rough and roistering, while the Iban were hot-tempered, and communal quarrels inevitably occurred (Pringle 1970:289). The Chinese were more benevolent with the other native groups, for instance, the Kayan and Kenyah, probably because they seldom came into contact. The considerate attitude of the Chinese towards the non-Iban people was evident when several Kenyah chiefs in the Baram were fined $3,000 for murdering a party of Second Division Iban in 1894. Most of the fines were immediately paid by the Chinese shopkeepers of Marudi, who undoubtedly extracted gradual repayment in jungle produce from the Kenyah (Pringle 1970:291). Of course, this could be viewed purely as a method of securing the source of jungle produce. But in actual fact, the Chinese also contributed to the establishment of friendly relations.

Whilst the Brooke government attempted to encourage peaceful inter-group relations, the groups themselves remained separated. Even when intermarriage between Chinese traders and Iban women were quite common, the Brooke government opposed such marriages due to related legal and political issues, such as who should keep the children when the couple separated. Moreover, the Brooke government never at any period officially recognised mixed-blood status because the recognised ethnic distinctions between Malays, Chinese, Iban and other groups were cultural (the life, language and religion), not biological (physical ancestry). Also, the Rajah’s refusal to recognise the indeterminate status was part of a broader inclination to define the distinctions between the cultural communities as clearly as possible. The Malay and Chinese traders were not permitted to live with the native people at the longhouse, nor to build shop huts in the native settlements (Pringle 1970:297).

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26 Therefore, it is impossible to estimate from written records the exact extent of intermarriage between the Chinese and Ibans (Pringle 1970:296).
The prohibition first became a formal and finable offence in the late 1870s. Offenders could be jailed for up to six months (Pringle 1970:297).

2.3. Conclusion

It is clear that the Iban, and later the Iban alliance with the Malays in warfare and headhunting were the cause of most hostile relations in Sarawak during the pre-Brooke rule. Moreover, it was the warfare amongst Iban and other groups that gave Brooke rulers their strategy in organising warfare expeditions in Sarawak, and forming segregated settlements in the region. It is also clear that the involvement of Brooke rulers in inter-group warfare changed the pattern of inter-group hostile relations in Sarawak. Raiding and headhunting developed into “peaceful hostile relations” based upon mutual suspicion.

Even though trade and social relations became more organised in Sarawak after the abolition of warfare, I still view the inter-group relations in the area as hostile. Trade relations based on mutual economic interests cannot be viewed as civil social interactions, and it has been shown that interdependence between the traders and customers does not necessary lead to friendly relationships. The Brooke Government’s segregation resulted in a permanent “ethnic” separation, hindering civil social interaction. This was made worse when mixed-blood children were not recognised by the Brooke government. Nevertheless, I would prefer not to view this as a complete negative. Territorial segregation increased the “ethnic consciousness” among the people in Sarawak, and in some cases, the suspicion towards other people who were outside their residential unit was reduced. For example, Iban would be less suspicious towards the other Ibans with whom they had previously
experienced hostile relations because of the knowledge that they of their “own kind”.

The coming chapters illustrate that it was not impossible to mend the situation and to develop civil social interaction. However, this involved the sacrifice of certain distinctive traditional values, as interrelation was only made possible through emphasis on *common* values. The values that I refer to are Christian. In the next chapter, I will discuss the work of Christian missionaries, whose separate objectives co-existed with the aims of the Brooke government. However, substituting Christianity for traditional values did not imply that social relations were easy to accomplish.

In relation to the issue of “ethnicity” in Sarawak, there are a few points that are worth considering. Firstly, I strongly believe that the current “ethnicity” status of any group in Sarawak was created by the Brooke government. As I have mentioned in Chapter One, the identities of any group can be created, reinforced, manipulated and changed. This may occur for a number of reasons, and in Sarawak the main reason was for the convenience of administration. Without looking for more detail about who and which group had been assimilated into another group, the Brooke government basically created an ethnic identity and status for the assimilated group. A good example is the ethnic label “Iban”. There is more than one different group which has been classified as “Iban” in Sarawak. As I have discussed earlier in this chapter, the assimilation of the Bukitan (and probably many individuals from other groups) into the Iban community came as a result of Iban headhunting. The Bukitans were perceived by the Brooke government as Ibans because they lived with the Iban community, spoke the Iban language, and seemed to practise Iban
religion due to their participation in each occasion. Thus the ethnic “Iban” is really a multi-ethnic construct.

Secondly, how do the offspring of intermarriage between the native Iban (or others) with the Chinese conceive of themselves? As I have discussed earlier, the ethnic classification of the people in Sarawak during Brooke government was cultural, not biological. The Brooke government created and fixed the ethnic status of the offspring of intermarriages between natives and Chinese through a policy that prohibited Chinese parents from having the custody of their children if they divorced. In other words, the offspring of intermarriages between the Iban and Chinese were recognised as Iban. In short, the ethnic “Iban” not only comprised non-Iban indigenous people, but also individuals who were the offspring of intermarriages between the Iban and Chinese, and who were not given an option to choose how they would like to be identified - as an Iban or a Chinese. Hence, as the Chinese are perceived in contemporary Malaysia as a separate ‘race’, the ethnic “Iban” is both multi-ethnic and multi-racial.
Chapter 3
Christian Missions and the People in Sarawak

3.1. Introduction

The Christian missions were the tool for Brooke rulers to “pacify” and “educate” the native people, especially the warlike Iban. This chapter concerns the mission work among the people, showing how the native people were integrated through mission schools and evangelistic work. However, the discussion will focus on a Christian mission called the Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM) which had different objectives to that of the Brooke government, that is to approach the more interior people to spread “Christian faith” through evangelistic work of spiritual orientation.

3.2. Christian Missions and People Relations

The real intention behind James Brooke’s promotion of evangelistic work among the Dayaks (for instance, the Iban and Bidayuh) was political in nature. He placed the missionaries to perform social work in protected settlements such as the government forts. James Brooke was more interested in the practical work of the mission such as in the improvement of the welfare of the native inhabitants. He outlined clearly how the mission should conduct itself:

If we proceed gradually; if the members of the mission show a Christian example, give love and confidence, educate, alleviate suffering, attend the
sick, gradually and imperceptibly they will change the native character (Ooi 1991:284).

The missionaries were forbidden to evangelize among the Malays because James Brooke on becoming the first White Rajah agreed to protect the Malays and Islam, in return for the consent of the Sarawak Malay leadership to revolt against Brunei rule. Accordingly, James Brooke promised to respect the law and religion of the country, and was anxious to reassure the Malays that the establishment of a Christian mission posed no threat to their position or to their religion (Saunders 1992:19). In fact James Brooke attempted to establish harmonious relations between Muslims and Christians by keeping a boundary between them. James Brooke made it clear by his statement:

(I) will protect the missionary from the zeal and denunciations of the Mahomedan, and I will protect the Mahomedan from the zeal and denunciations of the Christian, when either the one or the other threatens the well being of the community (Saunders 1992:36).

James Brooke in fact, right from the beginning, suggested that the mission should focus its activities among the Dayak population (Ooi 1991:285), particularly among the Land Dayak (Bidayuh) (Saunders 1992:34). Nevertheless, the missionaries made an important attempt to bring Muslims and Christians into contact through their education program. A Malay Day School was established for Malay men and boys in 1848 a few months after the Anglican SPG missionaries arrival. The school was short-lived partly due to lack of staff but also because it was not a priority among the missionaries after its pioneer, Reverend W.B. Right, left in 1849. In addition, the Malays refused to allow any religious teachings that exceeded the common ground between the Islam and Christianity and the Brooke Government insisted on its
policy of non-interference with Muslim subjects. However, the missionaries saw the school as representing “the first great move towards a system of national education in Sarawak...[where] the great moral and religious truths which were held in common between Christians and Mohammedan”27 were taught (quoted from Ooi 1991:290-1).

The first group of missionaries from the Anglican Church in England consisting of two priest-doctors arrived in Sarawak in 1848. This was followed by the mission plan of the Borneo Church Mission Institute (B.C.M.I.) in November 1847 to establish “a Church, Mission House and Schools” with the ultimate objective of “extending the blessings of Christianity throughout the Island of Borneo (Ooi 1991:284). There were also other mission groups that participated in mission work in Sarawak, namely: the Roman Catholic mission, the American Methodist Church, the Seventh Day Adventist Mission and the Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM). In order to avoid undue complications, overlapping and consequent confusion among the local native population, the Brooke rulers allocated specific areas of operations for the various missionary societies to carry out their pastoral and educational work. As a result, a pattern emerged whereby the Anglicans established their outstation schools in the First and Second Division; the Roman Catholic Mission operated mainly in the Rajang of the Third Division, and Bau and among the Singgi Dayaks of the First Division; the American Methodists worked among the populous Foochow Chinese immigrant community in and around Sibu, and with the Iban of Bawang Assan and those of Kapit of the Third Division; the Seventh Day Adventist Mission had a small school at Ayer Manis on the Kuching-Serian road of the First Division; and the newly arrived

Australian-based Borneo Evangelical Mission was allocated the Fifth Division² (Ooi 1991:310, see Map 3.1.). Most of the mission work on evangelization was channeled through educational programs in elementary schools. All Christian missions, regardless of their denominations, considered their educational work as a means to obtain converts to their faith. The mission schools thus functioned as a useful institution to spread Christian values and virtues, with the ultimate intention of converting their students to Christianity (Ooi 1991:289).

However, the Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM) way of evangelization was an exception. Their missionaries were more enthusiastic to set up a Bible School. Charles Vyner Brooke was unsuccessful in his attempts to persuade BEM to set up an elementary school in Limbang Valley of the Fifth Division on similar lines to the other mission schools in the country rather, the BEM established a Bible School at their permanent settlement of Sungei Pranga (see Map 3.2., Ooi 1991:288; see also Lees 1986).

The difference between the elementary school and Bible School is that elementary subjects, for instance, History, Geography, Art and Mathematics were not taught in the Bible School. In mission elementary schools, Bible Study was a compulsory subject for all students but the students were not taught to preach the Gospel. Bible study was made a core subject by BEM so that their students could study, understand, and preach the Gospel. When the students graduated from Bible School, they became missionaries and pastors. Students who graduated from elementary schools worked in the government departments, for example, as clerks, teachers, nurses, and police. BEM Bible

²Refer to the map: Map 1.1 in Chapter 1.
Schools were set up in the Fifth Division of Sarawak, and attended mainly by the Lun Bawang.

Through the emphasis on elementary schools as the most effective way to educate the people in Sarawak, the Brooke regime was more concerned to utilize the missions for its own political advantage than interested in the religious contribution of the missionaries. The rulers' intentions were to use the missionaries to civilize and pacify the war-like people such as the Iban for the convenience of government administration. Brooke expected the Mission to operate ‘in charity and peace; “hoping that on this occasion the contact of civilization with the native people would be conducive to their improvement both temporal and spiritual, he was serving notice that, as ruler of Sarawak, he had interests other than the mere gathering of souls” (quoted from Saunders 1992:11, my emphasis). The BEM missionaries were unhappy with this situation because the purpose of their mission was not to civilize but to preach the gospel (Saunders 1992:12).

The restriction on the location of mission activities inhibited the interaction between individuals from different ethnic groups because each ethnic group came from a different denomination and church, with a different perception of each other’s beliefs. Furthermore, as every settlement had its own mission school and church, the individuals did not interact with individuals from other ethnic groups. Only in the mission schools established in the state capital of Kuching which were the main educational institutions for the missionaries, did ethnic groups interact, and only the Land Dayak, Iban, Malays and Chinese.

29 “A.B. Champion to E.D.L. Danson, 1 June 1927, UPSG Archives, CLR 78, p.179a” (Saunders 1991).
30 Until recently the Anglican, Catholic, Methodist and the Evangelical Church do not get along well as the congregations condemned the doctrine of the others.
These were the only ethnic groups that were able to interact through educational institutions.

3.3. **Borneo Evangelical Mission in Sarawak**

The Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM), an Australian-based Christian mission arrived in Sarawak on the 12th November 1928. To a certain extent, the evangelistic work was made possible because of the 'pacification' of warfare under Brooke rule in Sarawak. Charles Hudson Southwell, the mission leader of BEM, noted in his *Memoir* that:

The whole of Sarawak had been pacified, piracy on the seas had been surpressed (sic) and inter-tribal warfare had ceased. The taking of heads was banned, though the nationals were permitted to retain skulls which had been taken in former conflicts trophies (sic). Any remaining pockets of resistance to the Rajah's government had been quelled without taking the reprisals. This was the most favourable time for widespread evangelisation in the interior of Borneo - headhunting had been surpressed (sic) and World War II had not yet broken out. The land was at peace (Southwell 1928:26).

3.3.1. **Evangelism Among the Ibans**

As they were newcomers, BEM were given Limbang of the Fifth Division in which to operate. They concentrated on the Iban who lived at the Limbang Valley. BEM's first contact with the Iban was in December 1928, when BEM missionaries (Carey Tolley, Frank Davidson and C.H.Southwell), during their inspection of the site for the BEM station at Sungei Pranga (refer to map 3.2.), were taken by the Iban of Tanah Merah (who were migrants from Skrang) to visit their longhouse. C.H.Southwell even went hunting with some of the Iban.
Map 3.2: Limbang-Trusan area indicating early BEM evangelistic work.

Source: Shirley Lees, *Drunk Before Dawn*, 1978
The Iban in Hudson’s hunting party helped him to gain his fluency in Malay language\textsuperscript{31}. In evangelistic work, BEM missionaries used the Malay language, learned though communication with local people other than the Malays. C.H. Southwell viewed the Iban as very friendly and he thought, “the Iban stood out as being easiest access for evangelism”. They seemed keen to hear the Gospel, but for the first few years the majority did not accept any commitment to the Christian teachings. Apart from evangelistic work, BEM missionaries were also equipped with first aid kit for minor injuries, and were able to assist Iban injured during hunting or farming. Initially, this assistance was rejected because it was different from traditional medicine. However Iban later started to seek medical assistance whenever they had injuries. Thus Iban friendliness arose from their need for medical care\textsuperscript{32} (Lees 1986:34).

C.H. Southwell had the impression that the Iban were proud of their own culture and identity, as they would ask Southwell and other BEM missionaries questions such as, “Are there any Iban [sic] in your country?”. Southwell would reply “No”, and the Iban would say “so no wonder you want to come to Sarawak, so that you can be with Iban [sic]” (Southwell 1928:38). There was an element of Iban values that made them quite “untouchable” to Christian proselytizing even as they gave the impression they were listening. In March 1937, C.H. Southwell and his wife, Winsome went to live close to a large longhouse of 300 families. They taught from an Iban translation of the New Testament\textsuperscript{33}. C.H. Southwell mentioned in his \textit{Memoir}, that the Iban were

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{31} Southwell, \textit{Memoir} (1928:35). The Malay language was the common language of interaction particularly among the Iban as they used to live in a close proximity with the Malay at Skrang.
  \item \textsuperscript{32} Even after 10 years, the Iban were still not Christians, and B.E.M. Annual Report in 1939 concludes that the stay of the B.E.M. missionaries amongst the Iban has only served ‘to emphasize the hardness of the Iban heart’ (cf. Lees 1986:49). Therefore, that years have been spent by the missionaries to minister the medical needs and conducting a school for young people.
  \item \textsuperscript{33} The New Testament was translated by the Anglican SPG mission who worked mainly among the Iban in the Second Division since Brooke rule in 1840’s.
\end{itemize}
always ready to hear their own language read to them. They were thrilled that Jesus taught them through the telling of stories or parables - that was the way they themselves conveyed opinions and communicated to each other. In Iban language, conveying opinions through parables is known as jako karong, which meant “speaking by allusion”. Usually, C.H.Southwell had Christian services conducted on the big verandah of his house with people sitting on the floor in a circle. He mentioned that he “tried not to make any comments, or preach a sermon because reading these stories was more effective” (Southwell 1928:84). Probably the interest in listening to the “stories” from the Gospel convinced BEM missionaries that the Iban were getting more and more interested in Christian teachings. However BEM missionaries reported that only a few Iban converted to Christianity. Probably, instead of being drawn towards the Christian message contained in these stories, the Iban were drawn towards them as a kind of entertainment. And as the evangelistic work was held at night, during the Iban leisure time, it is easy to see why this was so. Furthermore, it was obvious that the Iban probably did not understand or they only had a vague idea about the Christian values and the messages contained in the parables. For years, that was the reason, as Southwell claimed in his Memoir, “these Iban [sic]...have continued to be friendly and to give a hearing ear to the Gospel almost every night to them”, even though “this sustained attention is remarkable for Iban” (Southwell 1928:54).

It was also probably because of the egalitarian and independent family unit in the longhouse that Christianity was not widely spread among the Iban community in the longhouse. Freeman (1970:129) mentions that “jurally each bilek -family is a power unto itself, managing its own affairs and acknowledging no other family to be its superior, or master”. There were no
strong leaders that could be used by BEM to influence people in the longhouse. From the Brooke rule in the 1920’s onwards, Iban longhouse headmen as well as renowned warriors and pioneers who had influence in several communities within the loose tribal organisation were gradually incorporated into a formal hierarchy of administration. Their positions were increasingly institutionalised as agents of government, authorised by state power, and as representatives of their people (King 1993:203). However, for most Iban communities of that particular period, 1920s to 1930s, the “formal” leadership pattern was not really recognised, and probably they did not have their own term to describe the new pattern of authority. It is unlikely that the Iban accepted the “formal” leadership pattern imposed by Brooke rule after decades of operating in an egalitarian community.

There was traditionally no formal Iban ranking system, no centralised authority, no chiefs who could command tribute and formal respect and obeisance by virtue of acknowledged or hereditary positions of superiority. Although there was a headman (tuai rumah) in the longhouse, he was only a custodian and administrator of adat within a circumscribed social space, meaning that he could not independently make decisions, direct a result or command others. However, by his knowledge, oratorical skills, wisdom and judgement, he provided a medium, along with other recognised elders, for disputing parties to discuss their differences. In other words, he was unable to command the bilek-family to follow Christian teachings even if he was interested in doing so. Freeman (1970:129) mentions that ultimate authority rested in the bilek family.
I assume that Southwell and his wife, Winsome, during their stay with the Iban at Nanga Meruyu probably managed to attract a few bilek family to listen to the stories of the Gospel. However, the involvement of these few bilek families did not influence the entire longhouse because each bilek was an independent unit.

3.3.2. Borneo Evangelical Mission among the Lun Bawang and Kelabits

In October 1929, the missionaries walked to the upper area of Limbang where they met the Kelabit and Lun Bawang. After that, B.E.M. evangelised the Kelabit and the Lun Bawang who lived further inland of Limbang. Rajah Brooke visited Limbang in August 1930, and while approving what was being done, Rajah Brooke reiterated more firmly that “the work of the mission must be confined to the Limbang Valley and not pressed too far inland, not at all into the mountains” (quoted from Lees 1986:37). The BEM missionaries ignored the Government restrictions and they even went further up to the Trusan area to see the other Lun Bawang. Eventually by February 1934 permission was given to make occasional visits to Trusan, but the Government made it clear that a school had to be established in Limbang before allowing the extension of the evangelistic work among the Lun Bawang on a permanent nature\(^3\) (Lees 1986:48). The following year, Rajah Vyner Brooke refused to give permission to BEM to work among the Lun Bawang due to the report that he had received from the District Officer saying that the Lun Bawang “have decreased disastrously since the last time due to epidemics, and appear to be doomed”; Rajah Brooke’s reply was “to let them die out, that younger and better people should be worked with, that they were ‘old boots’ and beyond.

\(^3\)The Government policy was to have a school at each area the mission operated, and to educate the people with elementary educational.
“hope” (quoted from Lees 1986:48). The Government also had the same attitude towards the Kelabit whom “the Government considers to be somewhat treacherous and has not viewed the favour of a white man living amongst them”\(^\text{38}\), meaning that no white man (referring to BEM missionaries) was allowed to stay with the Kelabit. This was in spite of the fact that the Kelabit of the Medihit had assigned a piece of land in 1932 so that the missionary could build a house near the longhouse (Lees 1986:50).

In my view, the Brooke Government was not in favour of the missionaries working and evangelizing among the Lun Bawang and the Kelabit because they were not as well known as the Iban who held great importance in Brooke Government administration. Therefore, the Brooke Government insisted on the establishment of a school at Limbang mainly for the Iban, before the missionaries could evangelize the Lun Bawang and the Kelabit further inland. The Lun Bawang and the Kelabit were not as numerous as the Iban, and had not been involved in the inter-tribal raids with the Iban, thus they were not considered as a threat to Brooke Government. The report by the District Officer that both ethnic groups were dying out convinced the Government that both ethnic groups should be ignored, and sending the missionaries among them was just a waste of human power as the missionaries were thought to be more useful in assisting the Government in pacifying the Iban.

3.3.2.1. Christianity among the Lun Bawangs

The Lun Bawang had heard about Christian teaching in Kalimantan, Indonesia, before they encountered the BEM missionaries. A few Lun Bawang

\(^{38}\)B.E.M. Annual Report 1939
had met an evangelist\textsuperscript{36} of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA\textsuperscript{37}) in Kalimantan, Indonesia, and the evangelist had preached to them about Christianity.

C&MA was established in Tarakan, Kalimantan, and through the local missionaries, the Lun Dayeh of Kalimantan, many Lun Bawang were exposed to the Christian teachings. Apparently curiosity was motivated by rumours about the imminent coming of Christ. The rumour was that Jesus was coming soon and would take all the longhouses up to heaven with ropes and hooks. Thus, as the Lun Bawang were quite informed about the story of Christ\textsuperscript{38}, when BEM missionaries came again in 1937, they managed to attract a few Lun Bawang with a similar story.

In the beginning, the attraction of Christianity among the Lun Bawang may have been connected to social problems that affected their life due to the outbreak of diseases such as small pox. They abandoned a few longhouses due to the epidemic\textsuperscript{39}. Christian missionaries (the C&MA and BEM) may have taken advantage of the Lun Bawang situation at that moment by teaching them Western ideas of cleanliness and hygiene, quite different from the concepts of cleanliness and hygiene of the Lun Bawang. To the Lun Bawang anything taught by the missionaries may have been perceived as Christian. The Western ideas of cleanliness and hygiene may not have been taught as part of Christian teaching but to the Lun Bawang understanding, such teaching probably was seen as part of Christian values.

\textsuperscript{36} The evangelist was recognised as W.E. Prestwood, an American.
\textsuperscript{37} I use C&MA as it is used in most documents I referred to (see Lees 1986, Southwell 1928)
\textsuperscript{38} The story of Christ have been illustrated in previous chapter. Refer to chapter one.
\textsuperscript{39} It is not clear when the people in Sarawak started to suffer from the small pox disease.
Furthermore, earlier on before the encounter with BEM missionaries, some Lun Bawang were convinced by the stories they heard about Christianity, particularly that Jesus Christ would bring the longhouse up to heaven when they died. This story had a great influence on a few Lun Bawang because it seems to give the assurance that they would be in a pleasant place even if they die of the epidemics. However, the more inquisitive Lun Bawang were not satisfied with such a story and tried to understand what was the cause of the epidemics. Their leaders were unable to explain the cause of the epidemics and as a result many Lun Bawang may have seen conversion to Christianity as the only alternative available at that time. Those who were influenced by the story that Jesus Christ would lift their longhouse up to heaven may have been attracted to Christianity so that they could at least live peacefully after they died. However, for those who were keener to understand the cause of the epidemics, cleanliness and hygiene teaching probably represented the most satisfactory response to the epidemic. Thus, the Lun Bawang must have thought that all of the values taught to them were Christian values. Many Lun Bawang must have thought that the epidemic was ameliorated because they believed and practised these values.

The District Officer together with the Curator of the Museum of Sarawak was called to investigate the condition of the Lun Bawang. Their remarks about the changes in hygiene among the Lun Bawang were recorded in the Sarawak Gazzette, 1st July 1939, saying that “the place was so swept up that there was no place to put the used banana skins... The Trusan Murut (Lun Bawang) house, from being the foulest in Sarawak... is now quite the cleanest and best kept”. The Brooke Government, having refused permission for five years to establish work amongst the Lun Bawang, now began to press hard to take