INTRODUCTION

The Kota Belud[1] (Tempasuk) District of British North Borneo lies north along the coast from Jesselton, the Tuaran District intervening. It is dominated by the great mountain mass of Kinabalu, between 13,000 ft. and 14,000 ft. high,[2] and consists of the valley of the Tempasuk (or Kadamaian) River which rises in Kinabalu, and of foot-hills and plains in the coastal regions, these stretching away, backed by the mountains of the Brooke Range, of which Kinabalu is itself an element, towards the base of the Kudat Peninsula.

The inhabitants of the district consist of long-headed Nesiots,[3] the Dusuns, animists and to some degree head-hunters,[4] in the Kadamaian Valley and in the plains and foot-hills, with Mohammedans, who are round-headed Malayans, in most parts of the coastal belt. In the plains near Kota Belud, Mohammedan villages, such as Taun Gusi and Pirason, are in juxtaposition to those of pagan Dusuns. The Mohammedans are of two peoples; the Bajaus who call themselves Samah and say that they came originally from Johore in the Malay Peninsula, and the Illanuns, later arrivals from Mindanao in the Philippines. Each people has its own villages, but there is nothing to prevent intermarriages. Their languages are different.

I returned to Kota Belud in 1938 with some trepidation in regard to what I should find there, as I had not visited the district since 1915. I had picked up what information I could in Jesselton, previous to sailing thence in a Sea Gypsy boat, and had heard that at least one of my old Dusun friends, Gimbad of Kadamaian (Tempasuk), now a Native Chief, was still alive. Other reports, too, were good rather than otherwise. Apart from the District Officer, there were still no Europeans in the district—no estates, no missionaries, to corrupt and disorganize native life.

We landed at the Bajau village of Kolambai, where I hired a buffalo to take me to Kota Belud. I found appearances there encouraging.

[1] As it is called nowadays.

[2] Various readings of its height are given, but all well over 13,000 ft.

[3] As the term Indonesian is now used officially by both the Dutch and the natives to describe any native of the Malay Archipelago of whatever race, it must be abandoned as denoting the more or less wavy-haired long-heads.

[4] It is the inhabitants of the upland villages who are, or were, head-hunters. The practice had been suppressed by Government for many years, but the collapse of the Japanese provided opportunity for its revival, and Japanese heads were taken and ceremonies held.

Some of the men were wearing bright-coloured, Bajau-woven head-cloths, while the women were still the same untidy-looking creatures that they had been in former days—some kind of coat, and a sarong worn over baggy trousers, hair pulled back with a wispy tail hanging from behind.

When we reached the Chinese shops at Kota Belud they showed changes. In my day they had consisted of two rows of one-storey buildings with walls of sheet bamboo. Now, the ground on which they stood had been raised and levelled and the shops were two-storey plank buildings with their lower floors of cement. The rows had been lengthened and there was a closing block at the far end, that away from the Government Offices. The side of the rectangle that was without buildings was shut against the entry of buffaloes, cattle and ponies by a barbed-wire fence with a gate in it.

My general impression, gained later, was that the number of shops was in excess of the needs of the district and that many of them were making a bare living, if that. The chief wholesale trade was in the export of Dusun-grown tobacco (mostly brought down from the neighbourhood of Ranau, in the Interior) and in buffaloes. Two or three shopkeepers almost monopolized the export trade in tobacco, and that in livestock was practically in the hands of one man, the keeper of the pawnshop. Wild rubber was no longer profitable, and very little dammar gum was brought down from up-country. The latter was formerly much exported. Later study showed that there were twenty-five sewing machines at work in the shops, turning out clothes for the natives. I doubt whether there was a single such machine formerly, as the natives made their clothes at home. There were also three silversmiths, instead of one.

One great improvement was the disappearance of the gambling farm. It and the pawnshop, controlled by Chinese lessees, used to be adjacent, so that a man who pawned some article walked straight into the gambling shop, and usually lost the money that he had obtained on his pledge. I was greatly opposed to these licensed gambling farms, which ought never to have been permitted by the Chartered Company, though they were a considerable source of revenue. It was not because I objected to gambling as such, and thought it desirable to make people righteous by legislation. My quarrel was that they were enriching the Chinese proprietors at the expense of the native Mohammedan population—few Dusuns gambled there, but Bajaus and Illanuns frequented the Kota Belud establishment all day and every day. While the Mohammedans gambled among themselves,

betting on cock-fighting, pony-racing, and so on, though it might cause some social dislocation, one man's loss was another man's gain; but the gambling farms were in the hands of the Chinese and this meant that the Bajaus and Illanuns were ruined, and to the advantage of foreigners. All their heirlooms—ancient gongs, beautiful old brass sireh-boxes, weapons and silverware—were lost to them and dispersed goodness knows where and how. Some of such property was, however, bought by the Dusuns, out of whose hands it did not pass again. I always said that the Mohammedan peoples were disarmed, not by the Government, but by the Chinese pawnshop into whose hands their weapons passed.

There was one other great improvement at Kota Belud, and this was in the establishment of a branch of the medical service. There was an excellent Indian dresser, a Mohammedan, who visited all the widely scattered villages of the district at least once a year—or it may have been twice—whose gentle and kindly ways made him beloved by all the people, pagan and Mohammedan alike. There was also quite an adequate hospital under his charge. Yaws, a scourge, had almost been stamped out, and *kurap* (*Tinea imbricata*), a most unpleasant skin disease, so prevalent formerly, had become comparatively uncommon.

There was also a Malay vernacular school, chiefly, but not entirely, attended by Mohammedan boys.

Before the Japanese War, the District Officer at Kota Belud was responsible for the adjacent sub-district of Tenghilan. After the war, this was handed over to the officer in charge of the Tuaran District and, instead, the D.O., Kota Belud, took over the administration of a part of the Interior including the Government post at Ranau, important as being the centre from which much of the Dusun-grown tobacco reaches the coast.

Now as to the condition of native affairs in the year of my arrival (1938), prior to the Japanese occupation, I was pleased to find that, in many ways, the people had altered a great deal less than I feared. Possibly they were a little more sophisticated, and something had been lost in the way of picturesqueness. The market held at Kota Belud every Sunday[1] provided a cross-section of the population, for there one could see Bajaus, Illanuns, lowland Dusuns, Dusuns from up-country, and Dusuns from the interior, the last mostly bringing down loads of tobacco.

The Dusun-made sun-hat, of which two main types, the mushroom-

[1] The old Tamu Darat (up-country market) and Tamu Timbang near Kota Belud had been abolished and a new market created.

shaped and the broadly conical, had been common formerly, was much less in evidence, its place having, unfortunately, been taken in many cases by horrid little 'European-fashion' felt hats of Chinese make. Formerly, the Bajaus, when not wearing native head-cloths, which they often did, too, under their hats, affected the mushroom type with ornamental bindings in dyed rattan strips of black and red. This had almost, but not quite, disappeared, and the conical hat, though not very commonly worn either, was the type most used.

In 1910 and 1911 many Dusuns from the interior came down to market dressed in nothing more than a loin-cloth. Nowadays, in up-country villages, though men often go out to work in loin-cloths, they would not think of going down to Kota Belud so dressed, and always wear a jacket of some kind and trousers, usually of imported cloth of a dark blue colour, a hue much affected by the Dusuns of the Kadamaian valley and of the Interior.

Dusun men did not, as a general rule, wear their hair long even as far back as 1910,[1] but up-country, as at Tambatuon, a curious method of hair-dressing was in vogue to some extent. A fringe of hair was left in front, and the hinder parts of the head were shaved from the level of the ears backwards. The women, too, cultivated a fringe, but did not shave. Hair-dressing is now uninteresting.

Formerly, men from up-country villages wore little bracelets of plaited rattan, dyed in various colours, and girls brass ear-studs and brass bangles, occasionally heavy brass anklets. These have disappeared. On the other hand lowland unmarried girls, as at Kadamaian, load their forearms with numerous white bracelets, made by the Bajaus from the shells of the giant clam (*Tridacna* sp.) or from the tops of large *Conus* shells, while the women, whether unmarried or not, still retain the many-coiled rattan girdle on which are threaded numbers of brass, or shell, rings, as well as belts of medium-sized beads, some or all of which may be ancient.

The woman's hood of dark blue cloth, native-woven, because imported cloth is not stiff enough for the purpose, is still used in the lowlands for field work, at funerals, and by priestesses when performing certain ceremonies in the open. The breast-cloth, too, of dark blue imported cloth, is still worn by unmarried girls or married women who have not had children, but a short jacket is sometimes substituted for it in such cases, as well as in that of women who have had children, though these often, when in their own villages, leave the

[1] The Tuaran Dusun bachelors did so, and some Tabilong Dusuns (p. 6) still do.

breasts uncovered. This breast-cloth is kept in place by black or red bindings of coiled, dyed rattan which are in some cases very broad, as the black bindings of the Pinasang girls.[1] The breast-cloth covers most of the front of the body, but leaves the back bare.

Unfortunately, the Dusuns have a snobbish regard for everything that they consider to be 'Malay fashion' and, to a certain extent, a feeling of inferiority in regard to their own distinctive dress, which they are inclined to regard as out-moded and *outré*. This has not, so far, gone very deep, but I notice that at Tambatuon, for instance, girls, when going down-country to market at Kota Belud have a tendency to modify their own village dress and assume something that they consider more fashionable. Unfortunately, too, up-country girls, especially those who bring down tobacco, lengthen their short blue skirts, the result being that they are impeded at every step that they take by the drag of their nether garments.

Infected by the Malay vernacular school at Kota Belud, where shorts and shirt appear to be regulation dress, small boys in the villages, even up-country, tend to wear shorts, if not a shirt in addition. Previously they would have worn loin-cloths, even in the lowland villages, such as Kadamaian and Piasau—and much better for them too, as the clothes that they now wear are often dirty and smelly, owing to lack of supervision on the part of their parents.

I have spoken of Dusun sun-hats, but not yet, in detail, of Bajau- or Illanun-woven head-cloths worn by men. In 1910 these were much more in use than they are today; they were also much cheaper, some plainer types being made that sold for about $1.50. At that time the starched head-cloth was frequently seen, while the brightly-coloured 'handkerchief' usually was tied round the waist and contained a small brass betel-box, filled with chewing and smoking requisites. Nowadays, there is a tendency for the unstarched 'handkerchief' to take the place of the starched head-cloth. Recently, the Bajaus have taken to making 'European-fashion' hats of *Pandanus* mat-work.

On arrival at Kota Belud, and after meeting Gimbad there, I went straight to his village, Kadamaian being its Dusun name, and Tempasuk that which it has received from the Bajaus and by which, rather stupidly, it is known officially. It is the same with the chief river of the district, which is Kadamaian to the Dusuns, Tempasuk to the Bajaus, and the latter name has been adopted officially. At least one map that I have seen shows the lower reaches marked as Tempasuk, the higher as Kadamaian, and Government officers have,

[1] Red bindings appear to be coming into fashion at Pinasang.

on occasion, tried to persuade me that this naming is correct. It is, however, merely a question of which view-point one takes, that of the Bajaus or the Dusuns. As the Dusuns are admittedly, both on their own showing and on that of the Bajaus, the 'original' inhabitants of the country, I prefer the term Kadamaian.

I made this village my headquarters because I already knew Gimbad and, in doing so, I found subsequently that I had made rather a mistake, for, though Kadamaian customs are very similar to those of other lowland villages near Kota Belud, the dialect differs considerably from that of any other village in the district.[1] This I had either not known previously or had forgotten.

As soon as I began to find my feet, I decided that the best thing that I could do was to make a study of religion and custom in one or more lowland villages and in one or more upland villages, with, perhaps, a side glance at some of the Tabilong Dusuns who live towards the base of the Kudat Peninsula. There are almost major differences in belief and custom between the upland and lowland villagers and between these sections and the Tabilong Dusuns.

It is quite impossible to say that the Dusuns, speaking generally, do, or believe, such and such a thing. All that one can say is that the Dusuns of one village do it, or believe it, but even in one village there may be minor differences of belief or in the methods of performing religious ceremonies, one priestess following one school, another another. Neighbouring up-country villages that were at feud in former days and between which, therefore, ideas did not circulate, tend, I think, to show greater differences in custom and belief than those that were friendly.

In attempting such work as I have done in the present volume, the matter of informants is of the greatest importance. The Dusuns, in regard to religion and religious beliefs, may be divided into several categories. First, the majority of the men, although they know something of tabus, customs and spirits, are generally very ignorant about the details of religious rites, because they consider all such affairs the business of the priestesses, instructed women. They are, as a rule, quite indifferent about such matters, although they expect the priestesses to do everything that is necessary, and often do not attend ceremonies unless directly concerned—where a man has been ill, for instance, and rites take place on his recovery. At such im-

[1] The Kadamaian villagers claim to be of the same stock as the people of the villages near Tuaran and a story of how they became separated will be found on pp. 462-3.

portant ceremonies as *Matsalud* (*Sumalud*), for the success of the crops, men do not bother to attend the rites in the fields, though in the lowlands there may be a man in attendance, probably the owner of the field, who erects the flagstaff and flag, and carries the fowls and sacrifices them;[1] but he is usually present only at the beginning and end of the rites. For the evening rites the whole household is assembled because the day is over, and also because there is, or maybe, a certain amount of feasting.

There are among the men, however, certain priests who perform some rites that are not undertaken by women, such as 'incest ceremonies', and some that may be undertaken by either sex. Men priests make little or no use of the 'sacred language' (p. 42) usually speaking in everyday Dusun, and the ceremonies that they conduct are short and without chanting or much ritual. They know something of, but are not, I think, very deeply instructed in, Dusun religion.

Then again there are a few such men as my friend Gansiau, of Kadamaian village, who has provided me with a great amount of lowland material. I first knew him in 1910 or 1911, when he was about eighteen or nineteen years old, He is, I am glad to say, still strong and vigorous and has a fine family of sons and daughters. He is genuinely interested in Dusun religion and, when he is doubtful about any point that I raise, goes to his mother, an ancient and blind priestess, for its elucidation.

As for the priestesses themselves, they are, of course, by far the best sources of information if one can obtain it from them. Some are highly intelligent, like Langgitoi, of Kaung Saraiyoh, now dead. It was easy to work with her. Others are less intelligent, and it is possible that some of them have learnt the various rites more or less parrot-fashion, without thoroughly understanding what they are saying and doing. I have always found the priestesses willing, and even anxious, to help. Sometimes they demand small customary fees for instruction, which I am, of course, only too glad to pay. In addition I always make them a generous present.

Having the priestesses to draw upon for information, I do not bother much in regard to the ordinary women. Sometimes they appear to know a good deal; sometimes not. No doubt, if intelligent, they pick up a good deal of information from attending ceremonies.

The know-all, generally a man who knows nothing, has to be detected and avoided.

It will be seen from what I have written above that it would not be

[1] P. 221.

at all possible just to go up to any Dusun and extract from him, or her, such information as is to be found in this volume.

Where I have given a few texts in the 'sacred language' their meanings have been hammered out with help from Gintuwak, the late Native Chief Gimbad's third son, an extremely good-looking, pleasant and intelligent young man; from Tuak, Islamized Dusun, formerly of Kahung Saraiyoh, also intelligent; and from Gansiau. The last's brain turns lumberingly like his own ploughing buffaloes, but he is very reliable and understands what one is driving at when asking questions.

A little must be said about the post-war state of the district. I have found the people just as friendly and pleasant as ever. The Japanese, who, as elsewhere, made themselves thoroughly hated, were gradually ruining them with their exactions, especially towards the end of their regime when there were a good many troops stationed in the district and others always passing up and down, going to, or coming from, the Interior.

A few natives were done to death by the Japanese for one 'reason' or another, while over thirty Chinese and Sino-Dusuns were executed or otherwise 'disposed of' in connexion with the rising of the 'Double Tenth' to which I have referred above. These killings did not take place at Kota Belud. The prisoners were removed to Jesselton and, some people say, from there to Labuan. A few Dusuns were killed by allied bombing at Kahung Saraiyoh, Piasau and Tombulion. There were Japanese at the first-named place, but not at Piasau or Tombulion, and it seems possible that Piasau was bombed in mistake for the Bajau village of Pirason, on the other side of the river, where there were some Japanese.

During the years that had elapsed between my internment and my return to the district certain of my old friends and informants had died. Native Chief Gimbad died after the end of the war, but before I returned to Kota Belud. Dear old Lipatan, of Tombulion, had departed this life, as had also some lowland priestesses from whom I had obtained information previously. Langgitoi, of Kahung Saraiyoh, priestess, was a very sick woman and I had to treat her very gently and limit the duration of our interviews. She died in 1947. Gampus, ex-headman of Tambatuon and a very old friend of mine, very frail and ailing before the Japanese War, was, surprisingly, alive, but a living skeleton and past helping me with my work. I paid a visit of some weeks to his village, from which I went to Kahung Saraiyoh, before returning there. He died about an hour before my arrival in Tambatuon on the second occasion.

The district was in a bad way from the medical point of view. No medicines or medical attention had been procurable during the Japanese occupation. Yaws had again become prevalent, chiefly in the lowlands. I have been told that the population decreased by about 2,000 from a former total of about 20,000. Even now, very few villages have received a visit from a dresser,[1] though drugs and treatment are procurable at Kota Belud. Luckily there appears to be very little venereal disease of any kind. To do them justice, the Japanese did not rape, or interfere with, native women. They tried to obtain women for their troops, but, in so far as the Kadamaian valley was concerned, I believe that their only recruit was a Dusun woman from Kinsiraban village.

Speaking of Dusun matters of health in a general way, I have the impression that there is far too much preventable illness, and far too many deaths arising therefrom, both in the lowlands and in the uplands, but I think more in the latter than the former. Epidemics of influenza, dysentery and measles take a toll, the last chiefly among the children, and the people do not seem to have acquired any great powers of resistance to them. On the other hand fine large families are common in the lowlands. I am inclined to think that chest diseases are the worst enemies of the Dusuns, especially up-country. There are cases of tuberculosis here and there in the villages, but many deaths seem to occur from pneumonias. As far as the up-country people are concerned, and I believe them to be the worst affected, I put this down, at any rate in part, to the greater use of clothes than formerly, and the improper wearing of them—when wet, for example—thus producing conditions of the body where the pneumococcus can easily gain a foothold. I delivered a lecture to the Tambatuon people on this subject, and also on that of clearing away useless trees and brushwood close to their houses, so as to let in more air and light. I do not know whether it had any effect, but, in regard to the second item, the line that I took was that evil spirits liked dark places where there were shrubs, rubbish and damp, this being quite in keeping with Dusun ideas. In regard to the first, I told them that when their souls were lacking in strength owing to the discomfort of wearing wet clothes, evil spirits could easily effect an entry into their bodies—merely putting the truth in a way that they could understand.

The lowland Dusun men all speak Malay,[2] which is the *lingua franca* of the country, pretty fluently and I have used this language

[1] Regular visits have been resumed since the above was written.
[2] Bajau too, most of them, if not all.

when questioning them, and they in replying to me. Lowland Dusun women often understand some Malay, but rarely speak it, and when dealing with priestesses I have had to use interpreters. Up-country, a good many men speak Malay, of sorts, but, unless drunk, when it comes out, are shy of doing so. Thus, unless one speaks Dusun oneself, which I do not profess to be able to do more than a little, an interpreter is again necessary. To learn Dusun is a difficult matter.

There is a pretty full vocabulary of Papar Dusun, that of the late Father Gossens, published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Malayan Branch*, vol. II, part II, 1924, but this is useless, except for comparative purposes, in regard to the dialect spoken round Kota Belud and up-country, and it is necessary to compile one for oneself.[1]

While doing other work, I had been making such a vocabulary before the Japanese war, and it was nearly finished. Like almost everything else of mine, this was destroyed by our former little friends and allies, and I had to start all over again when I returned to Kota Belud. This new vocabulary was finished only a few months ago. My position is therefore that, so far, I have not had time to make much use of, or learn from it to any great extent. I know a fair number of ordinary Dusun words and also a number that are obscure, such as are used in ceremonies. I can make shift to string a few words together to form simple sentences, and can to some extent keep a check upon my interpreters and the answers given to their questions.

Dusun is a far more difficult language than Malay and has a complicated grammar of the verb, of which I now have some idea. One trouble is to find the verb stem and, even if this is known, it seems very difficult to form the imperative from it, as several methods are employed. Only a small proportion of words are directly and obviously connected with Malay, though the methods of formation of certain nouns and verbs is somewhat similar. Some of the similar words are those for moon (*tulan*; Malay, *bulan*), fire (*tapui*; Malay, *api*), stone (*watu*; Malay, *batu*), house (*walai*; Malay, *balai*, hall of audience), skin (*kulit*; Malay, *kulit*), sky (*tawan*; Malay, *awan*, cloud), wood (*kaiyu*; Malay, *kayu*), floor, (*rinantaian*;[2] Malay, *lantai*), heavy (*awagat*; Malay, *berat*), to attack (*miranggal*; Malay, *melanggar* —transposition of *r* and *l*). Some of the Dusun numbers, too, are much the same as those found in Malay (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).

It is necessary to say a little with regard to the distribution of the

[1] I am told that a Kota Belud Dusun often falls back on Malay when talking to Papar Dusuns or those of Pinampang, near Jesselton.

[2] *Arantai* means 'level' in Kadamaian Dusun.