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I. H. N. Evans

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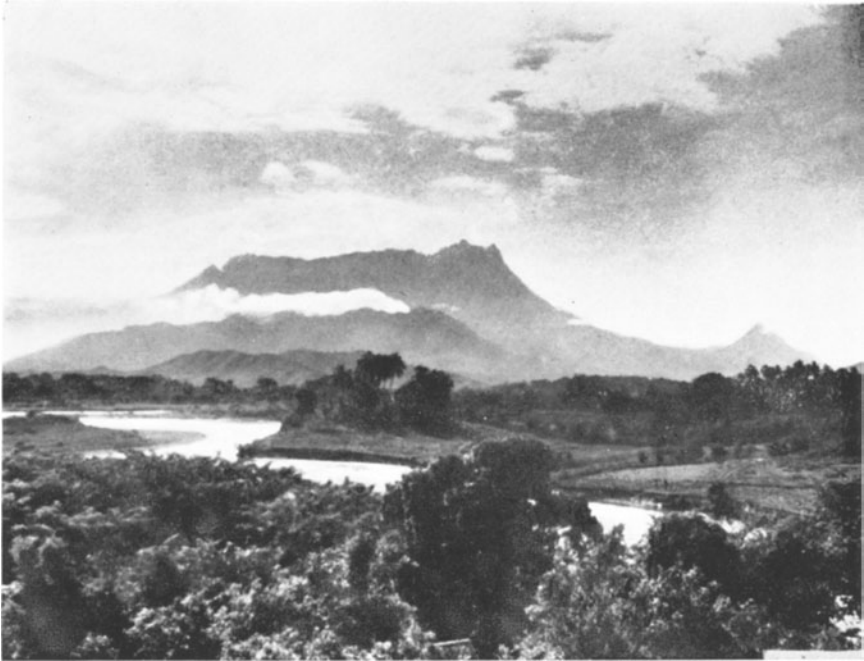
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Mt Kinabalu (over 13,000 ft), Mt Nungkok (right) and the Kadamaian (Tempasuk) valley from Kota Belud

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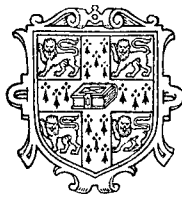
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THE RELIGION OF THE
TEMPASUK DUSUNS OF
NORTH BORNEO

BY

I. H. N. EVANS, M.A.



CAMBRIDGE
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1953

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107646032

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First published 1953
First paperback edition 2011

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-64603-2 Paperback

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MAP OF NORTH BORNEO

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PREFACE

A short preface may perhaps be advisable with regard to the origin of this book:

I came out to British North Borneo, as a Cadet in the Chartered Company's Service, in 1910, and after going to Tuaran, 21 miles from Jesselton, for a couple of months, was placed in charge of the Tempasuk sub-district, as it was then called, with which I fell in love immediately. My headquarters were at Kota Belud, 47 miles from Jesselton. I decided, however, especially as I was going to be moved to a town, that I should not care to stop with the Chartered Company permanently, and returned to England in 1911. Thence I went to Malaya in 1912, where I was in charge of the Perak Museum for many years and did a good deal of work among the Malayan wild tribes and in regard to Malayan antiquities, prehistoric and otherwise.

Having suffered from both Governmental and departmental frustration—chiefly the latter—for pretty well the whole of my career, I was only too glad to escape from this service at the first opportunity. This occurred during the 1932-3 'slump,' when Government was offering pensions to those of its servants who had been in its employ for over ten years. I was then forty-seven, while, at the earliest, I could not have retired, in the ordinary way, until reaching the age of fifty.

I returned to England and settled at Oulton Broad, Suffolk, converting a bungalow into a two-storeyed house that was very much to my liking, and creating, to my mind, a very attractive garden that sloped to the water's edge, where I had my own small dock and jetty. Here I spent much time in fishing in the Broad, especially for pike in the winter, in playing with East Anglian Gypsies and in searching for neolithic flints.

I lived at Oulton Broad from 1933 to 1938, during which time I wrote a book on the Negritos of Malaya and a few short papers of various kinds, while I also reviewed some books on the ethnology or antiquities of S.E. Asia. I also went for a trip to China in 1935, visiting Tientsin, Peking, Shanghai, Hongkong and Canton, while I spent a few months in Malaya in obtaining photographs and more material for my book on the Negritos, not then published. I also visited Bangkok, to which attractive city I had been twice previously.

On my return, I decided that the life of a cabbage in England,

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though very pleasant, was not for me. I therefore put my house up for sale and returned to the East. My intention had been to go to Peking for six months, by far the most wonderful city that I had ever seen. After that I would go to North Borneo, with which country I was still in love and had revisited for a couple of months in 1915, and would roam about there and do a little ethnological work if I felt inclined. However, the 'China Incident', as the Japanese called it, that started in 1937 rendered it difficult and inadvisable to carry out the first part of my programme; so I had to fall back upon the second.

I arrived in Kota Belud, my old station, in November, 1938, and, becoming reinterested in native affairs, immediately plunged headlong into a study of Dusun religion. Here I spent some of the happiest days of my life, both in the lowlands and up-country, until the outbreak of the war with Germany. This had a depressing effect, though I was little affected by it personally. The clouds, however, were gathering in the East and the Japanese War burst upon us like a clap of thunder, the Japanese occupation of British North Borneo being a New Year present to us in 1942. At that time I had almost finished the work that I intended doing—not by any means all that there was to be done. My fair MS., except for a little new material, as also a fine collection of prehistoric stone implements and another of ancient beads, both intended for the Cambridge University Museum of Ethnology, were stored at Messrs Harrison and Crosfield's office in Labuan, and I have quite sufficient proof that they, together with much personal property, were plundered by the Japanese when they landed on the island, which they did on 1 January 1942.

When they occupied British North Borneo a sort of uneasy *modus vivendi* was reached, by which, in so far as the West Coast was concerned, the officers of the Chartered Company continued to administer the country under Japanese supervision. The arrangement did not last long, for the Japanese, perhaps because they had received some nasty knocks in the war, became sour, and interned all Europeans shortly after the middle of May 1942. I was not arrested, but had to find my way to Jesselton, and to start at such short notice (a couple of hours only before leaving) that I had no time to make arrangements for hiding my rough MSS., most of which were with me, my photographic negatives and my ciné films. I gave these to Din, my much-valued Malay, and he passed them to a friendly Chinese in Kota Belud, married to a Dusun woman, with instructions to send them to his wife's village. Unfortunately, the Chinese did not do as requested, and when the Japanese bombed Kota Belud, in revenge for the

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abortive rising against them of the 'Double Tenth' (10. 10. '43), everything was destroyed.

I was interned in Jesselton for something over four months and then, with all the other male Europeans from the West Coast of British North Borneo, removed to Kuching, Sarawak, where I was till the end of the war and our relief by Australian forces.

From Kuching I was transferred to a military hospital on Labuan Island, and then to a convalescent camp. Released from there, I hired a house in a terribly fever-stricken locality and, after a while, escaped from that death-trap to a piece of land by the seaside that I had bought, on which I had had a temporary dwelling erected. I stayed there until the beginning of October, 1946, trying to get my financial and other affairs in order, rewriting a book of reminiscences, the MS. of which had also been destroyed by the Japanese, getting down on paper what I could remember of Dusun religion and custom—not very much in regard to minute details—and recovering from my enforced holiday.

By October 1946 I felt myself ready to attempt to regain all the ground that I had lost, especially as, after much trouble, I had got in touch with Din, he having rejoined me in November 1945. We left Labuan and returned to Kota Belud, arriving there on 10 October 1946, and I set to work again to try to recover my losses, I having then just passed my sixtieth birthday. Of all my previous records little remained to me, but most of my diaries which I had sent to the Chartered Bank, Penang, had come through safely, as well as a packet of 4" × 4" enlargements of the best photographs that I had taken,¹ excluding those of religious ceremonies. The latter, unfortunately, had been with my fair MS. in Labuan, while the diaries, though containing some material that was of ethnological use and interest, were not very full in that respect, as all detailed work was in the MS. of my book. I had, too, before leaving Kota Belud for internment, handed over to Din some rough diaries and rough notes, telling him that if the Japanese made inquiries about me and my work, to use these as a blind, and let them have them. This he did when a demand was made for all European-owned property held by Asiatics to be handed over to the Japanese. Some time after the reoccupation of British North Borneo, some of these diaries and two

¹ Stored with the diaries. I had bad luck with regard to photography after my return to Kota Belud, the first two consignments of films received being stale or otherwise defective. For want of others, I have had to use some pictures taken with this defective material.

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notebooks were discovered at Beaufort. The latter, though representing only a very small portion of my work, have been of great use to me, and throughout this book I refer to information from them as 'recovered material'.

I am still at work at the time of writing—20 September 1947. I have to thank Professor G. E. Holttum and Mr M. R. Henderson, Director of the Botanic Gardens, both of Singapore, for the identifications of a number of plants and the latter for the use of a photograph of a Dusun grave. All other photographs reproduced were taken by myself.

I.H.N.E.

*Kota Belud,
North Borneo
1947*