable while in the villages was as follows:

⁹ After several months with the Porod family and also through my interactions with the other villagers, I came to understand the villagers' perception towards playing hosts to other people, whether relatives, friends or strangers. As Peter said to me, "through one person, we get to know many other people – his or her siblings, parents, relatives, friends. We may need their help later on in the future. It is like an investment." Porod said in the village, "it did not cost much to offer our home to others as we have plenty of rice and food from the field or forest."

- December '96 – October '97 ongoing participant observation at Tinangol and Bavanggazo
- May 1997 (two weeks) fieldwork at Gombizau
- July 1997 (two weeks) fieldwork at Sumangkap

Besides these four villages, I made regular visits to Mompilis, my former research base and Kabanggaan (about 6 km from Tinangol). Myerhoff (1978: 29) strikes a common chord when she writes that, often, the researcher comes to establish a particularly strong and gratifying attachment to one individual. I did not have one but two¹⁰ meaningful attachments while doing the fieldwork. One was a farmer in his sixties at Tinangol. I called Tako¹¹ “my old man” and wrote a poem about him that was later printed in the local Sabah newspaper. The other attachment was with a single mother in her early thirties who was estranged from her husband and had five young sons ranging from 8 months to 12 years old to take care of. I was especially drawn to her determination to keep all her sons, and her tenacity to keep her part-time general office work at the primary school (seven kilometres away), to continue working on the farm in the afternoon and in the evening, to do the housework, cooking and washing. Above all, she was in the midst of building her own house or rather, an annex beside her mother’s single unit house in which she and her sons had sought temporary refuge. I was in awe of her courage to go to the forest alone to collect the wood and bamboo and to build the one-bedroom annex all by herself, with some help from her brother in law.

My primary source of data collection came from the *participant observation* – participating and attempting to make sense of my encounters and what was happening around me. I do not think I succeeded in becoming a Rungus villager or a Rungus woman, although I managed to acquire a Rungus characteristic fairly soon. My younger sister casually remarked that I smelt like the Rungus when I returned to

¹⁰ I wrote about their life histories and coping mechanisms in the paper I presented at the conference, *Gendering the Millennium*, at Dundee University (11-13 September 1998).

¹¹ I called him *amai*, meaning uncle (*inai* for auntie). Tako did not call me by my name, Liu, as did everyone in the village. Instead, he called me *amai*, which shocked me when I first heard it. I thought he thought I was a man! I told Hinoon about it and she said it was a sign of respect. Much later, I asked Tako how he addressed me. He said *amai*. I asked him why when I was a woman. He said it was *hormat*, respect. I saw it as a way of neutralising the sexual difference between a man and a woman when they had to be together often.

Kota Kinabalu after two months in the village. What was the Rungus smell like? My self-esteem was slightly dented when she said I had the smell of lingering sweat and hardened mud. Tinangol, as with all the other Rungus villages at Matunggong, depended on rainwater for its everyday water consumption. The year 1997 was to be one of the hottest, driest and humid years Kudat had ever experienced¹².

At Tinangol, I would follow some of the villagers to their fields or sit with them in the longhouse when they were stringing beads or relaxing. The Tinangol villagers had a more extensive mutual-aid service programme than Bavanggazo. There were two main types of mutual-aid service at Tinangol. One was for the paddy planting cycle and the other was for work related with coconut growing. This mutual-aid service was very organised. A woman villager headed the paddy planting cycle while a male villager organised the schedule for the coconut planting. There were more than twenty villagers (each family, one participant) who participated in both these activities. The common practice was for the villager whose field was to be worked upon that day to play host to the others. This meant that the family would usually prepare additional food for lunch. The participants brought their own food (rice, salted fish, fried fish, salted vegetables – all appetite boosters) but would have special food such as boiled chicken, which was a bonus. I loved these eating-together sessions. The villagers called them *mirung* (bring your own food and share). We normally started work at 9.00am, took a break at 10.30am which usually meant time for betel nut and *osu* (*sireh*) chewing. *Osu* chewing or chewing a quid is one of the distinctive markers of the Rungus people, especially for the above-thirty age group. Everything else could be put on hold but not the *osu* chewing. Below is a picture of the items needed for *osu* chewing:

¹² The harvest in April 1998 turned out to be a solemn activity. There was virtually no paddy on the fields to harvest. The terrible 1997 drought and heat killed off the paddy we planted in September 1997. I learned about this from the letters I received from the villagers, from the Malaysian Online newspapers in the Internet and from my family who sent to me articles on the reported incidents of hunger and starvation experienced by the people of Kudat, Pitas and Kota Marudu. Tinangol and Mompilis were one of the areas affected.



Necessary ingredients for *osu* chewing: from left to right – *sireh* leaves, *rinago* basket, mineral lime, gambier, candle wax, betel nut, cutter

I was in awe of the villagers' 'right on target aim' when they spat out their chewed remnants through the gaps between the bamboo floorings in the house. Alliston (1966: 60) describes the phenomenon well:

First, a box or tray containing some *sireh* leaf – a kind of climbing pepper found in the jungle – is placed on the floor before you. You are then expected to help yourself to the necessary ingredients to wrap up in the leaf: a piece of betel nut (*pinang* palm), a piece of gambier, a smear of lime and a little native tobacco. The leaf is folded over to form the quid and is popped into the mouth. In due course, a flow of blood-like saliva will result which can be spat out of the window or over the veranda or if you are sufficiently adroit, through a crack in the floorboards. The quid has an astringent taste and the effect is stimulating¹³.

Lunch was at 12.30noon and then rest till 2.30pm. The day's work normally ended at 5.30pm. I marvelled at the simplicity of their menu and the amount of rice the villagers ate. In no time, I too came to eat a lot of rice (two plates at least). The

¹³ Madhur Jaffrey (1976: 33) too mentions the *osu* or as she calls it, paan-leaf, in her book 'Invitation to Indian Cooking': "the guest has eaten well then the host descends upon him with yet another large silver tray ... the final offering, one he just cannot refuse. It is the paan. The paan has rounded off his meal as nothing else could and has left him with a feeling of immense and unique well-being." The Rungus (including me) would certainly agree with this.

main reason was that besides rice, there was usually nothing else that was substantial and the salted or pickled food really opened up the appetite. Another reason was that the villagers always invoked the 'threat' of *kobulou mato*, becoming blind in one eye. The Rungus viewed everything in pairs and so it was with food too. One had to take a second helping, no matter what. Even without this threat of becoming blind in one eye unless I went for a second round, I would gladly go for the food again. Working under the hot sun, chopping, cutting, gathering, carrying, planting, walking, I was perpetually hungry and thirsty.

Besides these mutual-aid activities, I would also follow couples or individual farmers to their fields. At Tinangol, my main company was Tako, the old man I mentioned earlier and also the Porod family. Porod¹⁴ was Tako's younger brother. Both were members in the Council of Village Elders at Tinangol.

At Bavanggazo, I joined the tourism-related co-operative work the women did, like clearing weeds and non-tourism work like harvesting paddy, gathering vegetables, ferns, fishing and collecting shells from the Bavanggazo River. When tourists arrived, I joined the Bavanggazo villagers, mainly the women, at the *apad-tingkang*. The women would be weaving, stringing beads or making shell bracelets for the tourists to see and photograph. I talked with the guides or operators who accompanied the tourists to Bavanggazo and also to the tourists. Most times, the language used was English or Malay. For non-tourism related work, my main company was Ino and her husband, Turom, whom I regarded as my *field parents*. Their single unit house was my home whenever I was at Bavanggazo.

I did not acquire the ability to speak Rungus well. I attributed this to living with the Porod family. Porod and his wife spoke in Malay with their 9 year old daughter (the only one at home on weekdays) and in Rungus with each other. Most of the time, we spoke in Malay. This was certainly a major limitation, as I could not have a conversation with villagers who could not speak Malay, like Ino. Sometimes I had to ask others who were present to translate but most times, I asked the speaker to speak slowly while I listened carefully to each word.

At Gombizau and Sumangkap, my interaction with the villagers was limited to a few families. At Gombizau, I spent much time with the family of the chairperson of the Gombizau Bee Rearing Association (from whom I learned about bee rearing and honey production in the village) and another family, a middle-aged woman and her twenty-year old daughter (from whom I learned about broom making). At Sumangkap, I spent most of my time with the village headman and his wife, and also the chairperson of the Sumangkap Gong Making Association and his wife.

My second primary source of data collection was from the interviews I had with the villagers and with the key personnel mentioned earlier. At Bavanggazo and Tinangol, I prepared a questionnaire as my interview guide. I interviewed the villagers while we were working at the fields, while the villagers were stringing beads or weaving in the longhouse or individual houses, or resting or through appointments.

For secondary data, I relied on official documents and reports produced by the District Office at Kudat and Matunggong, the Protestant Church of Sabah, publications in journals and books, tour brochures and guidebooks. When I returned to Edinburgh on November 1997, I was able to access the websites of the tour companies who featured their Rungus packages in their websites.

While doing the fieldwork, I came to understand the dilemma posed by Crick (1985: 74): “What is the difference between being an anthropologist, being a tourist and being an anthropologist studying tourism?” Just as Crick was annoyed when a young Sri Lankan monk said “hello hippy” to him, I too felt annoyed when the Rungus villagers called me a *pelancong*, the Malay word for tourist. I am a *pengkaji*, a researcher, not a *pelancong*, I said to the villagers. How does the anthropological or sociological fieldworker make this distinction while in the field? Myerhoff (1978: 18) summarises this dilemma clearly:

¹⁴ I sometimes followed Porod to the other villages on Sundays for the morning church service. Porod was also a volunteer teacher at the Bible Training Centre at Bavanggazo (PCS-funded institution). I followed his two courses from March till September 1997. The first year course was *Understanding Culture and Custom* and the second year course was *Law and Culture*.

The anthropologist engages in peculiar work. He or she tries to understand a different culture regardless of how strange it seems in comparison with one's own background. He or she accomplishes this by attempting to experience the new culture from within, living in it for a time as a member, all the while maintaining sufficient detachment to observe and analyse it with objectivity. This peculiar posture, being inside and outside at the same time, is called participant observation.

The tourist does not engage in the participant observation that is the trademark of the anthropologist. Myerhoff (1978: 28-29) also captures the principal difficulty of participant field research when she notes the overwhelming variety and amount of information that the researcher accumulates while in the field: "There is no definite, correct solution to the problem of what to include, how to cut up the pie of social reality, when precisely to stop or leave." This was how I felt when I was living with the Rungus people. Everybody was an informant, everything was data. To go about my daily schedule for ten months thinking that I had to note everything I felt, saw, heard, did, encountered, informed – left me in greater uncertainty and confusion as to what I was really wanting to study, discover, understand about the Rungus people!

Apart from the fact that there is no research on Rungus tourism to date, I would like to think that my research is different (another sign of the *tourist-me*) from the existing tourism research in Malaysia. It is a study on how the Rungus villagers, individually and collectively, cope and manage with the touristic representations of being a "traditional, primitive, isolated, happy and hospitable" community. The villagers spoke of their involvement in an activity alien to them, their encounters with outsiders, their dilemmas in having one foot in the old and the other in a new mode of livelihood. Our grassroots, micro-based understanding of the Rungus experience in tourism, however, will be incomplete if we ignore the *outsiders* - tour operators, tourists and the government – associated with Rungus tourism. Tour operators link the tourists and the Rungus through their tour packages and brochures. Tourists are the consumers of the Rungus tour package. Tour operators, tourists and Rungus depend on the government to provide a conducive environment for tourism and tourism development. Before we examine the macro perspective on tourism in Malaysia and Sabah, we look at the community at the centre of this tourism perspective – the Rungus.

CHAPTER TWO THE RUNGUS OF SABAH, MALAYSIA

This chapter introduces us to the Rungus people, “Sabah’s most traditional ethnic community” (Hutton 1997: 68). The next few chapters will guide us through more promotional superlatives of the tourism media on the Rungus. Insulated by the media rhetoric and picturesque landscape, the real-life Rungus appear colourful and happy amid the “natural” and “primitive” surroundings. Removed from these touristic representations, who are the “real” Rungus? This chapter introduces the non-touristic side of the Rungus. The chapter begins with an overview of the State of Sabah in historical and contemporary times, followed by a brief discussion on the people of Sabah. The next section presents the Rungus community with particular focus on their social organisation, economic livelihood and cultural activities. To place the Rungus lifestyle and livelihood (as this is what the tourism media claim to package to the tourism market) in perspective, I include in this chapter an outline of the work of the Basel Mission when the Mission and its missionaries were in Kudat and in particular, Matunggong between 1951 to 1973. The Basel Mission was and still is one of the main agents of change for the Rungus people¹. In this thesis, I have chosen to concentrate on the Basel Mission. This is mainly in relation with the tourism media’s emphasis of the Rungus as “traditional,” “unchanging” and “pagan believers.”

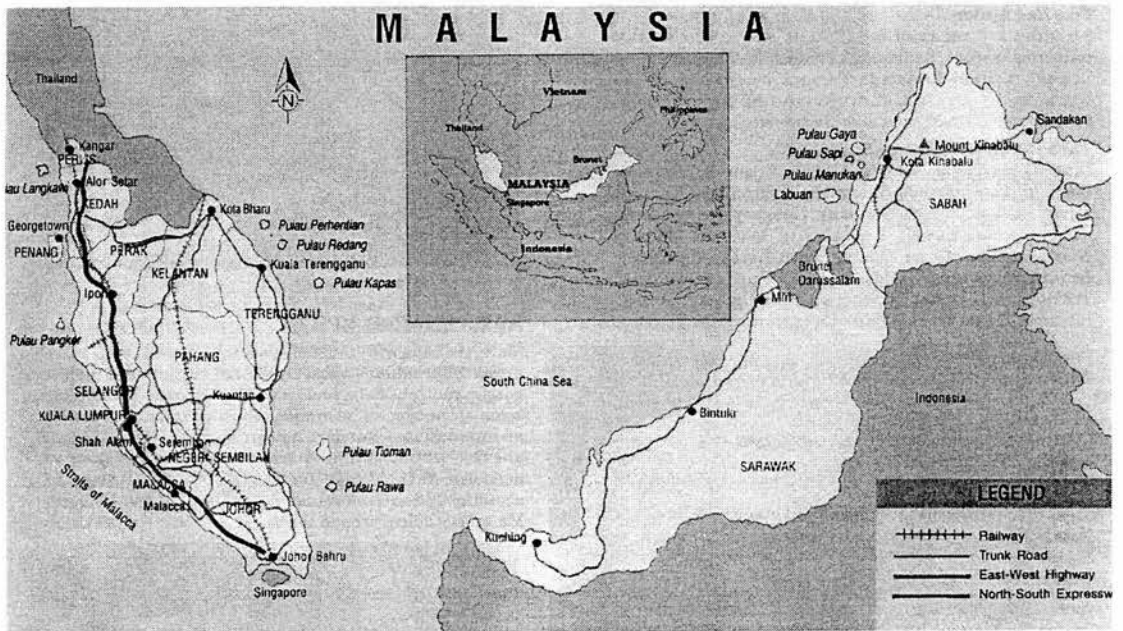
2.1 SABAH IN PERSPECTIVE

The Federation of Malaysia has thirteen states: Sabah and Sarawak on the island of Borneo and the eleven states of Peninsular Malaysia. The Federation also includes the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and the island of Labuan (please refer Map One below). Sabah and Sarawak, the two East Malaysian states, are separated by about 540 kilometres of the South China Sea from Peninsular Malaysia.

¹ The Basel Mission is the principal fund provider for the Protestant Church of Sabah (PCS), which is based in Kudat. Majority of the Rungus Christians of Kudat District are members of the PCS. Only a small minority of the Rungus Christians belong to other Christian denominations such as Seventh Day Adventists or Jehovah Witness.

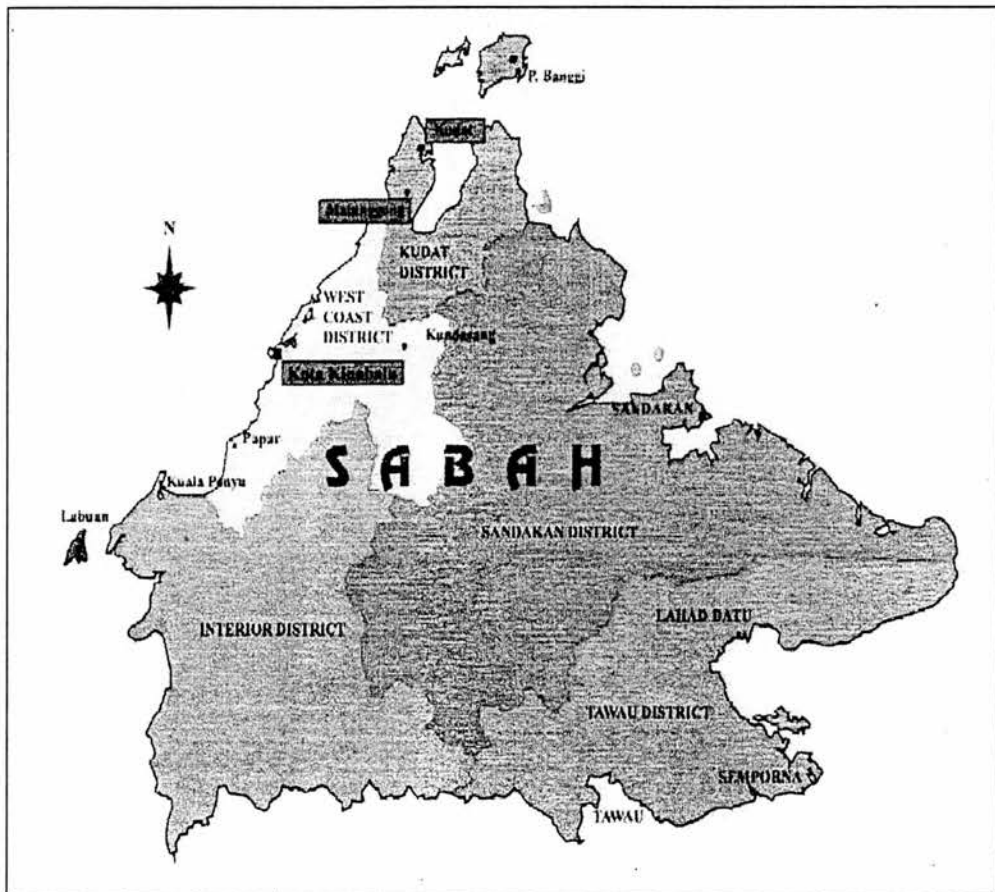
The population of Malaysia in 1995 was 20.5 million, about 80% of whom live in Peninsular Malaysia. By ethnic distribution, the Malays and other indigenous people form 57% of the population, Chinese 26%, Indians 7% and others 10%. Islam is the official religion with 53% of the population Muslims, 29% Buddhists-Taoists, 6% Christians and 12% animists, free thinkers, and atheists. The national language is Malay (Bahasa Malaysia) but the Malaysian people have their own ethnic languages and dialects. English, a legacy of British rule and educational system, is also widely spoken. In Sarawak and Sabah, the main indigenous people are the Ibans, Melanaus, KadazanDusuns (the Rungus are a sub-category) and Muruts. The population of Sabah is 2.5 million in 1995 with over thirty ethnic groups and more than eighty dialect or linguistic groups.

MAP ONE MALAYSIA AND ITS STATES



Sabah, 76, 115 sq.km, is the second largest state in Malaysia. It is located at the northern tip of the island of Borneo. Together with Sarawak, they form East Malaysia. Sabah has a heavily indented coastline of approximately 1200-1400km with the South China Sea in the west and north, Sulu Sea in the northeast and Celebes Sea in the east. It is often referred to as Land Below the Wind as it lies outside the typhoon belt that hits the South China Sea. Much of the area is highland with the Mt. Kinabalu (at 4101m, is the highest mountain in Southeast Asia) dominating its landscape. The luxuriant tropical rainforest supports numerous rivers and streams (SAWO 1992). Map Two below shows the state of Sabah and its five main districts:

MAP TWO
SABAH AND ITS FIVE MAIN DISTRICTS



2.1.1 Sabah in Historical Times Before the Chartered Company Rule (Pre 1881)

The history of Borneo and Sabah in particular, was almost unknown previous to the coming of the Europeans in the sixteenth century. Before 1881, Sabah, or North Borneo as it was called then, was unseparated from the rest of Borneo, which consisted Brunei, Sarawak and South Borneo (Thu 1977: 12). It is known that the Chinese from China had trade and diplomatic dealings with Borneo as early as 600AD (Williams 1993: 79). Borneo's spices were exchanged for Chinese porcelain and jars. Indian traders and travellers en route by boat to and from South China stopped briefly at western and northern Borneo ports to replenish supplies or seek shelter from severe monsoons from the South China Sea. These contacts between the people of North Borneo and traders and travellers from outside Borneo over many centuries introduced a variety of foreign cultural forms to the Bornean people, including techniques and tools of irrigated rice agriculture and the use of the water buffalo as the principal source of power in field preparation.

Between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, the early Malay Buddhist kingdom of Sriwijaya, located in Sumatra, dominated the southern and southwest coasts of Borneo. In the early fourteenth century, the powerful Hindu kingdom of Majapahit, Java, exercised state power in the same coastal areas of Borneo. European cultural influences reached the western and northern Bornean coasts as traders sought local products, particularly spices, following the conquest of Malacca by the Portuguese in 1511. Regular and intensive contacts between the Europeans and coastal peoples of Borneo did not begin until after the mid-nineteenth century as the British sought to establish protectorates to maintain the safety of trade routes through the South China Sea (Williams 1993: 80).

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Sultans of Sulu and Brunei considered the people in the islands of Borneo, Mindanao and the Sulu Seas to be their subjects. Before the rule of the Chartered Company in 1881, Sabah was unseparated from the history of the other parts of the island of Borneo – Brunei, Sarawak and South Borneo (Thu 1977: 12). The Sultans laid claim to various localities and appointed native chiefs to collect taxes from the villagers for them.

Borneo's trading prominence attracted the interest of European powers. In 1526 a Portuguese fleet under George de Menezes visited Brunei and made a trade agreement with the Sultan. Later, between 1577 and 1580, the Spaniards attacked Brunei, taking over the Brunei town in 1580. The Portuguese and Spanish were not too interested in establishing settlements or trading stations in Brunei or North Borneo and Sarawak. But the English and Dutch who soon appeared on the Borneo island, were keen to set up trading and territory stations. Later as industrialisation began to develop in Europe, there was a need for raw materials and markets and the European powers began to consolidate their positions in the East. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the appearance of the steamship shortened the journey to the East. These developments helped the European powers to expand to the East. North Borneo's strategic location between the west and east trade route helped to bring much trade and prosperity to the land. The situation, however, was not sustained. This is how an article in *The British North Borneo Herald* (the oldest newspaper in Sabah) in its August 1 1886 edition, described North Borneo then (quoted in the *Daily Express* (Sabah) 5 April 1998: 6):

Among the great harbours that give importance to North Borneo are Gaya and Ambong on the west, Kudat to the north and Sandakan Bay on the east. With its great harbours and central position, Sabah possessed advantages both commercial and strategically. Its past history bears this out for its ports possessed a flourishing trade with China and neighbouring islands until the advent of Europeans, Portuguese, Dutch and Spanish in these regions. Borneo and its neighbouring islands, with their tropical fertility and valuable products possessed an amount of trade and prosperity that could not fail to attract attention in the sixteenth century, before the withering hands of European empires – Spain and Holland - were stretched over them; a prosperity of which there is now no trace.

The writer of the article quoted a statement from Hunt who, in his report to Sir Stamford Raffles in 1812, described the existing social and economic conditions: "In looking over the map of the world, it is a melancholy reflection that so large a portion of the habitable globe as all Borneo is abandoned to barbarians and desolation." Hunt attributed the decay of commerce and prosperity in North Borneo to the direct action of the Portuguese and the Dutch, who "exact[ed] by treaties and

other ways, the Malay produce at their own rates, compelled the ports of Borneo to send the produce calculated for the China market to Malacca and Batavia. Agriculture was negated and lands hitherto cultivated were allowed to run to jungle and waste” (quoted in the *Daily Express* (Sabah) 5 April 1998: 6). The European presence among islands so rich in resources and population purportedly destroyed all security of life and property for the natives. Consequently, their commercial and agricultural prosperity rapidly disappeared, turning Borneo into a wilderness and its population to a life in the forests.

Another foreign power with trading interests in Borneo was America. In 1865, the American government sent a consul to Brunei. The consul, Chaude Lee Moses, made a business agreement with the Sultan for certain pieces of land including most of the state of North Borneo. The concession was for ten years, with Moses agreeing to pay £9,000 per year. Having no money, Moses sold his rights to Joseph W. Torrey of the American Trading Company. When the concession expired in 1875, the Austrian Consul-General in Hong Kong, Gustavus Baron de Overbeck, purchased all the rights possessed by Torrey from the Sultan of Brunei. Overbeck then returned to London to look for financial help. Alfred Dent, the son of Overbeck’s former employer, agreed to help him. In 1880, Overbeck transferred his rights over North Borneo to Dent who had in the meantime, formed the British North Borneo Provisioned Association Ltd. Dent then transferred to the Association all his interests and powers over North Borneo for £120,000. The Association asked the British government to grant them a charter. It received the Charter in November 1881 and changed its name to British North Borneo Chartered Company. The Charter stated that:

North Borneo was an independent state governed by the Chartered Company but that all relations between the state and foreign countries must be carried on through the British Government and no part of the state could be given away to another country without the agreement of the British Government.

The Chartered Company Rule (1881- 1946)

William Hood Treacher was the first governor of North Borneo under the Chartered Company. He set up his office in August 1881 at Labuan but had to move as Labuan was already a British colony from 1846. He chose Kudat and made it his first capital but when he came to know about Sandakan, Treacher thought it was a better location, hence he moved the capital to Sandakan in 1884. One visitor described his impression of Kudat then: "Kudat in 1885 looked anything but a prosperous port of the young colony" (quoted in Leong 1982: 14). It had a few *attap* (thatched) houses built over the sea, two Chinese brick shophouses and the Government House, the most important feature of any British colony (Leong 1982: 15). To develop the state, Treacher decided to bring in experienced farmers from abroad. In 1882, the first batch of Chinese Hakkas from the Kwangtung Province of China migrated to North Borneo via Kudat. These Hakkas had become Christians through the Basel Mission in China. In 1886, the Hakka Christians at Kudat formed their first congregation and called it the Borneo-Basel Self-Established Church in Kudat. They later renamed the church The Basel Christian Church of Malaysia when Sabah joined the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. The Church built a school called the Lok Yuk School in Kudat in 1903:

In April 1883, 96 Christian Hakkas landed in Kudat ... they worked hard in their vegetable gardens and paddy fields. Each individual or family was given a hectare of land, vegetable seeds and cash advances of three to six dollars. So successful were they in their vegetable gardening that regular shipments were sent to Sandakan. These included sweet potatoes, yams, Chinese cabbages, turnips, beans, spinach, pumpkins, watermelons, chillies, tomatoes, sugar cane and maize, nuts and coffee.

North Borneo under the Chartered Company made great progress. Schools and hospitals were set up at various locations in the state. The North Borneo State Railway was built in 1896 and the first twenty-mile line between Weston and Beaufort was opened for traffic in 1898. Public roads were built to link the major towns. The telegraph line was established in 1897. Telephone services were also

provided by 1913. The Japanese Occupation from 1941-1945 caused major upheaval to the developments introduced by the Chartered Company.

The Japanese Occupation and the Formation of Malaysia (1941-1963)

The Japanese invaded North Borneo in January 1942. By 1945, at the end of the Second World War, North Borneo was in ruins:

The chief towns and villages had been destroyed. The people had fled to the jungle or to their smallholdings. There were no public utility services (water, light, power, and telephones). Schools and malnutrition were great. Crime was rampant, communications were practically non-existent, food was scarce and the whole process of government had come to a standstill (Whelan quoted in Thu 1977: 17).

The Chartered Company could not afford the rebuilding of North Borneo and sold it to the British Government for £1.4 million in July 1946. With the transfer of control to the British Crown, North Borneo became a Crown Colony of Britain in 1946 (SAWO 1992: 10-11) until 1963. Colonial rule did not differ substantially from the Chartered Company administration. Most of the people of North Borneo understood little about the change in status from a British Protectorate to a directly governed Crown Colony. The British Government continued with the administration system of the Chartered Company. Nevertheless, the British Government, under the first governor for North Borneo, E.F. Twining, introduced several development programmes to rebuild the state. Trade was re-established, medical services restored, a number of schools reopened, water and electricity supplies partly rebuilt and the railway reconvened (Thu 1977: 17). By 1963 at the time of the fourth and last governor of North Borneo, William Goode, all the main towns in the state were almost completely rebuilt. The state's economy greatly improved (mainly in the extraction of natural resources such as timber and the exploitation of large areas of land for plantation agriculture), new banks and business companies set up, hotels constructed in the main towns. A teachers' college, Gaya College, was built in Kota Kinabalu. By 1963 there were 489 primary schools and 32 secondary schools.

Beyond these changes in the medical, social, education and economic sectors, there was little change in the political scenario. Before 1960, there was no political party in North Borneo. Political development began when the Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman, announced the Malaysia proposal in May 1961 (SAWO 1992: 12; Ongkili 1989: 61). He proposed that a Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Brunei, North Borneo and Sarawak should be formed. On August 1, 1962, the Secretary of State for the Colonies said in the British House of Commons that Her Majesty's Government agreed to the proposal but on condition that the formation of Malaysia must be in the best interests of the people of North Borneo and Sarawak (Thu 1977: 18).

On September 16, 1963, North Borneo, renamed Sabah, became a state of the Federation of Malaysia. Brunei did not join the Federation and Singapore withdrew in August 1965. Between 1969 and 1975, there were political and religious tensions in Sabah. Tun Mustapha, the Chief Minister, claimed to unify the various ethnic groups based on the Islamic religion. He founded the United Sabah Islamic Association in 1969. Tun Mustapha accused the foreign missionaries of disloyalty and ordered all of them to leave the state. At the same time, mass conversions occurred everywhere in the state. By 1973, all the foreign missionaries had left the state and many of the indigenous Sabahans became Muslims. The political scenario became calmer when Tun Mustapha lost the state election in 1976 to a new opposition, multi-ethnic party, Berjaya. The Berjaya Party ruled Sabah from 1976 to 1985 when it in turn, lost the state election to a new opposition party, the Sabah United Party (PBS). Pairin Kitingan, an ethnic Dusun from Tambunan, who was hailed as the *Huguan Siou*, the Paramount Leader of the people (particularly the KadazanDusuns), led PBS. Under Pairin, the KadazanDusun-Christian consciousness reached its height in the face of the predominantly Muslim opposition front consisting of Peninsular Malays and non-KadazanDusun ethnic minorities in Sabah. In 1992, however, PBS lost the state election to the Peninsular-imported Malay party, United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) which was given a new name, *UMNO-Baru* (New UMNO) in Sabah.

2.1.2 Sabah in Contemporary Times

After thirty-two years of independence, Sabah has seen a political history and economic development different from that of Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia. It has undergone four changes in ruling institutions that were the result of bitter power struggles as well as the people's desire for change (SAWO 1992; Luping 1989; Kitingan and Ongkili 1989). In the economy, Sabah registered an impressive economic growth mainly because of its petroleum and timber exports that accounted for 49% of the state's Gross Domestic Product in 1986 (SAWO 1992: 13; Pang 1989). This high economic growth rate gave the impression that the average Sabahan was one of the most prosperous ethnic groups in Malaysia. Instead, Sabah had one of the highest poverty rates in Malaysia. The official poverty line for Sabah in 1995 was a monthly income of M\$601 for a family of 5 persons. Hard-core families were those with monthly income of less than M\$301. The Mid-Term Review of the Fifth Malaysia Plan 1986-1990 revealed that the incidence of poverty in Sabah was 35.3% compared to 17.3% for Peninsular Malaysia and 24.7% for Sarawak. In Sabah, the districts identified as poor areas were Kudat, Pitas and the Interior while the poor population consisted of paddy farmers, shifting cultivators, fishing community and industrial manual labourers.

Within the poor sectors, rural households registered a higher poverty incidence than the urban households. In 1987, there were 8,100 poor urban households compared to 80,900 poor rural households. The figures were not surprising as three-quarters of the Sabah population lived in the rural areas with a livelihood based largely on traditional methods of farming and fishing, seasonal low-waged labour in the plantation and timber sectors (SAWO 1992: 14) or small and medium scale industries. Many rural villages were not easily accessible and did not have basic amenities such as electricity supply from the National Electrification Grid System and treated water supply. Distance, transportation difficulties and financial constraints hamper access to schools, especially secondary schools.

Despite concerted efforts by the Federal and State governments to improve the living conditions and bring development to the people, a significant number of Sabahans remain at the periphery. The state revenue from the natural resources –

petroleum, timber, palm oil and cocoa (which together formed 87% of the state's total export value in 1983 and about 66% of the state revenue in 1984) – did not benefit the majority of the Sabah population (SAWO 1992; Pang 1989).

In terms of development, the Sabah government based its development plans on the nation's development plans, in particular, the New Economic Policy (NEP), introduced in the aftermath of the ethnic riots on 13 May 1969 in Peninsular Malaysia. The NEP determines the form and substance of all the Five-Year Malaysia Plans. These Plans strive to achieve national unity through rapid economic growth (Pang 1989: 132). The state government's development objectives are in line with the NEP (*Sabah in Brief* n.d.):

- to maintain the momentum of economic growth of 5% and to uplift the economic standard of the people;
- to reduce the socio-economic imbalance;
- to improve work efficiency and productivity;
- to improve infrastructure facilities;
- to increase the production of foodstuff to the level of self-sufficiency; to diversify the economy.

Under its Vision Rural Program, the Sabah government hopes to introduce projects such as housing rehabilitation, installation of water and electricity supply, toilets, training programs, livestock rearing, marketing, workshops and business ventures, handicraft centres and village industries and credit facilities (*Daily Express* (Sabah) 16 January 1997: 1-2).

The Kudat district, with an area of 1287 sq. km, is located at the northern part of Sabah. Its coastal area is characterised by alluvial lowland with mangrove swamp interspersed with sandy beaches. The hinterland is hilly. The lowland and the immediate hill country are either developed into settled agriculture or subjected to shifting cultivation activities. The population of Kudat in 1991 was 55,932, of which 65% are Rungus, and the remaining 35% representing the smaller ethnic groups such as the Orang Sungei, Bajau, Suluk, Bugis, Banggi, Obian and the Chinese. The majority of the Rungus live in the hinterland or interior; the Bajaus, Irranuns, Suluks and Obians along the coastal areas while the Chinese mainly in Kudat town or Sikuati.

Matunggong, a small rural town of about 248 sq.km, is 42 km south of Kudat and 150 km north of Kota Kinabalu. It officially became a sub-district of Kudat on January 1, 1995, with its own Mini-Secretariat building at Sumangkap. Matunggong is a hilly area with substantial secondary forest, mainly acacia trees planted under the reforestation programme of the then Berjaya government. Matunggong (Map Three below) has about 118 villages and 77 of these villages have village chiefs. Matunggong has one secondary school located at Sikuati and one vocational school, also at Sikuati. There are altogether 17 primary schools, located in villages. There are four health centres – Sikuati, Matunggong, Tinangol and Lotong and five village clinics - Sikuati, Lajong, Tambuluran, Matunggong and Lotong.

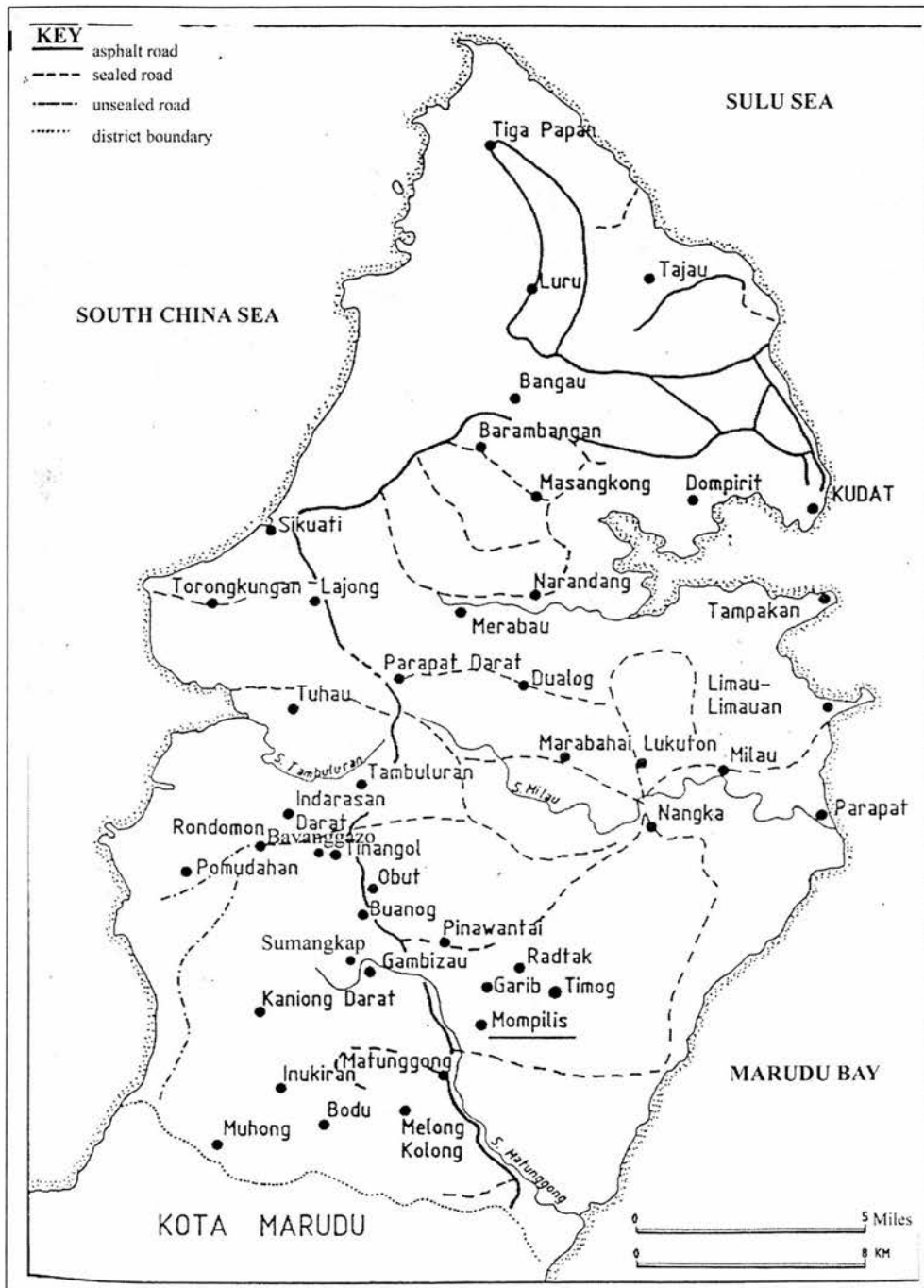
According to a Rungus folk story, Matunggong originates from the word *motung-otung*, the sounds of gong beating. The Rungus, as the legend goes, came from Nunuk Ragang at Nabal, the foothills of Mt Kinabalu, which is the resting-place for the souls of all the Dusun people, including the Rungus. The Dusuns' and Rungus' ancestor was a man called *Aki Ragang*, the Red Ancestor. *Aki Ragang* had four sons. One day, he instructed his sons to leave the village in search of a suitable

place to settle down and start a community. They had to continue walking and could only stop when they no longer heard the beating of gongs from Nabal. The four sons began their separate journeys into the unknown. One of the sons was called *Tomborongus*. He walked and walked, yet still he could hear the sounds of the gongs from Nabal. He thought he had walked very far and he was so tired. Finally, he decided to stop and take a rest even though it meant defying his father's orders. *Tomborongus* decided to build a permanent home at the place where he rested. Because he could still hear the gongs, he named the place *motung-otung*, after the sounds of the gongs. Later, the word became Matunggong and *Tomborongus'* descendants came to be known as Rungus. Several of the Rungus villagers I spoke with said they are proud of their legendary origin. The Nunuk Ragang origin links the Rungus with the other Dusunic people (for example, the Kadazans and Muruts) as *Momogun*, the indigenous people of Sabah. Their *Tomborongus* ancestry, however, provides the Rungus with a distinct and separate identity - *Rungus*.

Sabah, Kudat, paddy farmers and shifting cultivators – these are the labels associated with poverty. The Rungus wear badges with all these labels. It is therefore not a coincidence that the state government targets the Rungus as one of the priority communities to be given assistance under its rural development programme. Development projects for the Rungus include building and providing basic amenities such as roads, schools, clinic, community halls, suspension bridges, water supply through gravity pipes, water tanks, toilets, wood bridges, jetty, mosque, church, electricity supply using generators, *tamu* stalls, football fields and volleyball courts, badminton courts, telephone and one Mini-Secretariat building where several government agencies are located¹.

¹ These government departments, sub-branches of those at Kudat District Office in Kudat town, aim to provide easier access for the Matunggong people to seek assistance or settle their administrative matters. The departments include the sub-district office of Matunggong, Native Court, Rural Development agency, Land Office, Fisheries, Agriculture, Public Works, Rubber Planting Board, Social Welfare, Islamic Affairs and Wildlife Department. Future departments to be located here are the Police, Health, National Registration Departments, Postal Services Department, Kudat Town Board, Rural Library Services.

MAP THREE THE SUB-DISTRICT OF MATUNGGONG AND ITS VILLAGES



2.1.3 The Peoples of Sabah

The earliest inhabitants of Sabah were said to be Negritos (Williams quoted in Thu 1977: 21). These Negritos who appeared in Borneo about 50,000 years ago could have lived in other parts of Southeast Asia. They were very short, under five feet, had dark skins and eyes, and with woolly and straight hair. In Sabah, the Negritos lived in Banggi Island with a small population of about six hundred. Their main livelihood was hunting.

About 15,000 to 21,000 years ago, a different type of people moved into Borneo. These people were known by various names – Indonesian, Malaysians or Indo-Malaysians. They were said to have come from South China and North Vietnam. They had lighter skin colour than the Negritos and had straight hair. Their main livelihood was rice growing and pig rearing.

This second wave of migrants to Sabah was believed to be the ancestors for most of the native or indigenous people of Sabah, including the KadazanDusuns (combination of the Kadazan and Dusun ethnic categories), Muruts and Bajaus.

The indigenous people or natives of Sabah, like the Malays and Aborigines (*orang asli*) of Peninsular Malaysia, enjoy a guaranteed “special position” in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia through Article 153 (the Special Position of the Malays and other Indigenous Peoples)². In Sabah, the indigenous status is further safeguarded under the “Natives” provision of Article 161A(6) [Safeguarding the Position of Natives] of the Federal Constitution, Article 41 of the Sabah State Constitution and the Interpretation (Definition of Native Ordinance [Sabah Cap. 64]) (Kitingan 1995: 8).

The Kadazans are the largest indigenous peoples in Sabah. There are about twenty to thirty sub-categories under the KadazanDusun category. The major ones include: the Kadazans of Penampang-Putatan area; the Rungus of Kudat and

² When Malaya achieved independence from the British government on 31 August 1957, there was a delicate balance of power between the Malays and Non-Malays, with a kind of quid-pro-quo negotiation between the Malay and Non-Malay leaders of that time. The Malays assumed the status of indigenous people, or *Bumiputeras* (sons of the Earth), while the Non-Malays became known as non-indigenous people, or *Non-Bumiputeras*, immigrant groups. The native population of Sabah and Sarawak joined the Peninsular Malays and *orang asli* as the *Bumiputeras* of Malaysia.

Bengkoka Peninsula; the Tombonuvo, Kimaragang and Sanayo of Bengkoka, Kaindangan and Tengarason; the Minokok and Tenggara in Upper Kinabatangan River; the Lotud of Tuaran. The proponents for the use of the word *Kadazan* to refer to all the people under the Dusunic category claim that it originates from the Kadazan word *kakadaian*, meaning “road leading to the town” or “near the town area.” *Dusun*, on the other hand, is a Malay word to mean “orchard,” or “near the countryside.” In early 1990s, the Kadazans (represented by their association, The Kadazan Dusun Cultural Association) and Dusuns (represented by their association, United Sabah Dusun Association, agreed to use the term “KadazanDusun” to refer to the all the Dusun-Kadazan sub-groups.

The KadazanDusuns who live along the coastal areas and plains such as Penampang, Keningau and Tambunan are relatively more advanced in terms of livelihood and education. They are settled farmers, growing wet rice instead of dry rice and have rubber and coconut plantations. Most of them also have salaried occupations for example as civil servants or working for private companies while others are entrepreneurs with their own businesses. The KadazanDusuns who live in the interior or the hilly areas of the Crocker Range, in Kudat and Bengkoka Peninsula, and in the river valleys of Sugut, Labuk and Kinabatangan, are relatively poorer and less advanced. They practise rotational farming, growing dry or hill paddy, and other food crops such as maize and tapioca. The KadazanDusuns were animists in the past but many have become Christians or Muslims.

2.2 THE RUNGUS IN CONTEXT

2.2.1. Social Organisation

Housing

The Rungus people in the past lived in longhouses. Presently, there are very few Rungus-styled longhouses in Kudat. The length and width of a longhouse depends on the number of houses and size of the house. In the Rungus language, a longhouse is called *binatang*. Its root word, *vatang*, means becoming long, which is what a longhouse is (the tour media call it a “horizontal condominium”). Beginning with one house, the house becomes long as one house after another is added or joined

on either side of the first house. The headman, a *vozon*, meaning one who leads in Rungus, chooses the site. He lays the foundation for the longhouse by building his house first. Other members of his family or his relatives then build their respective houses adjoining the headman's house. In a longhouse, a house is called a *sirang* (house) or *valai* (home). A *sirang* belongs to a domestic family consisting of a husband and wife and their children. A family's *sirang* has two sections. One section is called the *ongkob*, which is the family's private space. The *ongkob* is an enclosed walled section, separated from the *ongkob* on its left and right sides by a wall. A wall also covers the front of the *ongkob* with a door in the middle. Inside the *ongkob*, is an unwallled open area with invisible sub-sections for various domestic activities. It is a house-in-itself: it has a raised sleeping area (*tingkang*); a washing area (*salow*); a cooking hearth (*ropuhan*); a dining area (*lansang*). The family sleeps, eats, washes, cooks and keeps their valued possessions in the *ongkob*. The other section is the *apad*, which is the equivalent of a hall-cum-living room of a modern house. The *apad* is also an unwallled, open area consisting of two sub-sections: a raised 'living room' (*tingkang*) and the aisle (*lansang*). The *apad-tingkang* is where the family rests, entertain visitors, do their weaving, embroidery and bead making. Sometimes, the family eats at the *apad-tingkang*. When the children, in particular, the boys, reach the adolescence stage, they usually sleep at the *apad-tingkang* and not in the *ongkob* with their parents. The *apad-lansang* is like a public aisle or corridor separating the *ongkob* from the *apad*. It serves as a walkway for the longhouse inhabitants to walk through the length of the longhouse or part of it in order to get into their individual *sirang*. The *apad-lansang* is also the place where the women pound their family's paddy and the men chop the wood intended for use as firewood.

Above the *ongkob* is the *abai* (loft) which is a storage area for the family to keep their belongings. These belongings include things frequently in use such as carrier baskets, mortar and pounder or occasionally in use such as gongs. It also includes things that could not be brought into the *ongkob* because of religious reasons such as *saging* (carrier basket for women), *todok* (banana shoot), *soko* (bamboo shoot), *sumbiling* (small bamboo) and *limau purut* (lime). These things could not be brought into the *ongkob* as the *bobolizan* (priestess) used them in the religious ceremonies. Attached to each end of the longhouse is a piece of round log,

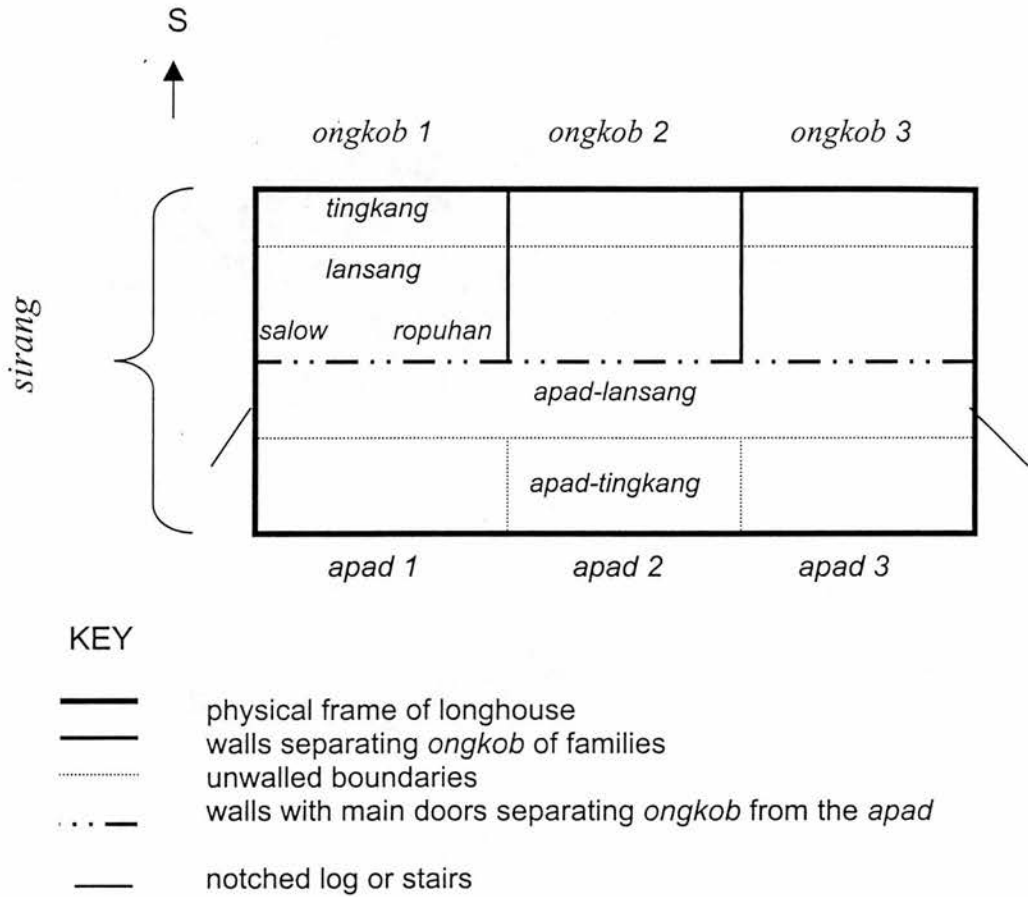
acting as stairs. The log has several notches to facilitate climbing. A “traditional” Rungus longhouse has no furniture such as tables, chairs, cupboards or beds. The split bamboo flooring or wooden floor is the “chair, table and bed” as shown in the photo below of a schoolgirl lying on her stomach to do her schoolwork:



A young Rungus girl doing her homework in her family's *ongkob-tingkang* with an oil lamp. The family's “cupboard” is the several boxes in the photo.

A typical Rungus longhouse is built on wooden poles or stilts, which are raised above the ground by about four to five feet. All the *sirang* in the longhouse share a common roof; the *ongkob* are all on one side and the *apad* on the other. The Rungus believe that one should not sleep facing Nabalun (Mt. Kinabalu), which according to the Rungus folklore, is the resting-place for the souls of the departed before meeting the Creator, *Kinoringan*. In a Rungus longhouse, the *ongkob* therefore faces north as Mt Kinabalu is located to the south of Kudat. The Rungus usually use materials easily obtainable from their surroundings to build the longhouse. These building materials include bamboo (split and tied together with strings made from tree barks or rattan), wood of various sizes, flattened tree barks and palm (*nipah*) leaves for the roofs. The discussion in Chapter Four on the Rungus tourism product will include

photos of the Rungus-styled longhouse. The diagram below shows the interior layout of a Rungus-styled longhouse:



The Rungus lived in areas surrounded by thick forests. The absence of roads, modern transportation and communication facilities isolated the longhouse village from the others. There was and still is no electricity and piped water in Rungus villages. The longhouse was one of the manifestations of the Rungus' coping strategies in relation to their continued survival within their immediate surroundings. Inter-dependence and mutual co-operation were two of the main organising principles of life in a longhouse. The longhouse inhabitants lived by a strict and elaborate code of rules, customs and sanctions to regulate behaviour and maintain solidarity in the face of living in close proximity and against the diversity of dangers coming from human enemies, wildlife, forces of nature, sickness and the unseen world.

The longhouse has stimulated both favourable and unfavourable notions from non-Rungus people about the Rungus. One favourable perspective associates the longhouse with a high level of uniformity, interpersonal relationships, co-operation, mutual trust and solidarity. The unfavourable perspective views this need for uniformity as an obstacle for individual advancement and development. Another unfavourable perspective associates the longhouse with supernatural powers and sees it as a house of spirits in total control over the Rungus. The predominant view of outsiders towards the longhouse is that it signifies "primitive living" (STPC's website: <http://www.jaring.my/sabah/cul.htm>). Reverend Poong (n.d.), the Chinese pastor who has worked among the Rungus since 1971, gave a representative description of the Rungus:

The Rungus society is in many respects much nearer to the paradisiac state of life since they can do with so few things. They can manage to solve their problems in such simple ways and many still regard work as a nuisance. They indulge in feasts that are never thinkable without the fellowship of the whole longhouse. In short, they live a life that is perhaps more human than many people in the highly civilised countries.

Village Headman, Council of Elders and Native Court

A Rungus village usually has one village chief or headman. One village may have one or two longhouses and several individual houses. During the rule of the Chartered Company, its first Governor, Treacher, tried to establish relationships with the village chiefs in order to govern the ordinary villagers. The Company paid the chiefs M\$5 a month. The chiefs' responsibilities included dealing with the conduct of the villagers; leading the villagers in any resistance against attacks; investigating any unnatural death and crime; supervising house building and rice cultivation; and acting as the government's spokesperson and as intermediary between the government and the villagers.

Before the mid-1980s, the post of the village chief was hereditary, that is, passed from father to son or the villagers themselves took a vote to elect the suitable candidate. A village chief was highly knowledgeable in Rungus customs and laws

and the comprehensive system of sanctions associated with everyday behaviour and social order. The chief was also a man of wisdom. He might have a vast and deep knowledge of Rungus customs and cultural practices but if he lacked wisdom, he would not be able to act in a just and responsible manner. The chief was also a magistrate, a Justice of the Peace in and outside the village, hence, he needed to have wisdom in order to choose the best options in the most uncompromising situations. After the mid-1980s, however, the post of village head is by appointment from the state government on the advice of the District Officer at the Kudat District Office. Affiliation with the ruling political party is one main criterion of appointment. Hence, supporters of the ruling party stand a better chance of becoming a village chief. Deep knowledge of Rungus customs and sanctions, expertise in certain crafts and traditional healing, leadership qualities and wisdom in arbitration, negotiation and decision making are of secondary importance. A village chief is now on the state government's payroll. Before 1995, a village chief received a monthly allowance of M\$120 and after 1995, the amount was increased to M\$200. The post of village chief, whether pre- or post-1985, has no time limit. The pre-1985 chief could hold office until death and the post-1985 chief retains his position for as long as he supports the government and vice versa.

The village also has a Council of Elders (*osukod*). They are usually older men who possess similar qualities and skills as the village chief. Any dispute or grievance among the villagers or between the villagers and people outside the village is brought before the Council of Elders and the village headman (including the representatives from the other village if it involves other villages). The village headman arranges a meeting for all the parties concerned. The aggrieved parties have the opportunity to state their case before the Council who will then deliberate among themselves on the final outcome. The Council's decision is based on consensus and is final. This means the parties concerned have to abide by the Council's decision. In the event that they disagreed or are dissatisfied, the case will then be brought to the District Office to be heard in the Native Court.

The Native Court began in the era of the Chartered Company when the government wanted to govern the natives through the headmen. Each of the five districts in Sabah has a Native Court. The Court deals with cases related to native

customs and laws such as marriage, divorce and religious practices. Native chiefs appointed by the government presided in the Native Court. Their decisions are subject to the District Officer's approval. Their jurisdiction does not include criminal behaviour or violence as this is a police matter to be dealt with by a magistrate (Thu 1977: 37).

Family

The kinship pattern of the Rungus is based on bilateral descent. A group of relatives is regarded as kindred without emphasis as to whether the relationship is traced through a female or male relative. Within a domestic or nuclear family, however, authority tends to rest with the husband or father. In terms of division of labour, the women perform the household tasks such as cooking, washing and looking after children. The men are nevertheless expected to help their wives, especially if the women are ill or in the late stages of pregnancy. Men's tasks include work that involves heavy manual labour, such as building houses and paddy storage huts, collecting firewood and hunting. As for activities associated with paddy planting, the men chop and cut the trees and undergrowth and the women help to collect the cut wood and debris and stack them into piles for burning. Both the men and women work together to plant the paddy: the men making holes in the ground with a hard wood sharpened at one end and the women following closely behind, throwing the paddy seeds into the holes. Both the men and women do the weeding and harvesting together. Rungus men also weave carrier baskets made from rattan and creeper plants and the women make beaded craft and weave their Rungus cloth. The women also have the responsibility for carrying water from the river, stream, gravity pipe or wells for household use.

Seniority in age and sex defines the nature of relationships between sons and daughters. The parents give priority to the oldest son who will inherit most of their property, especially land. He will also have authority over his younger brothers and sisters. The Rungus marriage pattern is monogamous, although Rungus men who consider themselves wealthy or whose wife is chronically ill could marry another wife (which is illegal in terms of the 1976 Marriage Act for Non-Muslim

Malaysians). The Rungus place a high significance on marriage. All individuals must marry at some point in their lives for the sake of procreation.

Manamong is the first meeting between the boy's family and the girl's parents. It signifies the boy's marriage intention (or proposal) towards the girl. Representatives of the boy's family arrange a meeting with the girl's parents and on the day in question, they will visit the girl's family, bringing along the *kinggaton*: tobacco, betel nuts, lime and betel leaves. The parents' acceptance of the *kinggaton* means agreement to the marriage proposal. The girl in question has the opportunity to state her wishes although she is not present at the time of the meeting. According to my informants, most parents will abide by their daughters' wishes.

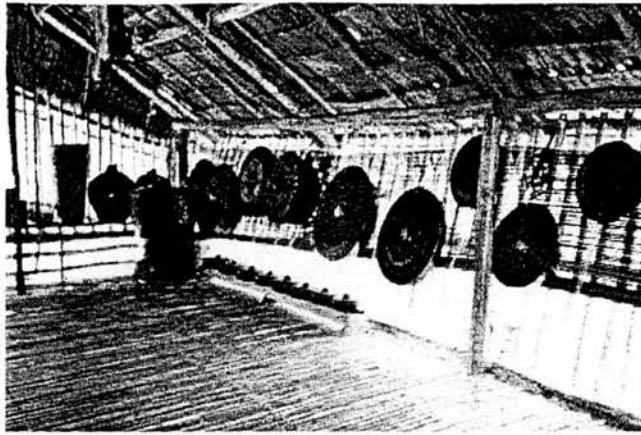
Discussion of the bridewealth or *buru*, which the Rungus define as a protection for the girl and her family against any misdemeanour or abuse by her future husband or his family is the main agenda. Significant others representing the girl's family and the boy's family respectively gather at the girl's house, to discuss the bridewealth. The boy's representatives sit at the *apad* while the girl's representatives congregate in the *ongkob*. An intermediary called the *bentaran*, acts as a go-between, conveying the suggestions and counter-suggestions from one party to the other. The bridewealth is divided into several levels, with each level having its respective gifts. In the past, the bridewealth included brassware (*longuvai*, *gadul*), jars (*panding*, *gumoroï*), gongs, buffalo, land, and at least one pig, as sacrifice to *Kinoringan* so that the marriage and the Universe is *sogit*, cool. The sexual union between the married couple produces too much heat, which irritates *Kinoringan*. His irritation permeates the Rungus universe making it *alasu*, hot. An *alasu do pomogunan*, a hot universe, creates potential dangers and misfortune not only for the two families concerned, but the whole village. It is therefore in the interest of the village to see that the marriage negotiations and actualisation are strictly adhered to. Present-day Rungus still follow the Rungus marriage procedures but with some modifications. Cash became part of

the bridewealth from the mid-1970s³ (the range could be between M\$200 to M\$10,000). The pig still features in the bridewealth but its meaning has changed for many of the Christian Rungus. They do not regard the pig as a sacrifice to the *Kinoringan* but as part of the food for the wedding reception! The three photos below show the brassware and gongs, including a set of Rungus gongs.



Multi-functional *dapu*, or brassware that have significant value in marriages. They are part of *buru*, bridewealth and also used as part payment for wrongdoing

³ Porod, the parish priest I stayed with at Tinangol, has the task of recording and issuing marriage certificates to the Rungus villagers in his parish. He gave me the record books from 1970 to 1994. The entries provide an interesting review of who married who, at what age, how much and what kinds of *buru* the groom's family gave to the bride's family and the changes in all these aspects over the years. These entries support the villagers' statement that the Rungus people started to include cash as part of the *buru* in the late 1960s.



A family's gong collection and below, a set of Rungus gongs:
 left to right: *Tontog* the drum; *Somponikul*, 3 big *tavak*, small
pompo, *soludon* and *sandangau* (most valuable)



Another significant event in Rungus marriage is the *mongoivanon* ceremony, introducing the newly married couple to the in-laws. This takes place on the second or third day after marriage. The ceremony is held in the groom's parents' house. The significant others (the bilateral kindred) take turns to present themselves to the couple. The intermediary introduces the bride to her husband's relatives and the groom to his wife's relatives. The marriage began with the *manamong* (establishing contact between the two families) and ends with the *mongoivanon* (establishing

kindred ties). For both ceremonies, the *kinggaton* is the principal medium used⁴. The photos below show the bridal costume worn by the bride and groom for the wedding ceremony in the village.



Symbolic exchange: the *kinggaton* for acceptance into husband's family.
Mainie, the student who introduced me to her people, on her
mongoivanon day (Mompilis, June 1995)

⁴ When I asked the Rungus villagers why the *kinggaton* is so important, they could not give a definitive answer. The few writings on the Rungus also did not mention the significance. I quoted Thu for the *manamong* ceremony but he too did not mention the significance. Instead he notes in his footnote that "it is also used to entertain the guest. Perhaps there is a medical function, and as a stimulant like coca leaves of the South American Indians" (1977: 107). The Rungus villagers informed me that the *kinggaton* gives them energy and prevents them from feeling hungry. As a significant item in an important event like marriage, the *kinggaton* can be said to be a life-giving symbol, signifying continuity and everlasting relationship.



A wedding entourage in 1965. The groom and the bride (Porod and Hinoon) on their way to the Tinangol church. One Basel missionary is in the background. Below, Porod and Hinoon with their respective *madgad* - best man and bridesmaid





Porod's only son, Peter, on his wedding day to a Chinese on September 24, 1997: three costumes – Western suit and evening wear, and Rungus costume

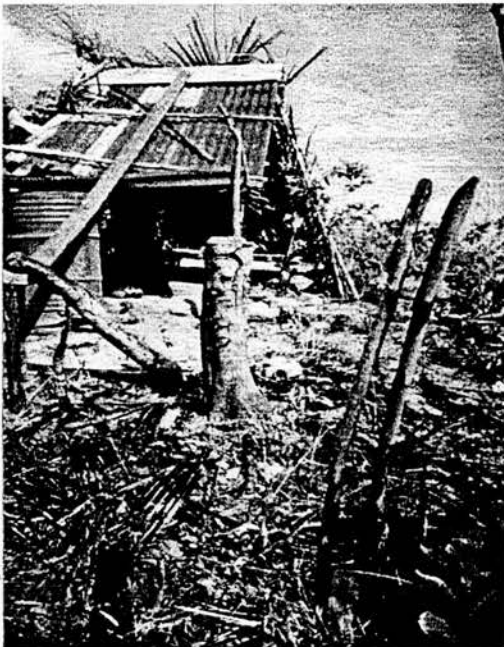


2:2.2 Economic Activities

The Rungus are farmers practising rotational cultivation. The two main food crops are paddy and maize. About 70% of the people plant dry or hill paddy that is usually planted on hillslopes as Kudat and Matunggong in particular have a hilly terrain. The average size of a family's rice field or *tagad* is five acres, although in the past, a family could have a plot of between ten to fifteen acres. The planting season begins in late June. After the family has decided on the plot to be cultivated, the members start to clear the land, followed by collecting and stacking the cut debris into piles and burning them. The ash from this burning is said to make the soil fertile. When the burning is done (around mid-July), the family uses part or the entire plot to plant maize. Maize takes only three months to mature and the paddy planting activity does not begin until late August or mid-September. The maize is in time for harvesting when the paddy-planting season (*pangasakan*) begins. Weeding starts in November and depending on the size of the plot, it may require two or three rounds of weeding to ensure the paddy grows well and produce a good yield. By late January, the paddy begins to bear fruit (*mongontizan* – literally to mean becoming pregnant). In early March, the ripening paddy undergoes the *moniim-tiim* (testing) where the family examines the paddy and determines the suitable date for harvesting. Harvesting usually takes place between mid-March and mid-April. The month of May is a period of festivity for the Harvest Festival (*Kaamatan* or *Magahau*) is celebrated at the state, district and village levels. After the harvest, some families start a small *gopu*, a cleared plot on the recently harvested paddy field, to plant maize. By the time the next paddy-planting calendar begins in late June, the families will have maize to supplement their daily consumption or sell at the weekly market (*tamu*)¹.

¹ *Tamu* or native market, means 'to meet, or meeting' in Malay. In the days of barter trade, predominantly before the Basel Mission's arrival in 1952, the Rungus and non-Rungus congregated at a specified place at a specified time and day to exchange their goods and wares. The *tamu* acted as a market place for economic transactions, an information centre where messages, mails and information are passed and distributed. It was also a social institution where relationships were formed, developed and maintained. At Tinangol, *tamu* was every Monday and Sumangkap, every Thursday. During my fieldwork, I looked forward to *tamu* days as these were days when I could have different foods such as fresh fish, and meet friends from other villages.

There are not many Rungus who engage in wet rice cultivation. In my fieldwork, only three families grew wet rice in addition to their dry paddy planting. This was mainly because they had flat land that was located near the river or large water pond. The State Agriculture Department encourages the Rungus farmers to grow wet paddy by giving cash allowances (M\$100 per acre) and subsidies for fertilisers and seedlings. The unfavourable terrain, difficult soil conditions, water supply and irrigation problems, however, discourage most Rungus farmers from participating in the project. Below are some photos of activities associated with paddy planting.



A shelter in the middle of the paddy field. In the foreground is the *tonduk*, a pair of wood stuck to the ground on the first day of the clearing activity. It symbolises: respect for the *rogon*, resident spirits of the *tagad* (paddy field) and *bambarazon*, resident spirits of the *paddy*. Also serves as a sign of land ownership to fellow villagers.



Onset of *pangasakan*, planting season, with the sighting of the *korimbutuon*, constellations. Here, Tako is demonstrating the *valatik*, Orion the Hunter, in mid-September



Gendered task: the men upfront making tiny holes with a *titindok*, hard wood with sharpened end and the women following behind throwing the paddy seeds into the holes



Harvesting paddy with the *linggaman*. Small in size but fast worker under deft hands

Besides these two main staples of rice and maize, the Rungus farmers also plant other food crops such as sweet potatoes, tapioca (as food for pigs) and vegetables. There is also cash crop cultivation: long term crops such as coconuts due mainly to the work of the Basel Mission in the 1950s and 60s; and short-term crops such as bananas, groundnuts and water melons introduced by the Agriculture Department. Some of the Rungus families also engage in rubber growing and tobacco planting. The Rungus also keep livestock such as pigs, poultry and buffaloes mainly for home consumption and symbolic purposes.

Most of the Rungus live in villages that are isolated and far from the towns or main road. Marketing is a major problem for the Rungus farmers who intend to sell their goods in the town or the *tamu* as there is no public transportation available. In the past, the main means of transportation was the buffalo and walking. Present-day Rungus villagers can rely on the few individuals in their respective villages or nearby villages who have managed to own or rent a van, truck or mini lorry and turn it into a public transport service for the villagers.

The Rungus are known as skilled craftspeople specialising in the production of beaded necklaces (*tingol* and *pinakol*), woven sashes (*inavol*) and baskets (*rinago*) made from rattan and creeper plants. Women are usually the principal producers of these three products. The Rungus men, on the other hand, are skilful at weaving their carrier baskets (*saging*, *berazit*, *tinangaban*, *saub*) and winnowing trays (*rolibu* and *nyiru*), making their long-handled, multi-purpose knife (*dangol*), the wooden drum, (*tontog*), the wood-based two-stringed guitar (*sundatang*) and the bamboo-based nose flute (*turali*). These artefacts, excluding the musical instruments, are instrumental to the Rungus' farming activities. The *dangol*, in addition, is a ubiquitous tool that the Rungus use for everything that needs cutting or sharpening with a knife.

Some of the Rungus families have become entrepreneurs engaging in small and medium-scale businesses. At Matunggong, the common business activities include handicraft trading, garages, petrol and diesel kiosks and retail shops. The entrepreneurs need to have a trading licence for their business. For the retail shops in the villages for example, the trader could apply for a M\$17 annual trading licence

that would enable him or her to sell only sundries. For a.M\$25 annual trading licence, he or she could sell other commodities such as stationery, gas tanks and handicraft. The village shop owners need not travel to Kudat, Sikuati or Kota Marudu to buy their stock. Chinese traders from these towns make scheduled weekly visits to the villages at Matunggong to sell or deliver the stocks. Besides the convenience of purchase and delivery, the villagers are happy to obtain their stock from the Chinese even though their bargaining power may be limited. This is because the Chinese traders allow the Rungus traders to buy on credit.

2.2.3 Cultural Characteristics

In this section, I will concentrate on the Rungus form of dressing and religious beliefs. Together with the longhouse and handicrafts, these characteristics are prominently featured in the travel literature and tourism-related activities.

Clothing and Costume

The Rungus people and the rest of the indigenous communities of Sabah share many similar features such as language, agricultural activities, religious beliefs, clothings, handicrafts and cultural artefacts. The Rungus characteristics, however, contain designs and patterns that are specifically Rungus and identified as such by both the Rungus and non-Rungus people. In terms of dressing, Rungus men and women have their own gender-based clothings. The older generation Rungus men (above 50 age group) wear black cotton trousers tied at the waist with cotton sash (*hogkos*), a shirt and a headcloth (*sigal*). In the past, the cotton cloth was made from home-grown and homespun cotton. The black colour came from a plant called *tahom*, which when boiled with water produces the black dye. Jeans, modern-styled pants and belts have replaced the baggy and shapeless cotton trousers.

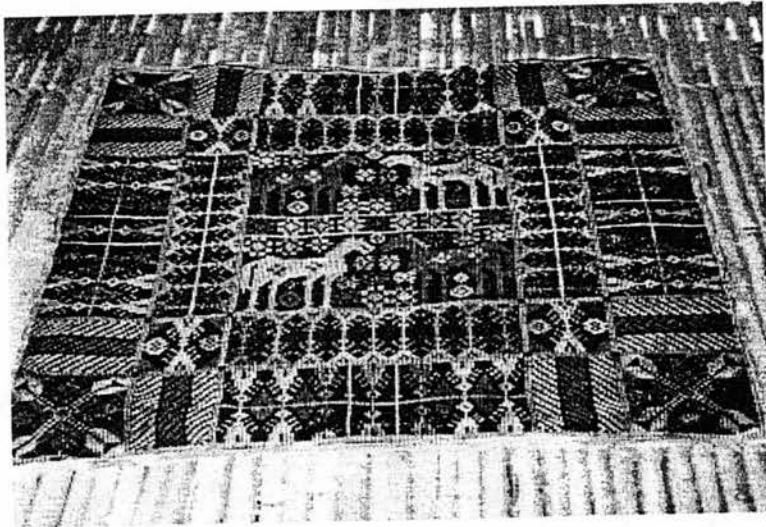
The *sigal* is a very important possession of the Rungus men. There are at least four kinds of *sigal* (according to cash value); *sigal tinohian*; *sigal notogob* and *sigal landap* and *sigal kutun* (made from cotton cloth) The *sigal tinohian* costs between M\$300 to M\$700. Originally made by the Bajaus, Obians and Suluks, this *sigal* making is getting popular among the Rungus women. The Women's Skill Centre at

Tinangol conducts a three months course on *sigal tinohian* embroidery. The *sigal notogob* and *sigal landap* can either be printed or machine-made. They each cost between M\$100-\$350. The *sigal kutun* is very cheap, perhaps less than M\$10. Although the *sigal* is part of the men's clothing, the Rungus associate the *sigal* with special attributes such as political leadership, economic status and personal well-being. *Sigal* wearers are either the *orang tua* or *vozoon* (village headmen), the Council of Elders, the medicinal healer, the rich and wealthy Rungus (according to Rungus criteria), the cultural-integrated and well-adjusted individuals. Opuk, one of my key informants at Tinangol who was a former secretary with PCS, gave this example:

In the old days, when the Rungus people saw a Rungus man without a *sigal*, they would ask themselves: why is this man not wearing the *sigal*? Does he not have one? Does he have no money to buy or goods to exchange for one? Does he not have any friends he could borrow a *sigal* from? Is he insane? Perhaps he is not a true Rungus.

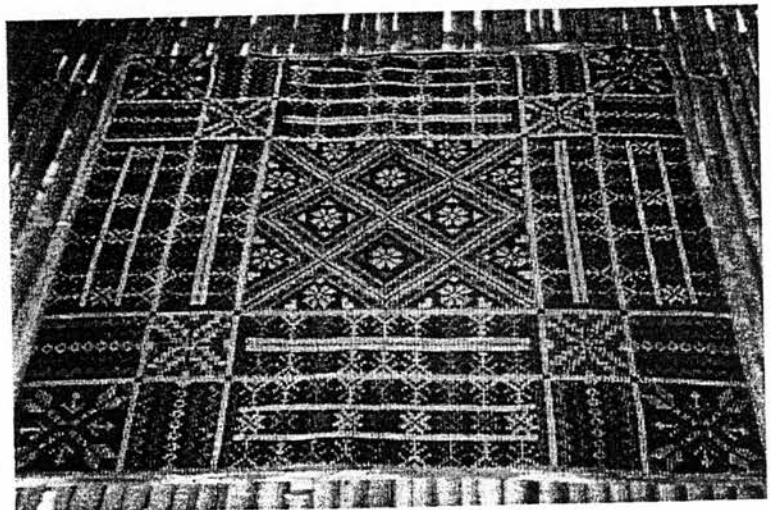
The symbolic significance of the *sigal* has diminished over the years. Present-day Rungus men, especially those below fifty years old, do not wear the *sigal* anymore. Many of them do not own one and will perhaps borrow or buy one when they marry or when the occasion arises. Instead of *sigal*, many of the young Rungus men wear caps or use bathing towels and their children's napkins as a sunshade when they are working in the fields. The photos below show three of the four types of *sigal* mentioned above.

sigal tinohian



Sigal notogob

Sigal landap





Older Rungus men wear the *sigal* when they go out. Here, these men are at the Saturday *tamu* at Matunggong

Rungus men in the past also kept long hair before marrying. A Rungus man would shave his head bald upon marriage and keep it bald thereafter. A bachelor without long hair had to pay a penalty to his intended bride-to-be's family. This might consist of more brassware, one or more gongs or a couple of earthen jars. Shaving of the long hair upon marriage was like a rites-de-passage for the man. It marked his departure from bachelorhood and entry into a life of responsibility as a married man with a wife and family to take care of in the near future. The Rungus men do not adhere to this practice anymore. During my fieldwork, I did not see any men with long hair or bald heads. None of the grooms whose marriages I attended shaved off their short hair either.

Among the Rungus women, their common clothings include the knee-length black cotton skirt and a blouse. The skirt usually has no zip or buttons. Like the men and their baggy trousers, the women use a cloth belt to tie the skirt at the waist or tuck the top corners towards the body. Contemporary Rungus women prefer to wear the sarong, a waist-to-ankle long skirt also worn by other Malaysians or Western-styled skirts, jeans, pants or trousers. Very few women wear shorts, however. While working in the fields, the Rungus women cover their heads with a *sarong*-like cloth,

which they adeptly fold it into a shape that will stay in place, while the women are working. The Rungus call this 'sunshade' *koluvu*.

Like the Rungus men, the Rungus people also had a customary practice to mark the change in status of the women upon marriage. After giving birth to her first child, older Rungus women advised the younger women to leave their breasts bare, particularly when they were in the house. There was no shame attached to married women who were naked from the waist up. Instead, mothers with young children who did not abide by this norm were frowned upon and reprimanded by their mothers in law. Breasts were the source of life for the baby and when the mother wore a blouse or the *sarong* up to her chest, this meant she was denying her child access to her milk. It signified a death wish, which the Rungus called *komomoli*. The mother is said to harbour an unexpressed wish for her child to die. Contemporary Rungus mothers do not follow this custom anymore. Many of the women I spoke with said they would be very embarrassed if they had to do this. In my research area including Mompilis, there were three women between 55-60 years old, who continued with this practice. One was from Mompilis, the second from Tinangol and the third from Gombizau. The married women, however, do not feel embarrassed to breast feed their children in front of men or wear the *sarong* up to their chest without a blouse. Unmarried girls, however, are forbidden to wear the *sarong* like married women other than when they are bathing.

Rungus women's clothing also includes ornamental jewellery. In the past, the jewellery was very elaborate and extensive, from the head to the feet. Beads and brass coils are among the prominent ornaments worn by Rungus women. Beaded necklaces made from coloured stones and tiny iron bells are considered priceless heirlooms. These necklaces, *todkol*, could cost between several hundred to a thousand Malaysian dollars. For everyday usage, the women settle for necklaces made from the easily available plastic beads and seashells. The whole set consisted of neck coils (*ganggalung*), forearm coils (*saring*), hip coils (*orot*) and calf coils (*lungaki*). Once these coils were set in place, the women would wear them permanently. Like the *sigal* and most of Rungus-styled clothing, brass coils had also lost their significance. Most of the Rungus women today do not wear these brass coils. During my fieldwork, I did not see any Rungus women wearing the complete

set of brass coils as part of their everyday attire. The only brass coil that continues to be part of everyday dressing is the *saring*. There were two women at Bavanggazo, one each at Gombizau, Sumangkap and Tinangol who wore the *saring*. I observed in the *mongoivanon* ceremony the bride dresses in Rungus costume and wears the *saring*.

The Rungus costume is different from the everyday clothing the Rungus women (and men) wear. For the women, their costume includes the *banat ondu*, a three-piece suit of hand-woven knee-length skirt with geometric and floral designs, a hand-woven chest to waist bodice and a hand-woven scarf worn lengthwise across the shoulders. There are decorative flowers in the hairbun, a beaded *sisingal*, worn on the forehead, the complete set of brass coils, a pair of two-inch wide beaded necklaces (*pinakol*) worn diagonally across the chest. For the men, their costume is called the *badu*, consisting of a hand-woven long-sleeved shirt with geometric and human designs, the black and baggy cotton trousers with cotton belt and the *sigal*. The men also wear the *pinakol* like the women. Today, the *banat ondu* and *badu* are worn by the Rungus on special occasions such as on their wedding day, entertaining political leaders who visit the villages or performing the cultural dances during the Harvest Festival. The Rungus people are paying more attention to the Rungus costume with the increasing tourism interest in cultural activities. STPC, for example, occasionally invites the villagers, particularly from Bavanggazo, to send a team of dancers and gong musicians for its cultural functions in the capital, Kota Kinabalu. The performers have to wear the Rungus costume while performing the dance. Many of the villagers I spoke with in my research area expressed their desire to own a *banat ondu* or *badu*. When I asked them why this was so, some of them said the Rungus costume is part of Rungus traditional culture, hence, having the costume will mean they are part of the Rungus culture. Several others said they are proud that the Rungus have a distinctive costume that is different from the other ethnic communities of Sabah.

Religious Beliefs¹

The Rungus people were once animists and many of them, despite being Christians or Muslims, continue to practise some of the rituals and ceremonies associated with the belief in supernatural forces. Thu (1977: 46) reports that “there are now approximately 13,000 Christians who make up 30 percent of the total population.” I could not obtain the latest figures on the number of Christian Rungus in Kudat at the present time. However, in the four research villages, there were only ten couples (husbands and wives and all from Tinangol) who said they were still *labus*, that is, animists. The animist Rungus believe everything exists or must be carried out in pairs. If one spouse decides to convert to Christianity, the other spouse must agree to convert. If there is disagreement, then there is no conversion.

The basic belief underlying Rungus animism is that both good and evil spirits inhabit the universe. These spirits control and determine the condition of every aspect of Rungus life. The Rungus believe that there is a direct relationship between the spirits’ anger and natural disasters or crises such as drought, floods, epidemic diseases, illnesses, death, crop failures and problems of relationships. These crises indicate that the spirits are angry because someone has done something wrong. Fear dominates the Rungus people’s belief in the power of the unseen world. The main principle is to adhere strictly to the appropriate practices, rituals and ceremonies that would appease the angered spirits. An angry spirit disseminates its heated anger onto the earthly Rungus.

The Rungus divide the universe into three levels. The celestial deities inhabit the top level, the highest ranking among them is the Creator, *Minamangun* or *Kinoringan*, the more commonly used term. *Kinoringan* enjoys the company of other celestial beings including *Sinorungan*, *Kodomondihai*, *Sombavon* and *Bintingavan* (Thu 1977: 87). These spirits, generically called *lumaag* by the Rungus, help *Kinoringan* to oversee the world and the Rungus in particular. The *lumaag* function as the intermediary between the *Kinoringan* and the Rungus people for they are ones

¹ Much of the material for this section comes from Thu (1977) and my fieldwork data (Mompilis 1992-1994 and Tinangol 1997).

the Rungus priestess, *bobolizan*², will establish contact and solicit their assistance when she is in a state of trance.

The middle range spirits inhabit the second level. These spirits reside in almost everything that exists on earth – trees, stones, water, soil, rice field, jungle, sea, mountain peak, hill slopes, the Rungus home, the cooking hearth and so on. The Rungus refer to the spirits that cause disasters and crises for them as *rogon* or evil spirits.

The ordinary Rungus people inhabit the third and lowest level. They are subjected to the power and domination of the celestial beings and the *rogons*. The Rungus have two main methods of averting potential danger. One method involves the use of certain animals and objects as omens (*kopizo*) and the other involves the complex and elaborate system of rituals, prayers and animal sacrifice.

Omens play a major role in determining the actualisation of a planned action and the success or failure of the action taken. Most of the objects and animals chosen as omens have names that rhyme with certain negative elements. Some of the bad omens are: mousedeer or *pavus*, which rhymes with *mavus*, meaning to erode or diminish in size; rat or *ikus*, which means *kumukus*, to reduce, to decrease; python or *lopung* from the root word, *opung*, which means to be left behind; grass snake or *topirik*, which means to pull away or separate.

The good omens include the deer or *tambang*, which means to grow, become more and the *vozi-vozi* snake. *Ozi*, its root word, means to like or desire. In the case of marriage plans, when the boy's family on their way to the girl's family to discuss the terms of the marriage encounters the *topirik*, they will read it as a bad omen (separation or divorce) for the intended marriage and will abandon their marriage plans between the boy and the girl. Hinoon, my foster parent at Tinangol, is a devout

² The *bobolizan*, a ritual specialist, is usually a woman. There are male *bobolizans* but I did not meet one in my fieldwork. The training of a *bobolizan* begins from childhood through oral communication. The *rinait*s – prayers and chants - are learned by heart and committed to memory through observation and instruction. Nothing can be written down as this would take away the potency of the *rinait* and offset the *bobolizan*'s capacity to mediate and assist the Rungus people. A former *bobolizan* at Tinangol informed me that George Appell, the American anthropologist who did his research on Rungus social organisation in the early 1960s came to Tinangol to collect these *rinait*s. He offered her money but she refused to participate. She would not only lose her power but worse still, she might make the *rogon* angry.

Christian but from our conversations on the Rungus interpretations of dreams and omens, she seemed to express some ambivalence on the matter. One subject we frequently talked about was her eldest daughter's impending divorce from her husband. Aged 31 in 1997, Anna has been estranged from her husband for several years. The couple did not have a happy marriage. Hinoon said perhaps the marriage was not meant to be. An omen had appeared on the morning of the wedding day and a *labus*, animist Rungus, would have abandoned the marriage. The family was on their way to the church at Tinangol for the wedding ceremony when they saw the *topirik* crossing their path. "Maybe we should have heeded the sign but nobody said anything at that time," Hinoon said to me.

The Rungus have many religious ceremonies. In this section, I concentrate on the festivals and ceremonies that I will mention in this thesis: the Harvest Festival or *Magahau*, the *tumoron* and *moginum* ceremonies.

The Rungus calendar begins in June with the preparation of the intended plot for rice cultivation and ends in May with the harvest. May is a month of thanksgiving and rejoicing after a year of tending to the paddy field. In Sabah, two days (30th and 31st May) have been set aside for the state-level celebration of the Harvest Festival, or *Pesta Kaamatan*. Christianity and time have eroded the religious significance or animist meanings of the Harvest Festival. For the *labus*, the main purpose of the harvest celebration is to offer thanks to the rice spirit (*bambarazon* and her 'assistants', *odu-odu*) for the good harvest and the re-assurance of an equally good or better harvest the following year. For the ceremony conducted by a *bobolizan*, the ritual specialist, chickens and pigs are offered to the *bambarazon* together with prayers and chants.

The State-sponsored *Pesta Kaamatan*, held annually at the KadazanDusun Cultural Association (KDCA) in Penampang, Kota Kinabalu, has an atmosphere of a *pesta*, a fair or fest in Malay. It begins with a re-enactment of the thanksgiving ceremony by the *bobolizan*, and culminates in the highlight of the Festival, the state-level *Unduk Ngadau* Beauty Contest (Miss *Unduk Ngadau* or Miss Harvest Festival). The contestants for this state-level beauty pageant have undergone the *Unduk Ngadau* contests held at the village, sub-district and district-levels. Handicraft stalls,

food stalls, clothings and ethnic costumes, souvenirs, demonstrations, exhibitions, musical shows and public talks are among the main features at the *Pesta Kaamatan*. Many of the Rungus villagers from Matunggong travel to the KDCA with their beaded crafts, honey, woven sashes and rinago baskets to sell at the *Pesta*. Some stay in the model Rungus longhouse³ or camp in and around the compound while others stay with their relatives in Kota Kinabalu.

Tumoron, from the root word, *intoron* (stop) or *mintoron* (rest), is a ceremony where the Rungus family takes time off their work to worship the celestial beings. From his informants, Thu (1977: 77) reports that the “*tumoron* festival is made mainly of two things; first, when someone is sick and second, when a new baby is born.” The ceremony is associated with the *bangau*, an important religious symbol consisting of a bundle of short (half foot by one inch) bamboo sticks bound together and hung above the cooking hearth in the family’s *ongkob*. For each *tumoron* ceremony, the family adds a new bamboo stick to signify a new vow to the *lumaag*: the family will hold a sacrifice ceremony in the near future in return for the *lumaag*’s protection and good care for the newborn baby or the ailing family member. The *tumoron* normally lasts three days and after the third day, the family members are not allowed to leave the house or do any work for two to three days. They are supposed to be ‘on leave or resting’ from their daily tasks in order to devote their time and thoughts to the *lumaag*. My key informants at Tinangol informed me that in the past, all the members of the family concerned must be present for the *tumoron* ceremony. It could not be held if one member was absent. In the past, Rungus parents preferred their children to stay in the village and not travel or migrate elsewhere. Any member of the family could fall sick at any time and everybody in the family needed to be present if the parents decided to hold the *tumoron* ceremony. In addition, outsiders, that is, people who were not from the village, were not permitted to enter the village during the three days after the ceremony was conducted.

³ The KDCA, like the Sabah State Museum, has a heritage village, consisting of model houses of the various ethnic groups of Sabah. These include the Murut longhouse, Rungus longhouse, Bajau house and the Malay house.

For the *labus*, the *tumoron* ceremony was a very important event because if the ceremony was not conducted properly, it might aggravate the illness or jeopardise the smooth growth of the newborn baby. That is why, according to my key informants, anyone who wanted to enter a longhouse must first call out to the inhabitants before arriving at the stairs in order to signal his/her impending arrival. “*Intoron ka?*” Is anyone in? When he or she received an answer from the longhouse inhabitants, the caller would then ask, “*Mindakot ka?*” Can I climb up or enter? If a family in the longhouse just had its *tumoron* ceremony, the longhouse inhabitants would politely inform the visitor that it was not appropriate for him or her to enter the longhouse⁴.

The *moginum* ceremony serves as the fulfilment of several *tumoron* vows. The family may have the *tumoron* ceremony at anytime but this is not the case for the *moginum*. It is usually held once every three to ten years. The *moginum* involves much preparation and expenses in terms of number of chickens and pigs to be sacrificed: “Generally eight or nine pigs are required, as for chickens the more the better, but never less than ten” (Thu 1977: 82). In addition to the pigs and chickens, the family also needs to obtain the following things: “Seven pairs of small bamboo sticks, seven pairs of palm leaves, seven trees of Gombizau (a plant whose root word, *izau*, means life (or *mizau*, to live)⁵, seven pieces of the heart of the young banana plant, seven *limau* (lime) flowers and finally thirty small fish” (Thu 1977: 82).

The family opens up a hole in the roof above its *apad* to prepare a makeshift altar for the pig sacrifice. The ceremony lasts for five days and each day is marked by the sacrifice of pigs and chickens and prayers by the *bobolizan*. Like the *tumoron*,

⁴ During my fieldwork in 1997, one tour guide related his experience with one Rungus village. When he brought his tourists to this village, the villagers would inform him that they could not enter the village as a family had just conducted the *tumoron*. The village headman said he could enter the village if he paid a fine of about M\$25-M\$30. After several visits and several fines, the tour guide began to suspect that it was all a hoax. Thereafter, whenever the village headman demanded the tour guide pay for permission to enter the village, he would politely decline and leave with his clients.

⁵ The Gombizau plant has several varieties. Thu (1977: 82) reports that the plant does not have any flower. When I was at Gombizau in 1997, Mongundi, the villager I spent much time with, showed me the Gombizau plant with purple flowers. She was having frequent headaches that she attributed to her husband’s sexual misconduct. Mongundi informed me that she boiled the Gombizau leaves and bathed with the water to offset the “heat in her body caused by husband’s illicit liaisons.”

after the ceremony on the fifth day, the family members are not permitted to leave the house or work for two to three days (Thu 1977: 83).

In summary to the religious beliefs of the Rungus, we can say that for the *labus* Rungus, these ceremonies serve to reassure them of their continued survival as well as reinforce the bond between the members of the family, the inhabitants of the longhouse and village. The longhouse and village share in the aftermath of the ceremony whether it is feasting on the sacrificed pigs and chickens or turning away non-visitors to the longhouse and village. The three photos below show the *moginum*, *tumoron-mamapak* and *sumombol* ceremonies.



Moginum in the *ongkob*. Three *bobolizan* enacting the relevant rituals before the pig is sacrificed



Mamapak –
thanksgiving after
harvesting



Sumombol, invoking the blessing of the spirits for the
safe journey of one of the village sons to the city.

2.3 BASEL MISSION: ITS VISION AND ACTION

These people seem to want something new because they see no room for improvement as things are. They want to work plantations and be like the Chinese and therefore it follows, for them, that they should become Christians. They do not want to become Adventists because then they would not be allowed to eat pork or smoke.

Hans Bienz (n.d.), the first Basel missionary to visit the Rungus in 1951, wrote this observation in his diary. Thus began the Rungus people's initiation into Christianity, the Basel Mission way¹. Bienz noted the Rungus' determination to improve their living conditions. The people seemed to be aware that their existing way of life was not helping them to progress. More significantly, Bienz' entry gave credit to the Rungus people's ability to make decisions based on their own rationalisations of the advantages or disadvantages attached to the various options. The touristic representations of the Rungus, however, negate Bienz' observation.

This touristic negation of change finds a partner in the European missionaries' attitude towards their mission work. Jenkins² (1990: 15) writes of the missionaries' attitude in Africa: "It is an European illusion that African cultures, for instance, normally exist unchanging over centuries." This perspective restricted the foreign missionaries' understanding of "their local congregation and its life. The missionaries were not able to see more clearly the indigenous roots and the role of tradition in what Christian people did and said" (Jenkins 1990: 14).

According to Jenkins (1990: 11), nineteenth century Basel Mission had a partisan view of the world. They were Europeans who presented themselves in terms of ideals and others in terms of their problems. The old Basel Mission aimed at

¹ During my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to meet Rev. Forschner and Rev. Dumartkeray, another two pioneer Basel missionaries and Tuan (Mr) Stahelin, the Swiss agriculturist employed by the Basel Mission to start the Farm School at Bavangazo in 1961. Forschner maintains constant communication with many of the Rungus elders at Matunggong as they are his principal sources of information on the Rungus culture and history. He makes annual visits to Kudat since 1986 when Sabah reopened its doors to foreign missionaries.

² Paul Jenkins is presently the archivist of Basel Mission at Mission House, Basel, Switzerland. I wrote to him in March 1998 inquiring about the Basel Mission's records of the missionaries' activities in Kudat. Most of the writings are in German. Fortunately, there was one book, a collection of articles written by former missionaries on their thoughts and experiences working as missionaries at various parts of the world. Jenkins sent me a copy of this book, edited by Franz Baumann (1990).

creating Christian communities abroad like those they knew at home, as indicated in one of its books, "Regulations for the Basel Mission Congregations in India and West Africa." The Basel Mission expected a new uniform of Basel-South German culture to be developed in West Africa and South India. It tried to ensure that their converts made a complete break with their "heathen" past, purging the indigenous culture of the essential parts of their identity. The missionaries set out not to conserve traditional culture but to intervene and change it. Their interest in the indigenous language such as painstakingly producing a dictionary of the indigenous language, was to help the missionaries in their efforts to build up a unified, modern, Christian world community. This intention, Jenkins says, was "wide off the mark" (Jenkins 1990: 11). These efforts did not destroy the indigenous culture or conserve it. Instead, as Jenkins has argued, the missionaries' actions encouraged the development of indigenous identity and self-confidence. The way the missionaries invested time and effort in learning the indigenous language and then publishing a whole range of books in it, made it clear to indigenous people that their own culture was a subject worth serious attention.

Otto Dilger³, one of the pioneer missionaries for the Rungus community after Bienz established the first contact, makes a similar statement on change: "It is impossible to get a picture of a culture that is complete and ready to be printed because culture seems to be a living thing which grows and changes all the time." Human culture, as a composition of meanings and forms of actions which people invent over time to help them organise and regulate their behaviour as members of a society, entails change and adaptation. Whatever the nature of change, the people base their decisions and actions on their rationalisation of the best possible alternative for their well being and continued survival. The Rungus are Christians by religion but they remain Rungus by ethnicity. They have their own ways of giving meanings to what they see as Christian or Rungus. Within the Rungus way, there is also the distinction between cultural practices and religious or animist beliefs. The individual acts according to his or her rationalisations with regard to the respective dimensions. As a Christian, the Rungus individual may not continue with the animist

³ Personal communication by post. Jenkins referred me to Dilger who is living with his wife, Marie, also a missionary, at Stuttgart, Germany.

rituals. As a Rungus, the Christian individual may continue with the cultural practices. This is the dynamism of the Rungus' culture-Christian-animism trilogy.

There are markers that serve as "signs" of Rungus Christianity: physical structures such as church buildings in the villages, the Protestant Church of Sabah's Headquarters located at Kudat town and the Bible Training Centre at Bavanggazo; observable behaviours such as saying grace before meals, Sunday church services, church weddings and thanksgiving or blessing ceremonies by the parish priest during birthday parties, recoveries from illness or for the educational success of sons or daughters.

The tourism media do not deny the Christianisation of the Rungus but they do not emphasise its existence or significance either. How would Christianised Rungus appeal to the modern-day tourists? If tourists perceive that Christianity is a strong force among the Rungus community, they will no longer believe, if indeed they do believe, that the Rungus are "primitive," "traditional" and "unchanged." Christianity makes the Rungus become like the Christian tourists (from the East and West) – "civilised" and "saved." The Rungus currency - the exotic difference - is lost under the force of Christianisation.

2.3.1 History of the Basel Mission in Sabah

The Basel Mission Society was founded in Basel, Switzerland in 1815. The Society was not a church but a missionary society supported by devout Christians in Switzerland, Germany, Austria and Yugoslavia. In 1846, the Society commissioned Rev. Theodore Hamberg and Rev. Rudolph Lechler to work among the Hakkas in Hong Kong and in Guangzhou, China. They founded the Basel Church in China. It was through Rev. Lechler that the British North Borneo Chartered Company recruited Chinese labourers to come to Sabah. In 1882, the first batch of Chinese Basel Christians from Hong Kong and China arrived at Kudat. They formed the Basel Christian Church in 1886 (later known as The Basel Christian Church of Malaysia [BCCM]). In 1949, Rev. Bienz, a missionary from the Board of Basel Mission, was commissioned to help in Sabah. Bienz arrived at Kudat in 1951 and by early 1952, the Rungus had formed the Protestant Church of Sabah (PCS). The Basel

Church assisted the PCS in many ways, for example, commissioning three pastors to work in PCS, building school hostels, providing scholarships (Dumartheke ray 1996: 1). Masangkung, about 45km from Tinangol, was the first village at Matunggong to embrace Christianity in 1952. Until 1977, when the PCS celebrated its 25th anniversary, there were more than ninety Rungus villages in the Matunggong sub-district who had converted to Christianity. Tinangol (including Bavanggazo) became Christian in 1959 while Gombizau (including Sumangkap) converted in 1966 (PCS Silver Jubilee Book 1977: 31).

When I think of the Rungus people's fear of the evil spirits and how this fear influenced their thoughts and course of actions, I often wonder how the Basel Mission succeeded in converting the animist Rungus to Christianity. Rev. Poong⁴, one of the Chinese pastors seconded to help PCS when the Basel missionaries had to leave the state in the late 1960s, spoke of the day he saw Rev. Honegger, the first missionary to start evangelical work among the Rungus villagers upon the recommendation of Bienz in 1951. Honegger, wearing the loose-fitting cotton trousers and shirt like the Rungus men, was carrying the *tinangaban* (a large carrier basket for men). He was almost bent double with the load on his back. The image of a White man dressed in Rungus attire carrying what seemed to be a heavy load made quite an impression on Poong, then a twelve-year old boy living in Kudat town. When he himself became a Christian pastor and worked among the Rungus, Poong said he sought solace from the image of Honegger carrying the load on his back. Spreading the Gospel to the Rungus was like Honegger carrying the heavy *tinangaban*. It was a monumental task but had to be done, according to Rev. Poong.

Thu (1977: 6) writes of the Rungus' fear of the evil spirits and how "their fear vanished when the Basel Mission spread the Gospel to them." Marie Dilger (1990: 9), describes the fear she saw in the eyes of a Rungus man who, upon becoming a Christian, could not bear to be in his longhouse anymore:

⁴ Personal communication with Rev. Poong in Kota Kinabalu during my fieldwork. Rev. Poong is presently attached to the Sabah Theological Seminary at Kota Kinabalu.

I shall never forget Kaling's eyes. He lived in a longhouse whose inhabitants were still adherents of the old religion. He himself had sent a message to us that he wanted to become a Christian ... One Sunday, we went to Kaling's longhouse. The people were shy but friendly; silently, they listened as Otto spoke briefly about the Grace of Lord, who is greater than any law, and we prayed the Lord's Prayer. Then Kaling announced that he wanted to become a Christian. He spoke loudly and clearly but a terrible fear looked out of his eyes. He collected his sleeping-mat and his rice-pot and left the house straight away, with us. This strong, intelligent young man could not have endured another minute in that longhouse, in which the Spirits were all-powerful.

Marie Dilger herself wondered if she believed in the Spirits. "There are more things in Heaven and earth ... than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (1990: 6). She did not fear the spirits but she acknowledged that for the believers, the spirits were real, hence their fear of these spirits were real too:

The Spirits – the powers that are merciless in avenging the thoughtless breaking of a taboo, and could consume people, or even whole longhouses – the Spirits were always lurking; a storm that was always threatening to break over the whole of the Rungus people's lives. We saw how people died, solely because they were convinced that a Spirit had cursed them (Dilger 1990: 6).

"We have come home to God," the Rungus villagers said to Dilger when they embraced Christianity. We will see how the Basel Mission and its missionaries succeeded in bringing God to the hearts and minds of the Rungus people.

After his arrival at Kudat, Bienz came to know of the Rungus through the Chinese Christians. Bienz began to visit several villages recommended by the Chinese. Aware of the leadership structure in the village, Bienz's initial contact was with the village headman. In his letter to the Directors of the Basel Mission dated 4th February 1952, Bienz wrote of his surprise at finding a large native population at Kudat: "The District has a native population of 33,477 as opposed to 7,332 Chinese. I am now convinced that we should begin here in the Kudat District to work among the indigenous population." He also wrote that the Rungus natives were not Muslims but "proper Bornese. They are rather primitive and are rice planters. They are all illiterates as there are no school but many can speak Malay." He thought there was

potential for Christian mission among the Rungus as the villagers showed interest to know more about the new religion. Bienz suggested the Basel Mission send a missionary “who has already spent some time in South Borneo, would have had experience, know the language, customs and practices of these people. Would it not be possible for you to send someone like Rev. Honegger?” (Bienz, n.d.: 3).

These pioneer missionaries carried the image of the Rungus as people without religion who needed to be saved. Bienz wrote of his first visit to the Rungus longhouse thus:

It was a wonderful experience for me the first time I sat together with these primitive people in their long house. They lived in pile-dwellings. Each family had its own room divided from the others by bark and containing no furniture. In this room they cooked their rice and fish ... Water was carried up in large bamboo pipes. You slept on a floor of split bamboos, without a mosquito net ... They are completely illiterate and only work when otherwise they would go hungry. Some are dirty, especially the children ... The women wear a sarong but often their breasts are free and they wear ornaments such as brass spirals on their forearms and hips and sometimes on their legs. Before you entered a long house you had to ask if you were allowed to enter and then you climbed up a pole that had notches for your feet – it was not very comfortable for us in our shoes⁵.

In 1952, the Basel Mission sent Rev. Honegger to be the first missionary to spread the Christian faith to the Rungus people of Kudat. Rev. Honegger invited community leaders from eleven villages⁶ to attend a meeting at Sikuati. Forty-five village chiefs and elders came for this meeting. After the meeting, the leaders invited Honegger to visit their villages and hold Sunday services. The Basel Mission, through Honegger, started a lay training school at Sikuati in 1955. The school aimed

⁵ The Rungus villagers have a story about these foreign missionaries in their shoes. The Rungus did not have shoes or slippers like the foreigners then. Their shoes were made of flattened tree bark tied together with strips of bark or jungle rattan. When the foreigners came to the villages for the first time, the people could not see the foreigners' feet. Only *rogon* had no feet and so the foreigners must be *rogon*. The Rungus villagers ran away from the foreigners as fast as they could.

⁶ The villages were Masangkung, Tinutudan (Lajong), Handal, Morolobou (Merebau), Rampai, Bangau, Kimihang, Barambangon, Popot, Parapat and Angkob (Tombuluran) (PCS Silver Jubilee Souvenir Book 1977: 31).

to train local Rungus in lay preaching to assist the foreign missionaries in conducting Sunday services.

On December 24, 1952, the Rungus people, under the Basel Mission, formed the Protestant Church of Sabah (PCS) for the Rungus people. The PCS membership was entirely rural as most of the Rungus villagers lived in remote places and were not easily accessible. They were scattered in a wide area separated by hills and mountains and linked with each other only by hill paths. There were no roads and public transportation then. PCS therefore encouraged every village to have a church of its own. The PCS' mission program included church ministries, clinics and schools. These were entirely run by missionaries from the Basel Mission Society. Rungus pastors and lay preachers were not trained or were undergoing training then. Difficulties arose when, in late 1960s, the Basel missionaries had to leave Sabah and the missionary work to the PCS leadership. With the help of pastors such as Rev. Thu En Yu and Rev. Poong from the BCCM, the PCS was able to continue the evangelical work as laid out by the Basel Mission.

I have selected three main aspects of Rungus way of life that were significantly affected by the Basel Mission. These three aspects are the belief system, social development and means of livelihood.

Belief System

In his article 'Introduction to the Rungus Community', Rev. Poong (n.d.) writes of the impact of Christianity on the Rungus community:

A changing world ... Acceptance of Christianity pushed in an important era in the history of the Rungus. Christian religion helps them to change their daily worship of the old religion to the worship of the true God who is a God of Love. Moreover, the standard of living improved tremendously.

Why did the Rungus need Christianity? To the Basel missionaries and also the Chinese Christian pastors from BCCM, the animist Rungus had no religion. The missionaries regarded people without religion as soul-less humans. The religion-less and soul-less Rungus needed to be "saved" from eternal damnation so that they could

enjoy eternal salvation and eternal life. The animist Rungus were under the absolute and ultimate power of celestial forces. To avoid incurring the anger of the spirits, the Rungus created a comprehensive system of rules and regulations, designed elaborate rituals and prayers and trained some of their members to be ritual specialists and act as intermediaries between the spirits and the Rungus.

The missionaries believed that Christianity released the Rungus people from the power of the *rogons*. Christian Rungus did not have to conduct elaborate, time-consuming and expensive rituals and ceremonies. Belief and faith in Jesus Christ – the God of Love and Mercy - replaced the belief and fear of the rogon who were the gods of anger and retribution.

Why were the Rungus able and willing to embrace Christianity when they were so bound by and fearful of the spirits? In addition, since the Rungus lived a life that was “much nearer to the paradisiac state of life and they can do with so few things, a life that is perhaps more human than many people in the highly civilised countries” (Poong n.d.), why and how should Christianity make a community of people more human than they already were? Marie Dilger (1990) cites an incident that shed some light on the way the Rungus perceived Christianity and adapted the new religion to their existing beliefs and cultural practices. One day, a Rungus farmer who had recently become Christian, came to see her. He brought with him five eggs. The farmer asked Marie Dilger if she could give him a hymnbook in return for the five eggs. Dilger wondered why the man needed a hymnbook when he was illiterate. When she asked him, he confided that he had seen several reddish stones on the land he intended to cultivate. He wanted to appease the spirits he believed resided in the stones. If he were a *labus*, an animist, he would sacrifice a chicken but now he was a Christian, he could not sacrifice a chicken, he said to Dilger. But he did not feel comfortable at the thought that the spirits were there and that he did not do anything about it. He therefore came up with the idea of using the hymnbook to replace the chicken. Dilger’s initial reaction was to think that the farmer’s action indicated his lack of understanding and faith in his Christian beliefs. She thought he was merely “replacing the old magic with the new one” (1990: 8). Later, after much contemplation, she realised that it was the farmer’s way of expressing his faith in the power of the Christian God.

I view the Rungus' acceptance of Christianity in their lives as an interaction between the Basel Mission's evangelical efforts and strategies and the Rungus' people's comparison of Christianity and animism. Marie Dilger (1990: 4) states that the Rungus became Christians because of economic reasons: "Animism made any progress impossible. One was allowed to till the soil for one year, and then the land had to be given back to the Spirits. As a result, the Rungus people could plant hill-rice whereas the Chinese immigrants established paddy-rice fields and coconut plantations and became rich." When the Rungus observed the Basel missionaries and the Chinese villagers, they wondered at their courage to live in places or to engage in activities the Rungus considered taboo. When the missionaries encouraged the Rungus to plant coconuts, they were reluctant to do so even when the missionaries paid them wages to plant the coconuts. The Rungus watched the missionaries and Chinese when they planted the coconuts. These non-Rungus did not become ill or die. They stayed in damp places and no misfortune befell upon them. They did not have to sacrifice pigs and chicken yet their paddy and their economy prospered. The Rungus concluded that the non-Rungus' religion must be so powerful and good that they did not fear the spirits. What was this God of theirs that required no elaborate animal sacrifice and no complex taboos and proscriptions? When the Chinese and missionaries fell ill, they went to the clinics and dispensaries. Treatment was easily available without requiring animal sacrifices and elaborate rituals. The Rungus realised that they too could go to the dispensaries when they were ill without having to bring pigs or chickens. Most of the Rungus reared the pigs and chickens mainly for ritual purposes. Those who did not rear or have enough pigs and chickens had to buy or borrow from friends and relatives. Many Rungus families were often in debt because of the need to provide animals for the rituals. Through the health programs and medical information provided by the Basel Mission, the Rungus realised that "serious illnesses like tuberculosis and malaria could not simply be cured by smearing fowl's blood on the patient's ankle or administering lime chalk on the forehead" (PCS 1977: 34). Such were the thoughts of the missionaries on why the Rungus embraced Christianity.

The Rungus' conversion to Christianity also affected their attitude towards the longhouse. The longhouse had both practical and symbolic functions for the Rungus

people in the past. It provided security and protection in numbers and served as a mechanism for social control. The longhouse structure necessitated an elaborate system of rules and regulations that functioned as a check and balance on competition and conflict while simultaneously developing co-operative behaviour and tolerance. The Christian Rungus, however, believed that to sever their ties with animism, they had to move out of the longhouse, which to them was the house of the *rogon*. Moreover, difficulties emerged if not all the longhouse inhabitants became Christians. For example, when a Christian Rungus died in the longhouse, his family had to consider the sensitivities and beliefs of animist inhabitants. They had to make an opening in the *apad-tingkang* to bring the dead body out of the longhouse without passing through the rooms of the other longhouse inhabitants. Hence, it was better, that the Christian Rungus thought, to live in individually-built houses.

Social Development: Health and Education

The Basel Mission aimed to spread the Gospel using the native language, in this case, the Rungus language. By translating the Bible into Rungus, the missionaries thought they could bring the Bible nearer to the villagers. Poong (1977: 15) explained this need to have the Bible in the people's own language:

Schools may be established and a people educated in another language, but without the Word of God in its own mother tongue, a church will not stand alone and grow in grace. For the church does not consist of buildings or represent an organisation of educated men and women. The church consists of ordinary people; of old ladies sitting back in the kampongs [village] minding the grandchildren; of old men governing the kampongs; of men and women going out daily to their rice farms; of children growing up to be "ordinary people". The earlier these ordinary people have the Scriptures in their own language the easier the church will develop under the instruction of the Holy Spirit.

The high illiteracy rate among the Rungus people posed a major problem for the Basel missionaries. There were no schools for the Rungus villagers. Even if they translated the Bible into Rungus, the people would not be able to read it. In addition, the Basel missionaries themselves could not speak Rungus or Malay. Honegger spoke Indonesian Malay as he was in Kalimantan before coming to Sabah. His first

action was to get some of the village headmen and elders to learn the Malay language. These village leaders in turn taught Honegger and the other missionaries the Rungus language. The missionaries also aimed to train these Rungus villagers to be lay preachers so that they could assist the missionaries in spreading the Gospel to their fellow villagers.

In addition to the adult literacy classes, the Basel Mission set up three primary schools which they called Native Voluntary Schools in Lajong, Tinangol and Lodong in 1965. The missionaries encouraged the Rungus parents to send their sons and daughters to the schools. In 1966, the missionaries built a Domestic Science School⁷ at Tinangol. The school organiser, Gertrud Ernst, designed a one-year course for young Rungus girls. The main subjects were sewing, cooking, handicraft, arithmetic, gardening, family and personal hygiene. The School provided accommodation for those who came from outside Tinangol. This School is still in operation but with a new name. It is now the Women's Skills Centre (changed in 1996 by the PCS Executive Committee), managed by a warden who is also a handicraft instructor at the Centre. The Centre organises a three months course on weaving, embroidery for the *sigal tinohian* and beadwork. During my fieldwork, there were ten women participants from surrounding villages who registered for the *sigal tinohian* course.

Besides the schools and literacy classes, the Basel Mission also introduced the Rungus villagers to modern medicine and treatment. The missionaries built several dispensaries and clinics in Rungus villages. The first dispensary was built at Tinangol in 1964.

⁷ Barbara Rogers (1980: 23) mentioned the domestic science movement in the early twentieth century as one of the factors causing the exclusion of women from the modern cash economy. The domestic science movement promoted 'home-making' as a vocation justifying the unemployment of women. Scientific housework and domestic management formed the basis of the domestic science curriculum as the ultimate aim was to train the women in order to serve men and make them 'better men'. Western missionaries working in third world countries adopted this concept, Rogers maintained. The existence of the Domestic Science School set up by the Basel Mission at Tinangol substantiated Rogers' point. The school, as the Rungus women who had attended the course informed me, taught them "how to be good women so that they could serve their husband well."

Means of Livelihood and Gender-related Work

The literacy classes mentioned above provided the missionaries the opportunity to meet and interact with the villagers. This was a good approach as they were able to introduce the Gospel through their literacy lessons. The interaction also allowed the villagers to get to know the foreigners. There was a second strategy the missionaries used to get close to the villagers. This was in the field of farming. Farming was predominantly the Rungus way of life. The Basel Mission used the Rungus' preoccupation with farming, which meant subsistence hill paddy cultivation, as a means to create more opportunities for interaction. The Mission engaged Tuan Stahelin to set up the curriculum for a course on agriculture. Stahelin arrived at Kudat in 1961. He formulated a five-year course in farming. In 1962, Stahelin's new agriculture course was ready to be implemented in the newly established Farm School, located at what was now Bavanggazo village. The curriculum included courses on agriculture, carpentry and animal husbandry such as rearing of fowls, cattle, pigs and buffaloes and Bible classes (PCS 1977: 33). The students were Rungus males from the Kudat district. The democratisation of the education system by the Malaysian government in 1966, which made primary education (from the ages of 7-12) compulsory, affected the attendance at the Farm School. In 1967, the Farm School became a Bible Training School. Instead of being the principal subject, farming became a secondary subject in the predominantly Bible-oriented curriculum. From 1974 -1980, the Bible Training School had to close down because all the Basel missionaries and foreign staff had left Sabah by then. In 1980, however, the PCS revived the School but renamed it The Bible Training Centre. PCS expanded the curriculum to include agriculture, music, wildlife, customs and native law and bible studies.

Through the Farm School and its efforts at encouraging the Rungus to engage in commercial farming and diversify their economic livelihood, the Basel Mission introduced many changes to the Rungus lifestyle and livelihood. Some significant examples were:

- types of crops cultivated: from food crops (hill paddy, maize, sweet potatoes, tapioca) to cash crops (coconuts, tropical fruits such as mangosteens, durians);
- farm size: from small-sized rice fields (about 2-5 acres) to large coconut and/or tropical fruit plantations (about 10 acres);
- farm labour: from family-based and/or mutual-aid community support service to family-based, mutual-aid community support and/or wage labour; from self-employment to paid employment (contract labourers or permanent staff);
- monofarming to diversification and alternative work (non-farm-related), such as maids, drivers, research assistants to the Basel missionaries and British administrators; medical and non-medical staff at the dispensaries; teaching and administrative staff in the schools; civil servants and general workers for the government departments; priesthood and lay preachers after completing Bible Studies Course at the Bavanggazo Bible Training School; commercial production of handicraft; housebuilding contracts.

One significant aspect of change related with farming activities was gender roles. The only publication to date on gender division of labour among the Rungus was by Laura Appell. She did her research while accompanying her husband, George Appell when he did his PhD on the Rungus community in 1959-60 and from 1961-63. Laura Appell (1992: 4 & 30) has this to say about the state of gender among the Rungus:

While sex roles are not identical, they are equivalent and both behaviourally and ideologically, they are of equal importance for societal functioning. Male and female roles are primarily balanced in the household economy. For each skill exhibited by a male, there is an equally important one possessed by the female. This applies to household tasks, agricultural activities, hunting and gathering techniques, child rearing, etc.

Appell believes that Rungus women and men had equivalent roles in economic production: “Although the male and female roles are not identical, they complemented each other and are of equal value. Therefore, it is better to say they are equivalent” (1992: 4). Appell did her research in the late 1950s and early 1960s before the Basel Mission introduced the various schools mentioned above and the new farming activities. During this time, the main means of livelihood for the Rungus community was dry or hill paddy farming (shifting cultivation). Rungus men

and women worked together to prepare the land for cultivation - clearing, cutting, chopping, burning, planting, weeding, harvesting. During the time of her research, men held the high ranking positions, including the village chief, Council of Elders and village midwife.

The presence of the Basel Mission changed the pattern of gender-related work. The missionaries encouraged the Rungus women to engage in commercial production of handicraft while attending domestic science courses. The missionaries introduced new crops and new planting methods to the Rungus men, encouraged them to attend Farm School and to train as lay preachers. By the time I did my research in 1997, the Rungus women were synonymous with handicraft production and domestic tasks and the Rungus men with farmwork and public responsibilities. The women spent more time at home while the men spent more time in the fields or outside the village.

2.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

How did the Basel Mission win the hearts and minds of the pagan or animist Rungus? The missionaries knew they could not confront the Rungus with the Bible and start their evangelism straight away. They had to learn to live like the Rungus and be living witnesses of the word of God to the pagan Rungus. Their strategies included using the village leadership structure, education, modern medicine and farming. Like anthropologists, the missionaries braced themselves for much discomfort and uncertainty. The anthropologists undertook such a task in the name of research while the missionaries regarded their mission as their calling. It did not matter to the Basel missionaries that the Rungus were not, like Rousseau's conception of "primitive" or "ancient" people "virtuous, by reason of their ignorance, their simplicity and coarseness of manner" (quoted in Sills 1968: 564). The Rungus have an elaborate system of regulations and rules, comprehensive vocabulary and a systematic thinking regarding the relations between things and between phenomenon. Like other "primitive" or "ancient" peoples, the Rungus were capable of "abstract thought" (Levi-Strauss 1962: 1). The "primitive" peoples' exhaustive observation and their systematic cataloguing of relations and connections,

Levi-Strauss (1962: 8) suggests, “do not relate just to practical purposes. They meet intellectual requirements rather than or instead of satisfying needs. The thought we call “primitive” is founded on this demand for order.” To the Basel missionaries, however, the Rungus were “Godless,” “primitive” and “illiterate.”



Rev. Forschner with Hinoon at the Bible Training Centre, Bavanggazo, on his visit in August 1997. Below is Tuan Stahelin and his family, revisiting Sabah-Kudat-Matunggong, also in August 1997, after 28 years.



The Rungus villagers' positive regard for the Basel missionaries (from their verbal statements as well as my observations of their actions when Forscher and Tuan Stahelin (their photos appear below) visited Tinangol in August 1997) was testimony of the significant impact the Basel Mission had on the Rungus people. This was how one of the church leaders at Tinangol explained the missionaries' work:

Through the Basel missionaries from Switzerland, we Rungus became Christians. If we did not have the Basel Mission, maybe we would not have a life like now ... no school, no religion, no hospitals, no dispensaries. Our minds and eyes would be closed. Now many Rungus are educated, able to think of a better way of life and development.

Tourism, like the Basel missionaries' presence in the village, offers the villagers another alternative for a different way of doing things, that is, offering services and entertaining visitors. Under this large category of service-oriented industry, there are various types of work the Rungus could do. The question is what could the Rungus do and how would they set out to achieve what they could do? With Christianity, the Rungus had the Basel Mission to help them. With tourism, could they rely on the tourism establishment? Should they rely on these outsiders?

Even though they differed in their vision and mission, both the tourism authorities' and the Basel missionaries shared common beliefs with regard to the

Rungus community. They both believed the Rungus needed help to improve their living conditions: the missionaries through the Bible and the tourism authorities through the Rungus' participation in the tourist industry.

The Basel Mission and tourism have brought changes to the Rungus identity. The former brought "civilisation" to the Rungus while the latter returned the "civilised" Rungus back to the forest. The missionaries sought to change the Rungus and the tourism authorities sought to preserve the Rungus. The Rungus' exposure to these new situations and new ways of doing things inevitably caused cultural tensions for the individual Rungus and the community at large. Thu (1977: 4-5) has aptly pointed out that the lack of contextualisation in the Basel Mission's evangelical work caused the new Rungus converts to experience a state of cultural alienation: they were leaving their old practices for new beliefs which had nothing in common with their old beliefs. Should the Rungus "become European in order to be Christians?" (Thu 1977: 9). Thu wrote of the cultural tensions in 1977 and twenty years later, in my own fieldwork, the villagers continued to display similar tensions or dilemma in their actions. Under Rungus tourism, should the Rungus people become primitive in order to be modern? Should the Rungus become pretenders of Rungus culture in order to be a commodity that sells?

The "markers" incorporated in the "sightseeing" tour of the Rungus – "native", "pagan", "longhouse dwellers", "hill paddy shifting cultivators" – imply no association with Basel Mission or Christianity. They represent the stuff that sells the Rungus to tourism - "the most traditional and colourful ethnic group of Sabah."

We will see in the next chapter how the Rungus people feature in the national and state tourism plans.

CHAPTER THREE

TOURISM IN MALAYSIA AND SABAH

Once a man unearthed in his field a marble statue of great beauty. And he took it to a collector who loved all beautiful things and offered it to him for sale and the collector bought it for a large price. And they parted. And as the man walked home with his money he thought, and he said to himself, "How much life this money means! How can any one give all this for a dead carved stone buried and undreamed of in the earth for a thousand years?" And now the collector was looking at his statue and he was thinking, and he said to himself, "What beauty. What life! The dream of what a soul! - And fresh with the sweet sleep of a thousand years. How can any one give all this for money, dead and dreamless?" (Kahlil Gibran *The Forerunner*)

Kahlil Gibran captures the essence of modern-day tourism with his anecdote on the *statue of great beauty*. The farmer and collector know the statue is a collector's item. Both, however, regard its value differently. The farmer connects the statue's value with money, which to him is the sustenance of life. The collector sees the statue's beauty beyond the material aspect. No monetary price could match its aesthetic and spiritual value, the soul of life.

In modern-day tourism, the tourists, like the collector, spend part of their savings or credit to seek this statue of great beauty. The visited, like the farmer, sell their statue to the tourists in return for the tourists' money. The tourists and the visited know the statue is of value. Nevertheless, they have their own *gaze* on what this value means. Gibran's depiction of *one product, different interpretation* is a fitting illustration of my research focus on Rungus tourism. The *statue* implies the Rungus lifestyle and livelihood packaged for sale in the tourism market. Its *beauty*, however, is subject to the respective interpretations of the major components involved in Rungus tourism.

This chapter continues with this focus on "gaze." The discussion begins with the government's perspective on tourism, followed by a literature review of research on tourism in Malaysia. The third section links the interest on tourism with the

historical images associated with the country and in particular, Sabah and the Rungus people in the context of the island of Borneo.

3.1 THE PLACE OF TOURISM IN DEVELOPMENT PLANS : FEDERAL AND STATE LEVELS

Malaysia is rich in natural resources and although it is still an important exporter of rubber, tin and palm oil, it is fast emerging as an industrialising economy with 27% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) coming from the manufacturing sector. The agricultural sector now contributes only about 17.2% of the GDP, second to manufacturing, which provides 60% of the exports and now the engine of growth for the Malaysian economy (Navaratnam n.d.). GDP growth averaged about 6.8% over the 1971-1990 period and increased to 9.5% in 1995. Electronics and electrical machinery make up 50% of the exports. Manufacturing is the biggest employer: in 1994, it had 1.9 million out of 8 million labour force; followed by agriculture, forestry and fishing, services and wholesale and retail trade. Unemployment in 1995 was about 7.8% and women constitute 36% of the labour force. Foreign investments fund most of Malaysia's industrial growth and there is an invisible deficit of US\$7.5 billion in 1995. External debt is also rising, from US\$23.3 billion in 1993 to US\$33.1 billion in 1996.

Malaysia's development policy aims to create a balanced wealth distribution and a better quality of life for all Malaysians. Through the Sixth and Seventh Malaysia Plans (1991-2000), the federal government hopes to provide the Malaysian economy with a new basis and a new direction for stronger and more sustained economic growth, better income and more balanced ethnic distribution of income in the 1990s and beyond. The Sixth Malaysia Plan lays the foundation for the Second Outline Perspective Plan 1991-2000 (OPP2) and the attainment of the Vision 2020, introduced by the federal government in 1992. The federal government claims that its overriding objective is not the rapid and sustained economic growth per se but to create a more equitable income distribution and wealth ownership between the Malays and Non-Malays. When this is achieved, the government believes the nation will enjoy political stability and national unity. The Malaysian people will then be

able to identify themselves and others as Malaysians, and not as members of their respective ethnic groups. Under the National Development Plan, the federal government expects Science and Technology to play a crucial and effective role in socio-economic management and development. The federal government's keenness to join the developed nations can be seen through its mega-projects, especially in and around Kuala Lumpur. On July 1999, the Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamed, opened the multi-media Garden City, known as Cyberjaya. It is about 40 km from Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. The Prime Minister perceives Cyberjaya, the locus of technology development, as the country's answer to the Silicon Valley in USA. Covering some 750-km, Cyberjaya lies at the heart of the Multimedia Super-Corridor (MSC). At one end, stands the world's tallest building, the 491metres high Petronas Twin Towers (completed in February 1996) and the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) at Sepang (replacing the Subang International Airport) at the other. The first phase of the KLIA, opened in June 1998 in time for the September 1998 Commonwealth Games, is capable of handling 25 million passengers and one million tonnes of cargo per annum (Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board 1998). The extensive development in the infrastructure and technology sectors has a trickle-down effect for other sectors playing a complementary role in national development. One of these sectors is tourism. This brings us to the federal government's perspective on the role of tourism in the Malaysian economy.

“Come to Malaysia and enjoy the experience of a lifetime”, the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB), also known as Tourism Malaysia (website: [http://www. Malaysia.org.uk/intro.htm](http://www.Malaysia.org.uk/intro.htm)) invites the prospective holidaymakers. Tourism Malaysia's claims echo the EIU International Tourism Reports (1994: 41) on Malaysia, which, among others, states that:

Malaysia is one of the world's best kept tourism secrets. In many respects, it is an ideal tourist destination as it offers a vast range of attractions to suit all tastes and at relatively affordable prices. Since it has not yet attracted mass tourism, it has remained relatively unspoilt, despite the industry's relentless search for new destinations.

The federal government regards tourism as a significant and viable tool for development. The tourism industry, part of the services sector now dominating the Malaysian economy, contributed about 3.2% of the total Gross National Product in 1993. It ranked fifth in the list of major foreign exchange earners in 1992 as Table 3.1 indicates:

Table 3.1 Major Foreign Exchange Earners in Malaysia 1992-93

Export Commodity	1992		1993	
	Ranking	M\$ (million)	Ranking	M\$ (million)
Manufactures	1	71,124	1	85,349
Crude Petroleum	2	9,147	2	7,848
Sawn logs & sawn timber	3	7,330	3	7,622
Palm oil	4	5,412	4	5,841
Tourism	5	4,595	5	5,066
Liquefied Natural Gas	6	2,540	6	2,765

Source: Economic Report 1993/94, quoted from the *Annual Tourism Statistical Report* (1993: 36)

In 1993, there were 6.5 million tourists and they spent M\$5.6 billion in Malaysia. In 1994, there were 7.2 million tourists and they spent M\$9 billion in Malaysia, an increase of 60% (Jayasankaran 1995: 48). The federal government is happy with these figures for this means an increase in foreign exchange earnings.

The federal government considers income from tourist expenditure in Malaysia as an important source of revenue for economic development in the country. Table 3.2 shows the tourist arrivals in Malaysia between 1981 and 1998:

Table 3.2 Tourist Arrivals and Receipts 1981-2000

Year	Tourist Arrivals	% Growth	Total Revenue (M\$ billion)	% Growth
1981	2,533,104	-	1,001	-
1982	2,774,698	+ 9.5	1,132	+ 13.1
1983	2,926,550	+ 5.5	1,329	+ 17.5
1984	2,947,314	+ 0.7	1,426	+ 7.3
1985	3,109,106	+ 5.5	1,543	+ 8.2
1986	3,217,462	+ 3.5	1,669	+ 8.2
1987	3,358,983	+ 4.4	1,795	+ 7.5
1988	3,623,636	+ 7.9	2,012	+12.1
1989	4,846,320	+ 33.7	2,803	+39.3
1990	7,445,908	+ 53.6	4,500	+60.5
1991	5,847,213	- 21.5	4,283	- 4.8
1992	6,016,209	+ 2.9	4,595	+ 7.3
1993	6,503,860	+ 8.1	5,066	+10.2
1994	7,197,229	+10.7	8,290	+63.8
1995	7,500,000	+ 4.0	9,170	-
1996	7,200,000	- 4.0	-	-
1997*	6,200,000	- 14.0	-	-
1998	5,500,000	- 11.0	-	-

Source: *Annual Tourism Statistical Report* (1993: 15) & *MTPB* 1995: 4-5

* There is a significant decrease in tourist arrivals especially after the economic crash in Asia in 1997. Malaysia's tourism industry was affected as Asians - particularly Southeast Asians - formed a large portion of the country's tourism market (as Table 3.3 below shows).

Table 3.3 Top Ten Markets 1993 and 1994

Country	1993	1994
Singapore	4,015,562	4,469,748
Thailand	469,288	538,493
Japan	255,607	286,330
Taiwan	180,964	250,579
Indonesia	154,521	225,854
United Kingdom	154,521	157,929
Brunei	142,824	150,812
Hong Kong	119,198	136,020
Australia	121,694	128,420
China	81,874	95,789

Source: *Annual Tourism Statistical Report 1996*

After independence in 1957, the then Malayan government was already keen to find ways of improving the economy and standard of living of its people. In 1959, it established at federal level the Department of Tourism within the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The Department's major role was to develop domestic tourism and promote international tourism. At the state level, seven states in Peninsular Malaysia each formed a State Tourism Advisory Committee to advise on development and improvement of tourist facilities in their states. For the private sector, some enterprising individuals and companies formed several tourist associations to promote tourism on a limited scale (Bank Negara Quarterly 1971: 192). On the whole, promotional efforts during this period were not organised or active. Between 1959 and 1965, for example, tourist arrivals did not increase much, from 13,000 in 1959 to 25,000 in 1965 (Tan 1991: 163).

Since tourism formed an important part of the government's development strategy, there was a need for an organisation with wider powers and greater operational flexibility. In August 1972, the Tourist Development Corporation of Malaysia (TDC) was formed under the former Ministry of Trade and Industry by Parliament Act 1972 (Wells 1982: 10). This 1972 Act established the TDC as a government-financed statutory body that was responsible for the overseas promotion of tourism within Malaysia and for the development, co-ordination and improvement of facilities and amenities for tourists and promotional work and publicity in Malaysia. The TDC, managed by a Board of Management with private sector representation, provided for the first time, an effective and formal dialogue between the public and private sectors and extension of government allocation to hitherto unexploited areas such as the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak.

Under the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-75), the federal government formulated a development pattern to provide guidelines for the private and public sectors in planning tours, providing facilities and services and implementing appropriate promotional strategies. Prior to 1970, tourism development in Malaysia was minimal and focused mainly in Kuala Lumpur and Penang. The government saw tourism as a low priority sector in national development plans since it relied on market forces to fuel private investments. The year 1972 marked the watershed in tourism development. The federal government formed the TDC in 1972, launched the national airline, Malaysia Airline System (MAS). Furthermore, PATA, the Pacific Air Travel Associations, held its first conference in Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia began to make its mark as a tourist destination in the international tourism market. Tourist arrivals increased by 18.4% between 1972 and 1975 (Bank Negara Quarterly 1971: 192).

The growing importance of the tourism industry justified the formulation of a national tourism plan in 1975 (Tan 1991: 164). Between 1980 and 1985, the national economy was badly affected by the worldwide recession when the prices of oil and other commodity products fell. This adversely affected international trade and overall economic growth, causing deterioration in terms of trade, deficit and current accounts of the balance of payment. The federal government was therefore

compelled to reassess the role of tourism in the national economy. Prolonged recession in developed countries and poor commodity prices placed tremendous pressure on the country for foreign exchange. In searching for products and services to export, tourism received increasing attention as an important component in the national development strategy. In 1986, the federal government accorded an official status to tourism. The rise in government allocation for tourism in the national development plans in each successive five-year development plan (Table 3.4 below) indicates the government's commitment and favourable attitude towards the tourism industry.

Table 3.4 Tourism Allocation in National Development Plans

Plan	Allocation (M\$ million)	% of Plan Allocation
Second Malaysia Plan 1971-75	8.59	0.10
Third Malaysia Plan 1976-80	27.19	0.08
Fourth Malaysia Plan 1981-85	40.00	0.09
Fifth Malaysia Plan 1986-90	140.50	0.02
Sixth Malaysia Plan 1991-95	533.90	0.51
Seventh Malaysia Plan 1996-00	696.00	-

Source: *Tan* (1991: 164) & *Seventh Malaysia Plan* (1996-2000: 564)

Together with the private sector, the government drew a travel pattern following specific routes within the country to encourage greater travel movements and promote the optimum location of tourist facilities and services. The travel patterns took note of the domestic and international tourist movements but were designed to attract tourists to the less developed areas. The government hoped that these definite travel routes would facilitate the provision of standard itineraries for tour operators in promoting package tours of Malaysia, enable the co-ordination of public and private sector development projects and reduce the wastage and duplication of financial and physical resources (Bank Negara Quarterly 1971: 192-93).

Beginning in the 1970s, the government and private sector established linkages with Southeast Asian tour operators to create regional package tours offering varied tourist attractions and amenities in each country concerned. The Malaysian tourism authorities sought the co-operation of European, American, Japanese and Australian tour operators to help promote these national and regional tours, since they were also the tourist-generating countries. This co-operation between Malaysian, Asian and Non-Asian tour operators continues till the present time. During my fieldwork, PATA organised its 9th conference, Adventure Travel and Eco-Tourism Conference & Mart. The venue was Kota Kinabalu, the capital of Sabah, from the 12-15 January 1997. The conference provided a forum for the officials and skilled personnel in the tourism industry to present and discuss the conference theme *Integrating Indigenous Cultures in Nature-based Tourism*. The Adventure Mart provided an opportunity for the buyers and sellers to promote and deliberate on their respective tour packages.

In 1987, the federal government established the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In 1990, the Ministry launched the first *Visit Malaysia Year* in Kuala Lumpur with the aim of promoting Malaysia as an international tourist destination, followed by the second *Visit Malaysia Year* in 1994 in Kuala Lumpur. In 1992, the TDC became the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB), the marketing agency for the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The MTPB marketing objectives include: increasing tourist arrivals; encouraging greater visitor spending; increasing meetings, incentive, conventions and exhibitions (MICE) in Malaysia and stimulating the growth of domestic tourism.

In 1995, the MTPB started its marketing campaign based on the theme "destination-based and promotion of activities on the basis of the strength of the product." Each destination was associated with one or several activities or products packaged as tourist attractions. With this marketing strategy, the whole tourism industry - involving both public and private tourism bodies - began to give more emphasis on product creation and development. The MTPB identified eight destinations with their respective attractions:

- Penang food, sea, sun, sand, culture and city tour
- Langkawi sea, sun and sand, shopping, legends, tranquility, local lifestyle, island hopping
- Melaka culture, city and local lifestyle
- Kuala Lumpur city attractions, events and culture
- Sabah nature, adventure, culture and scenery
- Pangkor sun, sea and sand, history, local lifestyle
- Sarawak nature, adventure and scenery
- Taman Negara nature, adventure and scenery

In the 1970s, tourists from Southeast Asian countries formed 25% of the total arrivals with Indonesia contributing over half of the number, Thais 3% and Singapore 7.2%. The USA contributed 17.4% of the total arrivals and was the most important source of non-ASEAN tourists, followed by UK, India and Japan. In the ensuing years, the percentage of British and American tourists has dropped but the percentage of tourists from Europe, New Zealand and Australia is increasing.

In summary to the federal government's perspective on tourism, we can say that the federal government regards tourism as a significant component in national development. Towards this end, the federal government tries to facilitate the growth of the tourism industry in Malaysia by creating a tourism-friendly environment in the country. Its efforts include, among others, providing substantial financial allocations, investment incentives, marketing assistance and relaxing immigration legislation.

The Sabah State government, like the federal government, has a positive attitude towards tourism as a potential revenue earner and a means towards helping the state achieve economic development. Tables 3.5 – 3.11 may provide some understanding on the state government's favourable regard for tourism:

Table 3.5 Tourist Arrivals* and Tourism Receipts

Year	Tourist Arrival	Total Receipt (M\$ million)
1985	63,067	70.9
1986	59,133	68.5
1987	41,855	55.4
1988	46,367	62.0
1989	54,731	94.4
1990	86,731	103.2
1991	102,412	118.7
1993	98,502	161.5
1994	114,675	176.2
1995	131,370	-
Jan-Sept 96	99,073	-

* The figures above account for arrivals via direct Flights from international destination only, due to the following immigration regulations:

- effective from 10 August 1982, "Malaysian citizens and permanent residents" from Peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak are not recorded.
- effective from 1 June 1984 and 1 August 1984, foreign visitors whose place of embarkation is Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia respectively are not recorded.
- effective from 1 August 1986, visitors to the Federal Territory of Labuan are not recorded.

Source: Statistics Department/Sabah Tourism, (quoted by the *Research Section, Sabah Tourism Promotion Corporation*)

Table 3.6 Tourist Arrival by Purpose of Visit 1992-Sept 1996

Purpose	1992 (%)	1993(%)	1994(%)	1995(%)	Till Sept'96(%)
*Social/ Holiday	61.4	76.0	79.6	76.6	80.2
Business	13.2	13.0	11.5	10.3	9.4
Transit	2.1	2.3	4.6	9.0	7.5
Others (conference, education)	5.1	5.9	3.5	4.0	2.9
Not stated	18.1	2.7	0.8	0	0

Table 3.7 Top Five Tourism Markets to Sabah 1990 – Sept 1996

Country	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
1	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia	Taiwan	Taiwan
2	Japan	Brunei	Taiwan	Taiwan	Taiwan	Hong Kong	Hong Kong
3	Singapore	Taiwan	Brunei	Brunei	Brunei	Indonesia	Indonesia
4	Brunei	Singapore	Singapore	Singapore	Hong Kong	Brunei	Brunei
5	Taiwan	Japan	Japan	Japan	Singapore	Singapore	Singapore

Table 3.8 Tourist Arrival by Type of Accommodation 1992-Sept 1996

Accommodation	1992(%)	1993(%)	1994(%)	1995(%)	1996(%)
Hotels	53.9	65.8	67.1	73.1	74.1
Friends and relatives	44.7	33.3	30.6	23.9	21.8
Others	0.7	0.9	2.2	3.0	4.1
Not Stated	0.8	0.1	0.1	0.01	0.02

Table 3.9 Tourist Arrival by Age Group 1992 – Sept 1996

Age	1992(%)	1993(%)	1994(%)	1995(%)	1996(%)
under 20s	11.7	14.2	14.0	10.9	10.4
20-29	28.3	25.9	25.5	27.9	25.9
30-39	28.2	27.3	37.7	26.5	25.0
40-49	17.7	18.0	18.3	18.9	20.8
50-59	9.2	9.1	10.5	9.8	11.3
60&above	3.86	5.17	3.72	4.3	6.13

Table 3.10 Tourist Arrival by Gender 1992 – Sept 1996

Sex	1992(%)	1993(%)	1994(%)	1995(%)	1996(%)
Male	67	62.6	62.6	60.5	59.5
Female	33	37.4	37.4	39.5	40.5

Table 3.11 Tourist Arrival by Group Tour 1992 – Sept 1996

Group Tour	1992(%)	1993(%)	1994(%)	1995(%)	1996(%)
Yes	18.6	20.7	22.3	31.1	32.2
No	62.2	71.1	77.4	68.6	67.8
Not Stated	19.2	8.2	0.3	0.01	0

Based on the principle of sustainable development for the people and environment, the Sabah Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Development formulates a tourism development policy with the following objectives (The Tourism Industry in Sabah: Basic Facts and Figures n.d.):

- to attain maximum economic benefit from tourism development;
- to carry out the development of tourism in the most expedient and cost effective manner;
- to minimise the negative social, cultural and environmental impacts of tourism;
- to tailor the development of tourism with the State's unique characteristic of 'unspoilt nature';
- to adhere to the Malaysian Incorporated Concept with the public sector playing a co-ordinating supporting and facilitating role;
- to encourage tourists to visit the rural regions rather than concentrate in the towns in order that the rural folks can benefit directly from tourism.

In April 1995 the Ministry, as a follow-up to the First Sabah Tourism Masterplan (1981-1995), commissioned a study on the state's tourism prospects. The study's Main Report was completed in February 1996. It contains policy development strategies as well as action plans and recommendations designed to guide the orderly development of the tourism sector in Sabah for the period 1995-2010. The Report forms the principal basis for the Second Sabah Tourism Masterplan (1995-2010). The First Sabah Tourism Masterplan advocated a development concept based on the promotion of Sabah and Sarawak together and the marketing of Kota Kinabalu (KK) and Kuching as a visitor destination package.

For Sabah, KK is the central focus, with Sandakan, Semporna, Kudat and Labuan as secondary tourism nodes. For tourism purposes, Sabah is divided into three zones - west, east and interior. The west zone covers the West Coast and Kudat Districts. The zone is sub-divided into the southern circuit, which focuses on urban, coastal, nature and nature-based tourism activities, and the northern circuit (Kudat territory) concentrates on culture tourism. The interior zone covers the Interior District and concentrates on adventure tourism. The east zone includes the Sandakan

and Tawau Districts. Its tourism attractions are wildlife, nature and nature-based activities (Second Sabah Tourism Masterplan 1996).

The Report (1996: 465-469) recommends that the tourism role of the northern circuit, that is, the Kudat region, should be as *day visit and short stay destination* for visitors staying in KK and in the west coast beach resort hotels as well as the free, independent travellers' circuit. Here, cultural attractions dominate. The overall development themes proposed are *village-stay* lodges and roadside cultural attractions.

STPC, the marketing arm of the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Development, is entrusted the task of leading a development programme to establish several village lodges along this northern circuit, offering 'homestay'¹ services.' The STPC's role is to provide guidance on the design of the lodges, ensure all lodge developments are *sensibly market-led* and avoid repetition of styles.

The federal and state governments' Tourism Masterplans include the Rungus community as part of the national development strategy. The government authorities view the Rungus as having the cultural attributes that are compatible with tourists' interests and expectations. Besides their potential contribution to the economy of both the nation and state, the authorities also believe that the Rungus' participation in the village-based tourism industry will help them to improve their own living conditions. Tourism creates a variety of employment opportunities and income-generating activities in the village, which means the Rungus do not have to leave the village.

¹ The homestay concept was first introduced in the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia and extended to Sabah and Sarawak in late 1996. The concept applies to villagers or longhouse dwellers who are willing to offer their homes to small groups of foreign tourists interested to experience the culture and learn at first hand the way of life of the local people. The government thinks that the homestay concept benefits both the tour operators and the local people. These tourism authorities encourage the people to think of ways to earn income through the sale of handicraft, activities and programmes (*Sarawak Tribune* October 19, 1998).

3.2 TOURISM RESEARCH IN MALAYSIA

Most of the tourism research in Malaysia followed the initial emphasis of tourism studies elsewhere, that is a concentration on the impact of tourism on the host culture. In Malaysia, the focus, as King (1992: 1) has noted, is on whether tourism has negative or positive effects on the local Malaysian culture.

Hofmann (1979) gives a descriptive overview of both the tourist and host characteristics in West Malaysia. His description included an inventory of tourist attractions, distinctions between travellers, visitors and tourists, the background of tourists and their expectations, economic complications of tourism and the state of domestic tourism and the Tourist Development Corporation (TDC). From his review of the government's efforts in tourism development, Hofmann concludes that the tourism industry will become a significant sector in the Malaysian economy.

Wells (1982) focuses his attention on the Malaysian government and its use of tourism as a tool for economic development. To enable tourism to play its economic role effectively, the host country needs to have a sound tourism plan or policy. With planning, the government will be able to evaluate the existing state of tourism in the country, create new destinations in economically disadvantaged areas, explore new markets and increase the quality and quantity of tourism infrastructure. To formulate a sound tourism policy, however, the government needs reliable data and statistics on tourism in the country. The Malaysian government, according to Wells, is handicapped by the lack of relevant data, as there is not much research done on tourism in Malaysia.

Kadir Din has written several articles on tourism in Malaysia. In his paper on competing needs in a plural society, Kadir Din (1982) examines the development of the tourism industry in Malaysia in the context of the government's New Economic Policy. He focuses his analysis on the ethnic dimension of Malaysian tourism, in particular, the *Bumiputera* and non-*Bumiputera* ownership and participation and the government's promotion of tourism based on clean, moral and religious guidelines. Kadir concludes that with its ethnic diversity and identification of economic activities with ethnic membership, Malaysia is a rich field for researchers interested in ethnicity-related tourism studies. His next paper (1989) concentrates on the role of

Islam in the tourism sector. He was interested to examine the relationship between the teachings of Islam and the objectives of tourism. Islam, according to Kadir, encourages its followers to travel so that they could appreciate the greatness of God through observing the signs of beauty and bounty of His creation. Muslim countries, however, do not internalise the significance attached to travel and tour. In the case of Malaysia, Kadir concludes that the Malaysian government has always treated tourism as part and parcel of the *laissez faire* economy that encourages a market-oriented mode of development. The challenge the Malaysian government faces, Kadir points out, is to develop a secular host community that approximates the ideal Muslim host. In his 1992 article, Kadir Din sets out to examine the touristic claim that tourism encourages the development of local entrepreneurship in the local destination. Using the Langkawi Island as his base, Kadir focuses on the economic responses of the local ethnic groups towards the development of the tourism industry in Langkawi. From his findings, Kadir concludes that, to ensure effective and balanced ethnic involvement in tourism, the tourism authorities have to work together to identify the appropriate strategy to promote a meaningful mode of involvement that is more representative of the ethnic composition in Langkawi.

Hong (1985), writing on the effects of tourism in Malaysia, does not portray the tourism industry in a favourable light. Indeed, the book's title, *See the Third World While It Lasts*, and her publisher, the Consumers' Association of Penang, prepare the reader for what to expect from the pages that follow. Asking "at what price" will the Malaysian people pay to become a developed nation through tourism, Hong answers the question herself by listing the negative impacts of tourism in Malaysia. These include, among others, the wasteful utilisation of local resources, economic dislocation of the local people, concentration of tourism earnings among the top elites and the rising prominence of sex tourism.

Bird (1989) shares Hong's foreboding with regard to tourism in Malaysia. "Tourism for Whom" is the theme Bird uses to argue her case against the government's preoccupation to make Langkawi, an island off the north-west coast of Peninsular Malaysia, into a competitive tourist destination. From her analysis, Bird concludes that, contrary to what the federal and state governments have hoped, the development of tourism in Langkawi has brought about land and economic

dislocation among the local population, dependence on tourism and multi-national corporations, inflation as well as changes to the employment structure, local values and the environment.

Tan (1991) examines the Malaysian government's intervention in tourism development through its tourism policy and strategies for the promotion of tourism in the country. Like Wells above, Tan emphasises the need for tourism planning and policy to enable tourism to place its effective role in socio-economic development in the country as well as to safeguard the interests and well being of the local population.

There are two publications on the perceptions of Malaysians towards the tourism industry. Ap, Var & Kadir Din (1991) did a survey on the perceptions of 83 Malaysian university students towards the impact of tourism on the local culture, people and environment. Their analysis shows that the students had a favourable perception of the role of tourism in economic development, the promotion of cultural exchange and cross-cultural understanding. The second study by Zainab Khalifah and Mohd Taib Dora (n.d.) surveyed the perceptions of the local villagers living in the vicinity of the Kuala Tahan National Park in central Peninsular Malaysia. The Malaysian Tourism Promotion Corporation classifies the National Park as a promising tourism destination offering nature-based tourism. The writers interviewed residents of 6 villages. Their findings indicate that the majority of the residents have positive views towards the development of the Kuala Tahan National Park as a tourist destination. This is because the emergence of a tourist industry in the vicinity has created a variety of job opportunities that the residents do not hesitate to take advantage of. It has also led to increasing incomes, a better standard of living and improved infrastructure.

Saunders (1993) journeys back to the past to re-discover the images outsiders have towards the people of Borneo and Sabah in particular. He seeks to argue that the modern-day images of the Bornean people are largely a culmination of a process that began when the first European traveller to Borneo's shores recorded his impressions of what he had seen. Starting with Pigafetta, the first European to leave a detailed account of his time at Borneo in 1521, to Elizabeth Mershon, who wrote a

book called *With the Wild Men of Borneo* in 1922, Saunders shows how the images of Borneo became institutionalised myths and how the travellers themselves were transformed into tourists as they came to equate the Borneo people with the images created. Saunders, however, differs from the general perspective of the host people as passive. Present-day Borneans, especially those in the tour business, know what the tourists want to see and they therefore use the historical images to re-present themselves and their fellow Borneans. This “self-exploitation,” according to Saunders, has potential political significance as it reflects a consciousness of a distinct and unique Bornean identity.

Stockwell (1993) has a similar research orientation to Saunders. He focuses on the development of tourism in Malaysia in the context of European exploration and history of European travel in the region. Stockwell argues that tourism in Malaysia is both a result and a reflection of colonialism. The infrastructure that the tourism industry thrives – shipping, railways, roads, hotels, resorts and basic amenities like water supply and electricity – are developed for purposes other than tourism. He also argues that the pattern of early tourism in Malaysia sets the pace for modern tourism in Malaysia, that is, a bias for tourism in Peninsular Malaysia, especially the West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia. Stockwell gives particular emphasis on the tourism versus culture debate when he attempts to show the detrimental effects of Western travellers and tourists on non-European cultures and societies.

Zeppel did her PhD research on the Iban longhouse tourism in 1994². In her articles (1997; 1996; 1993), Zeppel reviews the management of tourism among the Iban longhouse dwellers. She categorises the tourist experience into “cultural sightseeing tours” and “meet-the-people experience.” The former is a structured, pre-programmed tour of the longhouse with more emphasis on the sights than the interaction between the tourists and the Iban hosts. The “meet-the-people experience” involves opportunities for the visitors to sit with the Iban to have their meals in the longhouse, or enter the private space of the Iban family where the host

² The title of her thesis is *Authenticity and the Iban: Cultural Tourism at Iban longhouses in Sarawak, East Malaysia*. James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville. Unfortunately, I was not able to borrow the thesis through the Inter Library Loan.

may show the visitors their family heirloom and perhaps, a drinking session. Zeppel did her research in three Iban longhouses: Serubah, Nanga Kesit and Nanga Stamang in Sarawak. She argues that there is a significant relationship between the type of Iban participation and the type of tourist experience. There are three types of Iban participation: service supplier, partner or full control. Her thesis is that if the Iban have more control in the management of the longhouse tourism, there will be more cultural experience or meet the people sessions. If the Iban have less control, the tourist experience is more of the cultural sightseeing type. The longhouse inhabitants at Nanga Stamang have more control over their participation, hence their longhouse tourism provide more opportunities for visitor-host interaction or “cultural experience.” At Serubah and Nanga Kesit, the interaction is limited and minimal and the tour operators concerned do more talking than the Iban hosts. One interesting point from Zeppel’s conceptualisation of Iban tourism is her terminology. The tourists may be seen as clients, spectators or guests while the hosts may be mere performers, equal partners or owners. Her articles cited above did not elaborate these terms further. Nevertheless, I venture to associate these words with MacCannell’s staged authenticity and Cohen’s typology of tourist situations (cf. Chapter One). When the tourists are clients, there is a high probability the tourist space or setting is staged. The Iban hosts try to provide a good service in return for the tourists’ money. When the tourists are treated as guests, the probability for a “real” setting is high. The commercial intent is less emphasised when the Iban hosts attempt to display their hospitality as they would if their friends or relatives come to the longhouse for a visit.

Azaruddin Othman’s (1994) article on tourism in Tioman Island, located on the southeast coast of Peninsular Malaysia, is another impact study on tourism. His findings indicate that tourism development in Tioman Island has brought about significant changes to the socio-economic structure of Tioman society. The local people have left their agricultural activities to concentrate on tourism-related businesses, for example, building chalets, dormitories and huts, entertainment centres and leisure activities, food and drink outlets.

In his 1992 article on tourism and culture in Malaysia, King (1992) reviews the literature on tourism research in Malaysia. He argues against the claims of

researchers like Hong (1985) and Bird (1989) that tourism development in Malaysia has brought about cultural deterioration, loss of traditional pride and values and the destruction of a whole way of life. King points out that these researchers did not provide a conceptual definition of culture or explain what they meant by 'Malaysian culture' in view of the cultural diversity of the Malaysian society. Whose culture was affected? In addition, as there is a lack of baseline data on tourism in Malaysia, for example, on the types of tourists, length of stay, types of leisure activities and popular destinations in Malaysia, how could these researchers ascertain that a loss or destruction has occurred?

I agree with King's arguments on the limitations of the existing research on tourism in Malaysia, especially with regard to the concept of culture in the Malaysian context and the lack of tourism statistics. One significant implication from the perceived limitations of the existing research is the range of possibilities the tourism industry offers for researchers interested to study the tourism phenomenon in Malaysia. Tourism as a factor of economic development, or the politics of ethnicity, identity and religion in relation to tourism development, are but some of the complex and sensitive issues that need much more research.

3.3 REPRESENTATIONS OF THE RUNGUS

3.3.1 The Commoditised Rungus:

Discourse of the "Primitive" Rungus

For centuries, Borneo was the embodiment of all things strange and sensational. Wildest fantasies could be realised in this vast island of towering forests teeming with bizarre birds and beasts, inhabited by blowpipe wielding natives who indulged in the sport of collecting human skulls, with bare-breasted maidens, marauding pirates and the odd White Rajah thrown in for added flavour – an image of tropical forests and wild men of Borneo in loincloths living in savage isolation (Hutton 1997: 17).

The mere mention of the name Borneo brings image of fierce headhunters and warriors to the minds of many people. This was true to a point and occurred as recent as the Second World War (PanBorneo brochure n.d.)

The two quotations above are representative of the tourism media's portrayal of Borneo and its peoples. PanBorneo, a Kota Kinabalu-based tour company, may have stopped the clock for headhunting in 1945. "Gone are the days of the impenetrable jungles with dangerous headhunters and tremendous hardship. Borneo is now open to the tourist," Borneo Adventure, a Sarawak-based tour company, proclaims in its brochure. Yet, the images of the Bornean people as wild people living in unspoilt forests still persist in the mass and tour media. The Borneo Adventure brochure (n.d.) continues with another statement: "Borneo is one of the last remaining areas on earth where development for the sake of tourism has not destroyed the potential wonders of the world." Could the Bornean forest, wildlife, landscape and people remain unaffected and unchanged by the massive infrastructure and product development projects? Would the tourists who come to Borneo "take nothing but photographs, leave nothing but footprints?" (STPC slogan).

Tom Harrison, one of the leading writers on Borneo and Sabah history, argued against such rhetoric 25 years ago (St. John 1862 repr 1974: Preface):

Few parts of the world have attracted a richer literature than the great island of Borneo. Much of the writing is, in effect, trash. Even in the second half of this present century, we continue to get books by enterprising 'explorers' (French, Danish, American etc.) claiming to discover cannibals, pygmies, a tailed tribe and other wonders which remain sadly unknown to those of us who have lived in and loved the great island over decades, wandering it from end to end, Sarawak to Java Seas, sweaty coastal mangrove swamps to the dense soggy moss forest of the cold mountain tops. Head hunter stories continue, although head hunting ended everywhere well before World War Two and in most parts, long before the start of the century.

On the November 7, 1998, the tabloid newspaper, *The Express* (UK), claimed to have exclusive coverage on the discovery of a lost Stone Age tribe, the *Sakai*, said to live deep in the rainforest jungles of the Malaysian-Thailand border. Although not directly related to Borneo and its people, the story shows that there are people who still believe or would like others to believe that there are people living in the deep forests of Southeast Asia or Malaysia in particular, untouched by outsiders and foreign influence. With pictures of three 'hunters' captured by a camera set up to

photograph tigers, the article gives a sensational account of the serendipitous discovery:

This is the moment when the Stone Age came face to face with the twentieth century. A hunter strolls through a clearing clad only in a loincloth made of leaves and carrying tonight's meal on his back – a forest tortoise. Deeper in the jungle, two of his friends armed with spears, are startled by the flashlight of a hidden camera. They had strayed through time to give us a glimpse of how our ancestors lived, thanks to a World Conservation Society Research programme.

Said's book, *Orientalism* (1991) has some relevance to this depiction of people of the East, in particular, as "Stone Age" people. In the Bornean context, Orientalism functions as the top-level ideology, providing the material for the Bornean, henceforth the Rungus images. Men, Said (1991: 39) maintains, have always divided the world up into regions having either real or imagined divisions from each other. The absolute demarcation between East and West had been years, even centuries, in the making. There were innumerable voyages of discovery; there were contacts through trade and war. But more than this, since the middle of the eighteenth, there had been two principal elements in the relations between East and West. One, the growing systematic knowledge in Europe about the Orient, knowledge reinforced by the colonial encounter and by the widespread interest in the alien and unusual, exploited by the developing sciences of ethnology, comparative anatomy, philology and history. A sizeable body of literature produced by novelists, poets, translators and gifted travellers. Two, Europe was always in a position of strength, the Europeans seen as rational, virtuous, mature, "normal," while the Orientals as irrational, depraved, childlike, "different." The Orient was almost a European invention and had been since antiquity, a place of romance, exotic being, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences (Said 1991: 1).

For Said (1991: 204), Orientalism is a symbol of Western domination and strength. It is the European-Western way "of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experiences." The Bornean image, likewise, is the way the Western colonial powers and early travellers come to terms with the people they encountered in the abundantly forested island of Borneo.

Borneo as Eternal Paradise

St. John (1862: 1), chronicling his life and times in Borneo, wrote: “The wild tribes of Borneo and the not less wild interior of the country, are scarcely known to European readers, as no one who has travelled in the island during the last 14 years has given his impressions to the public.” Nevertheless, when early European explorers and travellers did commit their impressions to paper, they did so with a European gaze for a European audience. Borneo’s “great stretches of wild, untouched hill country empty of human trace” triggered the notion of a vast expanse of uninhabited, untouched, abundant and resource-full natural landscape. Earl (1837: x), who travelled around Borneo in the 1830s, wrote of Borneo as a “mysterious, unknown land, the haunt of headhunters and ravaged by *lanun* pirates, supposedly rich in resources but crying out for peace and development.” St. John (1862: 248) also wrote of villages with fruit trees and villagers who lived on the banks of running streams and all the population can keep themselves clean by frequent bathing and sufficient food to keep them healthy. Through their writings, Borneo came alive with a diverse range of flora and fauna: “In those palmy days, the world seemed overflowing with life, the potential to wealth was for all to feel, man’s opportunities limitless, natural resources boundless, inexhaustible (Harrison quoted in St. John 1862: xvi).

The Bornean image is rooted in the image of nature’s paradise - a place abundant with wild flora, fauna and humans. Beeckman (1718: 37), chronicling his voyage to Borneo, described Borneo thus:

The country abounds with Pepper, the best Dragon’s blood, Bezoar, most excellent Camphire, Pineapples, Pumblenofes, Citrons, Oranges, Lemons, Water Melons, Musk Melons, Plantons, Bonano’s, Coconuts ... The mountains yield Diamonds, Gold, Tin and Iron; the Forests, Honey, Cotton, Deer, Goats, Buffaloes and Wild Oxen, Wild Hogs, Small Horses, Bears, Tygers, Elephants and a multitude of monkeys. The Monkeys, Apes and Baboons are of many different sorts and shapes.

Earl (1837: 255) viewed the state of the Dayak society as peculiar and extraordinary where “they are scattered in small tribes over the face of the island ... totally cut off from social interaction with each other and speak a dialect often unintelligible even to the people of the district immediately adjacent.” Earl (1837: 320) concluded that “under such circumstances, improvement is perfectly impracticable; they have in all probability existed in their present state during the lapse of ages and without foreign intercourse must continue in the same condition for ever.” He cited the case of the Dusun or Idaan people living near the Kinabalu Mountain. He had read that the Idaan people were interested in beads and brass wire. On his first journey up the Kinabalu Mountain in April 1851, he found that the people did not want beads or cloth but concentrated on brass wire. On his second trip to the mountain in August 1851, the people’s preference had shifted from brass wire to cloth. In addition, their clothing had changed too: “*chawats* (loincloths) were decreasing, trousers were coming in.”

Some European writers did not share St. John’s account of change within the local societies. Hose (1926: vii), for example, had this to say about the “change-resistant or unchanging savages”:

customs and beliefs of the various peoples at present living under the Rajah Brooke’s beneficent rule in Sarawak present an epitome of the early history of civilisation representing as they do a series of primitive phases of culture that in most parts of the world would have been completely suppressed by the disturbing influences of higher types of civilisation. In Borneo, some of the most interesting and significant of the earlier phases have been crystallised and fixed for us to study at the present day.

Late nineteenth and twentieth centuries European writers drew upon these earlier writings to strengthen further the Bornean Myth. Carl Book, a Norwegian, was commissioned by the governor-general of the Netherlands East Indies in 1879 to travel through and report on the interior of Southeast Borneo. He published his report in 1881 entitled “The Head-hunters of Borneo.” The report, according to Saunders (1993: 280), is a lively somewhat sensational account of Book’s travels. It included a section on cannibalism among the Tring Dayaks and Book’s prolonged efforts to locate a tribe of men with tails - the *Orang-Boentoet*. The book also contained 30

colour plates depicting native artefacts, housing and dress. The scanty native dress contributed greatly to the popular image of Borneo, as a place inhabited by wild headhunters and dusky bare-breasted women. Saunders (1993: 284) also mentions Ella Christie, who was called Sarawak's first tourist. On her visit to Borneo in 1904, the Commandant of the Sarawak Rangers invited her to a "show of Dyaks" for her "to Kodak. All in war paint, really savages ... I did Sir Percy beside them in one, as a contrast ... I have got some very good Borneo savage relics and hats."

Borneans as Wild People of the Forest

Haddon (1902: 321) described the Bornean people as "wild savages, shy, timid ... cheerful, bright people, who are very fond of children and kind to women." In Wallace's (1869: 255) account, "the men as usual among savages, adorn themselves more than women. They wore necklaces, earring, finger ringers and delight in a band of plaited grass tied round the arm just below the shoulder. The elaborately adorned, shy, timid, cheerful, bright, women- and children-loving male savage was also a fierce and fearsome headhunter."

Writing about the monkeys and apes, Beeckman (1718: 37) claimed that "the most remarkable are those they call *oran-ootans*³, which in their language means men of the woods. They grow up to be six foot high; they walk upright, have longer arms than men, tolerable good faces ... No Tails nor Hair." Beeckman did not mention 'men with tails' but his *oran-ootan* might have inspired stories of men with tails thereafter (picture of Beeckman's *oran-ootan* as shown below). St. John (1862: 40) wrote that he had heard of such stories in every place he visited.

³ *Oran-ootan*, as Beeckman spelt it, or *orang utan*, in the Malay language, refers to the primates found in Malaysian jungles. The Malaysian government has classified the *orang utans* as an endangered species and has taken steps to protect the species. In Sabah, there is a *Orang Utan* Rehabilitation Sanctuary in the forest of Sepilok, Sandakan, on the east coast of Sabah.



People of the Forest, the *Oran-ootan*

Europe by the eighteenth century has familiarised itself with the notion of the “noble savage,” as Beaglehole (quoted in Moorehead 1966: 41) had clearly portrayed: “and now rose up, indeed, within Natural History, something new, something incomparably exciting, Man in the state of Nature; the Noble Savage entered the study and the drawing room of Europe in naked majesty to shake the preconceptions of morals and of politics.” The idea of the “simple, unsophisticated, child-like, happy, healthy people living in sun-kissed lands” (Wood 1941: iii) whose “every want was supplied by the tropical forest and who, best of all, knew nothing of the cramping sophistries of civilisation” (Moorehead 1966: 41), fed the political imagination of the Europeans. Cook’s “discovery” of Tahiti in the 1760s opened up the once unknown and mysterious Pacific Basin to many expeditions, explorations, invasions and missionary activities.

Winks (1971: 14) suggests that Europeans came to know of the *Beau Sauvage* less through the writings of the philosophers of Enlightenment than through three other, more important sources of presumed information: popularised writings of explorers, writings of missionaries and anthropologists and most vital of all, the highly coloured works of romantic novelists of the Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The philosophical notion of the noble savage enjoyed its vogue in the late eighteenth century but the greater impact of such romanticised visions of native populations was felt in the late nineteenth century and after.

The writings of explorers popularised what Winks (1971: 15) terms as the land of the mind: utopia, where the mind thinks, the body seeks. Islands and places - remote, self-contained, unexplored, believed to be capable of sustaining unknown forms of animal life - became the natural habitat for science fiction. Governments made it possible for voyages and explorations. Noble leaders led the way and common seamen provided the energy, the continuity and word of mouth knowledge of the voyages.

Winks (1971: 15) argues that the entire history of exploration is one of fabrication and invention rather than the scientific unrolling of a map. For example, Pigafetta, on his return from the Philippines after Magellan's death, was reported to have written that the East Indians stood not more than eighteen inches high and had ears so long that one ear was a mattress and the other a cover when they slept. The natives, seen as strange and different, were labelled savages - ignoble and uncivilised, ignorant and unclean, acting spontaneously without thought of cause and effect of their actions. Yet, they were also noble - innocent, simple and beautiful. Moorehead (1966: 48) gives a similar view on fabrication. He cites the case of Tahiti:

In the Pacific, the artist had no precedent to guide him/her; everything was new. The engravers of the artists' works added their own refinements - they tended to Europeanise the originals even more, so on both counts, in the written word and in the illustration, a false, idealised impression of Tahiti was being built up. The temptation to paint the idea of Tahiti rather than the reality was very strong and it was an idea interpreted in an European manner.

Several researchers have argued that there is a parallel between colonialism and tourism. O'Connor (1993: 71) states that "international tourism recapitulates a historical process: areas of one's country are given over to the pleasure of foreigners and the rhetoric of development serves as a defence." The needs of the colonialist and tourist are mirrored in images and representations created for their consumption and pleasure. The tourism authorities represent the host territory as "empty space" just as the colonialists justified colonialism by saying that the land occupied was "empty" and therefore available for stamping their own mark on "virgin territory." In the tourism context, areas and countries are represented as exclusively available for the construction of a pleasure paradise for tourists to engage in carefree play during their vacation or holiday.

Stockwell (1993: 270), for example, suggests that tourism in Malaya was a result and a reflection of colonialism. He maintains that Western tourists to Malaya, whether they came from Britain, continental Europe or the USA, were associated with British colonialism by their contacts and by the colour of their skin. Travellers to Malaya saw themselves and were treated by others as guests of the British, not of the indigenous people. The people, however, were willing to oblige the tourists merely because they were the *orang putih*, white people. While in the host destination, the guides directed the tourists to inspect the flora and fauna of the countryside within the confines of botanical gardens or game parks. The attraction was not Asia but European activities in Asia. Hence, Stockwell (1993: 258) asserts that "as myth fosters tourism, tourism encourages myth."

As wild savages and deeply attached to their pagan beliefs, the Bornean people were seen as people with low culture, incapable of autonomous improvement, hence justifying outside intervention or colonialism and the notion of the white man's burden, in particular. St. John (1862), together with Earl (1837: ix) were some of the propagators of the creed of the white man's burden. St. John (1862 repr. 1974: 369-70) wrote that "... it is better the natives should be Roman Catholics than remain in their present low state of civilisation. Nothing but Christianity can alter the real condition of the people, as that only will turn their minds in a new direction and free

them from practices and habits which keep the country poor and undeveloped.” His conclusion that the “Dayaks are an improvable race; that they do not possess any superstitions or beliefs likely to offer great obstacles to Christian teaching” (1862 repr. 1974: 380) implies that the Dayaks could improve themselves only through Christianity and with the help of Christian missionaries.

If Bornean images are the result of Western imperialism and expansion and the writings of Western travellers and administrators, then Sabah, Malaysian Borneo, is a by-product of the Bornean myth. Most of the tourism media depict Sabah as Borneo’s Paradise. Below are three examples of such representations of Sabah:

Turn any which way and you see rainbow not just in the sky but it is there in the tropical flowers, the birds and butterflies, and the fish in the sea. There is undeniably colour in the beaded and sequined traditional costumes of the Sabahans and in the language and customs (Sabah Fest 1992 Launching Book: 35).

Sabah ... (formerly North Borneo), popularly known as the Land Below the Wind, offers you a legendary, tropical land once “led” by headhunters, majestic mountains, dense rainforests, unexplored islands and mysterious caves. Today, the old charm and exotic appeal remain and Sabah is a unique holiday destination to suit all tastes in adventure (Exotic Adventure n.d.).

Sabah, Malaysian Borneo; In its primeval rain forest, rated 60 million years old, are found what scientists called, “the richest expression of life on earth ... nature, wildlife, culture” (STPC n.d.).

Such is the perception of Sabah as a paradise in harmony with nature that Alliston (1966: 13) expresses his fears of Sabah becoming a “threatened paradise.” This is how he describes the changes he observed then:

It is still far from the tourist routes and is likely to remain so. Nevertheless, a certain number of visitors found their way to Sabah's shores and often their first reaction is one of considerable surprise. Most of the towns are on the coast and their unexpectedly impressive modern buildings raise clean lines against the blue of a tropical sky ... "Can this really be Borneo?" one is tempted to ask. "No shrunken heads? No blowpipes and poisoned darts?" No, that is the old, fast-disappearing image of the country. Today these things are hard to find; tomorrow they will be in museums.

On October 24, 1995, Matunggong was the focus of foreign tourists when it became the site for the total solar eclipse. The STPC in its website brochure notes that "many eclipse enthusiasts from Japan, Singapore, Europe, Canada and United States ... chose to stay at a Rungus longhouse to wait for the dramatic moment. It was "logical" that when one goes to watch a momentous event like a total solar eclipse, one should cap that highlight in one's life with a stay in a Rungus longhouse."

What exactly is the logical connection between the eclipse and a Rungus longhouse? The answer lies in the mythology surrounding the Rungus people, a mythology fed by the writings of past travellers, colonial writers and reproduced by the contemporary tourism media. This then brings us to the subject matter of my thesis – the dynamics and dilemmas involved in the making of the Rungus into a tourism product, along with nature (as in the solar eclipse phenomenon), wildlife and adventure tourism.

Apart from the beaches, the Rungus are the main reason why tourists risk the three-hour uphill, winding and often nausea inducing road journey from Kota Kinabalu to Matunggong. The tour operators and guides reassure the tourists that their visit to Rungus territory will be worth their money and time. This is so because the tourists will be visiting the Rungus who live "in the Kudat forest" (Home Away From Home n.d.) at their *binatang*, that is, the longhouse. It is somewhat amazing (and amusing) to think that the Rungus word for longhouse is *binatang*. In the Malay language, *binatang* or its more diplomatic equivalent, *haiwan*, is the generic name for animals or wildlife, including the *oran-ootan*. The Malay (which is the medium of communication between the Rungus and non-Rungus) meaning of *binatang*

subtly commits the Rungus to the status of *binatang* (animal/wildlife) living in the *binatang* (longhouse).

The pre-twentieth century *wild people of Borneo* have come full circle with modern tourism. From being a threat or a hindrance, Borneans have now become friendly and hospitable. Their “low state of civilisation” as St. John stated above, is now a good resource for product development. The tour brochures promoting the Rungus people, for example, invite the tourists to visit the Rungus, “Sabah’s most traditional ethnic group” (Hutton 1997: 17) and “learn about the culture of the Rungus people” (Exotic Borneo Holidays n.d.; Home Away from Home n.d.). Unfortunately, the texts do not specify the cultural aspects the tourists are supposed to learn and the purpose of this learning.

Could the Rungus be “Sabah’s most traditional ethnic group” given the historical trading links, European expansionism, cross-cultural contacts, contemporary development programmes and tourism in their midst? Radford, in his article, *Big Feet, Small World* (*The Guardian* 16 May 1998: 5) describes the contradiction inherent in tourism:

If you want a remote corner of the world to remain exotic, don’t go there. The folk of Detroit or Doncaster dream of escape to Mombasa or Mandalay and are prepared to pay for it. The people with an income measured in \$1 or \$2 or \$3 a day and whose only capital potential is white coral sand, coconut palms and a precarious bargain with the typhoon season, are glad to welcome them. The one group buys adventure and peace and contact with ‘real people.’ The other acquires dollars. But of course things change. Tourists want to go to exotic locations but not to exotic plumbing or sanitation. They need hotels with hot and cold showers ensuite. But if tourists get clean water, how about the locals? If tourists get the road and transport, how about the locals? Rich Americans don’t just leave big footprints. They also shift a lot of dirt - carparks, buildings, roads and drains.

Norberg-Hodge’s article, *Why Monoculture will not work* (*Daily Express* 26 January 1997: 12) offers a similar argument on this contradiction. On the one hand, tourism thrives on difference, on the other hand, tourism demands standardisation. Norberg-Hodge argues that globalisation, which she defines as *monoculture*, refers

to a world of homogenous consumption. When globalisation or monoculture occurs, people everywhere will have the same food, wear the same clothing, and live in houses built of the same materials. Societies everywhere employ the same technologies, depend on a centrally managed economy, offer western education, speak the same language, consume the same media images, have the same values and think the same thoughts. In the case of tourism, the tourists' need for modern familiar comforts lead to homogenisation of conditions between the tourists' home countries and their host countries. Globalisation apparently makes people of the world similar and homogenous so that they can communicate with one another easily as they share similar ways of thinking, feeling and acting (monoculture). People who display a global outlook are said to be civilised or modern, and those who hold onto their ethnicity or cultural identity are regarded as tribal and savage. Norberg-Hodge, however, disagrees with such conceptualisation of globalisation. Globalisation of world cultures is a myth, according to Norberg-Hodge, because people who travel demand to have services and facilities in the host destination that they have been accustomed to. The increase in international tourism does not lead to globalisation of culture, uniformity or elimination of ethnic, territorial and national sentiments. Instead, people of the world become more conscious of the differences with others as the world becomes smaller with the growing advancement in communications and information technology and the increase in international travel.

In the context of international travel and tourism, monoculture will not occur because of the tourists' need for familiarity and comfort and expectation of difference. "Think global and act local" is the underlying principle of product development in host destinations. Under the "think global" principle, the tour businesses and the participating villagers in the host destination take into account the tourists' need for familiarity, that is, standard facilities for sanitation (modern toilets), sleeping (thick mattress and pillows) and food (Western or non-local menu). Under the "act local" principle, the tour businesses and participating villagers take

into account the tourists' expectations of difference. They select aspects of the local culture and repackage them into products (local colour) for sale to the tourists⁴.

The federal and Sabah state governments and tour businesses promoting Rungus tourism understand the contradictions and contrasting needs of tourism. In their tourism media, these authorities promise the tourists they will get to see and experience the Rungus past when they visit the Rungus destination. "Experience the past through the communal longhouse lifestyle," proclaims KK Tours' brochure (n.d.). "Visit a Rungus longhouse, a simple and unique house which reflects the communal living practised since ancient times," says Exotic Borneo Holidays brochure (n.d.). At the same time, these tourism authorities strive to reassure the tourists that they can expect to visit the Rungus past in relative comfort. "Overnight in twin-bedded room in authentic longhouse built on stilts with thatched roof, tree bark wallings and split bamboo floorings" (Borneo Eco Tours brochure n.d.) which is "built especially for the visitor" (PanBorneo brochure n.d.) "to stay in comfort and enjoy privacy (non-existent in a normal longhouse) as well as modern comforts such as mattress, mosquito nets, separate toilets and showers" (Hutton 1997: 70).

3.3.2 The Non-Commoditised Rungus: Discourse of the "Lazy" Rungus

The touristic representations of the Rungus perpetuate the nature-dependent and paradisiac images of the Bornean people. For the moment, these images are the currency of Rungus tourism. There is, however, another set of images which the government officials and tourism authorities have of the Rungus. These authorities do not use these images in their presentation of the Rungus to the tourism market. These images represent the authorities' unfavourable perceptions of the Rungus. Isager (1997), a researcher from Denmark studying the Rungus' response to agricultural projects, calls this alternative set of images regarding the Rungus as "the discourse of the lazy Rungus."

⁴ Smith (1990: 480), however, has a different meaning for the phrase. For Smith, "think global but act local" refers to the sustainable development of tourism. By this she means respecting the host's natural, built and cultural environments and the interests of all parties concerned.

Isager (1997: 4) argues that this discourse of the lazy Rungus is part of a dominant discourse of identities within which the Rungus identity is equated with Rungus culture, world-view and ways of working. This discourse on the lazy Rungus revolves around seven allegations the state authorities attribute to the Rungus people when their agricultural projects for the Rungus farmers fail. The Rungus, according to this discourse of the lazy Rungus:

- are not interested in changing their lives
- are unwilling to participate in development projects
- are unwilling to adopt new crops or new varieties of crops
- are unwilling to use fertilisers and insecticides
- do not listen to the developers
- are unwilling to develop their land in order to increase their income
- are unreliable workers

Isager (1997: 9) prefers to regard these official allegations as “problems of change” rather than “problems of culture.” The agricultural authorities, Isager points out, define agricultural development as changing the agricultural practices of the Rungus - from planting food crops like dry paddy and maize to cultivating long-term cash crops like oil palm, rubber, coconuts and short-term cash crops like passion fruit, groundnuts, ginger and melons. When these agricultural projects fail or when the Rungus show reluctance or disinterest, the authorities blame the Rungus, their culture and attitudes towards work. These authorities want the Rungus to act according to the authorities’ expectations without giving much thought to the fact that planting new crops that are cash-based may be a new experience, hence, requiring proper training or instruction on bookkeeping and accounting and capacity building skills such as developing risk taking abilities.

According to Isager, the term “discourse” allows the analyst to view the allegations above as a social construct representing the agricultural authorities’ way of seeing and interpreting the situation. It is not a representation of Rungus culture and identity. The cause of the failure of agricultural problems is not Rungus culture, but the ways in which the government officials perceive, communicate and interact

with the Rungus villagers. Said (1991: 3) has also used the discourse approach in his writing on Orientalism. He contends that “without examining Orientalism as a discourse, one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.” Through “Orientalism,” the “Orient” becomes a mass of undifferentiated landscape with homogenous and uniformly behaved people. Such a discourse served the purpose of the Europeans. It was a manifestation of cultural hegemony: “To say simply that Orientalism was a rationalisation of colonial rule is to ignore the extent to which colonial rule was justified in advance by Orientalism, rather than after the fact” (Said 1991: 39).

Whyte (1984), while not writing about discourse, Orientalism or Bornean myths, has nevertheless contributed to this idea of the homogenisation of “weaker” societies or communities. In his critique of the development policies of government planners, Whyte (1984: 251-252) argues that:

When modernisation programs fail, the peasant community is held responsible. It is because the people are passive, resist change, lazy and stupid that the programs failed. Outsiders who conceived the plan in air-conditioned rooms, in their laboratories and then go to the village concerned, meet the village heads and hold a short briefing with these heads usually initiate the program. The heads are required in turn to inform their fellow villagers of the program. The villagers on their part are expected to agree and play their roles accordingly. Resistance or failure of programs is usually due to the fact that the villagers know from experience that the recommended innovation will not work in their particular situation. Development planners lay the groundwork for their own downfall because they fail to recognise the importance of local knowledge regarding their history, culture and environment. The development system is based on unilateral plans for change from the experts, professionals or interested parties. This is cause for local grievance, protest, poor result or failure.

In summary, we can say that there are two dominant discourses about the Rungus people: the commoditised and non-commoditised discourses. The commoditised discourse relies on the historical images of Borneo and the Bornean

people. Tourists wanting to see the Rungus in their natural state, that is, living in the longhouse amid green, lush forest and a taste of wild adventure, will choose the Rungus village as their holiday destination. Perpetuating these historical images to tourists will ensure the sustainability of Rungus participation in the tourism sector. The non-commoditised discourse on the Rungus represent the government officials' and tourism authorities' ways of seeing the Rungus people. Frustrated by the lack of active participation and visible success of their projects and programmes involving the Rungus people, these development officials and tourism authorities say the Rungus are lazy, non-thinking, dirty and opposed to change.

The Rungus participation in tourism means that they will have to subscribe to the commoditised and touristic discourse. How do they act out the images and myths contained in this discourse? The "lazy, unmotivated, non-thinking and opposed-to-change" Rungus are participating in a modern, sophisticated, technological, demanding and ever-changing service industry. How do the Rungus cope and manage this new experience, if indeed it is new?

Gewecke (1996: 12), writing on her experience as a missionary with the Basel Mission in Africa, has this to say on reflection: "One is being moved to realise that people can live in quite different ways from us, organising themselves to maintain what they value in their own cultural contexts and what they need to survive in their physical environment." The two dominant discourses do not seem to acknowledge the Rungus capacity to live a way of life that has helped them to survive in their physical environment. Acknowledging this capacity means acknowledging that change has occurred which will subsequently negate the proclamations of the Rungus as "traditional," "primitive" and the Rungus way of life as "authentic."

The tourist, with travel documents and the necessary inoculations on board, is ready for take-off to the out-of-place destination. Like the tourist, we are also ready to begin our journey to the Land of the Rungus in Matunggong, Kudat, Sabah.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RUNGUS VILLAGES UNDER STUDY

This chapter introduces the four Rungus villages – Tinangol, Bavanggazo, Gombizau and Sumangkap - focusing on their existing living conditions, infrastructure and demographic characteristics. My description of Gombizau and Sumangkap will be somewhat restricted due to the brief time schedule and limited interaction when I was in the two villages. I spent just two weeks in each village and was usually with two to three key families.

4.1 LOCATION AND VILLAGE PROFILE

Tinangol, Bavanggazo, Gombizau and Sumangkap are located within five-kilometres from one another in Matunggong (please refer Map Three in Chapter Two). Bavanggazo was part of Tinangol and Sumangkap part of Gombizau until 1986. Of these four villages, Bavanggazo is the least accessible, especially to those without four wheel drives, as it is nearly three kilometres from the main road and is an uphill trek over unsealed road (at least, until January 1997 when part of the road was sealed). The other three villages are only 800 metres to one kilometre from the main road. Arriving from Kota Kinabalu, the visitors will see the signboards of Gombizau, Sumangkap, Bavanggazo then Tinangol: Kg Gombizau, Honey Bee Rearing; Kg Sumangkap, Gong Making; Kg. Bavanggazo, Traditional Rungus Longhouse; Kg Tinangol, Handicraft Centre at the junction to each village.

4.1.1 Tinangol, the *Dangol* Village

Tinangol has a legendary origin that the villagers believe blesses Tinangol with a commendable reputation. Tinangol is named after a river in the village, the *Dangol* River. *Dangol* is the word for the Rungus long-handled all-purpose knife. The river got its name, according to the village legend, when the first inhabitants of the area had to contend with the presence of the *rogon*, the ubiquitous spirits that could turn malevolent

if provoked or threatened. During one encounter with one of the village strongmen, the *rogon's* mystical *dangol* fell into the river. The *rogon* had no time to retrieve it as it was swept away by the strong currents. Without the *dangol*, the *rogon* lost its potent power and abandoned its claim over the area. From then on, the villagers did not encounter any trouble with *rogon* and the area gradually developed.

Until 1968, Tinangol was a large village with a population of about 260 families/2000 people. There was only one village chief for Tinangol. By 1986, however, Tinangol proper has become five smaller-sized villages, each with its own village chief: Tinangol (100 families), Hobut (40 families), Timbang Batu (50 families), Montuson (40 families) and Bavanggazo (30 families). Most of the villagers choose to be residents in the village where they have land.

When the Basel Mission began its missionary activities among the Rungus of Kudat in 1951, it chose Tinangol as its base. At Tinangol, the Mission built its first primary school (1964), a village dispensary (1964), a Farm School (1962) [later renamed as Bible Training School in 1967 and as Bible Training Centre in 1980] and the Women's Domestic School (1967) [later renamed as Women's Skills Centre in 1996]. Tinangol has its own football field with a seat stand as well as a church and a community hall.

With all these administrative, educational and health facilities, Tinangol became the focal point of Rungus and non-Rungus in need of any assistance or service. The Kudat District authorities declared Tinangol a Model Village in 1976, allowing the villagers to enjoy benefits and assistance not granted to other villages. Such was its fame that several overseas and local organisations chose the village for their development projects. Between 1983 - 1989, the Japanese Overseas Community Volunteers sent its volunteers (about four-five people every year) to Tinangol to carry out various projects (building gutters, installing water tanks, gravity pipes). The volunteers built a permanent double-storey wooden house as their work base and place of accommodation. In 1992, the Raleigh International Volunteers stayed in the village for further development work. Two Sabah-based non-governmental organisations, PACOS (Partners in Community

Organisation, Sabah) and SAWO (Sabah Women Action Resource Group) also carried out some educational and economic projects at Tinangol. In April 1994, with the help of several Tinangol youths, PACOS and SAWO set up a child care centre at Tinangol. They named the centre *Tungkusan*, meaning heritage. About five to seven Tinangol youths, both males and females, went for training organised by PACOS to be full-time carers and teachers in the centre. The objectives¹ of *Tungkusan* were to develop the villagers' consciousness concerning the importance of education for their children; to solicit outside funding; and to improve the standard of living of the villagers by acting as their intermediary for sale of handicraft. The centre was functioning until December 1996 when the core staff left the centre for other work. In June 1997, however, one young woman in her late teens volunteered to teach and take care of the children. Hence, *Tungkusan* was revived and from July 1997, PACOS paid a monthly salary to the young woman as well as employing a villager to be the cook for the centre. Tinangol was therefore already well known among international and national development sectors, including tourists, before it joined Bavanggazo, Gombizau and Sumangkap as part of the tourist attractions along the Northern Tourism Circuit (West Zone).

Present-day Tinangol has no Rungus-styled longhouse. Instead, it has three modern-styled, government-funded longhouses - Blocks A, B and C. The Tinangol longhouses have twenty-five rooms each (I enclose some photos of Tinangol village at the end of this sub-section). Several families own more than room in the longhouse while there are some others who own a room in the longhouse and an individual house in the village. There are about eighteen individual houses and a PCS-owned Mission House. The village has a primary school, a dispensary, Women's Skill Centre, a community shed, a multi-purpose hall, church and nine sundry shops (six in the longhouses and three in single houses). Like all villages at Matunggong area, Tinangol

¹ The youths who started the *Tungkusan* project did not have paid jobs at that time. They stayed in the village helping their parents, doing handicraft or housework. In the beginning, the villagers did not support the centre. They sent their children but did not pay the fees (annual registration fee of M\$5.00 and monthly fee of M\$4.00 per child). The volunteers did not receive allowances nor were they able to get funding from outside sources. But still, they have persevered with the help of PACOS and SAWO.

does not have access to electricity nor water supply from the government. Instead, the villagers use candles, oil lamps like hurricane or pump lamps, batteries and generators. The government gave three generators to Tinangol, one for each longhouse. The families in each longhouse take turns to pay the M\$25 per month to buy the oil for the generator. For the single houses, several families share the cost of a generator and oil, while two families have their own generators. All the families have their own non-flush, porcelain bowl toilets built outside the longhouse or single houses.

Seventy-eight families appeared on the list of families the secretary of the Tinangol Village Development and Security Committee gave me. Out of the seventy-eight families in the main list, sixty (77%) families stay in the longhouse and the remaining eighteen (23%) live in their own single unit houses. Sixteen families, however, have migrated, for work purposes, to Kudat, Kota Kinabalu, Tawau or Labuan². I met and interviewed the sixty families (mainly both the husband and wife) still living at Tinangol. There are about four female-headed households, two widows and two divorcees but all with grown-up children. I added the number of members from the sixty families I interviewed and the total came to about 433 people. Table 4.1 shows the age distribution of the husband and wife interviewed and Table 4.2 the age distribution of the members of the families interviewed.

² There is one study on the shifting cultivation of the Rungus in Sabah by a team of Dutch researchers in 1987. The Socio-economic Research Unit, KK and Department of Agriculture, KK commissioned the study. In regard to migration patterns, the study found that there was not much migration among the Kudat Rungus. The migration that occurred was mainly directed to other villages, probably connected to land and family reasons (van Leur et.al. 1987: 52). Of the 532 respondents in two villages, eleven migrated to KK, four to Kudat, ninety-nine to other villages. The study found that more women than men migrate in correspondence with the contemporary custom of wives following husbands to the latter's village. Rural-urban migrants were between 16 and 30 years old, and rural-rural migrants were predominantly uneducated villagers. The study concluded that inter-rural migrants usually moved out of own village for family, land or marriage reasons, while rural-urban migrants did so for economic and schooling reasons.

Table 4.1 Age Distribution of Heads of Families and Spouses

Age	Number (%)
Below 20	1 (1)
21-30	19 (16)
31-40	38 (33)
41-50	26 (22)
51-60	20 (17)
61-70	11 (10)
Above 70	1 (1)
Total	116 (100)

Table 4.2 Age Distribution of Members of Families Interviewed

Age	Number (%)
1-10	79 (18)
11-20	120 (28)
21-30	100 (23)
31-40	72 (17)
41-50	27 (6)
51-60	22 (2)
61-70	12 (2)
> 70	1 (1)
Total	433 (100)

Table 4.3 Type of Work by Heads of Families Interviewed

Type of Work	Number (%)
Full-time farmer	32 (53)
Government sector	15 (25)
Farmer and odd-job labourer	5 (8)
Small retail business	4 (6)
Ship captain	1 (2)
Van driver	1 (2)
Van driver & fish business	1 (2)
Unemployed	1 (2)
Total	60 (100)

Those working in the government sector are schoolteachers, school gardeners, officers in the Sabah Forest Authority and general labourers in the state museum, Telecom, Department of Public Works, Kudat Town Board. Seasonal jobs include housebuilding work and farm-related work for others such as cutting trees, plucking coconuts, planting and harvesting paddy. The monthly income of the heads of families interviewed ranges from M\$0 (for the sole unemployed head of family) to M\$2,000 (for the sole van driver-cum-fish business). These monthly incomes could be more than reported if we consider the earnings the wives of these heads of households (except for the two female-headed households) from handicraft sales. These earnings, irregular and unpredictable, range from M\$0 to M\$250 per month.

For land ownership, the average size of the land each family owns is sixteen acres. About 60% of the families have land grants while the remaining 40% are in the process of waiting for their applications to be approved by the state government. There are several families who bought some of the land they own but the majority of them acquired the land through inheritance or under the native customary lease system

(residential and cultivation rights). All the villagers I interviewed informed me that they have distributed or will distribute their land among their sons. The parents may consider giving one or two acres of land to daughters on which they could build a house. Daughters are not given land, the parents told me, because they would be living with their husbands who have lands under their name or who will inherit land from their parents when the time comes.

The Rungus people, like other Malaysians, have to apply for legal ownership for their land. The British colonial administration introduced the Torrens system, which required the country's residents to apply for the land grants in order to claim legal ownership over the land they possessed. Before this Torrens system, the Rungus village owned the land. The village transferred its rights over the land to the individual families who used the land for cultivation. These families owned the land for as long as the land was under cultivation. When they stopped using the land for cultivation, the village (represented by the headman) regained the ownership rights to the land. These rights over the land through cultivation or usufruct rights meant there was no private ownership and hence, the respective families could not sell the land. This absence of private ownership before the Torrens system allowed the Rungus men and women to be physically mobile. In relation to the pattern of residence after marriage, the Rungus' practice was that the groom stayed with the wife's family for a year after the marriage and then the couple could decide if they wanted to continue living with the wife's parents or with the husband's parents. The Rungus men were not attached to the land and could therefore work on any piece of land in the village that was not under cultivation. But with the introduction of private ownership and the mandatory requirement for land grants, the Rungus people's attachment to the land became more visible. They had to ensure that they continued to use the land or place some markers on the land they had been cultivating. In the meantime, the villagers had to go through the

procedures of applying for a land grant from the Kudat District Office³. A gendered pattern of land ownership developed. The men did most of the initial farming tasks – clearing, cutting, gathering debris and burning – to prepare the field for paddy planting. The women helped in the planting, weeding and harvesting but their main task was to look after the domestic needs of the family. The villagers thought it was more appropriate to apply for the land grants in the men's names rather than the women's since the men would spend more time working in the fields. The men became less mobile as they became more attached to the land. At present, the practice of living with the wife's family is no longer a dominant trend. Instead, the wife goes to stay with the husband's family and help the family to work on their land⁴.

Besides land, these Tinangol families also have heritage wares that the Rungus people consider as valuable possessions. Among these heritage possessions are Rungus men's and women's costumes, brassware, earthen jars, Rungus beaded jewellery and gongs. If measured by cash income, most of the Rungus people would qualify as *poor* people under the official definition of poverty (M\$601 for a family of five persons in Sabah). If these heritage possessions and land were included, the Rungus would not qualify as poor at all. In the past the Rungus themselves referred to poor people as those without paddy, buffaloes, heritage wares and gongs. Presently, poor people are those without paid work, money, a single house, land, car, paddy and buffaloes, gongs and heritage wares. The villagers I met, not only at Tinangol but in the other three villages, considered themselves poor because they do not have paid work (by this they mean in particular, government employment) and cash income.

³ Many of the villagers in the four villages under study are in a state of flux in terms of land ownership. They have sent in their applications (some since the 1960s) but have yet to receive any news from the District Office. Before the District Office processes their applications, it has to instruct the Land and Survey Department to go the village to survey and measure the land. Until the land is measured, the Office cannot process the applications. Consequently, in the villages, the villagers are waiting for these surveyors to come and measure the land. At Matunggong, a piece of land with grant is much higher than one without grants, which is known as land under native customary lease.

⁴ The villagers expressed their anxiety over the possibility that the size of their lands might be reduced when the surveyors came to measure their land. Some of these villagers said that was why they were reluctant to leave the village for long periods of time in case the surveyors came when they were not in the village.

The highlight of Tinangol's status as a leading handicraft centre occurred at the end of 1996 when the Kudat District authorities declared Tinangol as a Traditional Rungus Handicraft Centre. In December 1996, each Tinangol family received several packets of beads worth M\$350 from the Matunggong sub-district office. Seven skilled weavers also received several packets of weaving threads, worth M\$450. I asked the villagers why they received the beads. They said it was because the government wanted to encourage handicraft making among the Tinangol people.

The Tinangol villagers' involvement in the commercial production of handicraft already has a long history, beginning with the Basel Mission in the 1950s. The missionaries noticed that the village women were skilled at making beaded ornaments and weaving, while the men were adept at welding the knives and tools, making carrying baskets and building longhouses. They encouraged the men and women to produce handicraft for sale, besides using them for functional and aesthetic purposes. Opuk, the former PCS secretary, told me that most of the Tinangol villagers were not interested in the missionaries' attempts to persuade them to do handicraft. The villagers were reluctant to leave their farm work. His mother was the only one who showed interest. In 1963, however, there was a prolonged drought, resulting in a terrible forest fire. All the crops were destroyed. The villagers had no food and according to Opuk, it was then that they began to turn to handicraft as a way of making money. The missionaries bought the products from the villagers and encouraged them to improve their skills by attending courses at the institution then known as the Women's Domestic School. In 1973, the second drought occurred but this time, according to Opuk, the Muslim-dominated State government exploited the villagers' plight. Government officials told the villagers that the government would give food supplies and financial aid to those who agreed to become Muslims. The state government by that time felt threatened by the Basel missionaries' presence and successful evangelical activities among the Rungus community. It had issued an order to all foreign missionaries to leave

the state by 1973⁵. Hence, by end of 1973, there were no Basel missionaries at Kudat. Nevertheless, the Basel Mission continued (till my fieldwork in 1997) its evangelical mission in Sabah and Kudat in particular, through the Protestant Church of Sabah. With the continuing support from the Basel Mission (especially with the new handicraft courses introduced at the Women's Skill Centre), the Tinangol villagers' interest in handicraft production strengthened through the years.

All the Tinangol families engage in handicraft making - whether stringing beads, shells, seeds from plants, weaving Rungus sashes and cloth, weaving *rinago*, baskets made from creeping plants and rattan or carving miniature *tontog*, the Rungus drum. At Tinangol, there are four villagers who act as agents for their fellow villagers. These agents help to sell the handicrafts at Kota Kinabalu or elsewhere and in return, receive a 10% commission from every sale. One of these village agents is Nonji, a thirty-year-old full-time businesswoman. Nonji is married to the van driver-cum-businessman mentioned above (who is a Bajau) who has a monthly income of M\$2000. Nonji is a woman with many capabilities. She is a skilled beadmaker herself who is regularly invited by Sabah Tourism Promotion Corporation (STPC) as their handicraft demonstrator at local and international cultural events. Nonji has regular buyers at Kota Kinabalu from whom she receives monthly orders which she then sub-contracts to her fellow villagers.

⁵ Many of the villagers I met at Tinangol and other villages - as well as some of the prominent Reverends from Basel Mission and Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (BCCM) who visited Tinangol at the time of my research related their experiences at that time. Some of the main persecutions encountered by the people then were police harassment, threats of imprisonment, false arrests, promise of financial aid, food and livestock in exchange for conversion to Islam. Thu (1995: 58) wrote of "the mass conversion movement" (which corresponded to similar stories the villagers told me) of the state government. "In 1972, a government function was organised in Kudat to gather the villagers where the illiterate villagers were asked to sign documents upon receipts of gifts such as clothes and food. In that manner, a single function converted about three thousand people, the majority of which were Christians." At Tinangol, there were several elderly male villagers who became Muslims under this conversion movement and later in the 1980s re-converted to Christianity without the knowledge of the government. They could not, however, change or get rid of their Muslim names.



Block B, Tinangol longhouse and football field in the foreground (before September 1997)



Interior of Block B; the 25 *ongkobs* are on the right and the residents are sitting at the *apad-tingkang*



The *ongkob* doubling as a general store



Tinangol's "quaint white church" where the Sunday services and wedding ceremonies are held. Below, the Bible Training School, Bavanggazo. The mangosteen and coconut plantations initiated by the Basel Mission are still bearing fruits



4.1.2 Bavanggazo, the *Big River* Village

Bavanggazo is situated in the Guomantong forest with the Guomantong Hill about an hour's walking distance away (I attach some photos of the structures at Bavanggazo at the end of this sub-section). Bavanggazo River, as the name suggests (*bavang*, river; *agazo*, big), is the main source of water supply for Bavanggazo village and Tinangol too. Some of the families use their land at Bavanggazo for planting food crops like paddy, maize and vegetables. None of the Bavanggazo families, however, lived at Bavanggazo prior to 1993 even though the village has existed since 1986. The families continued – and many still do - to live at Tinangol. Why is this so? The Bavanggazo villagers told me their reasons: easy access to the dispensary, primary school and the main road. Before STPC paved the narrow gravel road (that the villagers called “buffalo path”) in January 1997, it was only accessible to four-wheel drives and lorries; they have their own houses at Tinangol and moving to Bavanggazo means they would have to build another house which would incur more expenses and maintenance work, plus the legacy of animism which means that the villagers believe that thick forest, places with abundant water, stony surfaces and mountain peaks are homes of spirits - both malevolent and benevolent.

Bavanggazo, as a bona fide village, has its own village chief and a Village Development and Security Committee. The Committee planned several projects and one of them was to start a rubber-planting scheme at Bavanggazo. In early 1992, the Committee submitted the proposal to the Rubber Planting Board at Kudat, paving a new beginning for Bavanggazo. In September 1992, STPC invited several Bavanggazo residents, including the Committee chairperson, Maran, to represent the Rungus community at the Malaysia Fest in Kuala Lumpur. Other ethnic groups were also present at the Fest. These ethnic representatives were “cultural specialists” - in handicraft making, housebuilding, dance and music, preparation of food and beverage. At the Fest, they built replicas of their homes, performed their cultural dances and demonstrated their handicraft making.

During their month-long stay at the Fest, Maran and his fellow villagers observed and interacted with the visitors. Maran was encouraged by the show of enthusiasm towards Rungus culture and people. He wondered if he could apply the idea of building a “longhouse-for-tourists” at Bavanggazo. Besides providing an opportunity for tourists to see and stay in a longhouse, the Bavanggazo residents could organise activities such as preparing Rungus food and beverage, performing cultural dances and Rungus music, making handicrafts for sale and display and presenting Rungus costumes and artefacts. A longhouse at Bavanggazo, Maran thought, would be different from the model longhouse at the Fest. It would be a real-life longhouse with Rungus villagers (Bavanggazo residents) living in it. Tourists would have the chance to join the villagers in their daily activities as well as learn something about life in a longhouse and about Rungus culture in general. Maran was confident that the villagers would live at Bavanggazo once the longhouse project started. He saw the longhouse project as a village-based project. Hence, he wanted all the thirty Bavanggazo families to join the project, whether or not they owned land at Bavanggazo.

The Rubber Planting Board approved the Committee’s proposal for a group-based rubber-planting project. It proposed that all the Bavanggazo families join the project. Thirteen out of the thirty Bavanggazo families agreed to participate, as they owned land at Bavanggazo. In early 1993, the rubber group began work at Bavanggazo. They cleared about eighty-two acres of land, ranging from four to nineteen acres per family. The Rubber Planting Board provided technical advice and financial support, including free rubber seedlings, pesticides, fertilisers and wages to the participants. It also employed an experienced labourer, a Timorese migrant, to help look after the rubber plantation. With this contract labourer working full-time (three years from 1993-96) on the rubber plantation, the rubber growing families were able to continue with their farm work or employment with outside agencies.

When the rubber project began, the family members walked daily from Tinangol to Bavanggazo. They did not build a proper shelter or resting-place. Maran capitalised on this situation: he told the members they needed a proper shelter in case they could not return to Tinangol and had to spend the night at Bavanggazo. He suggested that instead of building individual shelters, they could build a longhouse that could be their resting-place and a tourist attraction. Nine out of the thirteen rubber families showed interest. Maran then informed the other non-rubber growing Bavanggazo families. Eleven families agreed to join the project. One Tinangol family also asked to join the longhouse project, bringing the total number of participating families to twenty-one, all of whom were Maran's relatives. Later, two families decided to pull out, leaving the number at nineteen.

Maran then approached STPC at Kota Kinabalu. He met its project manager, Ritchie, who was the leader of the Sabah contingent during the Malaysia Fest. When STPC approved the project, the Bavanggazo Longhouse committee went to Kota Kinabalu to promote the longhouse project to about forty tour operators. STPC and ten tour operators funded the construction of the first longhouse, with ten rooms, in April 1993. The rubber-participating families built the longhouse themselves, adhering to the "traditional Rungus longhouse" concept emphasised by both Ritchie and the project participants. They collected the materials - tree bark, rattan, round and unsawn wood, split and round bamboo - from the forest. There was a signboard placed at the entrance to the longhouse with the agencies' names inscribed on it:

The construction and preservation of this unique traditional Rungus longhouse is made possible through the kind support from STPC, API Tours, Borneo Memories, Borneo Endeavour, Exotic Borneo Holidays, Popular Express, Sankita Tours and Travel, Transborne Travel and Borneo Eco Tours

The longhouse participants installed a gravity pipe at the water catchment area to take advantage of the abundant supply of water from the Guomantong Hills. They then connected taps from this gravity pipe to their respective rooms in the longhouse. The participants therefore did not have to carry water from water sources outside the longhouse or store the water in containers, gallons and pails in the rooms, which would be the case in traditional Rungus longhouse and villages. The existing longhouse, with ten twin-bedded rooms, could only accommodate twenty people so the longhouse Co-operative decided to build another. The members approached the Matunggong State Assemblyman for financial assistance. In mid-April 1995, the participants built the second longhouse, with the same structure and building materials as the first but without water taps in the rooms. The Public Health Department, Kudat, contributed four water tanks to store water from the gravity pipe.

In the beginning, the rubber growers used the rooms in the first longhouse as merely a resting-place when they were at Bavanggazo. In the meantime, Ritchie, together with Maran and several of the rubber growers, visited the tour operators in Kota Kinabalu. They informed these operators about the Bavanggazo longhouse and its potential as a tourist attraction or lodge. The longhouse began to have visitors in early 1994. When these tourists arrived and wanted to stay overnight, the rubber growers would vacate and clean the rooms for the tourists. This arrangement apparently did not suit many tourists. They complained to their tour operators and STPC that the rooms were dirty and sooty. STPC told the longhouse project participants who used the first longhouse that they could not stay in the longhouse. They had to build separate individual houses for themselves. Eleven out of the 19 project members agreed to do so but only five families decided to stay permanently at Bavanggazo.

The Co-operative did not have a coherent registration and accounting system from 1993 to mid-1996. There were many problems associated with organisation and management of the longhouse project. In August 1996, the Bavanggazo Longhouse Co-operative invited Tong of Borneo Eco Tours to be their Advisor. Tong initiated many changes to improve the longhouse. In his company's website, Tong has updated the list

of his contributions to the Bavanggazo Longhouse project, under the section Environmental and Community Projects (<http://www.jaring.my/bet/>)¹:

- the creation of a new logo for the longhouse; the design of entrance tickets, letterhead, envelope and printing of receipt books and stationery;
- the revision of entrance fees for day trip and overnight stay and the tour package to include a free coconut drink, a Rungus necklace, and a cultural dance at a fixed price of M\$35 per adult irrespective of the number of persons;
- the introduction of changes to the rooms and toilets including fixing hooks for clothes and towels, bamboo racks for overnight and camera bags and slippers for guests;
- the numbering and labelling of the doors of rooms with names of local trees and explanation; replacing fluorescent lights with oil lamps; and introducing cushions for the added comfort of guests when they sat down on the bamboo flooring for meals;
- the replacement of the taps to shower heads in the shower rooms and increasing the height of the showers from the usual 5 ft to 7 ft for added comfort of tall tourists; addition of windows to the toilets and shower rooms for ventilation and lighting; improvement of the footpath between the longhouse and the toilets with proper lighting, steps and plankwalk to minimise accidents - especially at night;
- financial assistance to the Longhouse Co-operative to buy a mobile phone in order to facilitate bookings or reservations from tour operators; introduction of a booking system, method of payment and a salary scale for the several project members employed full time;
- assisting the attempt to improve the road conditions by writing to the government, through the office of Malaysia Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA, of which Tong was the President); organising a fund raising project to purchase grass cutting machine, buckets, pails, oil lamps and cushions for tourists; and arranging for the Tanjung Aru Resort in Kota Kinabalu to donate their used bicycles to the Longhouse Co-operative for them to rent to the tourists;
- the reorganisation of the sale of handicrafts that provided for incentives and employment;
- assisting the printing of two new postcards and other promotional materials to sell and promote Bavanggazo Longhouse;

¹ I gathered the relevant information on these changes when I was at Bavanggazo. I refer to this 1999 update because of Tong's style of presentation in which he consistently used the pronoun "I" to draw attention to the things he had done for Bavanggazo Longhouse.

- bringing six staff on an educational trip to Sukau Rainforest Lodge to show them how the lodge was run. To complement this initiative, the Longhouse Manager, sponsored by MATTA, went on an educational tour to visit the Iban longhouses in Sarawak in order to better understand how cultural tourism is organised.

In late December 1996, STPC began development works at Bavanggazo, which included widening and paving the road, repairing the longhouses and constructing new flush toilets and shower rooms. The previous toilets and shower rooms were made of cement and tiles, not planks, woods, bamboo or thatched leaves. In April 1997, due to continuing management and organisational problems, the Longhouse Co-operative, on the advice of STPC, decided to find someone to take over the management of the longhouse project. They chose a businesswoman from Sarawak who was also a frequent visitor to Bavanggazo Longhouse. She signed a three-to-five year contract with the Co-operative, beginning June 1997. Under a newly formed company, *Tradisi Borneo Sabah*, she took over the organisation and management of Bavanggazo Longhouse.

One of the outcomes from the problems of organisation and management encountered by the Longhouse Co-operative from 1994 to 1996 was the lack of systematic registration of tourist arrivals. In fact, the Co-operative did not have a proper record of tourist arrivals before April 1996. Angka, the Operations Manager, informed me that they had a record book for 1995 that he could not locate. He gave me three books – the first for overnight visitors in 1996, the second for overnight visitors in 1997 and the third for visitors. I asked Angka who these visitors meant. Were they day trip or overnight visitors? He said it referred to day trip visitors. The system of registration in the three books was vague and irregular. Nevertheless, I calculated the registrations from mid-April 1996 to March 1997. There were 308 arrivals, out of which 221 (72%) were foreign tourists and 67 (28%) domestic tourists. The top five foreign arrivals were from Austria, Portugal, UK, Taiwan and USA. Most of the tourists wrote favourable comments such as: “accommodation, entertainment, food and people, all very good”; “a wonderful experience in a lovely nature”; “experiencing history, nature, tribal life”; “very friendly people, exciting experience”; “nice longhouse, we are very surprised.” I talked with the nineteen-longhouse participants and their wives. The tables below

describe some of their characteristics (the total adds up to only thirty-seven as one head of household is separated from his wife):

Table 4.4 Age Distribution of Spouses in Longhouse Project

Age	Number (%)
20-30	6(16)
31-40	9(24)
41-50	13(35)
51-60	7(19)
61-70	2 (6)
Total	37(100)

Table 4.5 Level of Education of Spouses in Longhouse Project

Level of Education	Number (%)
No schooling	20(54)
Std 1-6	4 (11)
Form 1-3	8(22)
Form 4 -5	4(11)
BA degree	1(2)
Total	37(100)

Table 4.6 Type of Productive Activity of Spouses in Longhouse Project

Type of Activity	Number (%)
Farmer	10(27)
Handicraft	7(18)
Farmer & Handicraft	10(27)
Odd jobs	2(5)
School gardener	1(3)
Hospital assistant	1(3)
Shipping clerk	1(3)
Community leader, businessman, farmer	1(3)
School teacher	2(5)
Preacher & farmer	1(3)
Full time in longhouse project	1(3)
Total	37(100)

In terms of paid work opportunities as a result of tourism activities at Bavanggazo, the longhouse participants said they could do various tasks at Bavanggazo that would enable them to earn some cash income. These included making handicrafts and selling them at the handicraft shop, doing odd-jobs such as weeding, clearing and cleaning the surroundings for one Malaysian dollar per hour, dancing and beating the gongs for the cultural dance performance in the longhouse, providing the coconuts as tourists' refreshment, cooking for the visitors and selling sundries to visitors. Occasionally, the STPC invited the Bavanggazo participants to take part in cultural shows in Kota Kinabalu or elsewhere. For this, the participants received a stipend in addition to paid accommodation and transport fares.

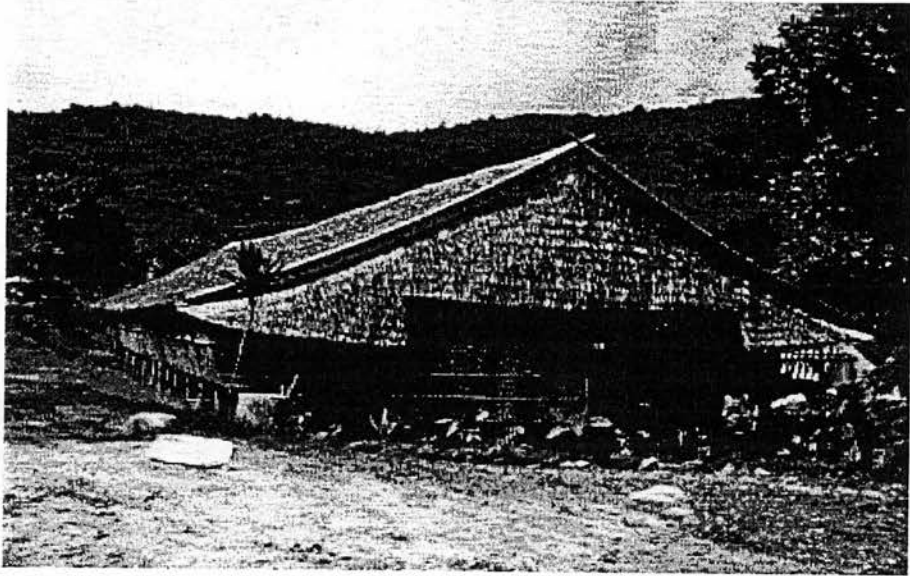
Except for Maran (who was the only person who worked full time in the project), the other thirty-six members combined their participation in the longhouse project with their farm work (planting food crops) or non-farm related work (paid work like teaching, gardening and so on). Maran, as the Co-operative Manager or Chairperson, received a

monthly allowance. This amount was higher than that paid to the few other members who received an allowance for doing regular work for the longhouses. These people on the Co-operative monthly payroll were an Operations Manager, two housekeepers who were in charge of bed making, cleaning and lamp lighting, plus two gardeners. Their monthly allowances ranged from M\$100 to M\$500. These members, however, informed me that the payment of these allowances depended on the Co-operative funds that in turn depended on the tourist arrivals. More tourists meant more funds, hence, these members could be certain of receiving their allowances. Otherwise, it meant they did the work for free. They informed me that up till March 1997, they had received their allowance only once. Naturally they were very dissatisfied, as they perceived that this was due to some mismanagement of funds.

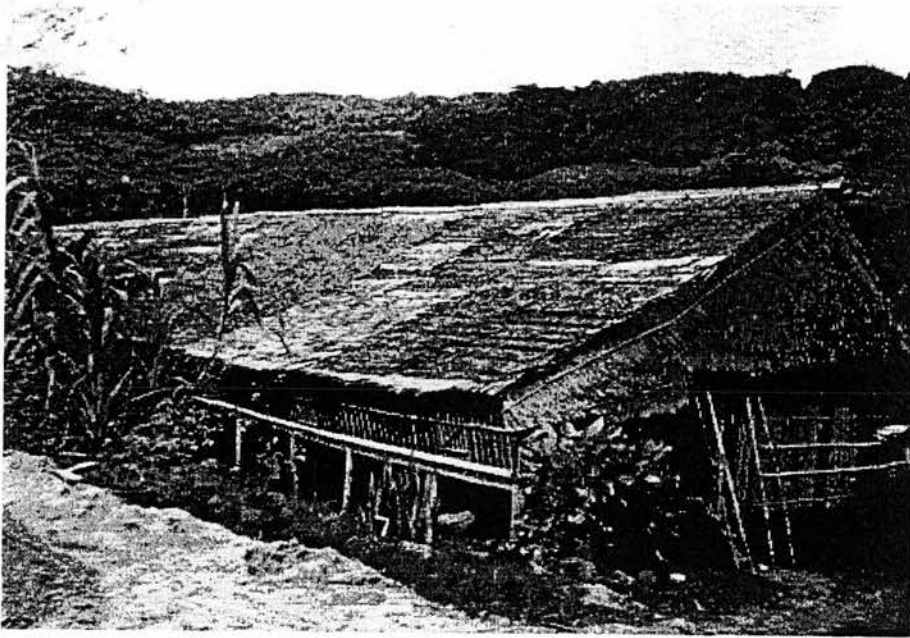


Signboard to Bavanggazo from the Kota Kinabalu-Kudat main road. Below, the rough gravel and stony road before the road works in late December 1996





Milaad Longhouse – tourist longhouse lodge.
This is the ten-*sirang* longhouse built in 1995 with government funding

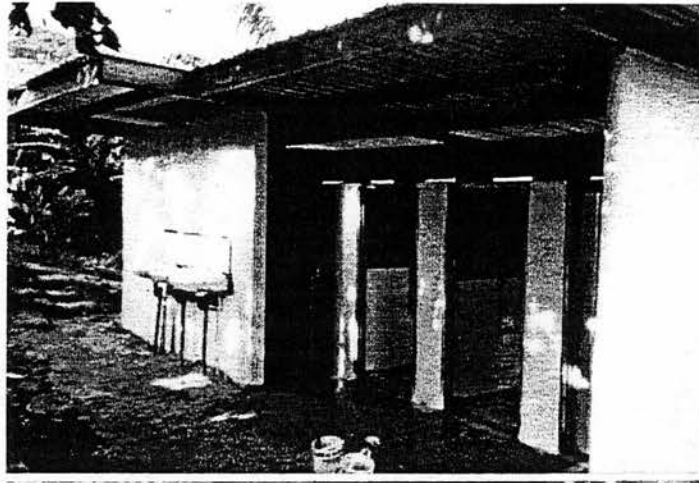


Mosungkoi Longhouse – semi-residential-cum-tourist longhouse lodge.
This is the eleven-*sirang* longhouse built by the
thirteen rubber growing participants in 1993.

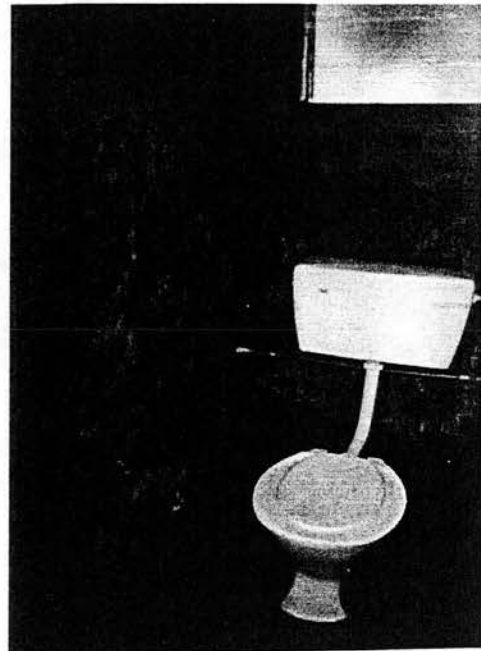


Pre-February 1997: old wooden structure with three toilets and three shower rooms





New concrete structure with three modern-styled toilets and three shower rooms to replace old wooden structure above. When tourists complained of the "modern" look, the Bavanggazo management surrounded the structure with a "wall" made from palm leaves



4.1.3 Gombizau, the *Medicinal Flower* Village

Gombizau has 33 families and about 160 people. The village is located on top a small hill amid the Gosusu Hill (as in the previous sections, I attach several photos of Gombizau at the end of this sub-section). Like the situation at Bavanggazo, STPC paved the village gravel path in early January 1997. Visitors arriving at the village will see several individual houses made of split bamboo and wood on both sides of the road and hear knocking sounds coming from the houses of gong makers, the bees buzzing in the hundreds of wooden hives, and the hammering noises emanating from the houses of broom makers.

There is one nine-roomed modern-styled longhouse, two "shortened" Rungus-styled longhouses of three rooms each, as well as about twenty individual houses. The village has a church and a small community hall which, during my fieldwork, was occupied by a young couple and their two small children. The villagers are all members of the Protestant Church of Sabah. None of the houses has taps in their individual homes. They use two taps in the village, one of which is connected to the gravity pipe attached to the Guomantong Hill and the other to the government water supply mains from Kota Marudu. Children, aged 10-15 have the task of carrying water from the taps. In addition, no families have toilets.

The main economic activity before 1992 was paddy farming, followed by coconut cultivation and gong making. After 1992, the dominant activities were bee rearing, followed by broom making, illegal logging, gong making, paddy planting and maintaining the coconut and rubber plantations. Gombizau was the centre of gong making before half of its population left to form Sumangkap in 1986.

Gombizau, located on high ground surrounded by thick forests and many flowering plants, is home to a variety of bees, especially the *Apis Cerana* species. Before 1992, the villagers did not rear bees on a commercial basis nor did they make wooden hives for the bees. They looked for nests made by the bees themselves in the forests. In December 1992 the Rural Development Agency, a statutory body funded by

the state-owned Sabah Foundation, chose Gombizau as one of the centres for its bee-rearing project because of its suitable environment and the availability of the *Apis Cerana* bees. About twenty male villagers attended a two-day course. These participants were expected to act as trainers for their fellow villagers after the course. In mid-1993 the Gombizau villagers started their bee-keeping project in the village. They bought the necessary materials such as planks, nails, hammers and wires for making the hives, and other equipment such as smoking device, gloves, face masks, knives and buckets.

With their involvement in the commercial rearing of bees and honey production, the villagers began to spend less time on paddy planting. They still retained their paddy fields but they were now smaller in size and only about two-three acres instead of five-six acres. As a result, their paddy fields became small and manageable and the individual families no longer needed to depend on their fellow villagers to help with the planting activities, as did the people of Tinangol. The families I spent my time with while at Gombizau informed me that none of them had needed the mutual-aid for paddy planting for several years.

The average number of hives per family was about fifty. Eight families had more than one hundred hives. The villagers informed me that if the honey sales were good, they could earn a gross monthly income of M\$1,400 to M\$2,000. In the first couple of years, the Rural Development Corporation was the main purchaser but since the end of 1996, the Corporation had reduced their orders. The other main source was the Chinese traders at Kudat who prefer to buy the unprocessed honeycombs. While 'honey is money', as the villagers said to me, nevertheless, the uncertainties of sales and lack of regular buyers posed a major problem to the beekeepers at Gombizau. *Asarok osusa ginavo* (heart is always troubled) and *inggolou ulu* (headache), is how the Chairperson of the Bee Keepers Association at Gombizau described his situation.

Besides bee keeping, all the villagers at Gombizau made brooms from the softened husks of coconuts. Gombizau, like most other Rungus villages, has many coconut trees, planted during the 1960s through the encouragement of the Basel Missionaries. Some of the villagers started making coconut fibre/husk brooms in 1989 followed by others in

the early 1990s. The broom making cycle takes about six days, including three days of drying. It is basically women's work. Apart from the men plucking the coconuts and helping to carry the coconuts back to the house, the women split the husks, dig out the flesh, peel the skins; pound the husks with a hammer to soften them, soak the husks, find the wood to be used as handles for the brooms and attach the softened husks to the wood. The women sell the brooms, at sixty cents per broom, to village agents or outside agents who came to the village to collect them. If the villagers sold the brooms directly to customers at the *tamu* or elsewhere, they could get a higher price, perhaps at M\$1.00 or M\$1.50 per broom.

Gombizau villagers, in general, display a better socio-economic profile than the villagers at Tinangol. With their broom making, honey production and gong making, the families at Gombizau are assured of a cash income of at least M\$50 per month. The family I was with for most of the two weeks I was there received more than M\$2,000 income from the sale of honey alone during that period. This did not include the cash the husband-and-wife team received from sale of logs (through illegal logging) and brooms. The couple, however, constantly complained to me that they did not have money. The other villagers often told me that they often wondered how this couple spent their money as they had the most hives in the village and the most sales. They said the couple was always complaining about having no money. "How could they have money when they were always going to Kudat and spending money?" one of the broom makers said to me. An in-depth study of household economics and ways of spending money would be a potential focus of future research.



Roadsign to Gombizau: "one village, one industry" honey bee rearing village



Registration hut in front of the village longhouse. Bottles of honey on display



The village church.



Two different housing structures: predominantly forest materials above and modern concrete materials below (belonging to the man said to be the richest in the village)



Domestic duty after school:
carrying water from the government-installed gravity pipe.
Water source is from Kota Marudu, 42km from Matunggong



Bee hives dotting the land owned by the Chairperson of the Gombizau Bee Keepers Association. There are one hundred hives on his two-acres of land behind the longhouse





Six days from coconut to broom. Broom making is almost cost-free, apart from plastic strings bought from the shops. But the preparation process involves hard manual labour



Beasts of burden: Gombizau villagers use buffaloes to transport sawn logs, coconuts, paddy

4.1.4 Sumangkap, the *Gong* Village

Sumangkap, the breakaway village from Gombizau, shares similar activities as Gombizau (some photos of Sumangkap attached at the end of this sub-section). The main difference is the order in which these activities appeared. At Sumangkap, the main economic activity is gong making, followed by bee rearing, logging and embroidering the male headgear, *sigal*. Most of the 43 families at Sumangkap make gongs on a commercial basis. Only about seven families whose heads of families are elderly couples do not make gongs because of failing eyesight and ill health. The villagers have formed an association, the Association of Gong Makers at Sumangkap. Their chairperson is Raimi, my key informant in the village. Raimi has frequent contacts with STPC, in particular with regard to the gong makers' requests for financial assistance and marketing contacts. He has limited contact, however, with tour operators.

Among the four villages, Sumangkap is the only village without a longhouse. The families built their own individual houses made of bamboo, *nipah* leaves, round wood, sawn planks and zinc. None of the houses had piped water supply. There is one common gravity tap connected to the government pipeline serving the needs of the villagers. No Sumangkap family has a toilet. The villagers in both villages said that for a couple of years, they had latrine toilets that were funded by the Health Department at Kudat. When the toilets became unusable after 1990, the villagers did not replace them. John Stahelin, the agriculturist who started the Bavanggazo Farm School at Bavanggazo in 1962, revisited Kudat in August 1997 after 28 years. He noticed many changes in the Rungus villagers' lifestyle but there was one practice that remained unchanged: the villagers' disregard for proper toilets.

In 1994, the Sumangkap gong makers began to engage in full-scale commercial production of gongs with the encouragement and financial support from STPC. As in Gombizau, the Sumangkap villagers now spend less time in farm work, especially planting paddy and maize. My key informant, Raimi, who is in his early twenties, said he had missed eating home grown maize for two years as he is now more committed to

making gongs. He and his wife continue to cultivate a small plot of paddy field, about 1-2 acres. Although their farm size and crops planted are greatly reduced, the couple nevertheless views this as a good development because they now have a cash income. Before 1994 when he was a full-time farmer, Raimi said that he had no income at all. As a gong maker, his net monthly income is between M\$700 - M\$3,000. One set of Rungus zinc-based gongs cost between M\$500 to M\$700 while one set of iron gongs cost between M\$3,000 to M\$4,200. Unlike the bee couple at Gombizau who are alleged to be spendthrift, Raimi and his wife told me they have a monthly budget for household expenses and savings and try to keep their spending within this budget.

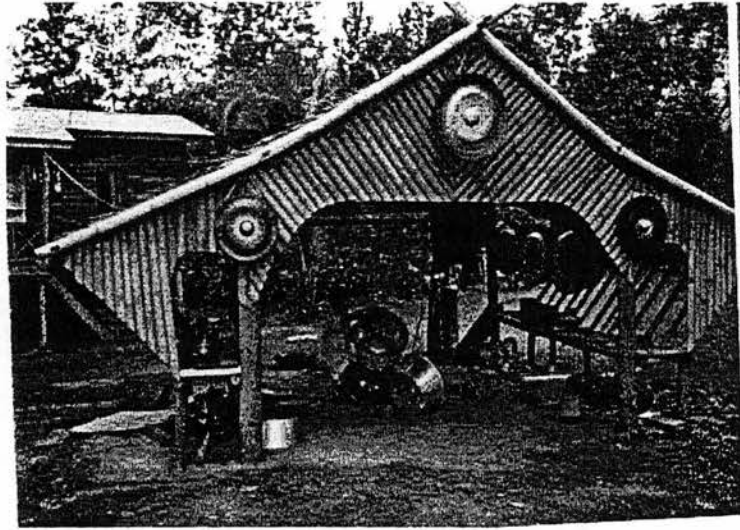
Each of the gong makers has his own work place, either under the house, beside the house or in a specially built work shed beside the house. About half of the total number of gong makers at Sumangkap have invested in a complete welding set which consisted of one gas cylinder (M\$500), one generator (M\$1,500) and one graining machine (M\$240). Those without the welding set have to send their gongs to those who own them. Only two gong makers in Sumangkap own mini lorries that they use to travel to other places to sell their gongs. Those without their own lorries would have to depend on these two men or on villagers outside the village.



Roadsign to Sumangkap village,
only 800 metres away



Raimi, the Chairperson of the Gong Makers' Association, at work
outside his house. The large-sized gong is destined for the
Secretariat Building at Matunggong



An artistically-built work shed at Sumangkap.



Sunday tamu at Sikuati, 24 km from Matunggong. One of the business areas for Sumangkap gong makers

4.2 ONE VILLAGE, ONE INDUSTRY : THE MAKING OF A DESTINATION

Tinangol, Bavanggazo, Gombizau and Sumangkap, from 1994 onwards no longer exist as ordinary Rungus villages. They have become destinations for visitors or tourists wanting to see and experience *traditional Rungus lifestyle and livelihood*, as promoted in the STPC brochure. Each of these four villages has a special role to play: to portray a specific aspect of Rungus life to the tourists:



Longhouse, handicraft, honey bee rearing and gong making: together, they complement one another to constitute the Rungus tourism product of the *traditional Rungus lifestyle and livelihood*. STPC and the Kota Kinabalu-based tour companies borrowed the “one village, one industry” (OVOI) concept from the Ministry of Resource Development and Enterprise, Sabah. For the Ministry, the OVOI concept comes under its basic industrial development project. It encourages the rural people to engage in economically productive activities in the village. The villagers have the cultural resources to help them to achieve development but they need some financial and

technical assistance. The OVOI concept, therefore, is to help the villages develop through village-based industrial activities. The Ministry imported the OVOI concept from the Oita Prefecture in Oita, Japan. The emphasis of this OVOI concept is to produce a local product using local resources and knowledge for the international market (Rural Industries Unit 1995). Oita is the prefecture to the northeast of Kyushu Island, Japan. Its Governor, Morihiko Hiramatsu, initiated this OVOI concept after listening to the grievances and problems of the people, which included among others, de-population due to migration to urban cities, bad roads, and low income. OVOI brings together families who have similar business interests and capital to produce a specific product or service. This village-based business enterprise has three objectives: to induce economic development; to improve the standard of living; and to reduce out-migration among rural youths (*New Straits Times* June 1, 1997: 14). To achieve these objectives, the Oita Governor proposed three guidelines to be followed by the participants of the OVOI project: the community itself produces the product; the product is representative of the locality; and the product meets global standards.

STPC adopts the objectives and philosophy underlying the OVOI concept. As the marketing arm of the Tourism Ministry, STPC's role is to help develop village-based cultural attractions and ensure that these attractions are market-led and unique. The OVOI concept fits into the STPC's plan to use the state's cultural diversity as a resource for developing tourism attractions. The STPC's task of finding suitable Rungus villages to represent the Rungus community under its own OVOI concept is facilitated by the existing conditions in each of the four villages under study.

How is the STPC's OVOI implemented at the village level? What do tourists see, do, receive or enjoy when they visit these villages? We move on to the next chapter to gain an understanding of the product offered to the tourists.

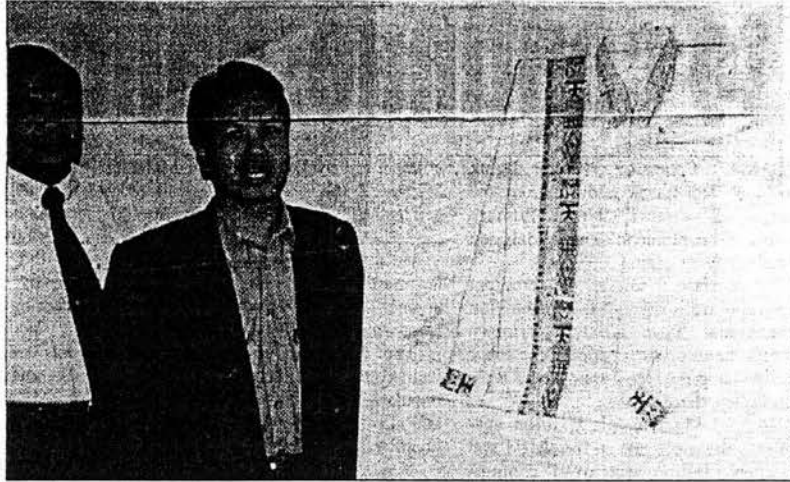
CHAPTER FIVE *The Two-Ringgut Myth* PRESENTING THE “TAILORED” RUNGUS AND THEIR LONGHOUSE LIFESTYLE

The Rungus and their Longhouse Lifestyle: this is how the STPC presents the Rungus to the world at large through its 1997 brochure (see Appendix One for the full text). The brochure begins with a general introduction to Kudat, Rungus territory, and the distinctive Rungus features: longhouse, handicrafts, animism and forested landscape. The second part of the brochure presents the “Longhouse Experience,” referring in particular to the longhouse at Bavanggazo. It describes the scenario awaiting the visitors at the Bavanggazo longhouse. There is also mention of Gombizau with its bee rearing activity and Sumangkap with its gong making. The brochure does not mention Tinangol. There are pictures of Rungus men and women (more women than men) posing in their gendered costumes and ornamental jewellery, performing their cultural dance and making handicrafts, a *bobolizan* staging a ritual, bee hives and gong making, of twin-bedded rooms and visitors savouring their meal on the bamboo flooring. These visual images facilitate the visual imagination of the readers of the villages mentioned.

I have used the word “commoditised” in the earlier chapters to refer to the making of the Rungus and their selected features into attractions for sale in the tourism market. Commoditisation (and preceding it, commodification) necessitates a knowledge of who the consumers are so that the final product matches the tastes and expectations of these consumers. The producer is like a tailor who, with a body size or measurements at hand, chooses the fabric, decides on the design and starts his/her tailoring, that is, cutting the fabric according to the design and body measurements. The Rungus and their longhouse lifestyle as represented by the OVOI concept is the result of a “tailoring” act by STPC, tour operators and to a lesser extent, the Rungus participants themselves. The package is the equivalent of MacCannell’s reconstructed ethnicity or Graburn’s secondary ethnicity (cf. Chapter One). The selected items do not reflect the Rungus’ pride or consciousness in their ethnic identity and culture. They do not exist in their own right except their significance in meeting the expectations of the tourists. Nevertheless, there is a possibility that the

Rungus' participation in the "tailoring" process, which requires the maintenance of differences between the visitors and themselves, may intensify their sense of relative deprivation and ethnic awareness.

The following event is not tourism-related nevertheless I mention here the special occasion organised by the Sabah Momogun Rungus Association (SAMORA), the association representing the Rungus people, in July 1999 at Kudat (*New Straits Times* [Malaysia] July 9, 1999). SAMORA has designed what it calls a "new Rungus traditional shirt." The occasion was to mark the launching of this new Rungus attire, a long-sleeved shirt with Rungus motifs running vertically on the right-hand side and lining its cuffs. The President of SAMORA calls for a re-definition of the Rungus identity that will place the Rungus on the same level as the other ethnic communities in Sabah. The first step, according to the President, is through improving the facilities and standards of education for the Rungus people. This newly designed shirt (reproduced below), which the writer of the article appropriately describes as "tailored identity," purportedly signifies SAMORA's attempt to construct Rungus identity according to the definition and determination of the Rungus themselves. Rungus tourism may have encouraged this politically related act. The more important issue, however, is that the Rungus are conscious of the need to replace the prevailing "discourses" attributed to them - "lazy" and "primitive" - with a more assertive identity. How can the Rungus do this and how can their culture help them? How will the Rungus reconcile their attempt at constructing an identity that they can be proud of with their touristic representations?



TAILORED IDENTITY: Jelani (2nd left) posing beside a sketch of the new Rungus traditional attire.

These questions outline the subject matter of Chapters Five and Six. Before we examine the incongruities between their touristic representations (self-for-others) and non-touristic realities (self-for-self) in Chapter Six, we have to familiarise ourselves with the Rungus product as presented in the tourism media and actualised at the village level. The first part of this chapter deals with these presentations and the second part examines the views of the parties concerned on the Rungus product - Rungus villagers, the tourists who visited the villages and the tour operators and guides who brought these tourists to the villages.

5.1 THE RUNGUS "ONE VILLAGE, ONE INDUSTRY" PRODUCT

5.1.1 "Traditional" Rungus Longhouse

The Rungus community and the Rungus longhouse are like the head and tail of a coin. Without one or the other, the coin loses its identity as a coin. So it is with the Rungus and their longhouse. The Rungus without the longhouse lose their most distinctive characteristic and as far as the tourism sector in particular is concerned, the Rungus will have no tourism appeal if this was to happen.

Under the one village, one industry concept, Bavanggazo represents the Rungus community through its two "traditional Rungus longhouses." All the tour brochures and travel guides, including the Sabah Tourism Masterplan (1996-2000),

proclaim the Bavanggazo longhouse as “traditional.” The Sabah Masterplan (1996: 202) states that:

The traditional Rungus longhouse was purpose-built for tourists at Kampung Bavanggazo and is proving popular with both day and overnight visitors from Malaysia and overseas. This excellent local co-operative initiative, supported by STPC, was opened in 1993. Sabah operators bring foreign visitors to experience the village activities, enjoy meals of local produce, witness cultural dances and purchase handicrafts.

The twin-bedded, 21-roomed longhouses at Bavanggazo are “traditional” because they are “authentic longhouses” (Borneo Eco Tours n.d.), “built in traditional Rungus architecture using natural materials, including Borneo hardwoods, nipah palms, rattans, tree barks and bamboo” (Bavanggazo longhouse flyer n.d.) “with only toilets and shower rooms as the two modern amenities” (STPC 1997 brochure).

The potential tourists look forward to visiting a “traditional” Rungus longhouse described as a “living museum where one can witness the traditional lifestyle, culture and costume of the Rungus communal community and exchange toasts and stories with the longhouse folks” (API Tours n.d.). Tourists can “mingle with ladies in sarongs and foot-long brass bracelets” (Borneo Eco Tours n.d.), “learn about the culture of Rungus people” (Exotic Borneo Holidays n.d.) and “be treated to a feast of local delicacies while the Rungus perform spectacular cultural dances and music” (Home Away From Home n.d.). This opportunity to obtain “a first-hand experience of living in a traditional longhouse where a few families share one long roof” (API Tours n.d.) allows “the visitors to appreciate the unique rustic lifestyle of the Rungus” (STPC 1997 brochure).

The added attractiveness of the Bavanggazo longhouses is that the visitors can be “a guest in a home away from home amid the cool forest air” (Home Away From Home n.d.) and “experience the past through the communal longhouse lifestyle” (KK Tours n.d.). The tourism media remind the tourists of their historical presence at the Bavanggazo longhouse as “the Rungus longhouse is fast giving way to modernity” (KK Tours n.d.).

An earlier flyer presenting *The Traditional Rungus Longhouse "Binatang"* effective 1st July 1996 to 1st July 1997, listed four items included in the Rungus longhouse package:

- overnight accommodation in twin-sharing room, including breakfast and dinner (M\$40 per adult/night; M\$30 per child/night);
- food: beef, chicken and traditional vegetables such as home grown hill rice, bamboo shoots, edible ferns, roots and tubers (lunch was available at M\$10 per person and a gas cooker was also available for those who wanted to cook for themselves at M\$5 per person);
- traditional liquor: rice wine, tapioca wine, maize wine (M\$2 per glass; M\$5 per bottle);
- a cultural dance (M\$35 per adult and M\$25 per child; cost included entrance fee, sash with individual names woven onto it, beaded necklace, coconut drink, cultural dance).

A working paper, *Plan to Promote Culture-based Tourism Activities through Homestay Program*, presented by Ritchie, the Project Manager of STPC, calls the Bavanggazo longhouse a "homestay program" where the tourists stay with the villagers in the longhouse and participate in the daily life of the villagers. The paper does not state whether the visitors sleep in the same room as the hosts or in different rooms in the same longhouse or in different longhouses. It does not mention the activities that the visitors can participate in other than observing the cultural dance, handicraft making, sampling Rungus food and wine and having a tour of the longhouse.

From the texts, we can divide the main items included in the "traditional" Rungus longhouse package into two categories. The first category consists of Rungus-based cultural characteristics such as Rungus costume, ornamental brass coils for women, local food and wine, folk stories, cultural dance and music, animism and handicrafts. Apart from these cultural markers, the tourism media also include the natural landscape - luxuriant forest, unspoilt beaches and mountain peaks - to complete the tourists' sightseeing tour of the "most traditional ethnic community of Sabah, the Rungus longhouse dwellers" (Hutton 1997: 68). The inclusion of nature accentuates the historical image of the Rungus as wild, spontaneous and hospitable. The second category consists of non-Rungus-based cultural

characteristics. These include modern, western-styled amenities such as toilets, shower rooms, and twin-bedded rooms with mattresses, pillows and mosquito nets. This list is incomplete at the moment as it refers only to those items mentioned in the texts. We will continue with the actual product offered to the tourists when they arrive at the Bavanggazo village.



Welcome sign to Bavanggazo “traditional” longhouse.
In the background is the public sitting area.

The two longhouses, Milaad and Mosungkoi longhouses, are respectively located behind and beside the *welcome sign*. Located at various locations near these longhouses, are seven individual houses. Only four of these houses are occupied: three by Bavanggazo families and one by the Timorese employed by the Rubber Planting Board to look after the rubber trees. These houses, like the longhouses, are built of “traditional forest materials.”



Three individual houses belonging to the Bavanggazo families. Ino's house, with her vegetable plot, are on the front right and Dorin's house is at far back. The gravity pipeline in the foreground channels water from Guomantong Hill to Tinangol village.

There is a registration hut at the main gate and an unmarked car park. The hut has a table and several chairs, a blackboard where Maran writes the particulars for imminent tourist arrivals (date, number of tourists and tour operator involved). The function of the hut, Maran informed me, is to register the arrivals and collect the M\$2.00 entrance fee. Since most of the arrivals are overnight visitors who have already paid the cost of the tour package to the operator concerned, there is no need for someone to be in the hut and wait for visitors to arrive. The operator hands the necessary amount to Maran or Angka, the Operations Manager. The other Bavanggazo participants do not see this money until there is enough profit collected in the Co-operative Fund for dividends to be distributed. This collection is only the balance from the total visitation cost (M\$75 per adult for overnight stay) after all the payment to the dancers, gong beaters, coconut supplier, meals provider, sash weaver and bead maker. It is no wonder the Co-operative Fund is almost always in the red with this long list of people to be paid. The participants' repeated grievance is that they have yet to receive any profit distribution from the Co-operative Fund.

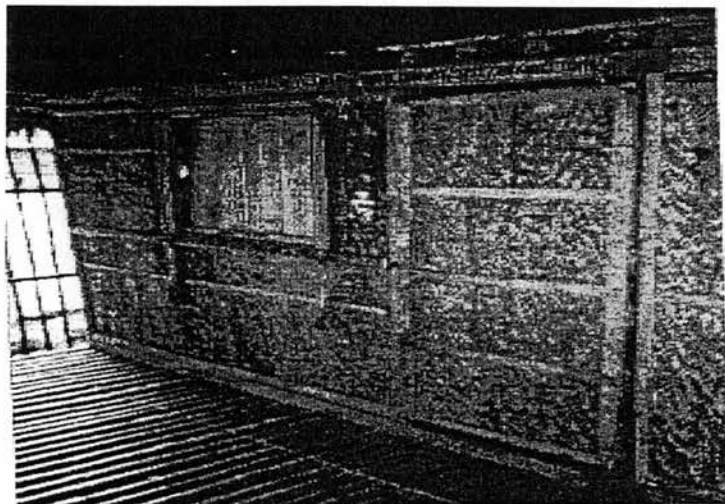


Registration hut at the entrance to Bavanggazo longhouse with empty beer bottles awaiting uplift.

The Bavanggazo participants have given names to the longhouses in January 1997 at the suggestion of tour operators. At that time, PATA was organising its 9th International Conference on Indigenous Tourism in Kota Kinabalu. The tour operators thought naming the longhouses would facilitate bookings and ease communication. The participants named the first longhouse built in 1993 after the Bavanggazo village headman, Mosungkoi. The second longhouse, built in 1995, was named Milaad longhouse after the family name of Maran, who initiated the longhouse concept for tourism. The participants had earlier given names to the rooms in both longhouses: Milaad's rooms were named after nature birds and those at Mosungkoi's after nature trees. The Bavanggazo women weavers wove the sashes for the names of each of the trees and birds and these sashes were placed above the door of the *ongkob*.

In both longhouses, visitors will see the tree bark wallings for the *ongkob*, tread on split bamboo flooring and enjoy the natural air conditioning of the longhouse (thatched roofing, gaps between the split bamboo flooring and gaps between the hardwood serving as the wall of the *apad*). At Milaad longhouse, the visitors cannot miss the handicraft shop (in the longhouse until June 1997) which is strategically placed at the front entrance. It is marked by extra features not associated with "traditional" Rungus longhouses: a window with detachable wood, two woven sashes hung above and below the window with the words "Bavanggazo, Kudat" and

“Sabah Land Below the Wind” respectively, and the words “Cash Term” written underneath the window. The two photos below show the handicraft shop (with the tree bark walling) and the *apad-tingkang* of Milaad longhouse. Several KadazanDusun hats are hanging on the doors of the *ongkob*:

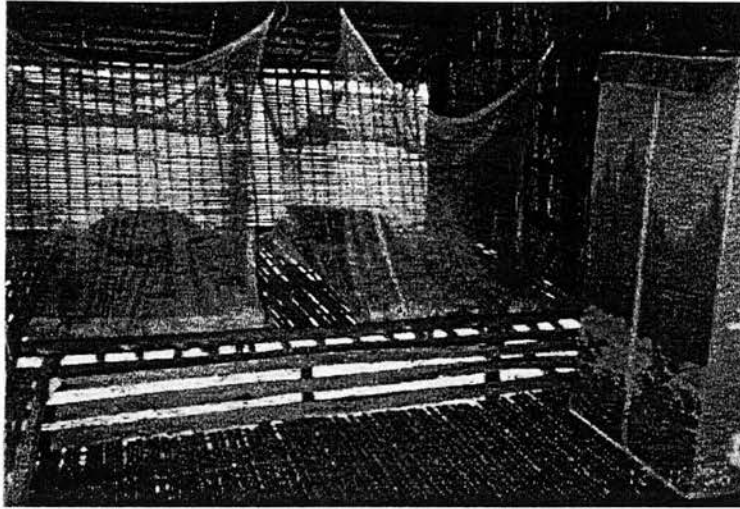


Tong, of Borneo Eco Tours, had earlier suggested to the Bavanggazo participants to make one of the rooms at Milaad longhouse into a handicraft shop. The participants could display their crafts in the shop and the tourists also need not leave the longhouse to browse and buy the crafts. Dorin, the wife of Angka, the Operations Manager, looked after the shop. When the Bavanggazo participants gave her their handicrafts, she recorded them in her book and labelled each product with the owner's code and price. When visitors arrived at the longhouse, Dorin opened the shop for the visitors. Besides the Rungus crafts like beaded necklaces, bracelets, woven sashes, *rinago*, the shop sold honey, musical instruments and some non-Rungus handicrafts such as Kadazan hats and winnowing trays. The participants gave 10% commission to the Co-operative Fund for each sale. The shop also sold postcards, including the two postcards produced by Tong of Borneo Eco Tours. One postcard shows four Bavanggazo adults in a Rungus dance pose and the other postcard shows four children posing in front of Milaad longhouse, as attached below:





At Milaad longhouse, the twin-bedded rooms (*ongkob*) have two pairs of slippers, a jug of drinking water and glasses, the Malaysian long skirt, *sarong*, oil lamp, bamboo table and a plastic clothes cupboard. When I photographed these rooms in December 1996, they had the cooking hearths (*ropuhan*), just like an ordinary Rungus longhouse. At the end of January 1997, I noticed that all the *ropuhan* in Milaad longhouse had all been removed. I asked Maran and he informed me that some of the tour operators disliked having the *ropuhan* in the rooms, which to them are bedrooms. Although the *ropuhan* were not in use, their existence gave the rooms a sooty and dirty atmosphere, according to the tour operators. The plastic clothes cupboards in the *ongkob* also caused some controversy. One of the tour operators had suggested that the Co-operative buy these cupboards so that the tourists could keep their possessions in these cupboards. When the purchases were made, the other tour operators were not happy, saying they spoil the look of the “traditional” Rungus longhouse. Consequently, the Co-operative had to take the cupboards away. The two photos show the layout of an *ongkob* in Milaad longhouse:



The twin-beds at the *ongkob-tingkang* and the short-lived plastic cupboard at the *ongkob-lansang*



Above, a wooden table; and a bucket with scoop for the overnight guest(s) at the *ongkob-salow*, washing area.

At the back of Milaad longhouse, is the kitchen. This is where Maran and his wife prepare the meals for the visitors. The couple is responsible for the menu and the money from the tour package (M\$10 for dinner and M\$5 for breakfast per visitor) go to Maran and his wife. They use a gas cooker instead of firewood.

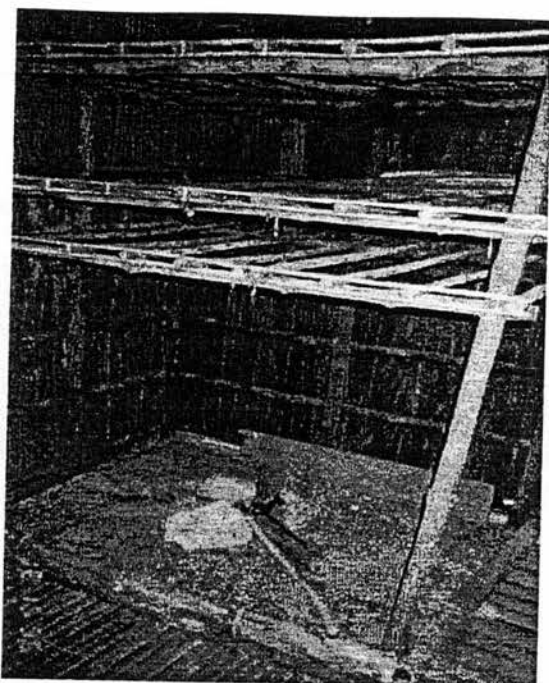


The longhouse kitchen where Maran and his wife prepares the meals for visitors. No “traditional” cooking methods or utensils used here

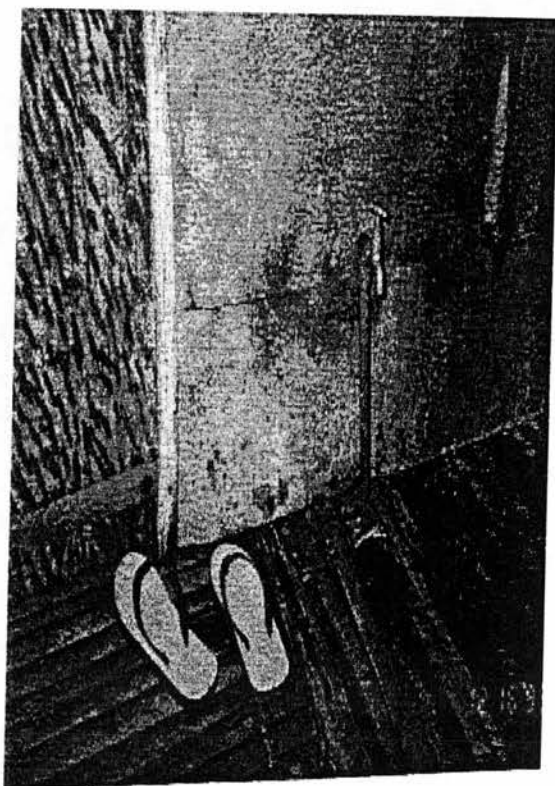
The Bavanggazo flyers and brochures promise local produce and Rungus-style cooking but from my observations of the menu, most of the dishes served to the visitors consisted of non-Rungus “traditional” food such as tinned sardines, tinned curry chicken, fried omelettes with onions and vegetables bought from the *tamu*. As for drinks, besides the coffee and tea, the Co-operative and later Maran’s and Angka’s shops, also sell beer to the visitors to “provide options in case they do not want or do not like the Rungus home-produced wine,” Tong, the tour operator explained¹.

¹ Erlend Clouston, writing on her visit to the Iban longhouse in Sarawak (*The Guardian*, Travel section, 2nd October 1999: 2-3), has this to say about the rice wine: “We had been warned that this was an extremely potent brew, likely to plunge feeble-bodied Westerners into heavy hallucinations but it turned out to have the punch of a mild sherry.” I have not tasted sherry and would not be able to make a comparison but from my experience of drinking the rice wine, I can say that the uninitiated will soon unwind with just a quarter cup of the wine.

Mosungkoi longhouse has a different set-up from Milaad longhouse. Some of the families involved in the rubber planting project use their individual rooms when they are at Bavanggazo (which accounts for the presence of water taps and the *odon* in the *ongkobs* of Mosungkoi longhouse, as seen in the photos below). The arrangement for tourists' accommodation is that when there is not enough rooms at Milaad longhouse, the families at Mosungkoi longhouse will vacate their rooms, clean and prepare them for the tourists. They have to furnish the rooms with the same facilities as those in Milaad longhouse. The room rental goes to the individual families, not the Co-operative Fund.



The *ropuhan* with *odon* intact, and below, the water tap originally installed by the participants of the rubber planting project. Slippers for overnight guest.



Besides being the first choice for tourist accommodation, Milaad longhouse is also the reception centre where the visitors have their welcoming ceremony, afternoon tea, dinner and breakfast, observe the Bavanggazo women stringing beads and weaving, and watch the cultural performances. The welcoming reception includes tea and savouries, coconut drink and garlanding ceremony. Maran garlands each visitor with a woven sash which has their own names (tour operators give their clients' names to Maran a few weeks before arrival) and a beaded necklace. The visitors then have the afternoon to wander and have a tour of the longhouse and the vicinity. Some of the visitors venture into the individual houses thinking these are part of the longhouse sightseeing tour. Meanwhile, the Bavanggazo women sit at the *apad* of Milaad longhouse "stringing beads and weaving their traditional cloth," just as the tourism media describe them (Eliot & Bickersteth 1998: 466). Sometimes the women dress in their costume, the *sukolob* or *banat ondu*. At other times, they wear their everyday clothing. Ino, my 'mother' at Bavanggazo, would demonstrate her spinning skills: *meningkol* or spinning homegrown cotton into cotton thread and *mongorilit* or winding brass wires into hip coils (*orot*). In the evening, the visitors gather at Milaad longhouse for their dinner and thereafter for the cultural dances. This involves their participation after each dance when the dancers invite the visitors to join in. The Bavanggazo participants usually perform three dances: the Rungus *mongigol* and *manaradan* and the Murut *mangunatip* or bamboo dance. The two Rungus dances are slow, non-energetic dances while the Murut bamboo dance is robust, requiring agile and swift movements to weave the feet in between the bamboo poles. Some of the visitors and the Rungus hosts entertain themselves with *tapai*, the rice wine, beer or the liquor brought by the visitors. After breakfast the next morning, the group leaves for Kota Kinabalu or their next destination. For those wanting to trek up Guomantong hill (an hour's journey), they will rise early and set off about 5.30 – 6.00am, accompanied by one or two of the Bavanggazo men. There is no price stipulated but the guide usually receives M\$5 from the trekkers (on the advice of the tour guide). The photos below show some of the "staged" activities for the longhouse visitors:



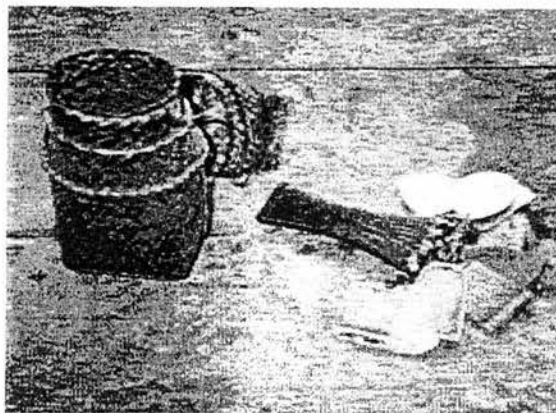
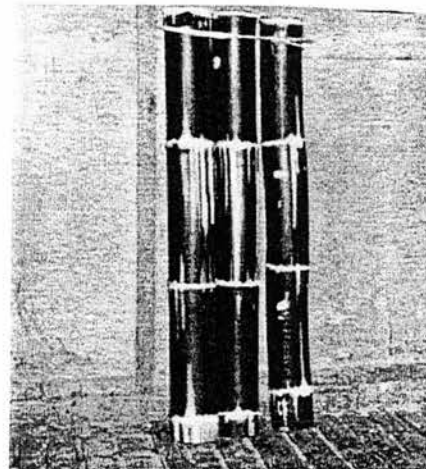
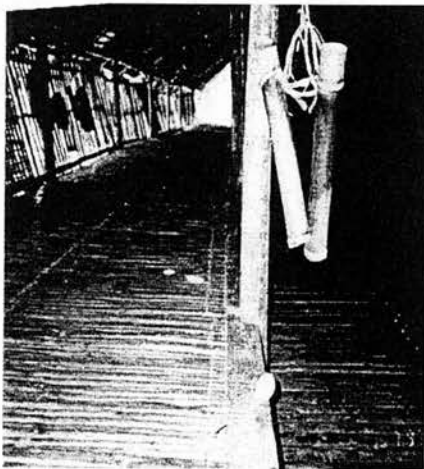
Cultural presentation for overnight visitors at Milaad longhouse



At Bavanggazo, Maran, the Chairperson, has a single house but he and his family live in one of the rooms at Milaad longhouse. The Co-operative decided to convert Maran's unoccupied house into a heritage house, *valai tungkusan*, where they display Rungus artefacts and household gadgets. When I was at Bavanggazo, the participants were making bamboo water carriers (*tokizog*, *tangga* and *sangit*) and bamboo cups (*subung*) which the participants said were used till the 1960s (see photos below). They were also making some pagan artefacts (*tinokin*, *bangau* and *domburan*). The *tinokin*, a small rattan basket with a cover, symbolises the spirit's (*rogon*) home while the *bangau* (cf. chapter two) and *domburan*, two half-foot pieces of wood, are the *rogon*'s weapons. When the animist family makes these artefacts, the priestess, *bobolizan*, would conduct a ceremony in the house and place the artefacts at a strategic location. After the ceremony, no one is allowed to touch or remove them. Touching them means invoking the presence of the *rogon* who would come and ask the family member(s) what they wanted. The *rogon* would be very angry if the action was done on purpose.



Above, making the bamboo containers, and below, the products, *sangit* (left) and *tangga* (right) and pagan basket, *tinokin* with the *sovion*



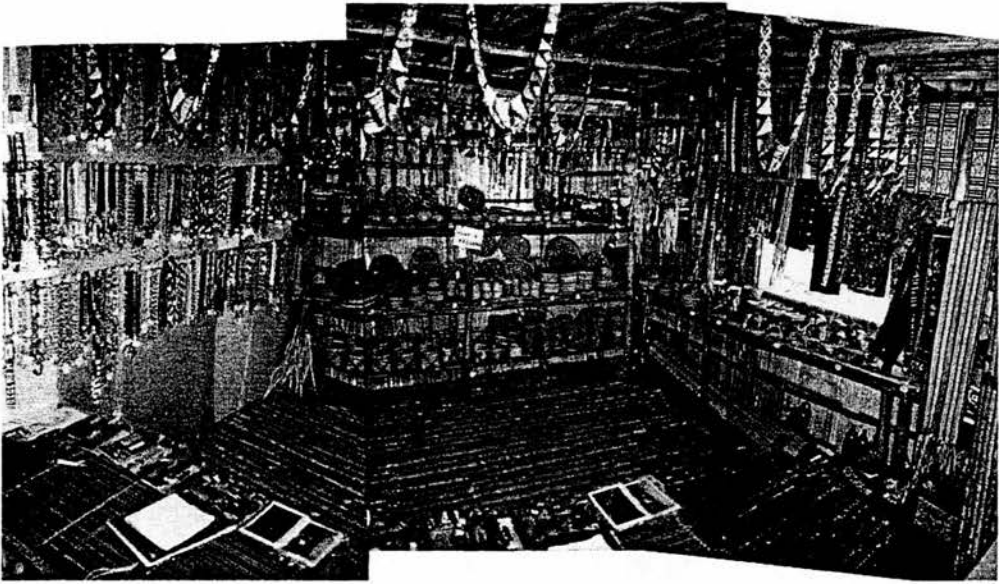
Before April 1997, there was a large-sized *bubu*, a wooden and bamboo model of a commonly-used fish trap and beside it was a ten-metre high wooden tower. The Bavanggazo participants dismantled these two wooden structures in April 1997 and used the space to build a handicraft shop and a kitchen for tourists. This kitchen has two water taps installed near its entrance, making it convenient for those who want to cook. During the time I was at Bavanggazo until October 1997, there were no visitors who used the new kitchen. Instead, the participants themselves used it to roast their tapioca or, when the guide asked them, to roast a pig.



The new two-in-one handicraft shop
with the new kitchen on its right

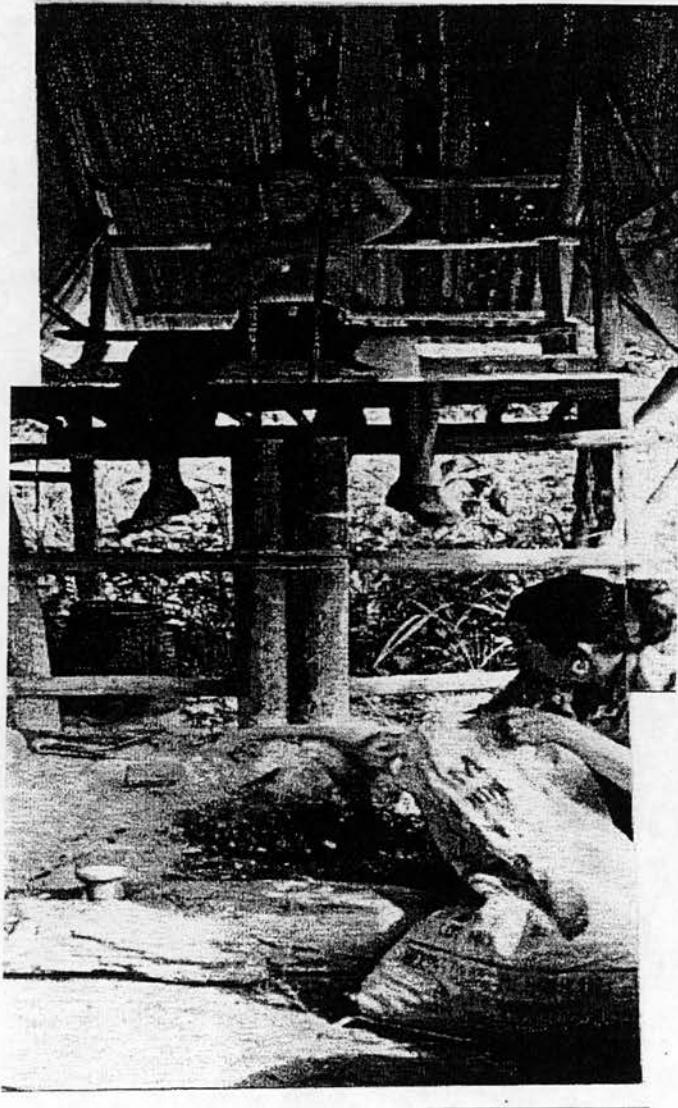
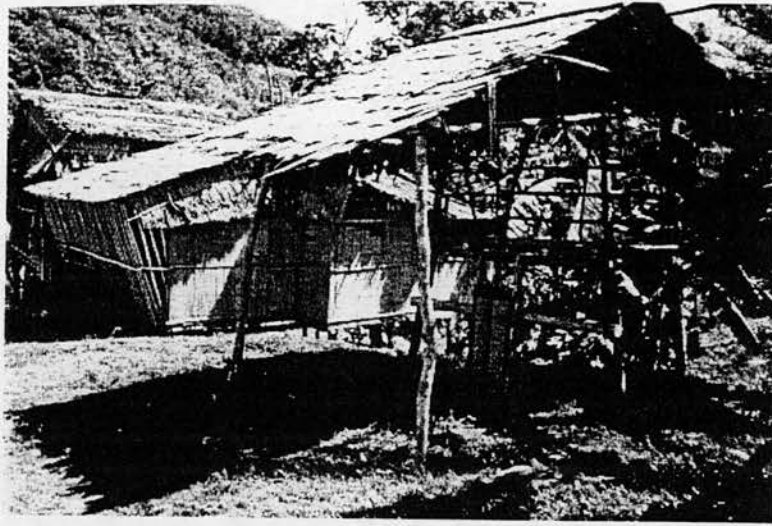
The Bavanggazo participants informed me that Maran and his brother, Angka, made the decision to shift the handicraft shop from the longhouse to a separate building outside the longhouse. I asked the two brothers about this and they said a “traditional” Rungus longhouse, the *valai dot Momogun* (not the modern-styled *valai dot porinta*), did not have a shop in the longhouse. I call the bamboo and wooden structure a “two-in-one” shop: each brother owns one half, which is separated by a wall. With the new introduction, private ownership has replaced the old co-operative system of managing the sale of handicrafts. This means the longhouse Co-operative does not receive the ten percent paid by the Bavanggazo participants when visitors bought their crafts displayed in the shop. This commission now goes to Maran and

Angka. The participants have a choice to put their crafts in either or both shops and pay the ten- percent commission to the respective owners when the visitors buy their crafts. I asked Maran and Angka and also their wives on the feasibility of having two shops at Bayanggazo. They said that the old co-operative system was not workable, as there were too many people to share the revenue (from the commission). Some participants did not have handicrafts in the shop while some others did not get to sell their crafts. There were several participants (the wives of Maran and Angka, in particular) whose handicrafts seemed to be easily sold. It was therefore unfair for these participants to have to pay commission that would be re-distributed to those with no handicraft or did not make any sale. The brothers also emphasised that there is no competition between them, for after all, they are brothers. I asked some of the tour operators about this development. Tang of Borneo Endeavour said if it means better quality products with reasonable prices, it is for the better. But he also said that the younger brother is not too happy with the tour operators because they prefer to bring their clients to Maran's shop. Tang reasoned Maran is the Manager (no longer called "Chairman" with the change in management to private company ownership) of the longhouse project, hence they have to show more interest in Maran's shop than Angka's. I noticed that Maran's shop is better stocked. In addition to the handicrafts, there are foodstuffs such as tinned food, flour, and cooking oil, titbits and toiletries. Once, I saw fresh chicken that he had bought from the local *tamu* to be sold to fellow participants or visitors.



The layout of handicraft display in Angka's and Dorin's shop: beaded craft, *rinago* baskets, souvenir *tontogs*, winnowing trays, woven sashes and cloth, men's *badu*, *sigal tinohian*, rattan mat and postcards produced by Borneo Eco Tours and STPC.

During my fieldwork, the Bavanggazo participants were also building a welding shed for demonstrating the *modsupu*, that is, making the Rungus all-purpose knife, the *dangol*. *Modsupu* involved using two large-sized bamboos, about 4 inches in diameter to act as pumps, and charcoal, as shown in the photo below:



The new *modsupu* shed at Bavanggazo for *dangol* welding demonstrations. Below, the former headman of Mompilis and his wife making the *dangol* the Rungus way, with large-sized bamboo (*poring*) and coal

The four families who stay permanently at Bavanggazo have small vegetable plots and 2-3 acres of paddy fields each. The vegetable plots are beside their houses but the paddy fields are some distance away. The participants informed me that in 1993-94, several visitors requested the participants to bring them to the paddy fields. They wanted to join the planting activities. From 1995 onwards, however, no visitors made such requests. The participants told me this was mainly because the visitors had to pay an additional charge (M\$200 per group) if they wanted to go to the paddy fields. Hence, when the visitors heard about the extra charge, they abandoned their intention.

For day trip visitors, they only have to pay the M\$2.00 entrance fee to visit the Bavanggazo longhouses. There is no standard programme for day visitors but they can request the participants to perform the Rungus dance. The charge is M\$200 per performance, irrespective of the number of visitors in the group. I have mentioned the longhouse Co-operative as the force behind the management and organisation of the longhouse project at Bavanggazo. Due to continuing organisational problems from 1993-96, the participants - following the advice of the STPC - invited Tong of Borneo Eco Tours to be their Advisor for a period of two years, from August 1996 to July 1998. Tong, as Advisor, subsequently suggested that the participants formed a Co-operative so that there would be a smoother and systematic management of the project. The participants formed the Co-operative in November 1996 with Maran as its Chairperson and several sub-committees working under him. The Co-operative remained in existence until June 1997 when a new owner to oversee the running of the longhouse enterprise replaced it.

This then is basically the layout at Bavanggazo and the visitation programme for day and overnight visitors. These overnight visitors stay in Milaad longhouse that is specifically for visitors or in rooms vacated by their respective owners in Mosungkoi longhouse. Unless the rooms are all occupied, visitors who sleep at Mosungkoi longhouse will have the opportunity to "stay together with the longhouse inhabitants" as presented by the tour media. These visitors have their meals with their group members and not with the Bavanggazo participants, although Maran and sometimes, Angka, join the visitors for their meals. During the cultural

performances, the Bavanggazo participants, especially the women, sit at one end of the *apad*, away from the visitors.

For the moment, we can say that the Bavanggazo longhouse tour package is more in line with what Zeppel (1994; 1996) has termed as “cultural sightseeing tour,” which includes viewing, sampling and buying the typified markers of Rungus’ traditionality: longhouse, handicrafts, dances, food and wine, costumes and natural landscape. The “meet-the-people” tour experience, which creates opportunities for interaction and communication, is limited to participating in the cultural dances and dining with Maran and his key committee members. The Bavanggazo longhouse project gave rise to “cultural specialists” such as skilled weavers, brass coilers, playing musical instruments, dancers, among others. It also creates wage earners and small-scale entrepreneurs.

The other three villages, Tinangol, Gombizau and Sumangkap, do not have “traditional” Rungus longhouses specially constructed for visitor accommodation. Tinangol occasionally receive visitors who ‘accidentally’ stray into the village thinking it is Bavanggazo or those visitors who want to see a 25-roomed Rungus longhouse. Also, at Tinangol, there is a plan to have a “traditional” Rungus longhouse for tourist accommodation. Thirteen Tinangol villagers built this “traditional” longhouse in 1995 on a piece of land owned by Nonji who became their Chairperson until June 1997. Each member owns one room in the longhouse. During the Total Solar Eclipse on October 24, 1995, tourists rented a room in the longhouse for M\$35 per person. After the solar eclipse, however, the longhouse has not been used and has since fallen into disrepair. The Tinangol longhouse project faces several problems, which include water supply, finance and management. Towards the end of my fieldwork in September 1997, STPC made some promising moves to revive the project. It commissioned contractors from the Kudat Public Works Department to survey the area for sources of water, road works and construction of new toilets and shower facilities. It also promised to give some funding to the project members to rebuild the longhouse and has already prepared a signboard for the longhouse, similar to the ones for the three villages and categorising it under the OVOI concept. This signboard is kept in Nonji’s house until the project takes off. The two photos below show the secluded and non-operational longhouse at Tinangol.



Tinangol's *touristic longhouse lodge*
Above, the STPC's sponsored signboard
in the storeroom of Nonji's house. Below, hope for the future;
contractors surveying imminent development works (May 1997)



5.1.2 "Traditional" Rungus Handicraft

Bavanggazo has the handicraft shop but Tinangol has the status of being the Handicraft Centre. *Traditional Rungus Handicraft Centre* – the authorities at the Matunggong District Office bestowed the title upon Tinangol in December 1996. "If you want Rungus handicraft, go to Tinangol." "You get your money's worth when you buy handicraft from Tinangol." These are some of the comments I received from friends and tour operators about Tinangol. Thu (1977: 45), presently a Reverend at the Sabah Theological Seminary in Kota Kinabalu, writes about Tinangol in his Master's thesis:

Tinangol handicraft is very attractive to tourists thus providing a supplement to the income of the Rungus community. Handicraft production is another form of cultural life. Bamboo and rattan are the important raw material for making tools such as containers, baskets, trays and mats. Some selected hardwoods are used to make musical instruments, yokes and knife hands. The people are also skilful in making knives, ornaments such as necklaces, belts made from beads bought from shops.

Tinangol and its reputed handicraft skills appear in theses and newspapers but from my review of the tourism media, only one travel guidebook mentions Tinangol: "Kg. Tinangol, set back from the Kota Kinabalu road, boasts of three 25-family longhouses and a quaint white church. The STPC has constructed an authentic Rungus *binatang* in the village which allows visitors to spend a night in a traditional Rungus environment" (de Ledesma et.al. 1997: 453). Unlike Bavanggazo, Tinangol has no formal networking with tour operators and tour operators likewise do not have tour packages that include Tinangol. Instead, tour operators bring their clients to Tinangol upon the latter's request. When visitors arrive at the village, some of the villagers who are in the longhouses approach the visitors and entertain them. Other villagers in the meantime take their crafts and place them in the *apad* and wait for the visitors to walk by. The Tinangol villagers make similar crafts as the Bavanggazo people such as the beaded ornaments, woven products, *rinago* baskets and miniature *tontog*. There are also several women who are learning to embroider the *sigal tinohian*, the most expensive headcloth worn by the Rungus men.

Some visitors may ask the villagers to perform the Rungus dance or put on their Rungus costume so that they can take photos. Several others may ask permission to see the *ongkob* or the family's gong and brassware collection. The village's Development Committee has already planned several projects in anticipation of the increase in tourist arrivals in the long-term and has received government funding for some of these projects. Between July and September 1997, the Tinangol villagers started work on: upgrading the gravel paths in the village; levelling the football field to make way for a car park; building toilets with modern flush system and a registration hut; and organising a mutual-aid cleanliness and landscaping campaign.

The existence of the registration hut will mean the villagers will in future charge every visitor the M\$2.00 entrance fee. The Development Committee also plans to build a handicraft workshop in the village where the villagers can use the space to make their handicrafts or demonstrate their handicraft making skills to visitors. As well, there are plans to construct an arch somewhere along the road to Tinangol to welcome the visitors, and to persuade the government to supply electricity and piped water to the village.

With these tourism-related projects underway, Tinangol will soon assume a dual role – a handicraft centre and a longhouse attraction. How this will affect Bavanggazo's tourism prospects and STPC's OVOI concept remains to be seen. Some of the Tinangol villagers said there is no problem as Bavanggazo and Tinangol are separate villages and tourists can go to Tinangol or Bavanggazo for accommodation or for buying handicrafts. Nevertheless, many Tinangol villagers expressed dissatisfaction at Bavanggazo's existence. They believed that Bavanggazo's popularity has robbed Tinangol of its tourists, who used to visit Tinangol before Bavanggazo had the longhouse project. One Tinangol villager explained his fellow villagers' grievance:

Before Bavanggazo longhouse, all tourists come here. We used to have many tourists coming here every month, especially during the November-December holidays. Now, in one week, sometimes we get only 2 or 3 tourists, sometimes, none for 2-3 months. We want more tourists to come to Tinangol. Tourism is good for the villagers. They can sell their handicraft but there is no chance for this now as tourists go to Bavanggazo longhouse.

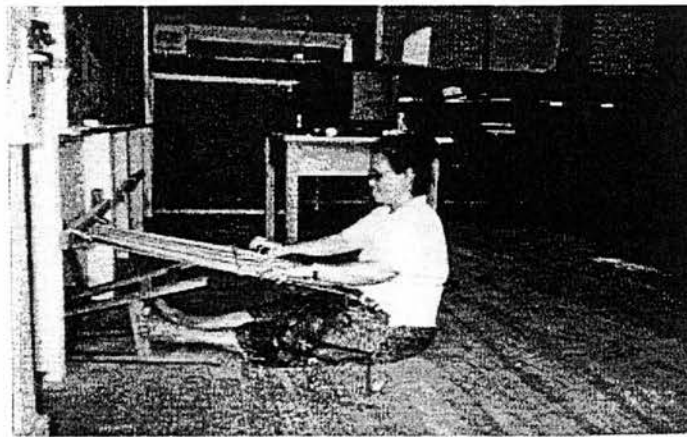
The Tinangol villagers believed that, as many visitors visited Bavanggazo, the Bavanggazo participants were earning a lot of money through their activities at Bavanggazo: the sale of handicrafts, preparation of food, room rentals, dancing, photo-taking, housekeeping and maintenance tasks. The Tinangol villagers felt somewhat “cheated,” as they had to find other ways of selling their handicrafts. One former chairperson of Tinangol’s Village Development Committee did some mental calculations on Tinangol’s losses:

Bavanggazo longhouse is making a lot of profit. If tourists go there everyday, this means everyday, money is coming in for the participants. Sometimes in one day, the tourists buy about M\$1000-2000 worth of handicraft so each participant can receive an average of M\$50 per day or week. Tourists seldom come to Tinangol now. We have lost about 70% of our visitors to Bavanggazo. Even when they come, they do not buy our handicraft. Now Tinangol people have difficulty selling handicraft as the Bavanggazo longhouse participants control the handicraft business.

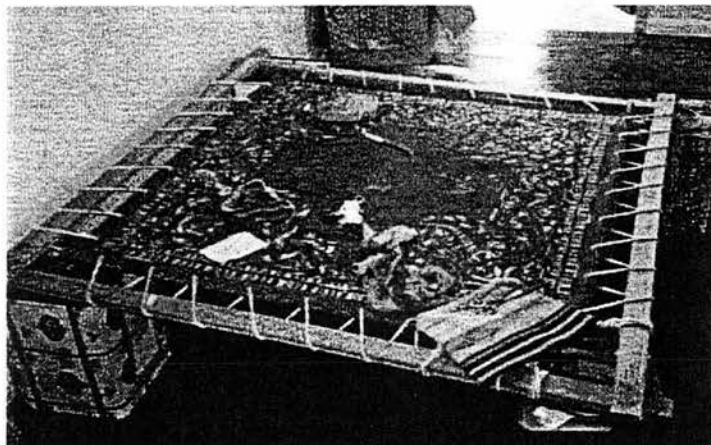
The Tinangol villagers’ discontent was not restricted to Bavanggazo’s monopoly of the tourism business. They accused the Bavanggazo participants of cutting off the water supply from the Bavanggazo River to Tinangol village and dirtying the water catchment area. In addition, the villagers said that STPC used to invite them to Kota Kinabalu or elsewhere to perform the Rungus dances but now, STPC invited the Bavanggazo participants instead. Despite these grievances and the conviction that “Bavanggazo longhouse should not be set up here because it is part of Tinangol but should be somewhere else,” as one young Tinangol woman told me, the villagers maintained that there was no conflict or antagonism between the Tinangol and Bavanggazo villagers. “We just keep our feelings in our heart,” said the former chairperson. As for the Bavanggazo villagers, they knew that their

Rungus relatives and friends at Tinangol were not too happy with them. Maran, for example, said that the Tinangol villagers were envious of Bavanggazo. He knew what the Tinangol villagers thought and said about the Bavanggazo villagers and the longhouse project. But they, the Bavanggazo participants, did not retaliate or respond, as they did not want to cause further trouble.

During my fieldwork at Gombizau and Sumangkap, apart from one woman at Sumangkap who did the *sigal* embroidery, I did not see any of the villagers stringing beads or weaving. The photos below show some of the handicraft making at Tinangol:



The Women's Skills Centre at Tinangol. Iyo, the warden-cum-course instructor, is demonstrating the *mangavol* (weaving) and below, embroidering the *sigal tinohian*



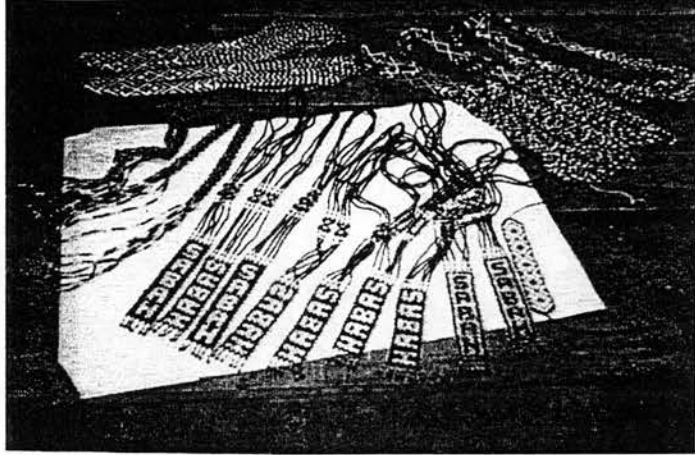


Carving miniature *tontog*, the Rungus drum from wood at the *apad-tingkang*, Tinangol longhouse



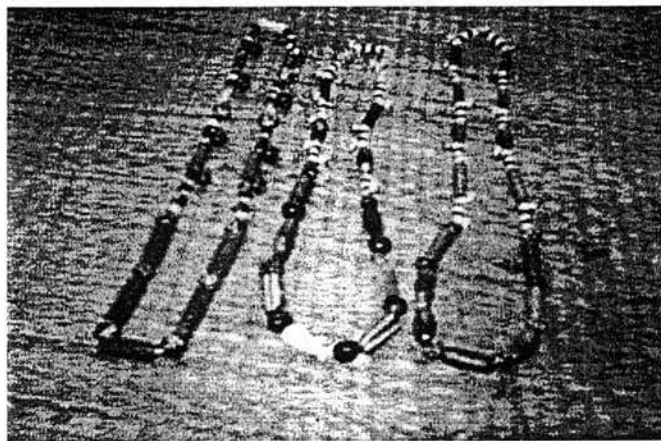
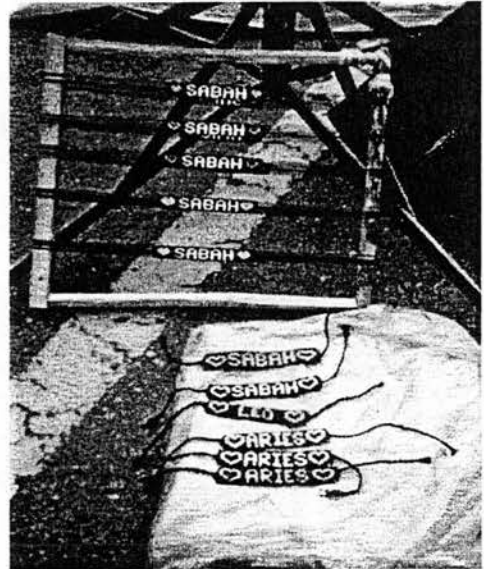
Tinangol woman stringing beads at the *apad-tingkang*. Defying gender stereotyping, Simin (below) is the only Tinangol male engaged full-time in making shell and beaded crafts. He is the "star attraction" for visitors to Tinangol





Modern and old

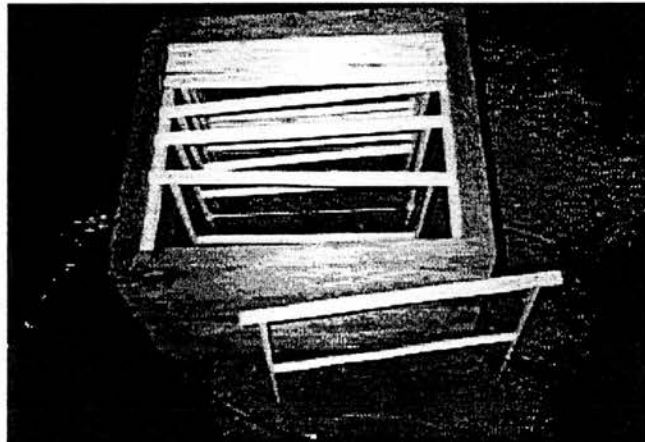
Cheaper plastic beads for necklaces and bracelets (between M\$1.00 to M\$80) with non-Rungus designs. Below is the *todkol*, the heirloom necklace worth more than M\$1000



5.1.3 Bee rearing and Honey Production

For this bee rearing and honey production, we travel to Gombizau, the only village among the four touristic villages with a bee rearing project. The project did not begin as a tourism project. The Rural Development Corporation started the bee rearing project at Gombizau in late 1992. Besides the training, loans and marketing assistance, the Corporation also donated one honeycomb presser to the village.

When STPC launched its OVOI project at Matunggong in 1996, Gombizau was one obvious choice to represent the Rungus community's lifestyle and livelihood. The beekeepers have already formed one association, *The Apis Cerana Bee Rearing Association*. When their bee rearing project became part of the Rungus tour circuit, the Gombizau villagers formed the second association, *The Apis Cerana Bee Rearing Tourism Association, Gombizau*. The Bee Rearing Association links the villagers' bee rearing interests and marketing needs to the Rural Development Corporation while the second association links their tourism interests to STPC. The STPC 1997 brochure introduces Gombizau with one sentence and a photo of a man posing with his honeycombs: "At Kg Gombizau, visitors get to see bee keeping and the process of harvesting beeswax, honey and royal jelly" (see STPC brochure in Appendix One). The photos below show a wooden hive and the bee rearers wearing the protective masks while collecting honeycombs:





Husband-and-wife team above with the protective gear,
while below, the boys brave the swarm of bees



Collecting honey the *wild* way:
a human ladder (on the left) attached
to a tall tree with a bee hive



The villagers have devised a system of entertaining visitors when they arrive at the village. The beekeepers, through their association, agreed to charge each visitor the M\$2.00 entrance fee (as at Bavanggazo). Like Tinangol, there is no prior contact or established booking system between Gombizau and tour operators. There is a registration hut near the nine-roomed longhouse where the villagers register the visitors and display their bottles of honey. Whoever is in the village when the

visitors arrive will entertain them. He or she asks the visitors if they would like to see the hives and a demonstration of honey collection. The visitation programme at Gombizau is very straightforward. The attraction is not the villagers, the longhouse, Rungus dance, costume, handicrafts or food, but the bees and honey. Since the bee hives and the honeycombs are “ever-present and ever-ready,” the villagers do not need to spend much time preparing or “setting the stage” like their touristic counterparts at Bavanggazo. They do not change into their Rungus costume, organise a garlanding ceremony, prepare honey-based food or provide accommodation. The amount of entertaining and interaction between the visitors and Gombizau villagers is very minimal and limited to the bees. While one or two of their fellow villagers entertain the visitors, the rest of the Gombizau villagers carry on with their tasks. They do not have handicrafts to sell to the visitors (like Tinangol villagers) or activities to perform for these visitors (like Bavanggazo participants). They know that their village is not the visitors’ first choice. These visitors stop at the village on their way to or from Bavanggazo.

The Gombizau villagers, like the people of Tinangol, do not depend on the visitors to buy their honey. Most of the time, the heads of households are not in their houses or village. They are out making hives or logging in the forests, finding orders or establishing contacts with prospective clients in Kudat or elsewhere. The villagers regard bee rearing as a profitable activity. With only a little capital, they can make quite a substantial profit from the sale of honey. This is how one Gombizau woman described her attitude towards the bees:

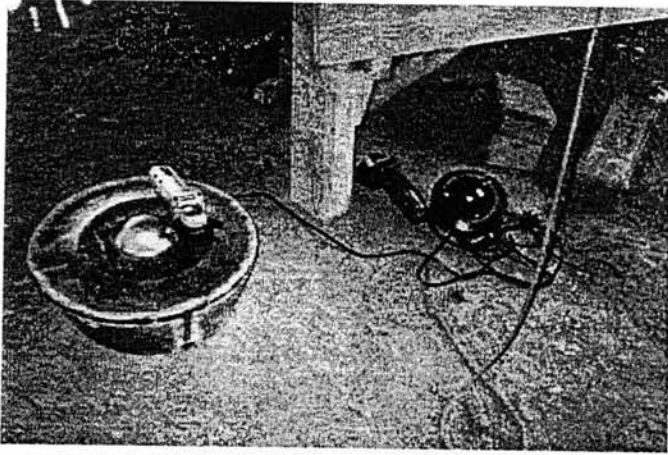
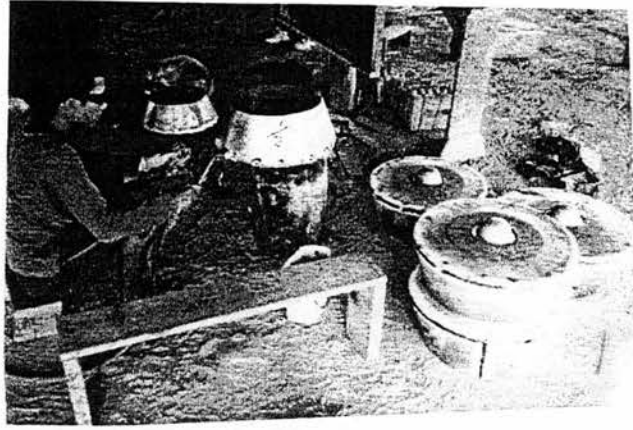
The bees give us honey while we give them nothing. So we must respect the bees. Like our parents who work so hard to give us food and a good life, the bees also work very hard to give us honey. We sell the honey and keep the money. The bees get nothing. I feel sad when the bees die. I mourn for them. You see, I don’t sell the baby bees. I give them to people who like to eat them. The bees give us their honey for free so how can we sell their babies?

5.1.4 Gong and Gong Making

From the buzzing of bees at Gombizau, we move on to the sounds of music from nearby Sumangkap, the village of gongs. The villagers called gong making, *modsupu*, the same word they used for the traditional way of making their *dangol*. Like Gombizau, the STPC 1997 brochure describes Sumangkap in one sentence, accompanied by a full-page picture of a man with *sigal* posing with his gong and hammer: “At Kg. Sumangkap, an enterprising small village, visitors can observe traditional gong-making and handicraft making by the villagers.”

When visitors come to the village, Raimi, the Chairperson of the Association of Gong Makers of Sumangkap or his representative, will entertain the visitors. He shows them the working shed, the gongs hanging in the shed and perhaps, give a demonstration. The village has a registration hut but the villagers do not charge the M\$2.00 entrance fee as the tour operators opposed this move. According to Raimi, these operators asked the villagers what they had to offer, besides the gongs, to warrant a M\$2.00 entrance fee. Raimi and his fellow villagers could not think of a convincing answer. Apart from the gongs, Sumangkap apparently has no other “attractive sights” for the visitors. Sumangkap is famous for gongs and gong making but there is no mention of Rungus music, songs and dances. Like Gombizau and Tinangol, the Sumangkap villagers do not entertain the visitors with the kinds of activities performed by the Bavanggazo participants.

Before 1996, according to Raimi, there were hardly any visitors to Sumangkap. After 1996, tourist arrivals increased due to the increasing prominence of the Bavanggazo longhouses. During the 9th PATA Conference held in Kota Kinabalu from January 12-15, 1997, there were about two coaches of tourists to Sumangkap. But not many of them bought the gongs. The Sumangkap gong makers shared the same fate as Tinangol and Gombizau. They could not depend on the visitors to buy their gongs. Sometimes, these visitors wanted to buy miniature gongs. Raimi asked his fellow villagers to make these miniature gongs but they were not keen to do so. All the villagers travel frequently to other towns, especially on their *tamu* days to sell their gongs.



Gong making using
the welding set

Top: welding

Centre: graining

Below: varnish



We have completed the full sightseeing circuit for the Rungus product – their longhouse lifestyle and livelihood. If we were tourists who visited all four villages and got acquainted with their respective “OVOI specialism,” how was our response towards the visit? Did we subscribe to the *two-ringgit* myth that we, the tourists, were living in an authentic Rungus longhouse, with the toilets and showers as the only modern amenities? Did we get a high quality tourist experience from the longhouse tour, handicraft and bee rearing demonstration and gong making? Did we feel “whole” after visiting the “traditional,” “colourful,” “friendly” Rungus and sampling some of their food and wine?

5.2 PERCEPTIONS FROM THE FIELD

5.2.1 “Traditional” Rungus Longhouse

You mean there are no people living here? So we are tourists? This is a longhouse for tourists? We don't like this. We want to be with the family – this was how one American woman visitor to Bavanggazo longhouse expressed her disappointment when she discovered that none of the Bavanggazo participants lived in the two longhouses. She was not alone in feeling disappointed over this mismatch between what was publicised and what was actualised. Many tourists were surprised to discover that the two longhouses were not “living museums” (API Tours n.d.) where they could experience the past through the present lifestyle of the Rungus. How could they “get a first-hand experience” (API Tours n.d.) of “witnessing life inside the traditional longhouse” (Borneo Eco Tours n.d.) if the longhouses were for tourists only? The tour companies were aware of the tourists’ discontentment. Tong spoke for his fellow tour operators when he said:

Tourists want to see Rungus people and how they live in the longhouse. They come to Bavanggazo not only to see the longhouse, watch the dance, listen to the gongs or buy handicraft. They also want to participate in some of the daily activities of the villagers as they want to learn more about Rungus people. These tourists could go anywhere in the world to see nature or modern lifestyle. But for Rungus lifestyle in a longhouse, they have to come to Bavanggazo. Unfortunately, the villagers are not in the longhouse or in the village when the tourists arrive. Often, the place is deserted and there is no one to entertain the visitors.

Ahmad, a tour guide-cum-coach driver from API Tours, believed that the Bavanggazo longhouse would be more attractive if the villagers lived in the longhouses. Tourists, he said, could stay in the same room with the individual owners or in separate rooms in the same longhouse or in a different longhouse. The important principle was that the villagers must live in the longhouse because this was what visitors came to see - the Rungus villagers living in a longhouse so that visitors could observe and participate in some of their everyday activities. Ahmad could not understand why STPC regarded the Bavanggazo longhouse as a homestay programme:

Why call the longhouse a homestay when the visitors do not get to live with the villagers in the longhouse as the villagers themselves do not live in the longhouse? Tourists come to Bavanggazo not to look around but also to stay with the Rungus people in a longhouse. How can the tourists learn about the Rungus lifestyle in a longhouse if no Rungus lived in the longhouse?

The existence of the Bavanggazo longhouses as tourist lodge rather than residential longhouse means that:

- the textual presentations of the longhouses, Milaad longhouse and Mosungkoi longhouse, in the tourism media were not “authentic.” The texts presented the longhouses as residential longhouses when they were merely lodges for visitors;
- both longhouses were inauthentic as “traditional” Rungus longhouses were not tourist lodges providing accommodation-with-rent to outsiders but a home providing shelter, protection and communal solidarity without rent to villagers.

The Bavanggazo longhouses as hotel-like lodges have many features that neither existed in an ordinary Rungus longhouse nor were accessible to Rungus villagers living in longhouses. These non-longhouse features include mattresses, pillows, cushion seats, plastic clothes cupboards, welcoming reception, garlanding ceremony and ushers, gong beating and cultural performances in the evenings, Bavanggazo women in costumes stringing beads and weaving, handicraft shop in the longhouse, water taps in Mosungkoi longhouse, no cooking hearths in Milaad longhouse, modern toilets and showering facilities. Indeed, some of the villagers pointed out that in the past, there was no concept of rent. There was no public transport and no money so the villagers had to walk if they wanted to go to Kudat (which the villagers said took three days) or rode the water buffalo if the destination was not too far. Along the way, the travellers could seek shelter from nearby villages and could be assured of a bed and food.

Referring to the Bavanggazo women, from my review of the travel guides and tour brochures, I noticed that women appeared more frequently than men. Women were shown doing a variety of handicrafts, dancing, enacting the animist ritual and posing in their *banat ondu*. Berger (1972: 64) has suggested that men and women have different roles and effects in visual images. Women are portrayed differently from men “not because the feminine is different from masculine, but because the ‘ideal’ spectator is always assumed to be a male and the image of the women is therefore designed to flatter him.”¹ The tourism media producers therefore regarded Rungus women as an extra-incentive or come-on to attract the male tourists who formed about two-thirds of the tourism market (cf. Chapter Three). At Bavanggazo, STPC and tour operators insisted that the womenfolk were in the longhouse during the day, and especially when tourists were due to arrive or were in the village. The women were supposed to be stringing beads, weaving the traditional cloth or making

¹ Berger (1972) wrote that men and women have different social presence. A man looks at something; as the subject of vision or the gazer, a man’s social presence assumes dominance and agency. His role as observer or gazer is imbued with the power of doing something for or to someone. A woman, on the other hand, is looked at or observed. As the object of vision, a woman’s social presence assumes a subordinate and passive position. The way she is pictured or presented depends on the producer’s perceptions with regard to the interests of the onlooker or observer. The man’s social presence is premised on what he can do to and for others but a woman’s social presence is constrained by what others can do for and to her.

rinago baskets. On some occasions, the women wore the *sukolob*, the one-piece, embroidered black *sarong* covering the chest to calf area or the *banat ondu*, the three-piece woven suit. The Rungus women have become a *touree* or performer, staging local colour through the handicraft making which is one of the major components of the Rungus tourism product.

One afternoon, I joined the Bavanggazo women at the *apad* of Milaad longhouse. They were playing their role - stringing beads, weaving, or just sitting and observing others at work in their *sukolob* or ordinary blouse and *sarong*. A group of about 25 Japanese tourists were due to arrive soon. When the visitors arrived, there was the usual welcoming reception - coconut drink, coffee and tea and savouries, and the garlanding ceremony. After the reception and ceremony, the women continued with their "work." Rungus people usually sat on the floor with both their legs stretched forwards. Several of the Japanese male tourists came to sit beside us. They tried to start a conversation in Japanese which none of the women (including me) understood. One of them came to sit beside Dorin, the woman looking after the handicraft shop. He reached out and tickled her left sole and touched her thigh. He inched closer towards her and she instantly moved away. Dorin and the other women did not say anything and I wondered what they thought of the action. I asked Ino about the incident and she said she was surprised. It was the first time, she said. That night Ino and I had dinner with Dorin and her family. I had to ask Dorin. She said she too was shocked but she thought the action was "nothing," *aso no nunu*. The story however did not end here. The next morning, Dorin was washing clothes and bathing at the tap outside her home (Dorin's house was beside Ino's house and about 50 metres from Milaad longhouse). She was wearing the *sarong* tied to her chest. Five Japanese males, including the sole-tickling man, were having a walkabout round the village. I quickly left Ino's house and climbed into the vacant house opposite Dorin's house to observe the Japanese men. When they saw Dorin by the tap, they walked towards her. Dorin stopped washing as the men took turns to pose with her and take a photo with their respective cameras. Dorin could do nothing except to stand beside the men in her wet *sarong*. The same man then pointed to her *sarong* and made some pulling gestures. She looked embarrassed and shook her head. At this point, I could not bear to see Dorin's discomfort (as I

perceived her to be uncomfortable). I climbed down the notched log and focused my camera on the Japanese men, imitating their action minutes earlier. When they saw me, they laughed self-consciously and began to walk away from Dorin. They have become the subject of another “tourist” camera, they thought.

Returning to the *banat ondu* the “models” were wearing in the STPC brochure, there was some disagreement among the villagers as to who could wear such a costume. Some said only the Rungus priestess, *bobolizan*, could wear the *banat ondu* and the complete set of ornamental jewellery. Others thought ordinary women could wear it on special occasions such as their wedding day. Here, I would like to say that there is a difference between the words “clothing” and “costume.” “Clothing” refers to the ordinary clothes the Rungus people wore in their daily lives. There is some variation in ordinary clothing between the younger and older generation. Older males normally wore loose fitting black cotton trousers with a cloth belt tied at the waist, a shirt and a headcloth, the *sigal*. Younger males wore pants or jeans with T-shirts or shirts. Older Rungus women normally wore the *sarong* and T-shirt or blouse, with their beaded necklaces. Very few women wore the brass coils on the arms (*saring tangan*). Younger Rungus women wore an assortment of clothes. Some wore jeans and a T-shirt; some wore a dress, or skirt and blouse. Very rarely did the women wear shorts. “Costume” refers to the *badu* for Rungus men, and *banat ondu* for Rungus women. API Tours (n.d.), in its day excursion and 11 days/10 nights North Borneo Panaroma packages, claims that “some of their elders are still wearing customary sarongs and eye-catching brass coils around their limbs and necks.” The villagers informed me that many Rungus women stopped wearing the *orot*, *ganggalung* and *lungaki* from the 1960s. This was mainly due to the Basel missionaries who encouraged the women not to wear these coils as part of their everyday clothing. The missionaries thought they were heavy and hindered mobility. There were still some women who continued wearing the *saring tangan*, the arm coils. Ino was one of these women.

Concerning the longhouse menu served to visitors, tourist brochures indicated that visitors had the opportunity to try Rungus food. But the actual menu for tourists was otherwise. The Bavanggazo participants did not grow their own vegetables or gather wild ferns in the forests. Maran and his wife bought the foodstuffs from the

weekly *tamu* at Sikuati and Kudat. Sometimes tour guides brought food such as fresh fish, prawn, chicken and beef and asked Maran and his wife to prepare the dishes. I asked the guides why they needed to bring the additional food. They said that not all tourists liked to eat Rungus food. Moreover, the amount of food served was often not enough for the tourists. The tour operators were also particular about cleanliness and hygiene. In mid-1997 the Bavanggazo women attended a one-week cookery lesson organised by STPC at Bavanggazo. A non-Rungus woman taught the Bavanggazo women new dishes and ways of cooking: rice porridge, steamed chicken with sesame oil, sweet sour fish, fried noodles and stir fry vegetables, among others. Maran informed me that these new dishes were Chinese-oriented as they anticipated more arrivals from Taiwan and China in particular in the near future. STPC and the tour operators were actively promoting Sabah, including the Rungus package, to the East. Chinese visitors, according to the villagers, prefer to have food they are familiar with. As of June 1997, under the new ownership, a new breakfast and dinner menu replaced the existing menu. The breakfast menu included rice porridge or noodles, fried bananas and tapioca. The dinner menu consisted of plain rice, one dish of chicken with Rungus rice wine, one dish of beef with soy sauce, three kinds of vegetable dishes and fresh fruit for dessert. This new menu was as “untraditional or non-Rungus” as the previous menu of tinned food and fried food.

In the STPC 1997 brochure, there is a picture of tourists having their meal at the Bavanggazo longhouse. I showed this picture to Tinangol villagers and asked them what the dishes were. The villagers did not think the dishes were Rungus food. If they did not serve Rungus food like boiled ferns, bamboo shoots boiled with mussels, salted or boiled fish, pickled jackfruit and plain rice wrapped in leaves, the tourists would have no opportunity to eat Rungus food, the villagers said to me.

Rungus animism is another component added to the Bavanggazo longhouse concept. The STPC 1997 brochure describes the Rungus binding with animism thus:

Regardless of their religious creed, the Rungus have maintained their cultural and traditional beliefs. This is seen with the continual acceptance and practice of traditional Rungus rites and rituals among the present generation. Today the Rungus still call upon the services of their ritual specialists, the *bobolizan*. Time, however, is taking away the sustainability of the old: in today's age of modern and hi-tech advances, the *bobolizan* is part of a vanishing breed especially as the younger generation pursues more lucrative careers.

The three pagan artefacts, *tinokin*, *bangau* and *domburan*, that the Bavanggazo participants did for the Heritage House were “only for show, not real,” the participants informed me. These participants who were all Christians, were not afraid nor did they feel uncomfortable. The artefacts had no significant meanings as there was no ceremony conducted. I asked villagers from Tinangol and Mompilis their views on the use of these artefacts as tourist exhibits. Most of them did not agree with the practice because the Bavanggazo participants were all Christians and should therefore not be doing something that was not Christian. There were Rungus people who were still animists, so even though the Bavanggazo participants did not believe or fear the *rogon*, these spirits still existed for the animist Rungus. Once the houseowner hung the *tinokin*, *bangau* and *domburan* in the house, the *rogon* would always be present and “on call.” The *rogon* would be angry if there was no food in the *tinokin*. This was how some of the village elders at Mompilis explained to me:

The *rogon* would say to the Bavanggazo participants - “you made the *tinokin*, why didn't you put the rice and pieces of pork in for me?” The participants therefore have to offer a chicken and a pig to pacify the *rogon*. Even holding the *tinokin* will invoke the presence of the *rogon*.

Porod, my foster father at Tinangol and a parish priest, said that if he were a *labus*, an animist, he would be offended. The Bavanggazo participants did not show respect to *labus* people when they made the pagan artefacts, which were sacred and potent, into tourist exhibits:

How can religious beliefs be put on show? On show means to give pleasure to the viewers. These are people's beliefs, not entertainment. The Bavanggazo villagers have taken away the spiritual significance of the Rungus religious beliefs and replaced them with the commercial interests.

Porod informed me that he had the *tinokin* and *sovion* and would show them to me to photograph. After hearing what the villagers said about the *tinokin*, I was reluctant to touch and photograph the *tinokin*. But Porod reassured me. He said that since I was not a Rungus and a *labus*, I had nothing to fear. When he laid the things out on the floor, I silently prayed to the *rogon* in my own way for permission. I did not want to antagonise the deadly *rogon*²!

The making of the Bavanggazo longhouse as a tourist lodge and the inclusion of non-Rungus or long discarded Rungus practices gave the longhouse a new meaning in its existence and function - as a place of work and business enterprise instead of a residential village and home.

While the longhouse was the main mode of dwelling for the Rungus in the past, it is not so for present-day Rungus people. Many Rungus villages, especially those in the Pitas area and around Kudat town, do not have longhouses and have been so since the 1960s or 1970s onwards. Many Rungus have never lived in a longhouse throughout their lives. Porod's wife, Hinoon, who was about 45 years old, came from a village in Matunggong that did not have a longhouse. Her family lived in a single unit house. When she married Porod in 1964 and had to live with Porod's family in one of the Tinangol longhouses, she was totally disoriented and unhappy.

² This incident reminds me of Powdermaker's (1967) account of her dilemma when one of the villagers passed away. Sitting beside the grieving relatives, Powdermaker was acting the role of a researcher, busy observing and taking notes. She suddenly became aware that the dead woman was someone she cared for too. Moreover, what would the others say? She promptly stopped writing and kept her notebook. She should be grieving like the others. But then she thought, who was she? The other villagers might not think the way she was thinking. They might think it was okay for her to write notes. After much contemplation, she took out her notebook and continued writing. Besides taking into account the Rungus' regard for the *tinokin*, my prayer to the *rogon* had some historical basis. When we were young, our mother and grandmother always reminded us to "ask for permission" from the spirits who were everywhere, when we wanted to answer a call of nature outside the house. Somehow, my mother and grandmother believed the spirits were Malay spirits so they taught us to pray in Malay: *datuk nenek, tolong tepi sikit, cucu mahu kencing* (grandfather, grandmother, please move away, your grandchild wants to urinate).

Porod then built a small bamboo and wood house on a piece of land his father gave him (now the site of their modern, concrete house completed in June 1997).

From my interviews with the Tinangol villagers, about 60% of the longhouse residents said they wished to stay in their individual houses. Some were in the process of building their own homes; others were saving up to buy the necessary building materials or waiting for an appropriate time. The former Chairperson of the Village Development and Security Committee at Tinangol estimated that about 75% of his fellow Rungus did not like to stay in the longhouse. The longhouse served its purpose when the Rungus had to depend on their fellow villagers for almost everything. With more facilities and services provided by the government, this dependence was much reduced and less crucial. In addition, the longhouse structure and number of families did not suit present-day living conditions and aspirations as indicated by some of the villagers' comments below:

It is difficult to live in the longhouse. We want to work but people come and talk. The longhouse is good because we have many friends but it is not good because we waste time. We cannot do much work. In the past, people gathered together to talk but they had specific times for this, like at night. Now, people sit together all the time to talk and gossip (a housewife-cum-handicraft maker in her mid-twenties).

If we stay in the longhouse and we work harder than others, people will talk about us. They'll say, "*nah, dialah yang duluan mahu jadi kaya*" (see, he wants to be the one to get rich first). In the longhouse, we cannot be different (a Dusun man married to a Tinangol villager).

There are too many people and children in the longhouse. It is too noisy to sleep early. If we wake up early, we disturb others. It is also difficult to teach and discipline our children. There is no table, no chair and no suitable place for the children to do study and do their homework. We teach our children to behave and they forget the next minute because they follow what their friends do (a male villager working in the government sector).

There is more freedom in a single house because people can't see what we do. People living in their own homes can do what they wish and get on with it without fear of people talking bad about them. It is also easier to maintain cleanliness if stay in single house (a housewife in her early thirties who was also the Assistant Chairperson of the Women in Development Association at Tinangol).

According to the Assistant Chairperson quoted above, the changing orientations of Rungus people towards the longhouse was a sign of "developing minds." Present-day Rungus people, she pointed out, saw the longhouse as a hindrance to progress and since they wanted to improve their living conditions, the first step was to move out of the longhouse. All the villagers I met during the course of my fieldwork believed that the Rungus longhouse would one day become extinct. "In fifteen years' time," said one of the male villagers in Tinangol, "we may not find a Rungus longhouse at Matunggong." The only Rungus longhouses that would exist then were the ones like Bavanggazo longhouse – built as tourist attractions and for tourist accommodation. Tourism, according to the Rungus villagers, would help preserve the Rungus longhouse. Hence, the Tinangol villagers, even though they regarded Bavanggazo longhouse with some hostility, thought that such model longhouses helped to preserve Rungus culture and longhouse lifestyle for the future generations. It is not surprising therefore to read articles in newspapers and travel media imploring potential holidaymakers to visit the Rungus longhouses at Kudat before they completely disappeared. One Malaysian travel writer portrayed the imminent demise of the Rungus longhouse well:

Vanishing longhouses ... happy is the man who has seen an authentic longhouse. The reason is simple: longhouses are difficult to find nowadays. There are life-sized model longhouses at the Kadazan-Dusun Cultural Centre, Penampang and at the Sabah Museum, but culture cannot be improvised. In the end, it's the authentic heritage that counts. Malaysia's expressed tourism policy is to turn this country into a cultural destination but see how the longhouses have been disappearing from the face of Sabah. The Kudat district is supposed to have about 574 longhouses according to the 1980 population census but many are modernised versions with zinc roofs few visitors like (*Sabah Times* 24 June 1991: 11).

5.2.2 “Traditional” Rungus Handicraft

Tourists, come here, come buy my beads - necklace, bracelet, brooch, one Tinangol villager called out to the tourists. These beaded products and woven materials are the main attraction at Tinangol and also at Bavanggazo. Gombizau and Sumangkap villagers do not engage in active production of handicraft, especially beadmaking, basket making and weaving.

In the past and to a lesser extent, at the present time, the Rungus women used rare and expensive multi-coloured stones bought from travelling traders or at the native markets to make their heritage necklaces, the *todkol*. The *todkol* was and still is a much-valued possession among the womenfolk. It functioned as part of the Rungus mothers’ legacy to their daughters upon marriage. Presently, the women used plastic beads they bought from shops, plant seeds (mainly saga seeds, *tigi* and *sinangkil* seeds collected from the forests) and seashells (collected from the beach or bought from the native market). The women villagers informed me that the beaded and shell products are more popular with the non-Rungus people. Besides the “traditional” Rungus necklaces, the women now make bracelets, hairbands, car decorations, pencil boxes, brooches, key chains, wristwatch bands, carrier bags or what the visitors wished to order. In addition to the “traditional” designs like the human and geometric motifs that “usually tell of old fables and legends” (STPC 1997 brochure), the craftmakers have also included new designs in the form of words such as names of constellations and horoscope signs, tourists’ names, birthday messages and welcome greetings. The customers give their designs to the villagers who will use these designs as their “plan” – the word commonly used by the villagers. Even though they have not made the designs before, these villagers study the designs and develop an understanding of the pattern involved. Through handicraft production, the predominantly illiterate women learn to read and write, if only through the process of transferring the words from paper to craft.

As for woven products, the women make sashes (*inavol*) and the traditional Rungus costume for women (*banat ondu*) and men (*badu*). In the past, the people used home-grown cotton to make the cotton threads for weaving. By the time of my

fieldwork (until end of September 1997), they did not grow the cotton but bought the threads from the retail shops. Like the beaded products, the weavers have also included new vocabulary and designs.

I asked the Bavanggazo and Tinangol villagers their views on handicraft authenticity. Did they claim to produce “authentic” Rungus handicrafts? “How do we know what is or is not authentic when we do not know their origin and their history?” they redirected the question at me. If by “authentic” I mean handicrafts the Rungus themselves create and use, they can think of few crafts that are “authentic.” For example, the *tingol* necklaces made from plant seeds and small plastic beads worn by women; *pinakol*, the beaded necklaces worn by men and women across the chest; the *rinago*, the baskets made from rattan and creeper plants.

Almost all the young married women at Tinangol engage in beadmaking, weaving sashes and making *rinago*. I asked these young housewives what an average day is to them. Their general day routine includes preparing breakfast for their husband and school-going children, washing crockery used for dinner the day before, washing clothes, finding food at the fields or forest or buying it at the *tamu*, looking after their young children, cooking, talking with friends and relatives, making handicraft and taking an afternoon nap if possible. These young housewives in their twenties are not used to working in the fields and would not like to work on the fields. They welcome the opportunity to do paid work and the idea of having a handicraft factory in the village. The average level of education attained among these housewives was Form Two (secondary level when one is 14 years old). One of them described the young housewives’ lives in the village:

It is a boring life, staying in the house all the time, taking care of the children and doing housework. It is worse if there is nothing to do in the house and we just sit around, talking. But working in the field is also tough. It is better to do the beads or weave. Doing the beads is filling in the time. If we are lazy or tired, we can rest, go to sleep or have a chat with friends.

Handicraft making, even if it is not economically supported by the village-based tourism, serves as an outlet for these young married housewives to engage in some alternative work besides the daily housekeeping. Some gender critics may

argue that the Rungus women's involvement in handicraft production in the village reinforces their "domestication" in the private sphere. Instead of being out there in the fields working alongside their husbands or engaging in other kinds of productive work outside the home or village, the women are staying at home to string beads and do their weaving (possibly for the benefit of visitors in case they arrive at the village). Bavanggazo women have their longhouse tasks; Tinangol women, their handicraft production; Gombizau and Sumangkap women, their bee rearing (where they are involved in the whole production process), broom making (as in the bee rearing) and gong making (help to apply varnish to the newly made gongs). I do not agree with the domestication argument but I will support the relevance of the triple role model (Moser 1993: 27-28) for these village women: *reproductive work*, the childbearing and rearing responsibilities required to guarantee the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force; *productive work*, which refers to work done for payment in cash or kind. For the Rungus women, this includes agricultural work (maize and vegetable growing, small-scale farming projects such as growing groundnuts, water melons and ginger; and non-agricultural work such as handicraft making, retail trading and food production; and *community managing work* and the provision of items of collective consumption. For the Rungus women, this involves church-based activities and the preparation of food during festivals or large gatherings.

At Tinangol, Gombizau and Sumangkap, the women were not tied to a programmed tour package like the Bavanggazo women. Hence, they were free to do what they wanted and go where they wanted to go. The Bavanggazo women, however, needed to stay in the longhouse to wait and entertain visitors. Sometimes, visitors arrived unannounced, only to find there was no one around to receive them. The Bavanggazo women who were permanent residents at Bavanggazo expressed their tension at having to stay behind and heed the STPC's and tour operators' instructions. Dorin, for example, preferred to stay in her own house stringing beads (where she could carry on working without interruptions). Ino, ever versatile, had a list of work to do: tending to her paddy field, clearing more land for her vegetable garden, gathering wild jackfruit or mangoes to make *sinamu* (pickled food) and

stringing beads. Whether it is tourism-related or not, the women in the villages have as much, if not more, work than the men.

I met several non-Rungus people married to Rungus women or men during my fieldwork. They told me that from their observations, the Rungus women were better than the men. The women spent their time working and looking after the family while the men preferred to sit with their friends and drink. From my fieldwork experience, I believe there is some truth in this. Many of the women I talked with were constantly thinking of what they could do to improve their economic well being.

In her detailed analysis of the position of women in gender division of labour, Boserup (1989: 2 & 211) shows how the contributions of women in productive work have been largely ignored or unacknowledged. Consequently, Boserup argues, women become an invisible entity in development planning and policies. Development planners assume a “gender neutral” perspective, disregarding the presence and the needs of women engaging in productive work. I asked the Rungus women about their access to government-sponsored projects. Their response was positive. There were several ongoing individual or group-based projects under the rural development program launched by the state government and statutory agencies such as the Sabah Foundation and the Rural Enterprises Department. At Tinangol, for example, a group of four women have obtained some funding from the Rural Enterprises Department to continue their banana and tapioca fritter cottage industry. Another two groups of five women each were participating in a small retail business under a loan scheme offered by the state government.

5.2.3 Bee Rearing and Honey Production

“What is so interesting about bee-rearing and honey?” Tong the tour operator asked me when I inquired about bringing tourists to Gombizau and Sumangkap. The thousands of honey bees swarming in and around their human-made beehives at Gombizau, the bee-rearing village, are not interesting enough to warrant a visit. This is a strange question coming from a tour operator but not too strange if we view it in terms of the underlying themes of Rungus tourism. Moving from the proclaimed

“traditional” Rungus longhouse and handicraft, the Gombizau bee-rearing activity seems a remote complement to the Rungus product offered to tourists.

Visitors do not want to visit a Rungus village that promotes a non-Rungus product as this takes away the novelty of visiting Sabah’s “most traditional ethnic group.” This is basically the dilemma of the Gombizau villagers. They informed me that their village did not receive as many visitors as Bavanggazo and Tinangol (as they perceived). There is some truth in this grievance as I did not see any visitors during the two weeks I was there except for two Sabahan visitors who “happened to see the signboard by the roadside,” the male visitor told me. This male visitor was the State Assemblyman for Banggi Island, located some 40km from the coast of Kudat town. He travelled frequently from Kota Kinabalu, the capital, to return to Kudat, his hometown and yet he did not know of Gombizau and its reputation as the bee-rearing village. When such a prominent state politician could be unaware of Gombizau as a tourist attraction, what more could be said for the ordinary public? Tong explained the outsiders’ lack of interest towards Gombizau well:

Other places have bees and other people also rear bees, collect honey and sell them. What is so interesting and unique about bee rearing and collecting honey at Gombizau? Why travel all the way here to see something that is not Rungus and not unique and which won’t help us to learn anything about Rungus culture?

If we define “authentic” as originating from Rungus people, we can say that the honeybee rearing project at Gombizau is “inauthentic” because bee-rearing using human-made hives, smoking equipment and processing honey with honey machine presser is not an original and indigenous Rungus livelihood. It is not part of the Rungus longhouse and Rungus villagers’ lifestyle. It is an activity introduced by the Rural Development Authority to capitalise on the availability of resources at Gombizau – the bees, the villagers’ interest to collect wild beehives and honey from the forests, and their interest in making bee rearing into a commercial activity. The “Rungus way” does not involve rearing bees in human-made hives. The Rungus look for trees and bushes with wild hives. Then taking a long bamboo or wooden pole, they burn one end of the pole and “smoke” the beehive with the burned end. After

most of the bees have flown away, the villagers climb the tree and retrieve the hive or honeycomb.

Porod, of Tinangol, said that past Rungus generations were very brave. They only needed to have a long pole, courage and thick skin (to withstand the stings). Present generation Rungus, however, are less brave and less able to tolerate pain. When they clear the land for their paddy field, for example, they bring along “Ridsect,” the insect repellent, to spray the ubiquitous swarms of bees lurking among the trees. I, too, was afraid of the bees when I joined the mutual-aid clearing activities. When I saw the villagers bringing the insect repellent, I was both amused and relieved that we had “protection” from the bees. The Rungus have created a typology of the different types of bees, from very mild to deadly species. The mild ones can be swatted at but it is better to keep a distance from the deadly ones. Perhaps, the Rungus need to know the different species so that when someone is stung, they can identify the bees and deal with the sting accordingly³.

This “imported livelihood” does not go down well with the “culture tourists” who want to see and learn about “authentic” and “traditional” Rungus lifestyle and livelihood. Furthermore, the commercial aspect of bee rearing is somehow more conspicuous or visible compared to the longhouses and handicrafts. Although both the longhouse lodges and handicraft making are also commercial activities, they still imply a use-value: the longhouses are homes to the villagers (at least, as presented by the tourism media) and the villagers use the handicrafts too. The Gombizau villagers rear the bees, collect their honey and sell the honey without using or consuming the honey themselves. In addition, how does looking at bees and their honeycombs help the visitors to feel “whole” and contribute to an “authentic” tourist experience?

³ The villagers told me that there were several cases of people stung to death by just one *surung*, the hornet. But during my fieldwork, Martin, a young farmer in his twenties, was stung by 20 *surung* while clearing the trees. We were all in awe of Martin as he showed no sign of pain and discomfort. I was stung once on the cheek by a *potisukan*, the second least mild in the hierarchy and the swelling pain was unbearable for several days.

5.2.4 Gong Making and Gongs

Sumangkap encounters a similar fate to Gombizau's. The tourism authorities and their media give lesser attention to gong making and bee rearing than to the longhouses and handicraft. The origin of gongs and gong making is not known but the tourism authorities promote gong making as part of Rungus lifestyle and livelihood as gongs are a significant feature of Rungus culture.

In terms of tour operators' preference, Bavanggazo ranks first, followed by Tinangol, Sumangkap and Gombizau. Tong explained why this was so:

The other three villages are only stopover villages. We will bring the tourists there if we have time or the tourists themselves request it. Most times, the tourists wanted to visit the longhouses at Bavanggazo. Bee keeping is not unique or traditionally Rungus. The gong making at Sumangkap is also the same, nothing special. At Tinangol, the longhouses are modern and tourists can get the same handicraft at Bavanggazo.

Both Gombizau and Sumangkap therefore share a similar experience in terms of their products' attractiveness to the tourism market. Seen in the context of the tourists' search for the authentic, this lack of tourist interest for Gombizau and Sumangkap is understandable. None of the literary writings on the Rungus mentions bee rearing or gong making as a means of livelihood for the Rungus community. There are bees and gongs in the West and East where the visitors come from hence, bee rearing and gong making do not fit in the tourists' minds as "primitive" and "unique."

I showed the STPC 1997 brochure to the Bavanggazo and Tinangol villagers and asked them if the contents (I had to translate and explain as the brochure was in English⁴) and pictures represented the Rungus lifestyle and livelihood. Many of them said that the brochure did not show the "real" Rungus way of life. Handicraft making, wearing the Rungus costume, dancing and gongs, sleeping on mattresses, sitting on cushions, flush toilets and showers – all these were not Rungus lifestyle

⁴ I did not see any Malay version of the brochure at the STPC headquarters in Kota Kinabalu but there were translations in German and Japanese.

and livelihood. Moreover, the villagers pointed out that these features implied that the Rungus people did not work but were always dancing, enjoying and having fun: “how can the Rungus survive if they do this and wear these costumes all the time?” I asked them what they thought should be included in the brochure. The villagers said the most important item was farming, which included paddy planting, maize and vegetable growing, catching fish, shrimps and crabs in rivers or fishing in the sea, looking for food or hunting in the forests and making handicrafts. Life as paddy farmers in the village was difficult, the villagers said. They have to be hardworking as all depended on their own efforts. Ino explained the Rungus life in the village this way:

If we do not grow paddy, we do not have rice to eat. If we do not plant vegetables, we do not have food. If we do not make pickled vegetables, we will not have food when we have nothing else to eat. If we do not weed the paddy field, the paddy will not grow well. If we do not work, we have no food. We have no paid work, so we have no money. And if we do not plant and take care of our crops, we will not have anything to eat. Village life is difficult, as we have to do everything. If not, we have to ask people, and this is not good.

The Tinangol villagers in particular, said the STPC brochure and the activities at the Bavanggazo longhouses did not give a true representation of Rungus life in the village. Some of the villagers even said that the longhouses were not “traditional,” that is, the structure and measurements did not follow the specifications of the “traditional” Rungus longhouse.

5.3 Concluding Remarks

The discussion indicates the incongruities between the publicised and actual representations on the one hand and the realities of the Rungus lifestyle and livelihood on the other. These incongruities or contradictions exist because of the need to tailor the Rungus product to the expectations and consumption needs of the tourism market. I view this action as a myth-making endeavour that maintains and sustains the continuing interest of tourists towards the Rungus people.

Hutnyk (1996: 101) uses the term “counterfeit and sanitised history” to refer to the travel guides’ selective and purposeful descriptions of Calcutta to suit the preconceptions and expectations of the prospective tourism market. Similarly, the tourism authorities responsible for promoting Rungus tourism displayed conscious efforts to select particular features in the Rungus history and contemporary living conditions that suited their tourism motives. These selective presentations not only rob the Rungus of their historical past and contemporary realities but also their individual identities. Wheat, in her article “*When a Holiday is a Way of Life*” (*The Independent on Sunday* [UK] March 2, 1998), describes this myth-making phenomenon well when she writes about the tendency of tour operators and tourism boards to “crop culture to fit our ideals.” These tourism authorities package culture in “easily viewable or purchasable forms,” resulting in the host people “selling their souls to tourists. Most travellers get a distorted picture of the local scene. Tour operators sell dreams to tourists because tourists are dreaming” (Wheat 1998). Wheat’s point correlates with Uzzell’s observation that tour advertisements encourage the tourists to create their own meanings and cultivate fantasies about the destinations beyond the observable attributes and facts.

This tourism market, however, is not homogeneous. Its diversity in terms of types of tourist motivations, demographic profile, country of origin etc. poses a major problem for the host or the product producers. There cannot be one standard product for this wide range of tourists coming to the destination with different expectations and fantasies. Yet, this is what the Rungus tourism product under the OVOI concept offers to tourists. To produce one standard product for a heterogeneous market is like making a round mould to fit an assortment of shapes and sizes. The Rungus represent this round mould, trying to satisfy the diverse state, business and consumer interests. This is what happened to the four components selected to represent the Rungus lifestyle and livelihood. New and foreign elements that suit the market needs are incorporated and claimed to be a part of “traditional” Rungus lifestyle such as garlanding, new handicraft designs with names of horoscopes, and bee rearing. At the same time, existing features and activities that are not compatible with the needs of the market or inconvenient to be staged (for

example, planting activities, the Rungus view of the cosmos, ethnobotany, animist beliefs and practices) are excluded.

We will see in Chapter Six how these incongruities have an impact on the claims of authenticity and the development aspirations of the Rungus villagers.

CHAPTER SIX

ISSUES OF RUNGUS TOURISM

6.1 THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL : PRODUCT DILEMMA

I didn't know people still live like this, a hundred years backward, Katy, a German visiting Bavanggazo longhouse, said to me. Katy's statement strikes the essence of the Rungus dilemma in ethnic tourism. To ensure success in the tourism business, the Rungus product has to meet the expectations and needs of the consumers, the tourists. In the Rungus case, the tourists expect to see the Rungus villagers' lifestyle and livelihood as different from the tourists' own lifestyle. This "difference" does not refer to the different customs or ways of doing things between the tourists and Rungus. For the Rungus, it means living a lifestyle under conditions that indicate a continuation from the past. Tourists hope to visit an unchanged, unmodern, unsophisticated Rungus community as this implies that the Rungus are still primitive and undeveloped. One American tourist I met at Bavanggazo explained why he came to Bavanggazo:

I can use the money to buy a house or car. But I want to travel and see how other people live. The world is getting smaller. It is coming nearer towards nature and people. In time to come, it will be difficult to find nature and people untouched by modernisation. We will have to go deeper into the jungle to do this.

Travel writers and tour companies have participated in spinning a discourse that reinforce tourists' preconceptions and expectations. As King (1992: 5) asserts:

Any perspective which assumes that there is something authentically 'traditional', untouched by the outside world and therefore can be and should be preserved by promoting alternative kinds of appropriate tourism is mistaken. Malaysian populations, however remote, have been brought into relationship with wider economic, political and cultural systems before, during and after the European colonial period.

Gewertz and Errington's (1991: 1) account of the Chambri community of Sepik, Papua New Guinea and its participation in the tourism sector gave me some insight into the complexities and ironies that small scale, peripheral societies share in their efforts to use tourism as a tool for development. Like the Rungus, the Chambris and their tour operators used the Chambri culture as a resource to transform the Chambris into a tourist attraction. The Chambris regarded tourism as a principal source of income and an avenue for development. The road to development, however, was not without difficulties and constraints. This was so because the Chambri and tourists met in a world system filled with incommensurate differences:

It was a world system in which the Chambri were of value primarily because they lacked development. The tourists and Chambri had largely contradictory objectives. Tourists were drawn to the Chambri primarily to see those less developed whereas the Chambri sought to attract tourists so that they could become more developed. To the extent that the Chambri were successful in developing, they would endanger the basis of their development: the Chambri would remain of special interest to tourists only as long as they remained "primitive and unchanged."

What the tourists valued in their encounter with the Chambri and other Papua New Guineans was not their sophistication but their primitiveness. Many of the tourists who visited the Chambris were prosperous middle-aged professional American men and women who came on packaged tours that promised a tour of the primitive. They viewed the primitive Chambri as an increasingly rare prize to be witnessed and captured before it was too late. Expecting to see the 'primitive' Chambris just on the edge of change, these tourists thought that they had come to Sepik just in time, before too much change had taken place. Gewertz and Errington wrote of the prior warning they received from an experienced guide on the Melanesian Explorer. The guide cautioned the authors that in their lectures (in exchange for board and room) to the tourists, they should be careful not to over-emphasise the extent to which change had already taken place among the Chambris. They should not, for example, inform the tourists interested in black magic that old Chambri men had begun to tape record their magical spells so that these spells would not be forgotten when they died. Tourists, the guide said, did not mind a little change

but would hate to know that the natives were sophisticated enough to tape their own chants (1991: 39).

My supervisor introduced the word “aspic” to liken the touristic presentations of the Rungus with the process of preserving food in aspic. “Quail in aspic” are frequently mentioned in older literature (Beaton 1962) and while the Rungus and the quail are undoubtedly different entities, nevertheless, it is thought provoking to think of Rungus tourism as a case of “preserving the Rungus in aspic.” Smith, writing in the Preface of Hose’s book (1926: vii) seemed to do this with the Punans of Sarawak: “In Borneo, some of the most interesting and significant of the earlier phases have been crystallised and fixed for us to study at the present day.” Hose (1926) did the same when he referred to the indigenous communities of Sarawak as the *natural man*.

I met some of the tour companies who frequently brought tourists to Bavanggazo longhouse. The Rungus community, they noted, had an “authentic” culture. The people lead a simple, down to earth and undemanding way of life. Tourists, especially the special interest and culture tourists, like to visit communities like the Rungus. It makes them feel good. The idea of pre-modern, stress-free communities co-existing with modern and advanced societies appeals to tourists from modern societies. Tang of Borneo Endeavour informed me that “most of the tourists live in high stress societies, hence leaving this stressful situation at least temporarily for a simple community will assist them in reducing the level of stress.” These tour operators maintained that their Rungus packages are people-oriented, which aim to bring tourists and Rungus closer so that each party could learn something from the other.

The Bavanggazo longhouses, Tinangol handicrafts, Gombizau beekeeping and Sumangkap gong making are designed for tourists interested in Rungus’ ethnic and cultural tourism. Their attraction rests not in their form (*signifier*) such as the types and designs of handicraft products or the shapes of gongs, but in their latent or symbolic meanings (*signified*) and what these meanings mean to the tourists’ self images and interests. A “traditional” longhouse, with the emphasis on the long roof without walls, reinforces the idea of the Rungus as a community of people who live

together in harmony, solidarity and co-operation. The tourism authorities use the longhouse as the equivalent of the sociologists' idea of a pre-modern, pre-industrial human community or *gemeinschaft*. The tourists, coming from a modern, industrial society, or *gesellschaft*, look for *gemeinschaft*-like communities for a taste of the past where life is purportedly simple, uncomplicated and unstressed. Hand-made crafts, made in the longhouse by Rungus women and men, without the use of machines or modern materials, complement the longhouse idea of the Rungus as non-technological, skilled craftspeople who depend on their own skill, labour and nature for the production and reproduction of tools and artefacts. The potential visitor in search of *gemeinschaft*-like human community responds positively towards the implicit meanings (signified) encoded in the Bavanggazo longhouse and Tinangol handicraft, and to a lesser extent, the bee keeping and gong making at Gombizau and Sumangkap.

The Sabah-based tour companies act as “sources of high street information and knowledge,” following Urry’s conceptualisation. Besides their printed brochures, postcards and leaflets, these companies have created websites featuring their tourism packages and products. The Rungus people have become part of their cyber-promotional efforts to reach the virtual tourism market. With a click of the mouse, the Rungus grace the computer screens of many prospective holidaymakers. Whether in print or on screen, the images that emerge from the texts do not deviate far from the dominant historical images outlined in Chapter Two. Below is a summary of the images of the Rungus people as presented in the media:

- rural peasants living in the countryside who “still live in longhouse surrounded by coconut palm grove, rice fields and banana plantations (Reger et.al. 1998: 191) and tourists can therefore .. wake up to the call of roosters and tranquillity of the village” (Borneo Eco Tours n.d.);
- timeless, unchanging and isolated community because they “still live in their distinctive communal longhouse” (Sheehan & Hutton 1998: 208), “practised since ancient times” (Exotic Borneo Holidays n.d.). Tourists have “excellent photo opportunities as many ladies still wear the traditional chest-to-calf black sarongs and other native ornaments” (Kota Kinabalu Tours n.d.).

- people with an easy-going attitude towards life and work where visitors are “treated for a feast of local delicacies while the Rungus perform spectacular cultural dances and music” (Home Away From Home n.d.) and the opportunity “at night, exchange some toasts and stories with the longhouse folks” (API Tours n.d.)
- people as unspoilt as the natural environment where “here in the Kudat forest, visitors can feel the fresh air and enjoy the green sight” (Home Away From Home n.d.) and “visit nearby unspoilt coral beaches for an afternoon swim” (Borneo Eco Tours n.d.)

Adjectives such as “unique, traditional, simple, museum, ancient, communal, unspoilt, fresh and green” reassure the tourists of the authenticity of the Rungus package. O’Connor (1993: 71) gives a similar account of the tourism scenario in Ireland. The Irish tourism media produces romantic images of the Irish people as stress-free and easy-going people, with relaxed attitudes towards work and time. These images appeal to tourists because “they come from a world which is extremely individualistic, fragmented and anonymous. They live in a society characterised by highly specified and discontinuing relationships with other people. Hence simple people who live their lives in traditional ways far from the hurly burly of the city are sought out as an essential part of the tourist experience.”

Tong, the one and only Advisor of the Bavanggazo longhouse project, categorises modern-day tourists into pure ecotourists, moderate ecotourists and mass tourists. The *pure ecotourists*, like anthropologists¹, seek cultures that are still unexposed to modern influences. They attempt to get to know and learn about the host community through living, eating, sleeping with the people in their “natural, ordinary, familiar” environment and participating in their daily activities. The *moderate ecotourists*, like the pure ecotourists, seek to visit communities whose way of life is different from their own. “Different” means “backward” and “undeveloped” hence less advanced, less civilised than the visitors’ way of life. The pure and moderate ecotourists have the same preference for backward communities. The moderate ecotourists, however, do not share the pure ecotourists’ passion of living

¹ Tong regards anthropologists as pure ecotourists who do not want to see change among the local communities: “anthropologists are like God, telling tourists they should not visit the Rungus and expose them to change. But how much have the anthropologists put into the local economy? They condemn tour operators and the government for encouraging tourism but clandestinely, they amass antiques and priceless artefacts in the name of gifts from the Rungus.”

with and like the natives. They expect certain standards that mean having several familiar facilities for their physiological and sanitation comforts at the host village. The *mass tourists*, unlike the pure and moderate ecotourists, prefer to spend less time in the host villages and more time in the city shopping, having fun in the entertainment centres or sunbathing. They do not mind if they learn about the local life or host communities from a distance. Instead of visiting “real, living villages,” these mass tourists visit theme parks and cultural villages with model ethnic houses located in museums and cultural centres. In addition, the hotel or resort where the mass tourists are staying may bring the local culture to their guests through cultural exhibitions and performances by trained professionals or representatives of the communities themselves. The following excerpt taken from a brochure of Sabandar Bay Resort, located by the coast of Tuaran, about 35km from Kota Kinabalu, demonstrates the “culture on your doorstep” theme:

“The Exotic Call of the Jungle ... A Dining Rendezvous into the Pristine Beauty of Nature.” Sabandar Bay Resort’s ‘Jungle Village’ is your escape into the primary jungles of Borneo. In the limelight of dim torches that light up the wonders of the forest, you’ll feast on an array of tantalising local cuisine with your choice of locally brewed rice and coconut wines, served in bamboo and wooden cutleries. Be a part of the magical evening being dressed up in ‘*kalong menuli*’ (headgear or flower garlands/beaded necklace) in an ambience of kampung² style where cultural music, performances and handicraft are activities weaved into your exciting night’s menu.

The tourism authorities’ emphasis on certain words indicate that they do not include change in their conceptualisation of authenticity. This is a problematic issue because there is a contradiction between conceptualisation and implementation. The former represents the tourism authorities’ use of rhetoric to attract the interest of prospective tourists. The authorities know that the Rungus product will remain of special interest to tourists only as long as it presents itself as “pre-modern” and “traditional.” How do the tourism authorities, in particular, reconcile these two contrasting characteristics of “tradition” and “change” and incorporate them into the

² Sabandar Bay Resort is launched in 1997 with the theme “Sabandar, The Great Escape, Borneo.” “Kampung” is the Malay meaning “village.”

concept “authentic” Rungus tourism product so that “traditional” does not mean “unchanging” and “change” does not make the product “inauthentic?” Tong explained the contradiction:

The objective of providing familiar facilities for tourists is to provide options so that they can make the decision themselves. At Bavanggazo, we have Rungus-made wine like rice wine, tapioca wine, corn wine, coconut wine and also foreign drinks like beer, spirits, grape wine. We can show the tourists where the Rungus do their toilet or build squat toilets. But we also need seat toilets with flush system and tap water. Many Europeans are not used to squatting and they have big stomachs... The important thing here is that the tourists know they have a choice. What is wrong with introducing new things in the village? The Rungus have to know that some of these things are for tourists, not them.

Tong’s rationalisation above implies that words such as “twin-bedded, mattress and mosquito nets,” for example, do not jeopardise the “authenticity” of the Bavanggazo longhouse. They are installed in the rooms in the longhouses for the benefit of the tourists, not as part of the longhouse representations. The changes introduced in the Rungus tourism scenario are meant for tourists’ comforts and do not form part of the “authentic” Rungus product. Moreover, according to Tong,

There is no such thing as authentic culture. There is no culture that has not been exposed to outsiders or change. If we want authentic culture, then it is better not to visit the culture. All cultures change through innovations and cross-cultural contacts. Authentic Rungus culture means a distinctive way of life that is exclusively unique to Rungus, for example, longhouse, costume, ornamental jewellery, handicraft, agricultural activities, animist beliefs³.

This means that the underlying themes listed above still apply to the Rungus tourism product – that the Rungus are unchanging, traditional people. It brings us back to the question on originality and reliability. “Change” in Rungus culture is one distinctive feature excluded from the Rungus tourism package. Could a human

culture pass through time and space without change? Opuk, the former secretary of PCS, had this to say about change:

Nobody can stay static. Everybody changes and has to change. But some people take a longer time to accept change. For example, wearing shoes. When the whites first came to Kudat, the people were afraid of them. They said the whites were *rogon*. They had no feet, no toes. The Rungus could not see the white people's feet and toes because they wore shoes. The Rungus did not wear shoes in the old days. Their 'shoes' were made of rattan and tree bark, leaving their feet and toes exposed. More often they were barefoot so their soles were tough and hard. They thought shoes spoilt the feet. Shoes made the soles soft, which was not good for the hot and unsmooth surfaces, thorns and stones.

Duggan (in Chambers 1997: 31) asserts that change does not inauthenticate the tourism product. Autonomy allows for change as long as the people decide on the components to be included and the kinds of images about themselves that they want to present to the tourism market. Duggan defines an "authentic culture" as "not one that remains unchanged which seems impossible under any conditions, but one that retains the ability to determine the appropriateness of its adaptations" (in Chambers 1997: 31). His findings on the Cherokees show that the Cherokee people benefited from tourism without sacrificing their sense of cultural integrity because they took advantage of outside mediation while maintaining traditional modes of production and decision making. In other words, the Cherokees' product was authentic not because it was traditional or unchanged but because the Cherokees themselves made the decisions and used their own culture as a resource. The Cherokee product was therefore original, reliable and autonomous, thus guaranteeing the tourists a value-for-money, pleasurable and authentic tourist experience.

Likewise, in Rungus tourism, aspects of the Rungus lifestyle that meet the expectations of the tourists are chosen, redecorated and presented on the front stage for tourists' viewing and consumption. Those that do not meet the tourists'

³ This is what Tong said when we met at his office in Kota Kinabalu in late December 1996. There was a contradiction between his statement and his company's tour package to Bavanggazo longhouse. "Overnight stay in authentic longhouse," claimed the text in the tour package. How could the longhouse be authentic if there was no such thing as "authentic" culture?

expectations or are not in line with the themes cited above are excluded from the package and relegated to the back stage. This is what MacCannell (1976) has termed as “staged authenticity.” This staged authenticity replicates “authentic” living conditions of the host people in a specially constructed tourist space (social space, as MacCannell calls it). Cohen (quoted in Selwyn 1996: 7) has also shown how the tourism establishment presents the “staged authenticity” of the hill tribes of Northern Thailand, described in the brochures as people who eat with their hands. “Eating with hands” reinforces the image of a crude, primitive way of eating as opposed to the cultured, civilised way of using fork, spoon or knife. The Thai tourism agencies, Cohen asserts, claim to offer authentic Highlander culture to tourists. They present the Highlanders as if they are primitive and remote, when in reality, the people are economically, politically and socially integrated with the Thai lowlanders. The tourists, visiting the Highlanders, think and feel contented that they are looking at authentic Highlander culture.

Price (1994: 259-264) voices a similar concern for the “politics of representation,” to borrow Hutnyk’s term (1996: 223), when she writes about the threats tourism posed on the sacred sites of indigenous communities. Unlike Graburn (1989) who views tourism as a sacred activity as it helps to restore the tourists’ sense of well-being, Price views tourism as a leisure activity involving pleasure and recreation. Sacred sites, however, are not places of pleasure, fun and recreation for tourists, neither are they for the people who use them for sacred purposes. Sacred sites are homes to the spirits who live in the area and places where the communities honour these resident spirits through annual pilgrimages, rituals and ceremonies. The communities regard these sites as places for contemplation, meditative experiences and quest visions. Price mentions two sacred sites in America, Bighorn Medicine Wheel and Medicine Mountain, located in the Big Horn Mountains of Northwest Wyoming, USA. These places have existed as sacred land sites for the indigenous people for over 10,000 years. When these two sites became tourist attractions, the indigenous people regarded the action as an affront to the spirit world. It was believed to disrupt the spiritual harmony between the dwelling spirits and the human beings. By turning the sites into touristic destinations, the tourism authorities were showing their disrespect to the sacredness of the place and to the spirits:

Herein lies the great division between the white, dominant culture and the Native Americans, for the dominant society lives with a commemorative religion, which commemorates a person, place or event in the past. Because of these cultural differences between North Americans and those who dominate planning and legislative organisations, the Elders that work with the Medicine Wheel Alliance asked many times: “How do you design plans to protect sacred places when you are dealing with people who have never held anything sacred? People who probe the earth, the sky and oceans, tread upon all the earth, touch everything and all without feeling the mother earth under them? (Price 1994: 261)

The touristic representations of the Rungus community through the one-village-one-industry tourism concept operate in a similar way to Hutnyk’s “rumour of Calcutta,” as well as being in line with Price’s account of the transformation of sacred sites into touristic sights and to MacCannell’s and Cohen’s idea of staged authenticity. The Rungus and some of their cultural characteristics have become “touristic rumours or touristic sights” designed for the consuming gaze of the tourists. The “rumours” justify the myth of the Rungus under the larger Bornean mythology as “people of the jungle” or *katak di bawah tempurung* (frogs under the coconut shell), as one of the Tinangol villagers put it.

6.1.1 Quality Tourist Experience

Applying Tong’s typology to the Rungus situation during the time of my fieldwork, there were two cases of “pure ecotourists.” They were Katy, the German woman mentioned earlier and Will, a nineteen year old youth from England who was taking a year off his entry to the university. Both stayed at Mosungkoi longhouse: Katy for a month (March-April 1997) and Will for three months (February-April 1997). Katy, aged 25, was a freelance journalist who had a Masters degree in Anthropology. She did her fieldwork in Kalimantan, the Indonesian part of Borneo. I asked her why she chose to come to Bavanggazo and stay for a month. She said her tour operator friend was one of the companies that frequently brought tourists to Bavanggazo. She had visited Bavanggazo and liked the place. Hence she decided to revisit the longhouse, only this time, the anthropologist in her persuaded her to stay longer. Katy paid M\$300 to Angka and Dorin for a month’s rent and three meals per

day. At Mosungkoi longhouse, Katy used the couple's room, so she had to pay the rent to them. While at Bavanggazo, Katy was free to accompany any of the Bavanggazo villagers on their daily tasks. She learned beadmaking, weaving, chewing the *inggaton* (although she preferred to stick to her cigarettes), and how to cook Rungus food, harvest paddy and help with the preparation for tourist arrivals. Katy said there was much to learn and do necessitating that tourists stay more than one night at Bavanggazo. Katy said from the tour program at Bavanggazo she could not see how the tourists could learn about the Rungus people and their way of life. They did not have the opportunity to mix and talk with the people either, arriving in the late afternoon and leaving early the next morning. Katy, however, did not see this limitation as a major problem since most of the visitors to Bavanggazo were "tourists," not "travellers" like her. Tourists, said Katy, did not expect to spend much time at Bavanggazo. They only came to see the place and not to live like the Rungus. For Katy, a traveller, she felt she had accomplished more than the tourists who came to Bavanggazo. In Goffman's conceptualisation, Katy had entered the "back stage" or the real-real tourist situation, in Cohen's typology (cf. Chapter One). Nevertheless, Katy remained as she was, a citizen of one of the most developed nations of the world. Should we be surprised when she said:

I enjoyed my stay here but I would not like to stay here for the rest of my life, like the people. Here, everybody does the same thing. One person starts something new and the others follow. The mind cannot think beyond the same behaviour, the same routines, the same thinking. After a while, life becomes boring and monotonous.

Bavanggazo has helped Katy, the anthropologist, to experience some "authentic" lifestyle but Katy the traveller had to move on to seek more "authentic" lifestyles.

Will, the other "pure ecotourist," was at Bavanggazo in a different capacity. He had worked at the Sukau Rainforest Lodge, Sandakan as a tourist guide from September 1996 to January 1997. Tong, the tour operator who was once the Advisor for the Bavanggazo longhouse project, owned the Sukau Lodge. He asked Will if he wanted to stay with a "traditional" community (referring to Bavanggazo villagers)

that was involved in tourism. While staying with the community, Will could do some research on the kinds of activities for the community-based tourism. Will liked the idea of staying with a “traditional” community even though Tong was not paying him any wages or allowances. Instead Will had to pay rent like Katy to the owner of the room he was staying at Mosungkoi longhouse.

While Katy followed the Bavanggazo women, Will accompanied the men and did what they did. He helped to build paddy storage huts for the harvested paddy, cleared land for a vegetable plot, brought tourists up the Guomantong Hill, collected wood from the forests, accompanied tourists to the beach, helped in the repair and maintenance work and participated in many other activities. He learned Malay and some Rungus, ate with his hands and generally behaved like he was one of the Bavanggazo villagers. Like Katy, Will attached himself to Angka’s family as Dorin cooked his meals. Amid his three months of hectic lifestyle and re-adjustment to a new way of life, Will managed to fall in love, fortunately or unfortunately, with Angka’s second daughter who was at that time waiting for her ‘O’ level results.

Katy and Will could be classified as “experiential or experimental tourists” (Cohen 1979) seeking “authentic” (real-real) tourist experience (Cohen 1979) by subjecting themselves to the “challenge,” “control” and “taking part” dimensions of a high quality tourist experience (Grahn 1991). Apart from Will and Katy, most of the visitors to Bavanggazo were “recreational tourists,” seeking rest and relaxation in the countryside or “diversionary tourists,” taking time off daily routine and work pressures to do and see something different (Cohen 1979). These recreational and diversionary tourists did not mind not learning about the Rungus culture. Just the superficial, tip of the iceberg “cultural stuff” and “ethnic quaintness” is sufficient for them. These tourists expected to see “real authenticity” and they were therefore surprised to see gas cookers, television sets and cassette recorders.

Some of the tourists informed me that they were uncertain about the limits of their visitation, that is, whether they could venture beyond the longhouse and into the individual houses they saw in the vicinity. Since nobody stayed in the longhouse, they presumed that the villagers would be staying in these individually built houses. They felt they were intruding into the private space if they walked into these houses, like they would in the Milaad and Mosungkoi longhouses. There were some tourists

who did not have such uncertainties. I was with Ino in her house when a German couple pushed open the main door and started to climb up the wooden steps. Ino hurriedly stood up. On another occasion, a Taiwanese visitor came to the house but unlike the German couple, he called out my name. Ino and I were very surprised. Maran had told Lue, the Taiwanese man, about me when he was at the longhouse and so, he came to Ino's house to look for me. In our conversation, I asked Lue about the longhouse and he said he was surprised that the longhouse was for tourists only. He had expected the villagers to live in the longhouse. The brochures had presented the Rungus as longhouse dwellers and they had also promised the visitors that they would be living with the Rungus in the longhouse. Lue, however, was not too disappointed as he found the landscape breathtaking and he could take many photos.

I also met several tourists who wanted the villagers to stay in the longhouse so that they, the visitors, could live together and see how the villagers lived their lives. The American woman quoted earlier wanted a "homestay-type" of longhouse experience.

This discussion of types of tourists in the Rungus villages is limited to Bavanggazo as it was the village that received the most visitors. I did not have much opportunity to meet visitors at the other three villages as very few visitors made their way there. Another reason was that I was not there in the village when the few visitors actually did arrive. At Bavanggazo, I knew in advance when tourists were arriving, as there were pre-bookings⁴.

A visit to an unfamiliar destination requires the tourists to put up with unfamiliar conditions. In the Rungus context, it certainly involves much unfamiliarity and unaccustomed living conditions and practices. Tourists experience some level of discomfort, for example, to sleep in a longhouse made of tree bark, wood and bamboo flooring, to be in a village without electricity and piped water or to eat Rungus food and to meet the Rungus villagers. But all these unfamiliar and

⁴ Although no tourists stayed at Gombizau, Sumangkap and Tinangol during the time of my fieldwork, the villagers informed me that there were several occasions in the past when visitors came to stay in their villages. Some of them were researchers from the Sabah State Museum; or researchers wanting to learn about medicinal plants. At Gombizau, three Dutch researchers stayed in the village for six months doing research on the Rungus and their shifting cultivation. They used Gombizau as a base and travelled to other Rungus villages at Matunggong and Kudat. I quoted their report on Rungus migration in Chapter Four (cf. van Leur et.al. 1987 in footnote 3).

unusual circumstances are supposed to enable the visitors to learn about the Rungus, to experience their “traditional” but “fast giving way to modernity” lifestyle, as stated in the tour brochures. The challenge posed to the mass tourists or “moderate ecotourists” is for them to try to live like the Rungus as much as they could manage such as sleeping on a mat, bathing in the small pool or by the gravity pipe. More significant activities would be to join the Bavanggazo villagers in their daily activities by, for example, following them to their paddy fields and learning what farmers do, think and plan while they are there. The paddy fields are not near the houses so visitors will learn that walking several kilometres through hilly terrain is second nature to the Rungus villagers. The villagers I spoke with have indicated that this exposure to the hill or dry paddy planting activities is very much lacking in the Bavanggazo longhouse experience even though it professed to represent “traditional” Rungus lifestyle and livelihood. Other examples cited by the villagers included picking edible ferns or finding bamboo shoots and tubers from the forest, looking for edible seafood in the stream or river, fishing, hunting or learning the various medicinal plants in the forests.

These “typical” Rungus subsistence activities use human labour and energy, with the help of basic tools, the foremost being the Rungus *dangol*. What is it like, for visitors accustomed to switches, plugs, machines, computers or cars, to live in an environment and participate in activities that do not include all these modern gadgets and facilities? I do not mean to generalise or stereotype the Rungus villagers when I use the word ‘typical’ above. These are the “cultural stuff,” to borrow Barth’s term, that form the substantive activities of the daily lives of the Rungus villagers and of my life too, when I was in the village. The reason is simple: if we did not find the food ourselves (such as fishing, looking for shellfish mussels, gathering ferns and edible plants in the forests), there was nobody and nowhere else we could get food from. Unless the villagers have money (for the transport fare and foodstuffs), they could not go the weekly *tamu* at Tinangol (Mondays), Tambuluran (Tuesdays), Kudat town (Wednesdays), Sumangkap (Thursdays), Rondonon (Fridays) and Matunggong (Saturdays). The retail shops in the villages (eight at Tinangol; one at Bavanggazo; two at Gombizau) do not sell perishables like vegetables or fish. Some

Rungus villagers still continue with the barter system⁵ with the traders at the *tamus*. I had the opportunity to observe Maran's mother practising her bartering skills on several occasions. Once she gave a small plastic bag of home-grown *kunyit* (tumeric) to the Bajau fishmonger who gave her eight (I counted) small fishes. Another time, she brought a small bag of sweet potatoes and tried to exchange it for fish again. She managed to get her fish after going to the third fishmonger.

Tourists will most probably be amazed to learn about the Rungus' knowledge of the constellations (*korimbutuon*) and their association with the paddy-planting season (*pangasakan*). I knew about the planting season and how the Rungus farmers watched out for the constellations in August and September while I was at Mompilis but did not give it much thought. But when I was at Tinangol, I spent most of the days in the paddy fields (from February to the end of April for harvesting and from July to September for clearing, burning and planting). I learned much about the farming activities, the animist-related rituals and customs and the association between the planting activities with the constellations. Tako did not mind spending some time in the mornings before we began our work to teach me something about the Rungus customs. Once, using the soil as his paper and a stick as his pen, he drew the *murupuru* (Seven Sisters), *rooh* (Taurus the Bull) and *valatik* (Orion the Hunter). Since it was the third week of September 1997 and Orion about to reign high in the sky, Tako went to look for some twigs, shaped them into an arrow and said this was how *valatik* looked like. I looked on in wonderment. Here was a Rungus man, without formal education, who knew about the stars, their shapes and their roles.

When I returned to Edinburgh⁶, I read up on constellations and was even more amazed at the similar knowledge displayed by human beings across time and space in response to a similar need: subsistence. Constellations, Dolan (1996) explains, are imaginary things that poets, farmers and astronomers have made up over the past 6000 years or more. The real purpose of constellations is to help us tell which stars

⁵ Tako, the farmer I spent much time with on his paddy field, related the deceptive tactics of the Rungus villagers when they practised this barter trade. When the villagers wanted to exchange with the migrant groups, like the Bajaus, Obians, Suluks, who were mostly fishmongers, they would use a large *kazakap*, a palm leaf, to wrap a little of their stuff, usually paddy, maize, sweet potatoes. The fishmonger thought there was a large amount in the *kazakap* so he/she gave a corresponding amount of fish to the villager concerned. With the Chinese traders, however, the Rungus villagers could not get away with this deception as the Chinese trader would always open the *kazakap* first.

are which. Why would people want to know about these stars? Farmers in particular invented the constellations because they needed to know when to begin planting or harvesting. Farmers living in regions with seasons know that they can plant in the spring and harvest in the fall. But in some regions, there is not much differentiation between the seasons, like in Malaysia. So farmers invented the constellations so that they knew when to start planting and when to harvest.

The Rungus planting season covers three months from mid-August to end of October. While all three months are suitable months, the third and fourth weeks of September are considered the best months, followed by early October. Usually, the Rungus villagers receive the cue to start planting from the village chief. He and several village elders will observe the sky at around 5.30am sometime before mid-August. In August, the constellation they look out for is the Seven Sisters or Pleiades, which the Rungus call *murū puru*. This constellation is an open cluster of more than 3000 stars, the brightest seven going under the name of the Pleiades or Seven Sisters. The Pleiades, according to Greek mythology, are the Seven Sisters⁷ of Atlas, the Titan who holds up the sky, and the Oceanid named Pleione. Rowan-Robinson (1990: 102-104) notes that the earliest recorded reference to the Pleiades is in the Chinese annals dated 2357BC. Hesiod, living about 1000BC, gave the Seven Sisters a strong agricultural role: "When Atlas-born, the Pleiad stars arise; Before the Sun above the dawning skies; 'Tis time to reap and when they sink below; The morn-illumined west, 'tis time to sow" (Rowan-Robinson 1990).

The Rungus farmers do not normally plant paddy in August, as the birds are still around to eat the paddy seeds, which are easily visible because the holes are not covered. Rowan-Robinson (1990) quotes Virgil who warned of "some people who, before the fall of the Pleiades, began to sow; deceived in the increase, have reaped wild oats for wheat."

In September, the constellation the Rungus look out for is Taurus the Bull, which the Rungus call *rooh* or wild pig. Taurus, or Hyades, is a V-shaped cluster of stars defining the head of the bull. The eye of the bull is a bright red-orange star

⁶ My eldest sister is a keen reader on astronomy and she sent me some notes on constellations.

⁷ The seven sisters are Alcyone, Maia, Electra, Taygeta, Celaeno, Merope and Sterope. The Great Hunter, the Orion, fell in love with them all, especially Merope who rejected him (Dolan 1996).

called the Aldebaran. Taurus was one of the earliest constellations to be recognised as early as 4000BC when it marked the Spring Equinox and its meeting with the sun marked the beginning of the agricultural year. The ancient Greeks and Romans associated Hyades with wet and stormy weather. It is interesting to note that the same association is found in ancient Chinese literature: "... the moon is caught in the Hyades, there will be great rains" (Rowan-Robinson 1990). The Rungus also associate September with rain, but not such heavy rain as to drown the paddy seeds that have just been planted. That is why September is the best month, because after planting, the Rungus farmers are almost certain that the rains will come. The Rungus farmers plant dry or hill paddy, without irrigation, hence the rains are crucial. In addition, the birds are starting to migrate elsewhere.

In October, the constellation the farmers look out for is *valatik*, or the Great Hunter, Orion. Orion is distinguishable especially through its three stars, which forms the belt across the middle of Orion. In classical times, Orion was associated with winter storms: "bringer of clouds," "he who brings peril on the seas" or "the stormy one" (Rowan-Robinson 1990). In Malaysia, the month of October signals the coming of the Northeast Monsoon from November to March, which brings heavy rains from the South China Sea and annual floods. When the farmer plants in late October, there is a high possibility the monsoon rain will drown his paddy seeds.

The younger Rungus farmers do not bother about constellations; but the older villagers still wait until they have seen the constellations when they want to begin their planting activity. This knowledge of the constellations and their association with the planting season is an example of how the Rungus can use their existing culture to allow the tourists to know about their lifestyle and livelihood, at the same time preserving, in a positive way, the Rungus knowledge of the universe. This example incorporates (i) Jenkins' (1990) assertion that development should be organic, that is, grounded and originating from the indigenous condition itself; and (ii) Grahn's (1991) model of a high quality tourist experience acquired through the nature of the physical and social environment, which provides the tourists with a sense of challenge, control and taking part. Tourists, when they learn about the constellations and their association with planting activities, will feel they have shared

or taken part in learning about a world view that is not only associated with the Rungus but with human beings who existed thousands of years ago.

There are other examples related with paddy planting (*mutagad*) that the Rungus farmers could share and demonstrate to the tourists, in particular their beliefs with regard to the paddy and rice and the rituals associated with these beliefs. These substantive features also correspond with the “think global, act local” principle underlying modern-day tourism. Tourism, the organisation of services and facilities designed to allow people to realise their tour, gives priority to global/international consumers’ needs in its product development. Unless the host destination uses the local resources to produce the product the international tourists want to consume, it would not be able to have a competitive advantage with the other host destinations. For example, the Rungus dance and beadmaking are two significant components of the Rungus product. But what is so special about Rungus dance or beadmaking? The Rungus participants and tour operators do not explain about the dance, music or beads and how each of these featured in the lives of the Rungus people. Grahn’s TIPEC model supports Smith’s (1990: 480) interpretation of the principle underlying the think global, act local concept (cf. Chapter Three). Whatever resources the tourism authorities use to produce the local tourism product, they must ensure their carrying capacity and safeguard the sustainability of these resources.

The Rungus package - longhouse, handicraft, bee rearing and gong making - does not include features and activities that stimulate the sense of challenge and control within the tourists. They may take part in the dancing, do some beadmaking, taste the rice wine and sample some Rungus food, listen to the sounds from the *turali*, nose flute, *sundatang*, wood guitar or the gongs, watch the bees and honey collection. That is about all the visitors do while in the four villages. They sleep on mattresses and pillows under mosquito nets, sit on cushions to reduce the discomfort of the bamboo flooring, enjoy western-styled toilets and showers. The “existing culture” the visitors are helping to preserve is the “local colour” that has nothing to do with Rungus’ worldview, thought processes and everyday subsistence. If these components are defined as Rungus culture, then the tourists are not getting “authentic” Rungus culture. The local colour, as a staged package, is a tamed, watered-down version of the Rungus life that will not cause much, if any, discomfort

and inconvenience to the visitors. In short, the Rungus package does not contain the three elements Grahn has suggested. It is a cultural sightseeing tour: to see the original of the represented sight in the tour media. The tourists see the Milaad longhouse featured in the media and they came to Bavanggazo to see the real Milaad longhouse. They did not come to Bavanggazo to have an experiential or experimental experience of living in a “traditional” longhouse. The Rungus can live in such a longhouse but not the tourists (cf. section below). This line of thought as expressed by the tourists and tour operators is very unfortunate considering the claim of the tourism authorities that the tourists could learn much from the Rungus people. In addition, the Rungus villagers themselves are denied the opportunity to inform the tourists on the more substantive aspects of their lifestyle and livelihood.

6.2 ONCE PRIMITIVE, FOREVER PRIMITIVE : DEVELOPMENT DILEMMA

The Rungus, “living in longhouses associated with primitive living, found only in the Kudat and Bengkoka Peninsular, and being descendants of the Austronesian stock, would qualify as a rare tribe worth visiting. A cultural adventure to see or live in one could make a stimulating study and experience” (STPC’s website: <http://www.jaring.my/Sabah/runlong.htm>).

This *stimulating cultural adventure* does not mean a total back-to-nature experience. As Tong said to me, “the tourists visiting the Rungus are not crazy like the anthropologists. These tourists are not willing to live like the Rungus as they want to enjoy their holiday with pleasure, comfort and the least anxiety.” The tourists expect the Rungus to live in primitive and non-modern conditions. At the same time, they expect to find modern facilities and familiar comforts while at the Rungus village. This is what constitutes the Rungus’ tourism development paradox that I view in the context of the myth of the undeveloped Rungus:

The Rungus will remain of special interest to tourists only as long as they remain primitive and unchanged. Success in tourism means preserving the difference and inequality between the Rungus and tourists, not improving the living conditions of the Rungus.

The Rungus, like other human beings, are self-conscious people with their individual capacities, sense of identity and self-worth and group consciousness. While their group identity gives them a sense of imagined equivalence with fellow Rungus, their self identity gives them the opportunity to think, feel and act in ways that may not conform to the cultural norms or practices of the Rungus community. How the individual view himself/herself and how others view the individual affect the nature of interaction between the two parties involved. This interaction becomes all the more significant when the parties involved give differing values to their identity and position in the interaction. The nature of interaction between tourists, tour operators and the Rungus is structured by their respective positions in relation to the tourism product. The Rungus village, villagers and culture are the tourism commodity. The tourists are the consumers of this Rungus commodity and the tour operators are the brokers or mediators who link these two parties together. Unlike other market commodities, the Rungus commodity is a talking, walking, feeling, and thinking, living human being. As long as the four tourist destinations continue to be on the tourist map, these living human beings have to live every day of their lives as tourist commodities and as ordinary people.

I remember the first few times I stayed at Mompilis village between 1991-92. I joined the villagers' enthusiasm in welcoming the tourists, sitting at the public area in the longhouse waiting for the tourists to approach us, talk with us, and buy our handicraft, while at the same time some of the villagers prepared to perform the Rungus dance. I played a "pretend game," acting as a Rungus woman, although my physical size and features must certainly have confused the tourists. After the tourists went away, we lingered to talk about the visitors and then resumed whatever work we did before the tourists arrived. I thought about the interruptions, about the way the tourists looked at us, and about their thoughts. What did they think when they saw us, listened to us, watched us? After much reflection, I began to feel uncomfortable at the way I thought the tourists might be thinking about me, as I was part of the village landscape, and about the Rungus. When the next group of tourists came, I sought refuge in one of the unoccupied single houses and observed the tourists from a distance. How could a brief visit to the Rungus village enable the tourists to learn more about the Rungus that the tourism media had not furnished

them with? In what way could a Rungus dance allow the tourists to get to know the Rungus better? How did the Mompilis villagers feel about the situation? They were enthusiastic and accommodating when tourists arrived at the village. But what about their private feelings? On my part, this Mompilis experience of being a pretender for the sake of another's consumption laid the foundation for my PhD research on tourism among the Rungus people. This time, however, I would not be the object of the tourists' gaze, or so I thought.

During the course of my PhD fieldwork, I found myself in a much more ambivalent situation than the Mompilis experience. I was a researcher trying (or pretending?) to be a native Rungus in villages where the native Rungus were trying to be commodified Rungus. Once, I was in the handicraft shop at Milaad Longhouse helping Dorin to serve the visitors. An American woman asked me about the beaded necklaces hanging by the wall. I told her those necklaces were *pinakol*, the paired necklaces the Rungus men and women wear diagonally across their chests. She said to me, in very slow tones, almost word by word, "you know, in the US, we have the Red Indians, the Indians." Then, she put her hand over her mouth and made the "typical" Red Indian sounds "wow wow wow." "The Indians, you know, have these too." I am sure the Indians have such beads (during the Edinburgh Festival last August 1999, I saw traders in front of the National Art Gallery selling Guatemalan beads that resembled the Rungus beads). But did she have to give a demonstration and speak in such slow, condescending manner?

While I grappled with my multi-dimensional identity – between being a researcher, pseudo native, tourist attraction, tourist, researched and fundamentally, the I/me - I thought about the Rungus' dual existence as ordinary human beings and as tourist attraction. How do they reconcile themselves with their public status as tourist attraction and private existence as human beings? I think this question is pertinent especially if the Rungus have no control over their public images and if these public images are equated with their private lives. "The wonderful thing about our Homepage is we are using mostly pictures and let the pictures tell you a thousand stories," Tang of Borneo Endeavour said of his company's tour packages in the Internet (personal communication through email in January 1998).

A thousand pictures to be told, but by whom and what kind of stories? William James (quoted in Fairchild 1961: 503) says that truth is not absolute but relative and instrumental: "When we see sheep huddling together, we say sheep are gregarious by nature. But we are merely defining in terms of the thing to be defined." So it is with the Rungus pictures. "Let the pictures tell you a thousand stories" means not the pictures but "you," the picture-producers and the picture-viewers. The tour company concerned, as the picture-producer, has a story in mind when it inserts a picture of a longhouse in its homepage or brochure. The prospective tourists, as the picture-viewers, interpret the story from their own perspective when they see the longhouse picture and associate it with the Rungus. Where is the Rungus voice in the tourism authorities' textual and picturesque story telling? The Rungus villagers may be enthusiastic about becoming part of the tourism product as this brings tourists and tourists mean money. But they will not want to be treated as if they are ignorant fools or humans without sensitivity or "heart," like the Tin Man in Wizard of Oz.

How then do the Rungus villagers see themselves and their fellow Rungus? If the Rungus view themselves unfavourably, how do they relate with the touristic images of themselves and the knowledge that tourists visit them in order to know and learn about the Rungus? On a similar note, Walker (quoted in Hurston 1986: 289) writes of the way White novelists portrayed the Black women in their novels. The characters of Black women usually assumed the roles of either a ham-fisted matriarch who was loyal to the White family she served and unable to protect her family without guidance from some White people, an amoral, instinctual slut or the tragic ordinary Black too coloured to enter the White world.

When tourism authorities use the longhouse in particular to project and reinforce the stereotyped images of the Rungus, they are mindful of the needs of tourists and their unfamiliarity with conditions in the longhouse. On one level, it is important to uphold the traditional features of longhouse lifestyle for the sake of tourism. On another level, it is equally important to provide the material comforts that tourists are accustomed to. Teo's (1997) paper on the Bavanggazo longhouse project illustrates the existence of these two contrasting "pre-modern" and "modern worlds." Tourists expect the Rungus villagers to live in undeveloped conditions but do not wish to subject themselves to such conditions when they stay in the Rungus

village. Teo (1997) cites the list of modifications implemented at Bavanggazo to make life more comfortable for the tourists:

To further enhance the experience of this unique product, we ensure that only oil lamps are to be used in the longhouse ... Native handicraft are to be used to decorate the longhouse. Shower heads will be raised from 4 ft to 6 ft to enable visitors to take shower without bending down ... Baggage rack, towels, pail, bucket and slippers are added to each room. To provide extra comfort for guests during dining, they have the option to use cushions while seated on the floor. All guests who stay overnight will be provided with "sarong," the Malaysian traditional wear.

Some of the tourists I met also expressed similar views. Petra, a German tour operator, said that most tourists were on short-stay holidays seeking recreation and comfort. They wanted to minimise the discomforts as much as possible. As a tourist, she said she would not like to live like the Rungus because:

I am European. I can't eat their food, sleep like them on bamboo flooring or mat, backache. I am not like them so why should I live like them? I do not expect five star services: if I had wanted this, why come all the way here? But I have to be realistic. I am not like them. Most European tourists would go for modern comfort, not a taste of real life living. Even for this kind of setting, 2 days and 1 night package, is enough. More days, it is closing on me. Too crowded.

Petra said that tourists who felt they were able to get the best of both worlds – observing the Rungus world in familiar comforts - would say with contentment: "I didn't know I would like visiting such a place but I really enjoyed it. I liked it. It was good." Tong, the Kota Kinabalu-based tour operator, echoed Petra's views. Like Petra, Tong noted that tourists are only in the country for a short while and should not be expected to adapt to the local condition immediately. For example, these foreign visitors need familiar food as their stomachs take some time to adjust to the local food. Tong pointed out that tourists' attitude towards culture tourism is something like this:

I want to see how you live, what you eat, do a little of your daily activity. But I don't want to sleep like you on the hard floor. I don't want to use your kind of toilet or do heavy manual work like you. I don't want to eat your kind of food. Don't expect me to eat what you eat.

This emphasis on maintaining the primitive image of the Rungus illustrates the irony of Rungus tourism. Present-day Rungus homes and Rungus lifestyle contain many modern features that are evidence of change. Many Rungus homes may not have western-styled toilets, showers, taps and electricity and many Rungus villagers may still subsist on paddy planting, odd jobs and little cash income. But this does not mean that the Rungus do not have modern gadgets, modern aspirations and behavioural tendencies that place them in the same category as people from the urban or industrialised areas.

Throughout my ten months' stay in the village, I observed many practices and activities that made a mockery of the touristic claims and representations of the Rungus people. Many of the villagers, for example, organised birthday parties for children and adults where the family members invited relatives and friends to the house to celebrate the occasion. The celebration began with the parish priest giving a short sermon and blessing the celebration with a quote from the Bible. The guests then sang the birthday song in Rungus or Malay. The Rungus tradition of celebrating birthdays is the ritual called *monidut-sidut*⁸, held when the child is one month old.

Another example is the marriage ceremonies. After the 1970s, the villagers have combined the Rungus marriage customs with modern features. Rungus weddings become like Western or Chinese weddings with the bride wearing the white gown (for the church service) and an evening gown for the reception later in the evening. The groom and bride are accompanied by their best man and bridesmaid respectively, confetti and wedding cake. After the church service, the couple

⁸ When the baby is one month old, the parents hold a *monginsamung* (meet the spirits and people) ceremony. This ceremony is to inform the spirits, both inside and outside the *ongkob*, that the baby is a new member of the family. For this *monginsamung* ceremony, the parents ask the *bobolizan*, the priestess, to conduct the *monidut-sidut* ritual, which involves prayers and the sacrifice of a chicken. The baby cannot be brought out of the family *ongkob* unless the parents have fulfilled the *monidut-sidut* ritual. Otherwise, the spirits may think that the baby is a stranger or enemy and will harm the baby. Present-day Christian parents have replaced the *monidut-sidut* with the parish priest's blessings during the birthday party.

changed into the Rungus costume for photograph taking. Once, at Tinangol, the groom's father insisted that the about-to-be-married couple should wear the Rungus costume for the church service and not the modern white gown and black suit. He was, however, overruled. The villagers do not see this practice of wearing the modern bridal costume as against the Rungus custom. If the families concerned could afford to rent the gown (between M\$1,000-1,500), there is no reason why they should not wear the wedding suit.

The wedding reception also contains some non-Rungus features. The bride's family organises the lunch or dinner reception for the wedding guests (which the groom's family has already accounted for in their payment of the bridewealth to the bride's family). Before my PhD fieldwork, I attended several weddings at Mompilis and elsewhere but had not encountered the practice of separating guests into "special" and "not special" guests. This is what happened at Tinangol. There are special guests that included politicians, village elders, government officials, parish priests, or people with special positions. They receive invitation cards from the family concerned. The non-special guests are the ordinary villagers who the family invites verbally. Special guests have specially prepared, non-Rungus food, with crockery and cutlery in the house or community hall. The ordinary villagers have their *linopot*, cooked white rice wrapped on leaves and boiled pork or beef soup in the makeshift sheds in the compound. The special guests bring wedding presents while most of the ordinary villagers come empty-handed. When I went to my first wedding reception at Tinangol with Hinoon, the parish priest's wife, she insisted we went into the house to have the meal. I was reluctant to do so but had no choice.

Contrary to the claims of the text writers, the Rungus lifestyle is already integrated into modern way of life. It is "not unchanged" or on the "brink of modernisation." This integration is not what the tourists want to see and is not what the tour operators want to show to the tourists either. The Rungus remain of special interest to tourists only as long as they do not display modern characteristics, as defined by the outsiders. How could the Rungus remain under tourists' expectations when the underlying rationale of tourism is for them to improve their living conditions?

The state and federal governments view tourism as an avenue for the Rungus to participate in cash-based productive activity, thereby diversifying their mainly subsistence paddy farming. Success in tourism allows the Rungus to have access to cash income, besides contributing to the state and national revenue. When the Rungus acquire cash income through tourism, they gain more purchasing power and are able to spend it on things they could not afford to have before.

The tourism authorities, on the other hand, encourage tourists to visit the Rungus as they, the Rungus, are one of the few “rare” and “primitive tribes” of Sabah and Malaysia. How can the tourism authorities maintain their touristic rhetoric when the Rungus participation in the tourism sector is basically to change their “primitive” existence?

Tourism, the source of the Rungus’ future strength and autonomy in the world, is premised on continuing inequality. There is therefore a contradiction in terms of the government’s and tour companies’ usage of tourism as a tool for Rungus development while at the same time, using tourism to negate or hide the existence of development for the Rungus community. Herein lies what Gewertz & Errington (1991: 28) call the paradox of tourism. The Chambris, according to Gewertz & Errington (1991: 57), did not regard themselves as “backward” or as “primitive,” even though the tourism media depicted their community as such. They did not think, as the tourists did, that there was a contradiction between development and keeping their culture strong, in remaining Chambri.

Unlike the Chambris, the Rungus villagers perceive themselves and their community as poor and backward. They want to improve their living conditions and be like the others in having access to basic amenities, good paying jobs and cash income. This is the typical perception of the villagers:

We are poor because we have no paid job, no money. We have pitiful lives. Before, we used paddy for everything ... Now, people have to look for work, start business, and earn money. We need to do this to send our children to school, buy foodstuffs, household equipment.

The villagers frequently asked me to advise them on how they could improve their way of life. "Why can't we progress like other people, have money, good house and a good job?" they asked me. In response, I asked them what they themselves wanted. What did they mean by "progress?" Progress, or *sumurut*, means a better life, they said. In the past, it was progress when a Rungus family had more than 30 gunnysacks of paddy, one or two buffaloes, one set of Rungus gongs, several earthen jars and brassware, ornamental jewellery and one set of Rungus traditional men's and women's costume. In present times, these possessions are not equivalent to progress. Progress now means paid work, cash savings, education for children, land with grants, a vehicle (mini lorry, van, car or motorcycle), a shop, buffaloes, modern furnishings and electrical equipment such as televisions, videos, cassette players (even though battery or generator-operated), gas cookers, heritage wares, gold jewellery and beaded ornaments.

The Rungus' perception of themselves as poor people reflects their adoption of the dominant ideology. The Malaysian authorities use monetary income to define poverty. Income, which means command over resources over time, includes both monetary and non-monetary income such as land and possessions with economic value. When monetary income is used as the sole criterion to define poverty, this means that a household will be considered poor if its monetary income is nil or below the poverty line. To acquire monetary income, the individual or household members have to engage in economic transactions in the market economy, that is, sell their labour in return for wages or sell goods in return for profits. To be excluded from the market economy means to be excluded from the possibilities of access to and acquisition of monetary income and wealth. Market is the symbol of modernity, affluence and material comforts. As Seabrook notes (quoted in the *Daily Express* [Malaysia] September 7, 1997: 12):

In a market economy, people learn to be poor. They associate themselves to the market economy and the cash and demand-based commodities. The market has therefore replaced resource poverty with monetary poverty. A life without monetary income does not mean poor and a 'bad life' if the people provide all their own needs themselves. As long as they retain control over the resources they require for their livelihood and survival, they are not poor and leading a bad life.

Human effort, creativity and self-actualisation are submerged under the pursuit of demand-led, market-based and cash-oriented interests. In this situation, the people who define themselves and are defined by others, as poor in the monetary sense will live with an abstraction far removed from living reality and context - the unending pursuit of money. The Rungus villagers frequently informed me that they could not develop or improve their economic situation without outside aid. Tako explained this dependency attitude of his fellow Rungus villagers:

Before, everything depended on our own efforts and our fellow longhouse members. We discussed (*miupakat*) and helped one another (*royong*). Although we still do this, it is different. Now, people depend on the government more. When we want something, we ask the government first. We always ask the government for help, unlike the Chinese. They ask the government for projects.

If improving the villagers' standard of living involved changing, replacing or developing the existing structures, this will certainly have an impact on the Rungus product. Rungus development will reduce or close the gap between tourists and Rungus. When the "primitive" Rungus become like the developed tourists, they lose their exoticism and unique appeal. Flannery O'Connor (1966) provides a fitting analogy in her novel, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*. When people improve their socio-economic status, they change or modify their existing tastes and needs. They aim to have the comforts they are not able to have before. This results in them becoming like the people who are already enjoying these comforts. "Everything that rises must converge," O'Connor points out. The Black woman character in her novel bought a hat that was the same colour as a White woman. But O'Connor's point, I think, is not in the colour of the hat or the fact that the Black woman displayed similar taste to the White woman. Set against the background of the White woman's patronising attitude towards the Black woman's son, O'Connor wants to show that, irrespective of skin colour, ethnic origin, gender or educational background, people who belong to the same class share similar likes and dislikes.

The Rungus villagers are not supposed to act in a similar way to O'Connor's Black character. They are "non-thinking, non-aspiring, complacent and contented with their existing lifestyle." The reality is far from the rhetoric the tourism media

would like the tourists to believe, as one American tourist at Bavanggazo pointed out: “Just by being here, with a camera, video and different clothing, we provoke the locals to think that tourists are rich and better than they are. The locals therefore want to be like us – have the same material goods and technology, wear the same clothing and have money to leave the village and travel.”

I remember one incident at Bavanggazo when the students from the International School of Bangkok were visiting the longhouses. They were surprised to see a cooking gas tank outside the kitchen at the rear of Milaad Longhouse. They approached the guide and one of them said to him, “I thought you said these people used firewood to cook.” The guide was caught off guard for a while but he quickly thought of an answer. He said, “Yes, the people here used a gas cooker to cook for the visitors because it was faster.” I do not know if the students went to the participants’ individual houses, but they would be disappointed if they did because all the participants who stayed at Bavanggazo used gas cookers with several families using the *ropuhan*, firewood hearth as well. The situation is also the same at Tinangol, Sumangkap and Gombizau. All the villagers have gas cookers; some have battery or generator-operated electrical appliances such as television, video, cassette player; some families own a car or a mini lorry, van or motorcycle.

It is not only gas cookers in Rungus homes that contradict the visitors’ expectations. On one occasion, I saw several Japanese male visitors (the same group I mentioned before with the sole tickling man in it) going up to Dorin’s and Angka’s house. One of them pointed to the family’s cassette player and television and gave a thumbs-up, whatever that meant. Both the cassette player and television were battery-operated but this was not important to the visitors. What was significant was that the visitors did not expect to see modern technology in a “primitive” Rungus home.

“When modern man sought progress,” one writer in the *Sabah Times* [Malaysia] (June 24, 1991: 12) cautions, “culture often became an easy victim, relegated to the background in the quest for development. When development is reduced to mere modernisation, the world loses its wealth of cultural diversity.” The Rungus have shown interest in diversifying their mostly subsistence-based livelihood

to include tourist and non-tourist-related business ventures. Many Rungus, especially those between 20 to 50 years old, left their villages to work in factories, workshops, supermarket, garages, restaurants in the bigger towns, whether in Sabah or Peninsular Malaysia. The village offers no hope for a better life. This is how one of the male migrants from Tinangol explained why he had to leave the village if he wanted to have a better life:

People with education can stay in the village because they can teach in the schools here or work at the government departments at Kudat and Matunggong. They can travel daily because they have income to pay the transport fares. With education, they can stay in the village, work for the government and be rich. But for those without education, like me, and still want to live in the village, they can only be a farmer. They cannot be rich if they work as a farmer.

Other villagers echoed the view of this male migrant. One man in his mid-thirties, a paddy farmer doing seasonal jobs like housebuilding, did not wish his children to be like him. This was what he said to his eleven-year old son:

Do not be a farmer like me. Go to school, study hard, because only with education can you get a job with good pay. Let my suffering end with me. It is enough for me to suffer this poverty. Let it not continue with you. I will work hard so that you will not be like me.

Another Tinangol villager, a woman in her mid-twenties, worked hard stringing beads and being a full-time housewife, while her husband, a full-time farmer, looked for odd jobs like sawing logs in the forest for other villagers. Wanting a better life for her family, she was frustrated by the lack of productive work in the village:

It is very difficult to bring up children if no paid work and no money. I need money to send my children to school and to buy food. I have to work hard and save money to educate the children. When they are older, they can get good jobs with their education and look after us. I hope my children do not follow their parents to become farmers with no money.

While modern aspirations and changing livelihoods may have eroded Rungus “culture,” the selling of Rungus ethnic and cultural tourism may prevent the loss of the “world’s cultural diversity” and in particular, “Rungus culture.” Without tourism, the Rungus culture and “traditional” lifestyle will disappear, the villagers told me. This touristic emphasis on ethnic and culture tourism may also affect the Rungus’ access to government funding and development projects. I had the opportunity to listen to several speeches of the then State Assemblyman for Matunggong⁹ (I enclose some photos below of the politicians’ visits to the villages). On one of his visits to Bavanggazo, he informed the Bavanggazo residents that he had made frequent appeals to the government to install an electricity supply to the Rungus villages at Matunggong. He said he had informed the government that the Rungus villagers could not continue to live without basic amenities like treated piped water and electricity supply to their homes. According to the state assemblyman, the Minister concerned replied with these words:

The authorities are reluctant to introduce development projects at Matunggong because of tourism. The Rungus villages are presented to the tourists as traditional and undeveloped. If they have these modern facilities, what then is their attraction to the tourists? It is better if the Rungus continue to use oil lamps, hurricane lamps, candles, torchlight and generators¹⁰.

⁹ The State Assemblyman lost his seat in the recent state elections (12-13 March 1999) to the opposition party, the Sabah United Party’s candidate.

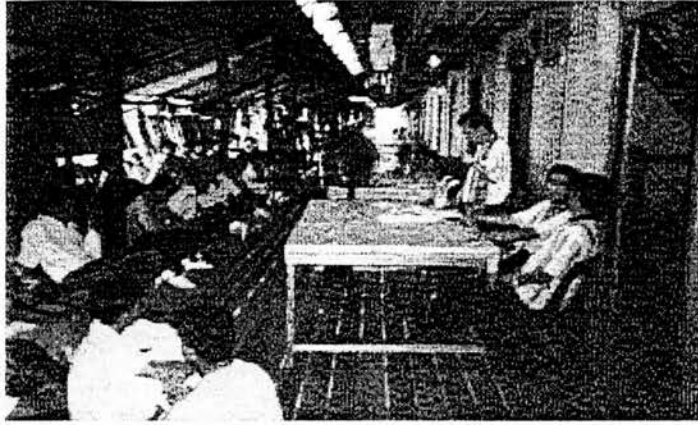
¹⁰ I could not validate the Assemblyman’s claims. Newspaper reports in 1998 spoke of the government’s commitment to supply electricity to the rural areas, including Matunggong, by the year 2010. The Assemblyman’s speech was tinged with a political agenda. The Bavanggazo residents invited him to officiate at the opening of the AKAR sub-branch at Bavanggazo. He used the occasion to propagate the party he represented and the national ruling party.



The Sabah State Minister for the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Development, Datuk Bernard Dompok, on his first visit to Bavanggazo, April 5, 1997



Datuk Marcus Majihi, the State Assemblyman for Matunggong (1994-1997) at Bavanggazo (above) and Tinangol longhouse (below). opening a branch of *Akar Keadilan Rakyat (AKAR-Bersatu)*



By becoming a tourist attraction, the Rungus villagers are in a difficult situation. They have to live their everyday, ordinary lives under the watchful eyes of government officials, tour operators, tour guides and most of all, the tourists. Besides being a home, their village and their houses have become a workplace and a public centre. The Rungus people are basically ordinary villagers living in ordinary villages. At Bavanggazo, the participants were not too happy when tourists made their way to their homes. There were some tourists who were sensitive of the villagers' private space. They felt they were invading the villagers' privacy if they wandered beyond the limits of the longhouses.

In general, these villagers have no major grievances with regards to their participation in the tourism sector. Instead, they have favourable views towards tourism, tourists and their villages as tourist destinations. They view tourists as rich people who have the money to travel. Tourism is thus a good source of income as the villagers are hopeful that the tourists will spend their money when they are in the village. The villagers are also proud that tourists choose to come to their village. This means that their village is well known and has a good reputation. Rennie, a 23-year old Tinangol woman, said tourists came to Tinangol because "they want to know about us. So we must have something good that tourists can learn about." Rennie formed a partnership with her elder sister and a friend to start a handicraft business (a small stall) in the city centre, Kota Kinabalu in July 1997. She felt happy when her friends from other villages informed her about the documentary they saw on television or the news from the radio about Tinangol and Bavanggazo. "We are in

the news, everybody knows about Tinangol now. This is good for us and our handicraft," she said.

Tourism gives them the opportunity to meet and interact with people from all over the world. The villagers believe they will learn from tourists about their life in their home countries. Hence, when tourists come to the village, the villagers treat them with respect, answer their questions and try to entertain their requests, for example, posing for photographs, dress in their Rungus costume or show the tourists their *ongkob* (private family area). I asked the villagers at Tinangol, Bavanggazo, Gombizau and Sumangkap if they felt inferior to the tourists who arrived at the village. Most of the villagers, Bavanggazo participants, in particular, since the latter has the most interaction with tourists, do not feel inferior or subordinate. The villagers informed me that meeting and entertaining tourists is necessary if they regard tourism as part of their economic livelihood. Tourists are like an investment. Happy tourists mean more money as they will spend more while in the village and will encourage their relatives or friends to come to the village. Jody, one of the housekeepers at Bavanggazo longhouse, said:

Tourists mean money so we have to treat tourists with respect. We offer them authentic lifestyle, friendly people. For me, when tourists come, even though I am very tired, I put on a happy, smiling, energetic and lively face, not bored or tired looking.

The villagers are, however, concerned about the way the tourism media present the Rungus people. Rungus life in the village is a hard life but the brochures make the Rungus life look simple and easy and the Rungus people happy people with no worries. The tourists' presence heightens their sense of relative deprivation. This is how Jom, one of the gardeners at Bavanggazo longhouse, compared his fellow Rungus' disadvantaged situation with the tourists:

We cannot go anywhere as we are poor people. Tourists are rich so they can travel everywhere. We stay in the village and become poorer because we do not learn anything new while the rich tourists travel and become richer because they learn something new from the people they meet and the things they see. How can we be like them with no money and no opportunity to travel?

Jom said that tourists usually brought biscuits and stationery for the children and gifts like cigarettes for the adults. According to Jom, this is not because the tourists feel superior or pitied the villagers, but because “like the father caring for the son, the tourists cared about us. It is like a Rungus father who works on the field and brings back vegetables and fruits for his children.” Although most of the villagers said they did not feel inferior, they admitted that they felt inhibited or shy to talk with the tourists. This is because they could not speak English with the English-speaking visitors. The Rungus villagers who felt inferior to the tourists said this was because the tourists were more advanced and of higher status than them. They, the villagers, were only ordinary farmers without money. Some of the Bavanggazo participants said they wanted to learn English but could not find the time yet to do so.

The villagers said in general they welcomed all nationalities but admitted to having a preference for certain nationalities and characteristics. At Bavanggazo, the participants told me they preferred tourists who were interested to know more about Rungus culture and willing to stay at least one night. Masapi, the other housekeeper besides Jody, said he liked tourists who were keen to join the villagers in their daily activities, for example, farming activities, fishing, hunting, gathering ferns, collecting shells and catching shrimps from nearby streams.

Ritchie, of STPC and some of the tour operators I met also expressed similar views. They were keen to bring small groups of what they called “special interest” tourists - tourists who are willing to stay more than one night at Bavanggazo and have more time to interact and learn about the Rungus people and their culture. These tourism authorities said they preferred small groups of about five to ten tourists each. During my fieldwork at Bavanggazo, I observed that the number of tourists in an organised group ranged from only one to forty members. None of these tour groups requested to join any of the daily activities of the Bavanggazo participants. Katy, calling herself a traveller, looked with disdain at the tourists who came to Bavanggazo wanting to visit the Rungus people but who were only willing to stay one night.

With regards to tourist nationality, many of the Bavanggazo participants said they preferred Japanese and “White” (no nationality mentioned) tourists. Japanese tourists like to ask questions, talk with the participants and appear to be very warm and friendly. “White” tourists are equally warm and curious to know about the Rungus. They want to know why the Rungus built the longhouse, where they obtain the wood, how they build the longhouse and how they manage to live together.

There are also occasions when the Bavanggazo participants feel uncomfortable with the tourists’ behaviour. Some Western tourists, for example, complained about the thin mattresses and needed additional mattresses. Some did not like the rattan mats. Many tourists complained about the old toilets before the new ones were completed in January 1997. Kalun, the Bavanggazo participant who is a lay preacher, commented on the clothing some of the “White” women tourists wore when they were at Bavanggazo. They wore very skimpy shorts and when they had their showers, they did not close the door. He also said there were several occasions when he saw couples hugging and kissing in the longhouse or in the compound.

Dom, the Timorese working on the rubber plantation, also offered his views on the tourists who came to Bavanggazo. He was not a participant in the longhouse project but he helped the participants in their mutual-aid activities and was most of the time in the village together with the Bavanggazo participants. According to Dom, “White” tourists preferred to see villages that were really traditional. They did not like to see modern structures and artefacts in the village. He thought Bavanggazo longhouse offered the ‘White’ tourists what they were looking for - traditional Rungus longhouse and Rungus food. Japanese tourists were also keen to try Rungus home-cooked food but they sometimes brought their own food to eat together with the food served at the Bavanggazo longhouse. Chinese tourists from Taiwan or Mainland China were the least accommodative. They were quite reluctant to eat at Bavanggazo longhouse but preferred to eat in the shops or restaurants in Kudat or Kota Marudu. German tourists, like Chinese tourists, did not fare well among the Bavanggazo participants. The participants said German tourists were very reluctant to spend their money but always wanted to have more than others. Robert echoed the villagers’ view, a British running his own tour company in Thailand. Robert was travelling alone to Bavanggazo longhouse. This was what he said about German

tourists: “They are the worst. They want to see how the locals live but they want to do this at very low prices. They want cheap food, cheap accommodation and cheap souvenirs.” Robert also compared Bavanggazo with Thailand:

The people here seem friendly. They don't come and sit near us when we have our meals, but sit further away. They don't approach us with their handicraft and artefacts to sell. It is different in Thailand. There, it is very commercialised and people think of money, money, and money.

On their relationship with tour operators, the Bavanggazo participants said they had a cordial relationship with the tour operators. This is because they regarded the tour operators, including the STPC authorities, to be officials or people with power. STPC is the major source of funding for the Bavanggazo longhouse project and the tour operators are the main agents bringing tourists to Bavanggazo.

Some tour operators, according to the Bavanggazo participants, issued instructions without considering the participants' views or needs. Tong the tour operator told the participants that they:

- could not rear domestic animals such as chickens, pigs and dogs as tourists liked to visit clean places and would not like Bavanggazo if they saw these animals roaming freely in the compound;
- should make the longhouse structure and organisation as “traditional” as possible and this meant no tables, no chairs in the longhouse. But he insisted on getting rid of the cooking hearths in the longhouse, on converting a room into a Handicraft Shop, on providing cushions for the tourists, and asking the participants to buy plastic cupboards for each of the rooms in the longhouse;
- should not use the toilets and shower rooms.

The tour operators mentioned above informed me that these changes are for the good of the participants themselves. Tourists like to visit places that they can relate with and feel comfortable. The tour operators, however, expressed their disappointment at the lack of co-operation and commitment towards making Bavanggazo longhouse a better place for tourists. Below are some examples of these tour operators' views of the Rungus:

They are not willing to work unless they are paid, or only if everybody else works together without pay. If they want tourism, they must think of it as a business, not charity. The participants themselves must manage the project so that they know how complex and tough tourism work is and be less dependent and demanding on the tour operators. But they are only interested to receive money but not willing to invest money in the project. If they only milk the cow and do not feed it, how can they expect the cow to grow fat and give them more and better quality milk? (Tong, Borneo Eco Tours);

The Rungus are not directly involved in creating tour packages. So they do not benefit much economically from tourism. They only wait for tour operators to bring tourists to the village. They don't think about what to create except wait for tourists to come. They all do the same thing, produce the same handicraft, same pattern. They don't think beyond what they normally do, like what can they do with the coconuts besides selling whole coconuts or as copra (Sabudin, Discovery Tours);

The Rungus are not enterprising. They do not think about development or beyond their habitual, regular routines. They only want immediate or short-term benefit. And they think they can obtain this benefit without working for it. The villagers see the tourists as people with money so they think they do not have to do much work but just wait for the tourists to come (Tang, Borneo Endeavour).

If such were the perceptions of the tour operators who, in their tour brochures and packages, encouraged tourists to visit and learn about the “primitive” and “traditional” Rungus, I wonder then what it is that these operators expect the tourists to learn *from* the Rungus, who according to the villagers I met, are only “poor farmers?” This is how one elderly Tinangol villager described the Rungus life:

Rontob kakanon, within the boundary of subsistence. If we plant paddy, we have no money to spend. If we don't plant paddy, we have no rice to eat. We are poor farmers working in the field with basic tools and dependent on nature for crop survival. We live from hand-to-mouth with no paid work and no money.

What can the Rungus teach these tourists, when they are seen to be unenterprising, non-thinking, lazy people? Maran echoed the tour operators' sentiments:

Rungus people have no long-term vision. They want money but do not want to work for it or contribute ideas on how to make money. They have no motivation to work other than the old way of doing things. They are not interested to know and learn new skills. They think, “why bother to work hard and suffer stress and pain just to have plenty of money? The rich dies too and cannot take their money with them to the other world.” So they spend their time talking, drinking and gambling with fellow longhouse mates.

Maran had reason to feel frustrated with his fellow participants because he could not motivate them to show more commitment to the project. The participants, according to him, were reluctant to leave their farming, their familiar livelihood and commit themselves full-time to the longhouse project. Maran saw this reluctance as an indication of their *kolu* attitude, that is, the reluctance to leave the familiarities of the comfort zone. The participants, according to Maran, thought that if they did not plant paddy, they had nothing to eat. These *kolu* people, Maran said, expected others to do the tasks at Bavanggazo longhouse and at the same time, they also expected to receive and enjoy the same benefits as the others that had to do all the work at the longhouses.

Angka said that Maran wanted all the participants to benefit from the project. But the participants had not shown any change in attitude and commitment towards Bavanggazo longhouse. Angka said he tried to explain to the participants that if they concentrated on paddy planting, they would not get any or much economic returns after a whole year's work. If, on the other hand, they concentrated on Bavanggazo longhouse, they might receive M\$100 per month or M\$1,200 in one year. In the meantime, they could still continue to plant two to three acres of paddy. Masandang, one of the Bavanggazo participants who continued to be a full-time farmer, spoke of his tension of combining tourism with farming:

I feel guilty leaving my small children at Tinangol. Each time I go to Bavanggazo, I worry about them. I also worry about my paddy field. When I go to Bavanggazo, I cannot work in the field. If I don't work in the field and take care of the paddy, it will not grow well. If I don't go to Bavanggazo and work there, I won't get any money. The others will get angry with me too for not doing the work.

The Bavanggazo participants told me of several instances when they felt humiliated by the STPC officials and tour operators. Once, Tong offered some packets of groundnuts to the participants and said to them, "if you people don't work hard, how could you have groundnuts to eat?" Another incident was when STPC invited the Bavanggazo participants to join the cultural performance for a function it organised for the PATA Conference in Kota Kinabalu in January 1997. The usual routine was to send about three-to-four women and four-to-five men for the cultural dance performance. After their dance, the STPC manager approached Maran and chided him for bringing "middle-aged, fat women who were like buffaloes." The Bavanggazo participants heard what the manager said and they were very hurt. As a result, the participants decided to form three dance groups comprising three different age categories: the above thirties who would only perform at Bavanggazo; the teenage and mid-twenties' category who would represent the village for cultural shows outside Bavanggazo; and the children's dance group, acting as the reserve group. The adult participants started to mobilise their children's interest in the Rungus dance and gong beating. Three adults (two women and one male) who were reputed to be dance specialists trained the young boys and girls. The adults organised the children's first dance session in April 1997. The children, ranging from 6 to 14 years old, dressed up in their respective gender costumes with the accompanying jewellery and hair decorations. They were very excited and eager to go through the dance routines several times.

The Bavanggazo participants, in particular, did what the tourism authorities instructed them to do – sitting at the *apad* (public corridor) stringing beads, weaving and talking; garlanding the tourists with sashes and beads; dancing for the tourists; making pagan artefacts or re-enacting Rungus marriage ceremonies. These activities are part of the tourism programme for the sake of tourism interests but not part of

everyday life. They are not only artificial, they also contribute to the emergence of pseudo cultural specialists (people claiming to be dance and handicraft experts, knowledge authorities, ritual experts) and cultural fakes (artefacts claimed as invented or made by the Rungus community). As Porod, the parish priest at Tinangol, commented, “here in the village, we did not see the Bavanggazo people *sumundai* (dance)¹¹ before but once they joined the longhouse project, everybody is eager to *sumundai* because *sumundai* means money.”

The Rungus villagers are also subjected to joking behaviours of tour guides. “*Hey, sumandak-sumandak, senyumlah supaya nampak gigi dan sireh. Orang ini mahu ambil gambar*” (Hey, young ladies, smile and show your teeth when you chew your betel leaves so that these people can take your photo), said one young Sino-Kadazan tour guide in Malay to a group of middle-aged women sitting inside a house at Bavanggazo. “These people” he was referring to were the 14-16 year old foreign students studying at the International School of Bangkok in Thailand. The Bavanggazo women smiled but said nothing. The tour guide who sounded cheerful and confident in the beginning was unable to read the women’s response. Did silence mean they agreed to being photographed? Receiving no clear response, the guide and the students walked away, mission unaccomplished.

The Rungus stereotype, however, is not all that dismal. The Rungus themselves have favourable perceptions of themselves. Many of the villagers I talked with said Rungus people are very hardworking. Sikau, a government employee staying in the Tinangol longhouse, described the ordinary Rungus farmer’s routine:

At the first cock crow between 2.00 or 3.00am, the Rungus farmer wakes up, carries water from the water source outside the longhouse and cooks rice. At the second cock crow between 3.00 or 4.00am, he changes his clothes and prepares to go to the field. At the third crow between 4.00 and 5.00am, he leaves the house and heads for his field that could be several miles away. There he stays till dusk at 7.00pm. Then with his firewood and some kinds of food collected from the forest or field, he heads towards home.

¹¹ The Rungus use the word *sumundai* for women and *mongigol*, for men.

When I asked them to cite the positive traits of the Rungus people, the villagers gave a similar response – that the Rungus are caring, helpful and friendly; that their Rungus dance is one of the best in Sabah, their culture unique and their language very comprehensive and elaborate. The Tinangol villagers used their village as an example to show how friendly and co-operative the Rungus people were. Tinangol has a large population, yet there is no rivalry or fights among the villagers that warrant police intervention or court cases. In addition, almost all the families (nearly 90 families) make handicrafts but there is no jealousy or tension among them. The former Chairperson of the Village Development and Security Committee said that there is no reason to be envious, because “there are no guarantees in handicraft sale. There are days when tourists buy our handicraft, and days when they pass us but buy from the others.” Nevertheless, there were several villagers who said there is envy or jealousy, especially towards those who are hardworking and produce a lot of handicraft.

Through Rungus tourism, the tourists and Rungus in particular hope to gain something for themselves. The tourists hope to widen their knowledge, enjoy the experience and achieve a sense of satisfaction and balance. The Rungus villagers view tourism as a source of income besides helping to preserve their culture and customs. *Rumosi ko tumagak koubasanan Rungus* (fear of losing the Rungus culture) – this is what many of the villagers said to me. The Rungus culture is fast disappearing, according to the villagers, as more Rungus are leaving the longhouse, speaking Malay, and adopting new values and ways of doing things.

Tourism is a new experience for the Rungus villagers. New experiences require new attitudes, skills, and forms of behaviour and relationships. It does not mean, however, that this new scenario should replace the old practices that have enabled the Rungus to survive in their immediate environment. The Rungus need the assistance of the tourism authorities to help them acquire and develop these new elements. This new scenario, however, has to be rooted within the context of the existing Rungus structure and organisation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

“What have you lost?” asked wise old Nasreddin Hodja’s neighbours when they saw him looking for something in the street. “I can’t find my key,” replied Hodja, the hero of countless popular Middle Eastern folk tales. “And where did it fall?” they asked, pitching in and looking for it but to no avail. “Somewhere inside my house.” “Then why are you looking for it out here?” “Because out here there’s more light.” (Walji 1990)

The preceding chapters have attempted to describe the touristification of the Rungus people of Kudat, Sabah, Malaysia. The main resources for Rungus tourism are culture and ethnicity. Four major items - life in a longhouse, beadcraft and weaving, gong making and bee rearing - are selected to represent the Rungus as a rare and primitive tribe living on the edge of modernity. The tourism authorities present this popular touristic theme through their persuasive texts and eye-catching photographs. The image of the Rungus as simple, contented and harmonious, unaffected by the passage of time and change enhances the Rungus’ appeal as a tourism sight. Tourists choose the Rungus tour package to see for themselves the “authentic,” “rare” and “primitive” Rungus.

Tourism, to the Rungus villagers, gives them the opportunity to have paid work, monetary income and hence, better purchasing power. To these villagers, tourism is all about making money. The Rungus want to develop and progress like everyone else, including the tourists. But does the tourism industry meet the development aspirations of the Rungus people or does it only satisfy the touristic needs of the outsiders – tour operators, STPC and the tourists? As Picard (1995: 51) has argued for the Balinese situation, the development plans for Balinese tourism are based on the market study of tourist arrivals in Bali and not on the assessment of the development needs of the island. Similarly, the First (1981-1995) and Second (1995-2010) Sabah Tourism Masterplans focus on the economic potential of tourism and the viability of the tourism industry by developing the infrastructure, facilities and services related with the tourism industry. In Tinangol, for example, we see the road works and the conversion of the football field and volleyball court to a car park, and the possibility of the construction of a welcoming arch for visitors. Of what use is a

welcoming arch and a car park to people who do not own cars or are not in their homes for most part of the day to “welcome” the tourists?

The development aspirations of the Rungus and the tourism authorities, however, pose a threat to the viability of Rungus tourism. If the Rungus improve their conditions and standard of living through tourism and also, non-tourism related avenues, the gap between the visitors and visited would diminish. In other words, Rungus development sows the seeds of destruction for the very product that is supposed to help them achieve their aim – “traditional” Rungus lifestyle and livelihood. The “developed” Rungus would lose their cultural exoticism, affecting their status as a tourism sight. Consequently, tourism would no longer serve as an economically productive resource to help the Rungus improve their economic status.

The development paradox for the Rungus is also a paradox for the tourists. Tourists want to visit the exotic, primitive and happy savage (Bruner 1996: 157) but their visit to this exotic other lessens the exotic-ness of that other. The cross-cultural contact provides the opportunity for acculturation and mutual borrowing. The increase in tourists’ interest and patronage of the Rungus product encourages the authorities to improve the facilities and services. More tourists may be motivated to visit the Rungus which means more opportunities for the Rungus to engage in economically productive tourism-related work.

Culture tourism depends on this sense of “cultural exoticism” (van den Berghe and Keyes 1984: 343) attached to the tourism sight. It thrives on this “cultural exoticism” or difference because the “exotic culture” of the visited is something not available in the visitors’ home country. The greater the cultural boundary between the visited and visitors, the higher the former’s touristic appeal is to the latter.

Because of this touristic emphasis on difference or contrast, tourist-receiving countries have to compete with one another by offering a product that stands apart and above all others. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998: 153), for example, states that:

To compete for tourists, a location must become a destination which in turn must be distinguishable. That is why the tourism industry requires the production of difference. It is not in the interest of remote destinations that one arrives in a place indistinguishable from the place one left or from any of a thousand other destinations competing for market share.

It is therefore not surprising that when the tourism authorities present their “destinations” in their respective media, they do so in a manner meant to stir the imagination of the readers and potential tourists with regard to their proposed holiday destinations. As Dann (1996: 2) describes it,

Tourism, in the act of promotion, has a discourse of its own. Via static and moving pictures, written texts and audio-visual offerings, the language of tourism attempts to persuade, lure and woo and seduce millions of human beings and convert them from potential into actual clients ... Since much of this rhetoric is both logically and temporally prior to any travel or sightseeing, one can legitimately argue that tourism is grounded in discourse.

Picard (1995; 1993), in his study of Balinese tourism, regards discourse as an important tool to understand the significance of Bali and the Balinese to tourism. Why is Balinese culture important to tourism? Picard argues that it is not because of tourist motivation per se or that the Balinese culture was inherently good or attractive. It is because of the way Bali, the Balinese people and their cultures have been portrayed or represented, which appealed to the tourists. The Dutch colonists and Orientalists, for example, conceptualised Bali as a living museum, maintaining its unique culture despite waves of colonisation, Indonesianisation and modernisation. In this thesis, I have also attempted to provide an understanding of Rungus tourism through the historical and tourism discourses on the Rungus people. Like the Balinese situation, the tourism media promoting Rungus tourism have also represented the Rungus as a living museum, that is, a community of people continuing the same way of life as that of their past generations. This sort of discourse appeals to potential tourists who have moved away from or are not familiar with “primitive,” “traditional” and “village” living conditions.

Discourse, however, has a value connotation. As Dann (1996: 4) points out, “it implies the power of the speaker over the addressee.” In the tourism industry,

outsiders – the tourism authorities and tourists – display this power over the discourse on the represented. Both the tourism authorities and potential tourists structure the discourse according to their respective motivations. Tourists “can and do feed back into this discourse. They have their own ways of constructing images from the information that is supplied to them by the tourism industry” (Dann 1996: 2). These images of the other, or what Urry (1990: 2) has described as the tourist gaze, are constructed through difference: “The gaze in any historical period is constructed in relationship to its opposite, to non-tourist forms of social experience and consciousness.” Tourism results from a basic binary division between the ordinary or everyday and the extraordinary (Urry 1990: 11).

Tourist destinations or tourist sights are therefore socially constructed. Like ethnographic objects which are basically “artefacts created by ethnographers when they define, segment, detach and carry them away” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 2), tourist destinations and sights are also artefacts created by “the power of those who make and claim these objects in the first instance to determine their meaning and fate” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 3). These destinations, like ethnographic objects, are made, not found. They do not begin their lives as tourist destinations. They become touristic through the processes of commodification and commoditisation (cf. Introduction Chapter).

7.1. BEYOND THE CASE STUDY: SALIENT ISSUES OF CULTURE TOURISM

The account of culture tourism among the Rungus highlights three significant points that all parties - the tourism authorities, the tourists, the local people and the tourism researchers - have to consider when they talk about culture tourism. These three points are (i) definition of culture tourism; (ii) manufacture of culture tourism and (iii) managing culture tourism.

7.1.1. Definition of Culture Tourism

Since the mid-1980s, there is increasing tourist fascination with as well as research interest in culture tourism. The ongoing debate in contemporary tourism

literature, in particular, the sociology of tourism (cf. Chapter One), is whether tourism has a beneficial or detrimental impact on the local culture. The emphasis on impact studies creates the illusion that tourism is bad and local culture is good; that tourism pollutes the pure and faultless local culture. It also regards tourist motivations as the determinant of local interest in the tourism industry.

Theorists such as Boorstin (1964), Nieto (1976), Nash (1989) and Greenwood (1989) highlight the negative effects of tourism on the local scenario. They perceive tourism and the commoditisation of local culture for tourism as a form of degradation, causing the loss of the culture's traditional meanings for the local people and a form of imperialism, reinforcing the unequal structural differences between the visitors and the visited. On the other side, theorists such as MacCannell (1976), McKean (1973; 1976; 1989), Graburn (1989), Picard (1995) and Boissevain (1996) prefer to view tourism as a resource effecting positive changes for the local people and environment. Tourism opens up avenues for the local people to engage in economically productive work, while at the same time, it revives their interest and pride in their own culture.

This theoretical orientation is in line with the conventional view that:

- tourism is a unilineal flow of human bodies, generally from a more advanced to a less advanced environment;
- tourists and tourism businesses determine the structure and organisation of the local tourism industry;
- tourist receiving countries and their local populations respond to this outsider interest and control in a passive, unreflexive manner;
- tourism and tourists bring changes to the local people, local culture and local environment but the local situation does not affect the tourism industry and the tourists.

Picard (1995; 1993) and Lanfant (1995; 1993), among others, distance themselves from what Lanfant (1995: 1) calls "a methodology dominated by the study of social and cultural "impact," which tackles tourism as an exogenous force, assessing its effect (positive or negative) on some targeted milieu." In her earlier article, Lanfant (1993) argues against this conventional model which contributes to the stereotyping of tourism as a leisure activity and a unilateral system of exchange

and reciprocity. The model assumes that tourism originates from the developed Western world and imposes its presence and standards on the developing or underdeveloped Third World. Lanfant regards this as a totalitarian view based on the western notion of domination and dependency. It does not concern itself with the nature of exchanges between developed and underdeveloped countries engendered by the growth of international tourism. This conventional model of tourism therefore denies the sociality of tourism (Ong 1996: 50). Dissatisfied with the existing theoretical models of tourism, Lanfant proposes an alternative perspective which takes into account the sociality of tourism. Lanfant's model is based on three assumptions (cf. Ong 1996: 50):

- that tourism is an international fact without pre-determined national, regional or cultural associations. Such a view enables the researcher to view tourism as a relationship with both the sending and receiving parties playing an interactive, mutually-influencing and interdependent role. This view calls for the researcher and also the tourism authorities, to perceive tourism not merely as a result of the Western demand for leisure but also the Third World countries' desire for change and development;
- that tourism is a total social fact, which requires an integrated, systemic approach in terms of tourism planning and development. Such a view encourages the researcher and tourism authorities to view tourism not as a separate entity that is simply added to the existing local structure but an entity that blends with and competes for resources in the existing structure. It therefore widens the rationale of using tourism as a route to development. Tourism is both an economic activity benefiting from the inflow of foreign exchange and a social activity encompassing cross-cultural contact between the tourists and local people;
- that tourism is a bottom-up phenomenon which requires involvement and co-operation from the local people whose homes, neighbourhood and everyday lives are subjected to the presence of tourists and their gaze. This view calls for a grassroots approach to tourism development and research which recognises the primary role of the local people in tourism planning and decision making.

Picard (1995; 1993), on the other hand, points out that researchers do not give much thought to definitions when they use words such as "culture," "ethnic" and "tourism." What do these researchers mean by these words and how do they operationalise them? He emphasises the importance of these conceptual definitions in view of the concentration of tourism research on the impact of tourism on local culture. Smith (1989) and Wood (1984), for example, have provided definitions for culture tourism and also differentiated it from ethnic tourism. Wood (1984: 361)

defines culture tourism as aspects of local culture – such as festivals, costumes, cultural dances and music - that are selected, reconstructed, packaged and sold to tourists. Ethnic tourism, according to Wood, refers to the quaint customs of indigenous and often exotic peoples (cf. Introduction Chapter in this thesis). But how does Wood differentiate between aspects of local culture and quaint customs? What does “local” mean? Are the aspects genuinely local or are they imported or products of acculturation? King (1992) likewise, has also highlighted the general orientations of Malaysian researchers to focus their research on the impact of tourism development on local Malaysian culture. Researchers such as Hong (1985) and Bird (1989), according to King, do not define “culture.” Neither do they explain what they mean by “Malaysian culture.” Similarly, what do the tourism authorities and travel writers mean when they talk about culture tourism? Do they regard all aspects of “local culture” as worthy of “culture tourism?” If so, why do they include some aspects of “local culture” in the cultural tourism package and exclude others from it? This brings us to the next issue related to culture tourism, that is, on the production process and the considerations involved.

7.1.2. Manufacture of Culture Tourism

Travel and movement exhibit our curiosity concerning the world in which we live. We wish to know what other places look like, what their people, culture, animals, plant life and landforms are (McIntosh et.al. 1995). Culture tourism – specially organised culture-based tourist experiences – seemingly responds to “the deep urge in all human cultures to travel to witness the ‘extraordinary’ or the ‘wonderful’ object” (Rojek 1997: 52).

Under culture tourism, long forgotten, neglected or disappearing customs, practices, artefacts and sites are brought back to life and given a facelift. New meanings are attached to these revived entities. At Bavanggazo, for example, artefacts that the animist Rungus hung in the *ongkob* to appease the spirits are now hung in the heritage house to attract the tourists. Animism, in the Rungus case, is packaged as one of the signs of Rungus’ primitiveness. Some of the Rungus villagers, however, oppose the use of these artefacts as tourist exhibits. These artefacts are spiritual offerings to the residential spirits of the *ongkob* and once they

are hung in their special places in the *ongkob*, are taboo to human touch. They are sacred symbols depicting the respect of the Rungus people for the unseen world, not artefacts to entertain the tourists. Turning them into tourist attractions violates their sacredness. It is also a sign of disrespect to the Rungus people who are still animists. The differing opinions among the Rungus villagers themselves over the choice of what should or should not be displayed to tourists indicates that they distinguished between sacred and profane and between ritual and leisure.

In addition, elements which are detrimental to the touristic appeal are excluded (like Rungus Christianity). Those which support the touristic theme are included (like bee rearing and gong making) and even though they are not inherently local, they are claimed as authentic and will eventually assume local and indigenous status. The question therefore arises as to what is or belongs to the local or native culture and what is foreign and does not belong to the local culture. How do the local people whose culture is being “exported” to tourists maintain the boundary between local and borrowed, native and foreign?

The production and transformation of aspects of local culture into tourist commodities is thus not an easy task, as the Rungus experience has shown. There are several crucial questions involved in the “marketing of cultural sites, events, attractions and/or experiences in the local culture as primary tourist experiences” (Craik 1997: 113). The first question concerns boundary maintenance. When a living culture is commoditised into a commercial object, it becomes a detached, objectified and user-oriented entity. This requires the producers or transformers of the local culture into tourism commodities to consider consumers’ expectations, desires and standards. But the question is what can be commoditised and sold and what should be protected?

Like the Balinese case, the Rungus tourism package consists of easy to objectify cultural items such as dances, costumes, food and drinks, housing structures and craft work. Non-material aspects such as value system which are abstract and not easy to objectify and present are excluded from the tourism product. Hence, returning to Picard’s and King’s contention, when researchers write about the impact of tourism on culture, they have to unpack the term culture and specify what aspects

of the local culture they are concerned about. Researchers also need to re-examine what they know about tourist motivations. Why do people become “tourists?” What do they wish to see and do while at the tourist destination? The conventional view associated with the promotion of culture tourism assumes that people interested in culture tourism are mainly from the industrialised, western nations who seek to experience the culture of people from non-industrialised, non-modernised, non-urbanised and non-developed nations. The tour operators I mentioned in the earlier chapters subscribed to this view when they stated that Rungus tourism was mainly for the tourists who came from highly-stressed societies. Such an assumption reinforces the idea that culture tourism, in particular, is “an escape mechanism for tourists who want to get away from it all” (Rojek 1997: 1). It belies the seriousness of tourism and tourist motivations. Tourism is not a trivial activity. Tourists travel to acquire new experiences and knowledge about others. They are not necessarily fun-loving, idle or hedonistic individuals.

A clear conceptualisation enables theorists studying tourism and its relation to local culture to have a common platform for understanding what they each mean when they talk about impact, tourism and culture. This will also enable theorists to separate tourism from other factors of change and more significantly, to delineate the potential impact of tourism in such a way as to ensure tourism will optimise, not destroy the cultural and natural resources it depends on for both its and the local culture’s survival and sustainability.

This brings us to the question of authenticity. In the earlier chapters, I have outlined the tour companies’ claims that they are offering authentic Rungus culture to tourists. According to these tour companies, the Rungus culture is authentic because it is still traditional and close to nature. The Rungus people are a rare tribe with a way of life that few others share or have. The Rungus and their culture are therefore unique and extraordinary. This is what the tourists are looking for, according to the tourism authorities and several theorists such as MacCannell (1976). MacCannell (1976) has argued that tourists leave their home country to search for authenticity in the everyday life of the other - that wholesome, integrated, meaningful way of life purportedly absent in the tourists’ home environment and everyday life. These tourist destinations, the tourists believe, or are encouraged to

believe by the tourism media, persist as whole communities where the inhabitants do not experience alienation, sense of loss and meaninglessness as do the tourists. The search for authenticity through culture tourism is what the religious pilgrimage is to pilgrims, according to both MacCannell (1976) and Graburn (1989). The pilgrims seek oneness with God or Creator by embarking on a religious journey to sacred sites. The tourists travel to out-of-the-way destinations, seeking authenticity in the other's culture, lifestyle and livelihood with the hope that this authenticity might transfer to their being or consciousness. While pilgrims visit holy sites mentioned in their holy books, the tourists visit tourist sites created, packaged and marketed by the tourism authorities through their respective tourism media.

The making of a tourist destination or tourist sight not only entails fabrication and making myths about the local conditions but also about their authenticity. The concept of authenticity in culture tourism, as the Rungus experience has shown, is a complex term that defies definition. Tour operators marketing Rungus tourism, for instance, claim that their product is authentic. The operators claim that the Bavanggazo longhouse is authentic, which they define as the original and true reproduction of the "traditional" Rungus longhouse. Even though the longhouse has several features not available in a "traditional" Rungus longhouse, such as the modern flush toilets and shower facilities, seat cushions and handicraft shop, the longhouse is still authentic to the operators, the Rungus participants and many of the tourists. The incidence of fabrication and myth making challenges one of the main assumptions in the literature on tourism, namely that tourism is primarily motivated by a quest for authenticity. As Rojek (1997: 55) points out:

If sights are always pot-pourris which utilise elements from a variety of index files at both conscious and unconscious levels, how can one speak of an authentic experience of the real place?

Another source of contention associated with the concept of authenticity concerns the definition of the "tourist." Tourism, as defined in the literature, is characterised by three main factors: movement of people between two or more places (the place of origin and the place of destination); the nature and length of time for this movement (more than one night and less than a year, that is, temporary) and the

purpose of this movement (not for economically productive work and monetary purposes but for leisure and pleasure). The people who “move,” according to the above characterisation, are generally known as tourists. Tourists share one common characteristic, that is, tourists will return to their home residence and they want to feel good for having visited some place and people that are significantly different from their own home situation and country people. We know, however, that there are many kinds of tourists, each with their own motivations and reasons for leaving or moving from their usual place of residence to a faraway destination. The Rungus experience, for example, demonstrates that some tourists were satisfied with the basic modern amenities provided at Bavanggazo while many others expected to have more facilities such as hot water showers and non-Rungus food. There were also tourists who expected the Rungus villagers to live in the same longhouse with the visitors, while others did not like the idea of sharing the same living space with the villagers. Some tourists considered themselves to be travellers or ecotourists and they wanted to be more involved in the everyday life of the villagers, such as going to the fields with them or helping to mend a water pipe. Others were contented with the existing tour package that did not require them to trek to the fields or participate in manual subsistence activities. These tourists were not only different in terms of motivations and self-regard, but also in terms of nationality, age, gender, social class and ethnic membership. Tour operators, for example, preferred to promote Rungus tourism to South Koreans, Japanese and Chinese from mainland China as the Rungus tour usually served as a side attraction to complement their main tour objective to Sabah, that is, shopping and city tour. These tourists were also considered by the tour operators and Rungus themselves as less fussy, less demanding and more generous than Chinese from Taiwan or German tourists.

The tourism market is thus very segmented. One pertinent task of the tourism authorities, in particular, is to identify and differentiate their potential customers. The production of culture tourism in a monolithic, pre-determined package will not meet the expectations and desires of this segmented and differentiated tourism market. For tourism researchers, one dominant research problem, as Rojek (1997: 2) points out, concerns epistemology: who or what is “a tourist?” Without a clear distinction of the variants of tourism and tourist motivations, there will be little confidence in the use

of tourism studies and statistics as data for analytical and comparative purposes. Consequently, the problem of epistemology generates a problem of methodology: how to study tourism and tourists when there is lack of knowledge and agreement among tourism researchers on the concepts of tourism and tourists? It is thus not surprising, when we review the tourism literature, to see a concentration on economic-related aspects of tourism or in other words, on the economic relevance of tourism and tourists to the tourist-receiving nations and “not the social and cultural practices or tourist experiences” (Rojek 1997: 2).

Furthermore, presenting or framing culture as if it is a static, homogenous totality, belies the dynamic and differentiated nature of the culture itself. Culture as a living entity, undergoes adaptation and change as its members acquire knowledge and experiences, develop new thoughts and skills and establish new contacts. Old ways of doing things give way to new and improved ways, whether developed by the individual or their fellow members, or borrowed from the outside world. Written records would give historical and contemporary evidence about what was originally developed by the cultural group and what is borrowed or foreign. Without such written records, however, how could we know what traits or elements were original or not?

In view of the uncertainty surrounding the authenticity, that is, the originality of the cultural aspects selected and packaged as tourist attractions, and the rhetorical objectives of tourism businesses, I do not think that tourism research needs to focus on this question of authenticity. Indeed, as Rojek (1997: 69) has suggested, there may be a school of thought that says tourism is replaced by television culture, and more recently, Internet culture. The multiplicity of television channels and increasing patronage of the Internet in this contemporary era suggest that present-day people need not leave their homes but “visit” the tourist destinations from their living rooms or home computers:

Our belief in authenticity is corroded by television indexing and dragging. Why travel if external sights have been stripped of their aura and if telecommunications allow us to practise collage tourism in our living rooms? (Rojek 1997: 69)

With the multiplicity of information channels and tourist-related services, the post-modern tourists are faced with a plethora of meanings that defies the logic of seeking *one* single meaning or *the* authentic tourist experience.

7.1.3. Managing Culture Tourism

Tourism involves diverse but inter-related sectors representing not only transport services, businesses who own the tourist sites but also the governments of both tourist-generating and tourist-receiving countries. Each of these service-related sectors serves the needs of the tourists as well as the needs of the hosts. The success of tourism depends on the effective management of these different and often conflicting needs. In the context of culture tourism, however, it depends on an additional but very important component – the local people whose culture is made into a resource for the production of cultural experiences and cultural artefacts. Culture tourism relies on the active participation and co-operation of the local people because they are “the product” itself. However, as the Rungus experience in this thesis has shown, the local people lack access to and control over the planning and decision making of tourism policies and programmes concerning their integration into the tourism industry.

The structure and organisation of culture tourism is usually moulded in terms of the tourists’ interests “in culture or symbols” (Craik 1997: 113) which are based upon the separation of the familiar and ordinary (tourists’ home culture) from the strange and extraordinary (hosts’ local culture). In culture tourism, the relation of the tourist to the sight is culture-based. Cultural experiences offered by tourism are consumed in terms of prior knowledge, expectations, fantasies and mythologies generated in the tourists’ origin culture rather than by the cultural offerings of the destination (Craik 1997: 118). In culture tourism therefore, the emphasis is more on the meanings, fantasies and myths attributed to the host people and their culture by outsiders rather than on the production of the material objects themselves. In the Rungus case, the use of the longhouse, beadmaking and weaving, bee rearing and gong making to attract tourists develops from the idea that these entities represent the “authentic and traditional lifestyle and livelihood” of the Rungus. This further

implies that the Rungus are primitive and far removed from the forces of modernisation and development.

The contrast between the tourists' cultural assumptions and the practices of different cultures, Rojek (1997: 56) points out, lies behind the tourist motivation to travel and tour. The pleasure and excitement associated with the act of touring are partly related to the switching of rules practised in our own cultures with contrasting rules. The contrast itself is pleasurable. But Rojek (1997: 71) argues that the return to familiarity and order in everyday life is the prerequisite of enjoyable tourist experience. Hence in contrast to the common perception of tourism as a break or an escape from everyday routines, Rojek prefers to see tourism as a drift, rather than an escape or departure from everyday routines. The latter view implies a division or discontinuity from the everyday, ordinary lives of the tourists to the extraordinary travel and tour experience.

Tourism authorities who are responsible for the planning, development and management of the nation's tourism industry need to consider these fundamental conceptual and methodological issues in their attempt to use the local ethnic communities as a resource for culture tourism. In the Malaysian context, there is presently a lack of research, on the one hand, on tourists and tourist motivations (what they seek in their travel) and tourist practices (what they intend to do at the destination) and on the other hand, on the local people and their motivations for transforming themselves into tourist attractions. More significantly, there is a lack of sensitivity within the tourism management authorities to see the two sectors – tourists and locals - as a complementary and an integrated whole.

7. 2. Concluding Remarks

The structure and organisation of tourism management is predominantly controlled by both the government tourism authorities and private enterprises. These authorities prioritise market needs and pay more attention to changing market needs and the global scenario. Consequently, they pay less attention to the readiness and training needs of the local people as well as the integration of tourism development with existing local conditions. Therefore, until and unless the local people

themselves realise they have to take up the *challenge, take part* and *control* their involvement, culture tourism would remain de-contextualised and detached from the historical and contemporary scenario. As Hollinshead (1990: 313) remarks, “perhaps the grossest continuing shortfall in the insight of tourism operators, developers and planners in North America and elsewhere, who seek to exploit or further the indigenous condition, is the understanding of what is meaningful to the host population.”

Culture tourism consists of “customised excursions” (Craik 1997: 121) of outsiders to places significantly different from their own home environment. As stated above, it is generally assumed that going away for tourism purposes means being on holiday or taking a break from everyday routines. Nevertheless, the holiday vacation may also indicate a genuine interest to learn about other people, lifestyle, heritage and arts in an informed way. An informed cultural experience enables the tourists to modify their assumptions and stereotypes regarding the visited. This touristic experience is possible when the representations of the cultures of the people visited are grounded in their historical contexts and contemporary situations. Such contextual sensitivity humanises cultural tourism and gives the cross-cultural contact a personal and educational dimension. This is because a contextualised culture tourism would take into account the local needs, capacities and conditions and integrate the development of tourism with this existing scenario.

Take nothing but photographs, leave nothing but footprints – this is STPC’s catchy reminder to tourists regarding their collective responsibility towards the host destinations. This slogan is appropriate when the host destinations are non-talking, non-self conscious commodities, for example, the Tunku Abdul Rahman Islands, Kinabalu Park, Tenom Orchid Farm, Sepilok Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre – in short, nature and adventure-based attractions. When the attraction is human beings, like the Rungus people, should STPC expect the tourists to abide by the slogan? Footprints move the soil particles and photographs discriminate and freeze images. The tourists’ presence, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, will, like a tiny stone dropped into the water, spread its impact far and wide.

This impact, however, need not be negative or frowned upon. Change need not be detrimental to or opposed by the indigenous or local people if their existing cultural practices and social organisation were given prior consideration. "When there is development, there is always change. We must choose the best way to cause the development" (Gewertz & Errington 1991: 1). The Rungus' participation in tourism almost certainly demands changes. But unless these changes are based on the Rungus' own choices and rationalisation (like the farmer exchanging eggs for a Hymn Book), the key, even if found, would not be able to release the Rungus from their "underdevelopment" or their "coconut shell." If, for example, the Rungus no longer lived in longhouses, would this be a negative change? In the context of tourism, the real-life Rungus need not live in a longhouse forever for the sake of tourism. Since most of the tourists are "mass-recreational-diversionary-type," why should the Rungus, like the Iban of Sarawak, continue to live in longhouses or houses in villages without access to modern amenities when these tourists expect to enjoy modern amenities themselves while in the Rungus villages? There is a prospect for Rungus tourism to thrive as a meaningful venture for all the parties concerned: for tourists to achieve a high quality tourist experience; for the Rungus villagers to use their culture to redefine the Rungus stereotypes and myths; for tour operators and the government to benefit economically.

In the light of the issues raised in this thesis regarding Rungus tourism, the tourism authorities, in particular the STPC as the organisation responsible for the management and marketing of culture tourism in Sabah, need to re-consider their planning and policies relating to tourism development. To recapitulate, the success of Rungus culture tourism depends on the authorities' sensitivity to the historical and contemporary contexts of the Rungus way of life. For most of the local people, tourism is a new experience which demands new skills, new knowledge and changes in attitudes. The authorities therefore have to be ready to assist the local people to improve themselves and develop confidence in their ability to face the alien but unavoidable tourist presence in their midst.

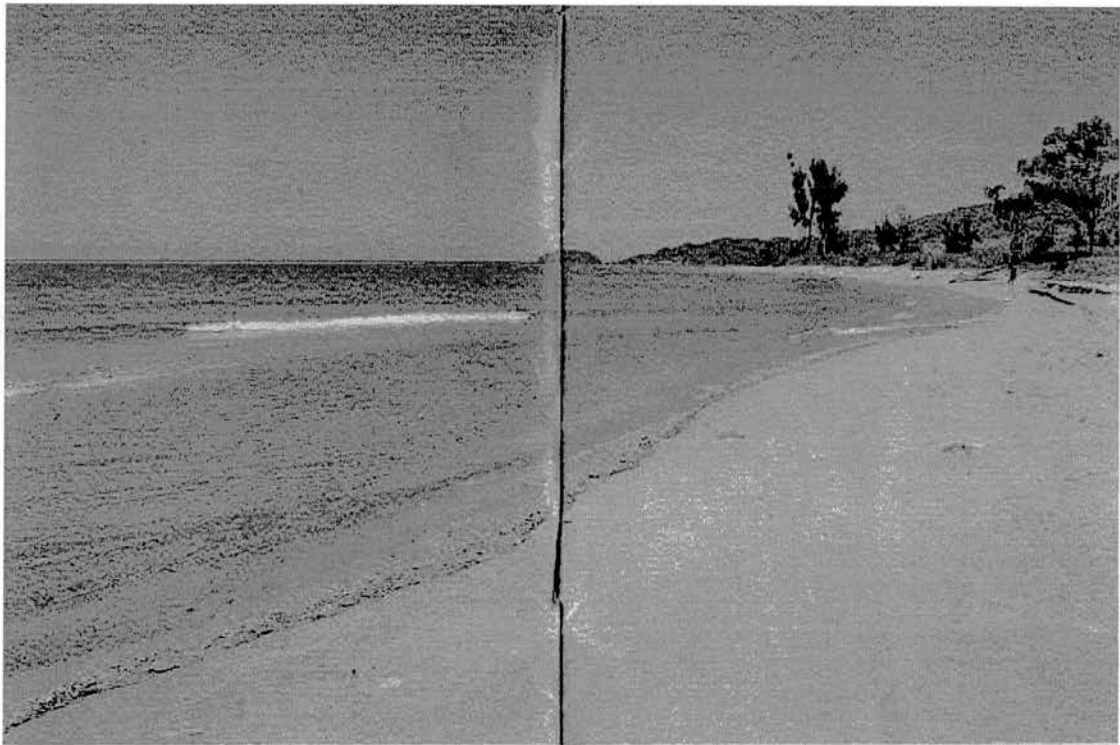
Contemporary tourists seek the kind of tourism that allows them, as Selwyn (1993: 137) observes, "a sort of space in a world of 'Peter Pans' in which 'eternal children' ... never grow up." The Rungus, however, do not want to be "Peter Pans."

They want to “grow up.” Hence, the time has come for the Rungus to stop looking elsewhere for a way out of their *rontob kakanon*, subsistence livelihood but to start looking inwards and re-discover their capacities and knowledge. As pointed out in this thesis, the tour operators criticise the Rungus for not knowing they have the product. It is time to show the outside world that the Rungus know their product and can manage on their own.

APPENDIX ONE
SABAH TOURISM PROMOTION CORPORATION
1997 BROCHURE



Posing outside Milaad Longhouse in full Rungus costume
For the female model, the *banat ondu* with *saring tangan* and *lungaki*
and the male model, the *badu* with *sigal*



The Land

Kudat town was founded by Briton A.H. Everett on the 7 December 1881 and became the first capital of North Borneo (now known as Sabah); as an earlier settlement at a nearby island, Pulau Balambangan, was abandoned due to pirate attacks.

More Europeans especially the British began to arrive on Kudat shores with the discovery of oil in 1880. This period also saw the first arrival of Christian Hakka Chinese who farmed the soils of Kudat and other parts of Sabah. The frequent pirate attacks and inadequate supply of drinking water forced the British to move the main administration offices to Sandakan in 1883.

Kudat Division comprises of three main districts that include Kota Marudu, Kudat and Pitas.

Kudat district is about 160 kilometres to the north of Kota Kinabalu and the journey by road takes at least three hours.

Kudat district's many attractions include the rich cultural heritage of the ethnic groups, unspoiled natural landscape and gentle, warm and friendly people. The major attractions are its extensive sandy white beaches at Bak Bak, Bangau, Indarasan, Kalampun and Sikuati and traditional villages at Bavanggazo, Gombizau, Lajong, Sumangkap, Tinanggol and Mompilis.

As golf was a favourite British sport, Kudat also had the distinction of having the first golf club in Sabah. This club was established in the 1930s and was affiliated to the prestigious St. Andrew's Club in Scotland.

Kudat is dotted with numerous family farms growing coconut trees, maize, ground nuts and bee keeping for honey. Being surrounded by the sea, seafood is also a thriving industry.

The Longhouse

The Rungus live in their thatched traditional longhouse called *binatang* that provides them with shelter and protection from the elements. The traditional setting of the Rungus longhouse provide visitors with an opportunity to experience and appreciate the unique rustic lifestyle of the Rungus.

The *binatang* takes a few months to build, depending on the size and availability of building materials. The Rungus position their longhouse on a west-east axis facing Mount Kinabalu with the belief that a cool, airy atmosphere is attained for ideal living and good health.

The *binatang* is on stilts and holds several family units, *sirang*, each with an area of about 300 square feet. For each *sirang*, there is a sleeping area - *tingkang sid ongkob*; a dining area - *lansang sid ongkob*; attic - *abai sid ongkob* and *abai sid apad*; corridor - *lansang sid apad* and the living area - *tingkang sid apad*. There are two types of *tingkang sid apad* - a raised, flat platform or merely an extension of the corridor.

As you climb up the entrance stairway or *tukad simbatu* that is made of a small tree trunk with notches chopped into it, this will lead you into the main longhouse communal living area. Walking along the corridor, you will note the wooden

floors made from the *tonibung* (*Oncosprema horridum*) and *tivang* (*Bambusa Scortechnii*), small, split tree trunks tightened with rattan and bark strips to hold them together.

The roof of the longhouse is made up of thatched *numbizo* (*Metroylon Sagus*) and *pagung* (*Nypu fruticans*) leaves. Walls are made from tree bark. The traditional building materials of the *binatang*'s main structures are made of durable timber such as *bakau tangob* (*Rhizophara mucronata*) and *tagas* (*Eusideroxylon zwageri*).

Rungus builders choose only trees that bring good luck. Tree species to be avoided as building materials as they are believed to bring bad luck are

- *Ginduvus* (brittle plants which symbolise instability),
- *Mindaraha* (a plant with red sap which signifies blood)
- *Toodopon Pavok* (*Fragraea elliptica* - the preferred sleeping place by owls indicates a dwelling for bad spirits).





The People

The Rungus are the main ethnic group living in the Kudat Division. They are a sub-tribe of the Kadazandusun indigenous group. In fact, the name "Kudat" is derived from the Rungus word "Kutad", a type of grass commonly known as *lallang* or *Imperata cylindrica* which grows abundantly in the district.

Kudat, as with other districts in Sabah have many other ethnic groups - these being the Bonggi, Bajau, Bugis, Kadazandusun, Obian, Orang Sungei and Suluk. For many of the ethnic groups in the Kudat district, farming remains an important activity. For the Bajau, Irranun and Obian, fishing is an intergral part of their lives, for the Bonggi, shifting cultivation.

Rungus Traditional Arts And Craft

The Rungus are renowned in Sabah as highly skilled artisans who traditionally make colourful beaded necklaces made from local plant seeds and clay. Rungus beadwork come in all sizes and the most significant are the *pinakol* or shoulder bands which are long and broad with multi strands and worn diagonally across the chest. The beadwork motifs are from ancient designs and usually tell old fables and legends.

Rungus women are highly skilled in the art of weaving cloth and basketry. Their traditional attire is made from home grown, hand spun cotton which is woven on a back strap loom. Their black cotton sarong are decorated by an intricate colourful border of *linangkit*, a form of needle weaving. Again, traditional motifs and designs are maintained. All this requires painstaking hours of time and attention.

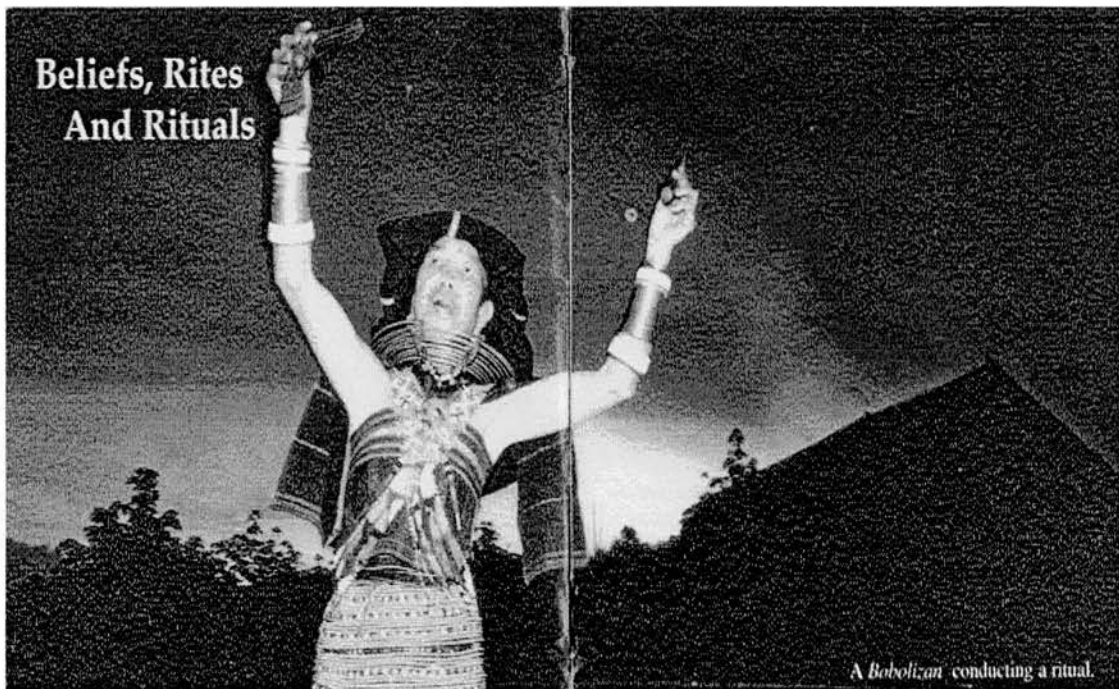
Rungus men can be easily distinguished by their richly embroidered traditional headgear called the *sigal tinohian*. It is worn as part of their daily attire. The *sigal* plays an important part of their social life, at festivals and celebrations.

As with most ethnic communities in Sabah, the traditional colour of the Rungus is black. Aside from the different patterns, designs, beads and headgear, Rungus women used to adorn their necks, arms and legs with heavy brass coils. This tradition is still being maintained but may disappear as the skills for making these coils are dying out and many young girls today opt not to wear them as part of their daily lives.

Rungus trays, baskets and containers are called *rinago* and are made from coils of the *lias* plant and are bound together with a kind of wild grass called *lingkong*. Winnowing trays are called *nyiru* and the Rungus make them from thin strips of the *bemban* stem.



Beliefs, Rites And Rituals



A Bobolizan conducting a ritual.

The Rungus have embraced Islam and Christianity while some have remained animists. However, regardless of their religious creed, the Rungus like many other ethnic groups in Sabah, have maintained their cultural and traditional beliefs. This is seen with the continual acceptance and practice of traditional Rungus rites and rituals among the present generation. Today, the Rungus still call upon the services of their ritual specialists known as *Bobolizan*. There are male and female *Bobolizan* and they perform specific rites and rituals accordingly.

In selecting the suitability of a new site for their longhouse, the Rungus will invite the services of the male *Bobolizan* who will initiate a ritual, known as the *mamabat*. Prayers known as *moguhok* are chanted and a four-string puzzle known as *mongumbang* is used to ascertain the health and safety of the longhouse residents from evil spirits and beings. Other rituals involve the use of paddy grains, clam shells and prayers in ancient Rungus.

When conducting rituals with the 'spiritual world', the female *Bobolizan* must wear the sombre black attire consisting of a cotton top known as *banat*, a sarong and hood known as *tapi* and *kuluvu* respectively, and a sash or *sandang*. To contact spiritual beings, the *kamagi*, a special

beaded necklace is worn and the *Bobolizan* shakes a rattle called *gonding* at the start of the ritual to summon the 'good' spirits. These rituals may last up to a day while some take at least a week.

Part of their task is healing the ill and one female *Bobolizan* at Kampung Tinanggal is known to perform a ritual where her ancestors' spirits, *sambavon divato* are summoned to 'enter' her body and called upon to help the ill person fight off the 'angry' spirits.

Certain ceremonies also include traditional ritualistic dances such as the *mongigol samundai*. As in the old days, the Rungus also perform the dance at other special festivities without the religious ceremonies which normally accompany it.

The ritual specialists can also take the role of the local 'doctor' and their intimate knowledge of medicinal herbs and remedies ensure that they are very much sought after. Indeed the *Bobolizan* has many roles, and depending on the need, they can be a faith healer, spirit medium, or advisor. In today's age of modern and hi-tech advances, the *Bobolizan* is part of a vanishing breed especially as the younger generation pursue more lucrative careers.



Longhouse meals are mainly homegrown or harvested from around the village, including wild ferns and fruits. Your longhouse menu may include native salads such as *tivak dot polod* and *tomboruwah*. Fish and seafood come from nearby fishing villages. For drinks, there are always plenty of young coconuts available and several varieties of the local brew to further liven the evening festivities.

The evening brings a festive 'party' atmosphere to the longhouse with the rhythmic playing of gongs and the villagers resplendent in their traditional black costume complete with their colourful and elaborate beads.

Longhouse Experience

Kampung Bavanggazo

The Bavanggazo longhouses are unique attractions for visitors as they were planned and developed as a cultural centerpiece by the Rungus community at Kampung Bavanggazo. Together with the Sabah Tourism Promotion Corporation (Sabah Tourism) and local tour operators, the Rungus marketed the longhouses as a means to display and conserve their cultural heritage whilst engaging in an economically sustainable venture. Kampung Bavanggazo is an ideal example of a successful community tourism project operated by the indigenous community of a particular region.

The two Bavanggazo longhouses each took about eight months to build. There are ten *sirang* in each longhouse. Nearby are two *sulap* which are traditional paddy stores. Located a few feet away are the village's only modern amenities, toilets and showers equipped with tapped water from the hills.

The large living area also holds the main indoor working area. And a stay at the longhouse will enable visitors to observe, enjoy and take part in the Rungus unique lifestyle. During the day, the longhouse corridor is busy with Rungus womenfolk at work stringing elaborate beadworks, weaving baskets and their traditional cloth. Visitors can experience and participate in these activities.



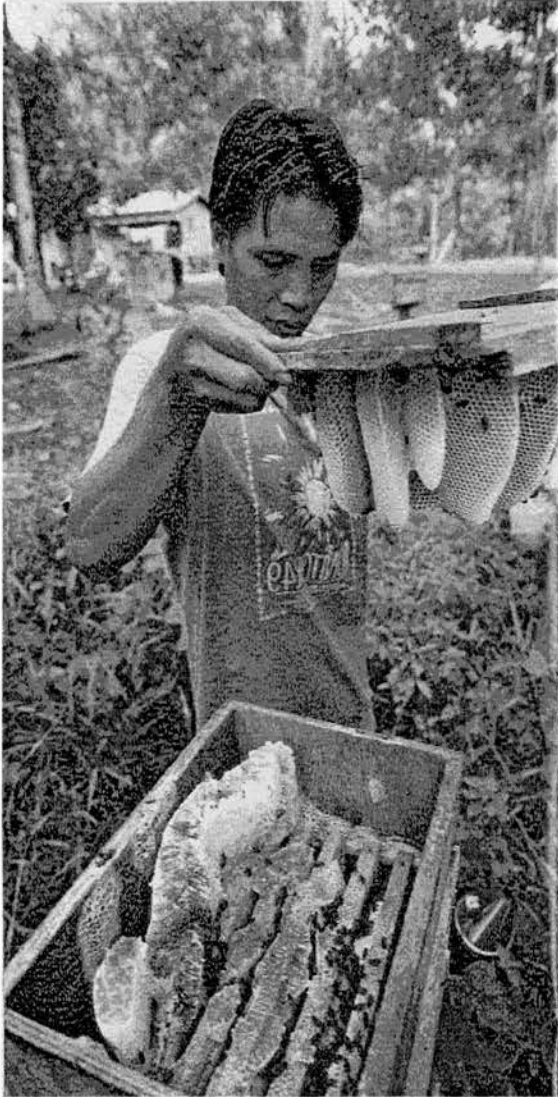
A *sirang* or your longhouse suite



Kampung Gombizau and Kampung Sumangkap

At Kampung Gombizau, visitors get to see bee-keeping and the process of harvesting beeswax, honey and royal jelly. At Kampung Sumangkap, an enterprising small village, visitors can observe traditional gong-making and handicraft-making by the villagers.

Bee-keeping



Some Do's And Taboo's

While all visitors are very welcome, you are reminded to kindly respect and adhere to local customs, values and traditions. At all times, visitors are reminded of the need to respect the privacy and personal space of the longhouse residents. When in doubt, please refer to your guide, the village headman or Native Chief.

- Enter a longhouse only when invited.
- Always make your presence known as you approach a longhouse dwelling.
- Do not walk UNDER the longhouse. It is considered most ill-mannered or that the person has ill-intentions.
- During the construction of a new longhouse, visitors are prohibited from entering the building as the Rungus believe the visitors may bring bad luck.
- Visitors should not enter the sleeping quarters or *sirang* without the prior consent of the residents.
- When leaving the longhouse, visitors should have the courtesy of informing the longhouse head and to stop for a chat to its residents when passing their rooms or *sirang*. If the visitor chooses to do otherwise, the longhouse residents will see the visitor as being ill-mannered and may request compensation known as *sogit*.
- Visitors are kindly reminded not to wear their footwear in the longhouse and to leave them outside.
- In moving about the longhouse, always tread lightly and 'wind' your way around other persons. NEVER walk over a person, man, woman or child.

What to wear and bring

- Comfortable walking shoes are essential.
- Light cotton clothing.
- A hat, sunglasses, torchlight and an umbrella can be useful.
- Personal toiletries and towels.
- Bring small currencies for making purchases.
- It is suggested that extra bags be brought to store your footwear.



Bookings

Visitors are encouraged to arrange all their bookings for longhouse stays through the respective tour operators.



Gong-making at Kampung Sumangkap

GLOSSARY

<i>amai</i>	uncle
<i>apad</i>	public corridor in longhouse
<i>Apis Cerana</i>	a type of bee species
<i>badu</i>	Rungus male's hand-woven long-sleeved shirt
<i>Bambarazon</i>	rice spirits
<i>banat ondu</i>	Rungus female's hand-woven three-piece costume
<i>bangau</i>	the half-foot long wood that symbolises the <i>rogon's</i> "weapon"
<i>Bavanggazo</i>	the Big River Village
<i>binatang</i>	longhouse
<i>bobolizan</i>	animist or pagan priestess, usually a woman
<i>bubu</i>	fish trap made of bamboo or rattan
<i>buru</i>	bridewealth or brideprice
<i>dangol</i>	all-purpose long-handled knife
<i>dapu</i>	collection of brassware
<i>domburan</i>	the partner to <i>bangau</i>
<i>ganggalung</i>	brass coils worn by Rungus women round the neck
<i>golodok</i>	temporary bee hive
<i>Gombizau</i>	the medicinal flower village, usually used to bathe off the heat caused by other people's wrongdoings, for e.g. a husband's adultery
<i>Guomantong</i>	the highest hill at Matunggong
<i>hogkos</i>	trouser belt made from cotton cloth
<i>inai</i>	auntie
<i>inavol</i>	hand-woven sash
<i>Kinoringan</i>	Rungus' supreme God, sometimes called <i>Minamangun</i> , the Creator
<i>komomoli</i>	death wish for baby if the mother covered her upper body while the baby was still at breastfeeding stage
<i>kopizo</i>	omen
<i>korimbutuon</i>	constellation
<i>labus</i>	Rungus word for animist people
<i>linggaman</i>	the small cutter for harvesting paddy
<i>lungaki</i>	brass coils worn by women around the ankles
<i>Minamangun</i>	the Creator of the Universe
<i>minit ginit</i>	toy mobile hanging by the cradle

<i>mirung</i>	to bring own food and eat together with others
<i>miupakat</i>	meeting and deliberation to reach a consensus
<i>modsupu</i>	Rungus way of welding the iron to make the <i>dangol</i>
<i>moginum</i>	the once in ten years pagan thanksgiving ceremony for the longhouse involving the sacrifice of several pigs, at least one at the top of the longhouse roof
<i>Momogun</i>	indigenous people, the Rungus self-perception of themselves as indigenous people of Malaysia and Sabah in particular
<i>mongigol/sumundai</i>	Rungus cultural dance; the <i>mongigol</i> refers to the males and <i>sumundai</i> refers to the females in the dance team
<i>mongoivanon</i>	“introduction to in laws ceremony” upon marriage
<i>murū puru</i>	the constellation, Seven Sisters
<i>mutagad</i>	planting paddy
<i>odu-odu</i>	the <i>Bambarazon</i> , rice spirits’ assistants
<i>ongkob</i>	the private compartment of the family where the cooking hearth, sleeping area, washing and dining areas are located
<i>orot</i>	brass coils worn by women around the waist
<i>osu</i>	betel nut
<i>osukod</i>	village elders, could be men and women
<i>pangasakan</i>	planting paddy season
<i>rinago</i>	baskets made from plant creepers and rattan
<i>rogon</i>	spirits, both benevolent and malevolent, believed to be residing everywhere and potentially dangerous
<i>rooh</i>	the constellation, Taurus the Bull
<i>ropuhan</i>	cooking hearth in the <i>ongkob</i>
<i>royong</i>	mutual-aid activity
<i>sangit</i>	the one-to one and half foot long bamboo for storing water in the house
<i>saring</i>	brass coils worn by women around the arms. <i>Saring</i> is the only brass coil from the list of brass coils that Rungus women continue to wear (at least during the time of my fieldwork)
<i>sarong</i>	the local Malaysian long cotton wrap-around skirt

<i>sigal</i>	Rungus male headcloth
<i>sirang</i> or <i>valai</i>	the <i>ongkob</i> and <i>apad</i> together
<i>sireh</i>	betel leaf
<i>subung</i>	the bamboo cup used in the old days
<i>Sumangkap</i>	the gong making village
<i>Sundatang</i>	Rungus two-string guitar made of wood
<i>tagad</i>	paddy field
<i>tamu</i>	native weekly market; the root word means to meet, which was the original intention of <i>tamu</i> – for the people from all the different villages to meet and exchange news and goods.
<i>tangga</i>	the three-foot long bamboo for carrying water from the water source to the house
<i>tavak, somponikul, soludon, sandangau, tontog</i>	a set of Rungus gongs
<i>Tinangol</i>	the <i>dangol</i> village
<i>tinokin</i>	the basket that symbolises the <i>rogon</i> 's home when the houseowner performed the “asking for blessing” ceremony. Goes together with <i>bangau</i> and <i>domburan</i> .
<i>todkol</i>	necklace made from beads and stones with small iron bells; coveted as heritage possessions for women in particular
<i>togizok</i>	the bamboo water container
<i>tonduk</i>	the pair of long wood the farmer planted to the ground on his farm to ask for permission from the <i>rogon</i> and also as a sign of ownership of the land
<i>tungkusan</i>	heritage
<i>tumoron</i>	thanksgiving ceremony
<i>turali</i>	Rungus nose flute made from bamboo
<i>valai dot Momogun</i>	Rungus-styled longhouse
<i>valai dot porinta</i>	government-styled longhouse
<i>valatik</i>	the constellation, Orion, the Hunter

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