

A photograph of a man in a yellow shirt and a traditional conical hat guiding two large water buffaloes through a muddy, shallow field. The buffaloes are harnessed together and are wading through the water. The background is a lush green field with some birds visible in the distance.

Terry Bibo

***Not What  
You Know***

# NOT WHAT YOU KNOW

## *Travels in Indonesia*

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This epub of “Not What You Know” is a revision of the 1997 printed book (in two parts). Included are photographs not shown the original print version. Minor changes to the text have been made to remove ambiguity or correct spelling.

### **Disclaimer**

The views expressed in this work are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any authority or organisation referred to in the text.

## Introduction

'Not What You Know' is the travel diary of two visits to Indonesia I took in 1995 and 1997. Although I'd taught Indonesian at the RAAF School of Languages in the 1960s I knew I could improve my conversational skills. A long stay in Indonesia was necessary. The first trip was made possible with the help of friends who'd been students of mine and the generous offer of an Indonesian lawyer. The reason for the second trip was to attend a second re-interment ceremony (pemugaran) of a Dayak elder, the tribe I'd been adopted into during the first trip.

## The 1995 Trip

My visit to Indonesia from 31 October to 15 December 1995 was the direct result of a dinner at the Southern Cross Club with Alan Cooke, one of my students in 1964 and with whom I have maintained a firm friendship over the past 30-odd years. I had said that there were two things I wanted to do in retirement: learn to ride a horse, and learn to speak Indonesian. Since learning the language in 1962 I have never been satisfied with my command of it in conversation. Reading and writing, listening and translating, OK, but speaking it, NO. I would have to spend three months in country to become fluent, I thought. 'I'll fix it' said Alan. That was April 1995 when Alan, who lives in California with his Indonesian wife, Meina, was passing through Australia on one of his frequent business tours for his employer, Sunrise Medical Group.

On 30 May, Jefferson Dau, a long-time friend of Alan's wrote from Indonesia to say he would welcome me in Jakarta to arrange a visit to Central Kalimantan, where I could get to know the Dayak culture and environment. Jefferson is a lawyer in the Tutor Law Office and Chairman of Indonesian Leather And Leather Goods Exporter Association. He originally came from Kalimantan and his elder brother ran a hotel in the capital, Palangkaraya. Des Cooney, course mate of mine in 1962, ex-RAAF and currently working in Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, was posted to Jakarta in June 1995 and offered initial accommodation. It was too good an opportunity to miss and I booked for six weeks, flying with Garuda. The limit of six weeks was to meet the Indonesian limit of 8 weeks on a tourist visit, cut back by lack of space on returning aircraft because of the holiday bookings over the Christmas period.

During my visit, through the influence of Jefferson Dau, I was adopted by the Ngaju tribe of Dayaks in Central Kalimantan. The adoption ceremony was carried out at the village of Kuala Kapuas on the Barito River, about an hour's ride in a fast speedboat upstream from Banjarmasin. My reason for visiting the village was to attend a re-interment ceremony (pemugaran) of the remains of Malik and Bahar, descendants of Patih Andoeng who was a Dayak elder. Malik had founded the village of Kuala Kapuas some 200 years ago, and re-interment in the family burial place is a Dayak tradition. Dayaks are a Christian minority in an overwhelmingly Muslim society.

### **Itinerary — 1995**

Tuesday 31 October 1995, Canberra — Jakarta

Thursday 9 November, Jakarta — Palangkaraya

Sunday 12, Palangkaraya — Tanjung Puting

Tuesday 14, Tanjung Puting — Pangkalan Bun

Thursday 16, Pangkalan Bun — Banjarmasin

Friday 17 / Saturday 18, Loksado

Tuesday 21, Banjarmasin — Palangkaraya

Wednesday 22, Palangkaraya — Tewah

Thursday 23, Tewah — Kuala Kurun

Friday 24, Kuala Kurun — Palangkaraya

Saturday 25, Palangkaraya — Kuala Kapuas

Monday 27, Kuala Kapuas — Jakarta

Tuesday 28, Jakarta — Sambolo

Thursday 30, Sambolo — Jakarta

Thursday 7 December, Jakarta — Yogyakarta

Tuesday 12, Yogyakarta — Jakarta

Friday 15, Jakarta — Canberra

### **The 1997 Trip**

At the pemugaran of 1995 the family decided to initiate an annual ceremony to honour their ancestors, and the first of these was scheduled for 23 March 1997. With the approval and assistance of Jefferson Dau and the Dau family I had arranged to attend the ceremony along with Susan who, I hoped, would enjoy the spectacle and appreciate my involvement with Indonesia over the past 35 years. We would be accompanied by Alan Cooke, who arranged my first visit, and his daughter Sharon along with her partner, Paul Whiteley. And, of course, Jefferson himself.

The ceremony was not held because, I believe, of political considerations. The country was in election mode and there were underlying political and religious tensions throughout the archipelago in the run up to the election date of 29 May 1997. But we followed the same itinerary from Jakarta as had been planned, and were treated to a possibly more impressive ceremony in Palangka Raya, the capital of Central Kalimantan. There the five of us - Alan, Sharon, Paul, Susan and myself - were formally adopted into the Ngaju tribe in the Balai Kaharingan, a Dayak church. Alan and I were readopted because this ceremony was 'more traditional' than what we had undergone earlier. Alan had been adopted more than 20 years ago when he was serving what was then a very remote community.

### **Itinerary — 1997**

Saturday March 15 1997, Canberra - Jakarta

Monday 17, Jakarta - Yogyakarta

Thursday 20, Yogyakarta - Jakarta

Saturday 22, Jakarta - Banjarmasin

Sunday 23, Banjarmasin - Kuala Kapuas

Monday 24, Kuala Kapuas - Palangka Raya

Wednesday 26, Palangka Raya - Jakarta

Friday 28, Jakarta - Canberra

Thanks to Alan, Des and the Dau family I came back speaking and thinking in Indonesian with experiences that cannot be reckoned in monetary values. And I made a lot of friends I hope to retain for years to come. The hospitality and generosity of the extended Dau family are unsurpassed and I owe them my thanks for this experience.



## Jakarta, 31 October – 9 November 1995

*Indonesia: The world's largest archipelago with a total of over 17,500 islands of which about 6,000 are inhabited Indonesia extends 5,150km along the equator and has a total area of 1,919,443 sq km. Its inhabitants comprise some 300 ethnic groups who speak an estimated 583 different languages and dialects, with Bahasa Indonesia the official language. The five main islands are: Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Irian Jaya.*

Departure on Tuesday, 31 October, was no hassle but a nearby house in Blacket Street burned down at around 0230, disturbing my last few hours of rest. I was getting up at 0430 anyway. On the early news I heard that there were 'suspicious circumstances' surrounding the fire. Andrew was leaving home the same day to pursue his chosen career in Adelaide so we said goodbye for a while, and Robert escorted me to the airport to look after my car while I was away.

I hadn't travelled overseas since leaving the RAAF in 1976 when all the administrative procedures were done for me, but there was really no problem in getting my bag booked right through to Jakarta from the Ansett terminal in Canberra. There was even a bus to get me from the domestic terminal to the international terminal in Sydney. Flying was good to Den Pasar with a change of aircraft to Jakarta where Des was waiting at the disembarkation gate. This was a bonus because, with Des's diplomatic privilege, I was ushered straight through customs. But with a four-hour time difference from Canberra it was going to be a long day.

First impressions were of a dirty, disorderly city with utter chaos reigning on the roads. The city is growing, and introducing modern aspects like toll roads, but I get the impression that development is not always well planned. The roads simply cannot cope with the amount of traffic they are required to service, and massive hold-ups and snarls are an everyday feature of the city. This is a city with over half the population of Australia in its boundaries. There are 10 million people here, and probably 15 million in the greater metropolitan area of what is called Jabotabek. This covers the adjoining towns of Jakarta, Bogor, Tangerang and Bekasi. Australia's population, by comparison, recently reached 19 million.

Des's unit is south of the city proper, in Kuningan on Jalan Gatot Subroto, near the intersection with Rasuna Said and was, until recently, called *Palm Court*. Nationalist sentiment has recently decreed that non-Indonesian names

will be changed and it has become *Palma Citra*. It is a comfortable unit on the 6th floor of a 17-storey building with no 13th floor. Two big bedrooms, and I have my own bathroom and toilet. Plus there is a great 25-metre pool downstairs that I will get to use frequently. Des has a vast collection of classic CDs, pewters, books, glasses and crystal collected from his postings around the world. In a way I envied him but, as he pointed out, my life has not been entirely uninteresting. Building security is tight, with guards on the front gate and in the building foyer. We need a plastic security card to enter the residential area. Fortunately the Australian Government picks up the rent of almost \$1,000 a week. It also pays for electricity that can be four times as expensive as in Australia. But some homes - the little huts packed tightly together in the poorer districts - only have 450 watts available to them, not enough for a hot plate and barely enough for lighting. Certainly not enough for the television with its dish antenna to pick up Australia, France, Japan, and Malaysia among its channels. Des has a live-in maid, Tati, who is very competent at housework and cooking but lacking in English - great from my point of view of having to use Indonesian. Tati is well paid at about \$30 a week, where the average labourer is lucky to earn \$1.50 a day and the minimum wage set by the government is about to be raised from \$1.66 to \$1.88. She is meticulous in her ironing and insists on ironing my singlets and underpants. When she irons shirts she does up every button including those in the lapels and pockets. I'm happy to have one button done up to stop the shirt falling off the hanger.

The first day was an introduction to the city and shopping for a good dictionary and road map. In Des's 974cc Suzuki Super Carry van we battled the traffic to visit a major shopping centre known as Blok M, the embassy, and a 'popular' bar on the 6th floor of a nearby building that has maintained its services under the same management for at least 18 years. Obviously there is an 'arrangement' with the authorities, which is still the way a lot of business is conducted in Indonesia. Des remembered it from previous postings. I enjoyed a couple of cold beers here in air-conditioned comfort while the ladies entertained us with talk. The Suzuki is registered as a diplomatic vehicle and the '18' on its number plate ensures that we get to park free in those areas that charge parking fees.

At one stage it took about an hour to negotiate what should have been a 10-minute segment of our driving. The Lippo Bank, one of the Soeharto family enterprises, doesn't want anything to do with my American Express travellers' cheques, so in frustration I go to a nearby opposition, the Bank Nasional

Indonesia, and have no trouble at all. There are about 140 banks in Indonesia, all with their own variations of regulations, and cashing cheques, changing US dollars to rupiah and using Visa or Keycard was often to be a major problem.

Mornings are almost an unwelcome experience in Indonesia with its 87% Muslim population – the largest Muslim nation in the world and about 200 million people in all. At 0400 all the mosques start calling the faithful to prayer through their loudspeakers. I got used to it so that it didn't bother me, but Des still got woken up every morning by the mosque under his window. As a shift worker he didn't appreciate their prayer schedule. Tati and I headed for the local markets where food four is cheaper than the supermarkets and far more colourful, and Tati introduced me to the local buses. These are an experience. Mostly decrepit and often appearing to border on the dangerous, they run continuous services between destinations without schedules. There are official city buses with a set fare of Rp250 (about 9c), but the majority of buses on the road are run by cooperatives and charge anywhere from Rp350 to Rp1,000. We paid Rp350. A driver/conductor team will hire the bus out on payment of 25,000 to 40,000 rupiah, and pack as many passengers into as many runs as they can fit in one day. They are not air conditioned, and being packed into these in 30 degree, humid weather cannot be described as pleasant. Also, I was told, they are a haven for pickpockets.

On Saturday I took a taxi to the National Monument, Monas, in the northern centre of town. This is located on Merdeka Square and flanked by the Presidential Palace, the National Museum, the Town Hall or Governor's Office, and Gambir Railway Station. Taxis are almost as cheap as buses and \$2 goes a lot further than on a bus in Canberra. The monument is a pillar 120m high topped with a gold flame. This is real gold plating on a solid base and was increased from 30 kilos to 50 kilos this year to commemorate Indonesia's 50th anniversary of independence. This is the wet season of the west monsoon in Indonesia and showers and storms are frequent. Days are mostly cloudy with only occasional glimpses of blue sky. When the grey cloud is not obscuring the landscape the smog and traffic pollution is. It rained heavily while I was at the monument and made photographs look bleak. Leaving the monument I was approached and befriended by Robert, who subsequently guided me around Jakarta for the rest of the day. The people here are very friendly and I was constantly being approached and addressed. As soon as I spoke in Indonesian it opened up a whole new relationship. Kids from a Muslim school wanted their photo taken with me. Strangers wanted my photo, with them or their friends, and my address. With Robert I went to Sunda Kelapa at Tanjung Priok

in the dock area of Jakarta, through a much nicer looking part of town than down in Kuningan. Most of the traditional boats that anchor here were carrying wood, and the one I boarded over narrow, precariously placed planks, was from the Jambi district of Sumatra, a 4 day and 4 night journey that was undertaken once a month. The crew was very friendly and talkative, happy to have their photograph taken, and grateful for a few rupiah for ‘cigarette money’ when I left.



*A traditional boat loaded with wood docked at Sunda Kelapa.*

Trekking with Robert through the closely packed suburbs on the banks of some of the streams in Jakarta opened up vistas of a life I had not seen in decades - since leaving flying into south-east Asian destinations. The classification of Jakarta’s waterways as ‘streams’ is a misnomer of the greatest magnitude. They are generally filthy, polluted, narrow channels built along and over by mainly wooden houses at ground level. The government is currently trying to remove all inhabitants from the banks of streams in an attempt to beautify the city in a *Clean Streams Program*, abbreviated to *Prokasih* for *Program Kali Bersih*. It is facing enormous opposition from citizens groups who have occupied this territory for generations and are not being adequately

compensated for the shift. Government policy had been to issue notice of destruction of the area, with the requirement that residents move into government refuges or make their own arrangements as to removal. On the defined date remaining residents were moved out and bulldozers flattened the area regardless of whether the houses had been vacated or not. This policy was coming under severe criticism by concerned members of government and a more humane approach being introduced. Robert had friends in some of these houses who worked for him. Never at a loss for a job, he drove for a courier firm and also owned 15 carts that sold soft drinks and cigarettes. He had a 3-month old son in Java, he said. Well, Jakarta is the capital of Java, and Java is a big place. But I was to strike this expression again with Tati, from east Java, In referring to home they use Java, as distinct from Jakarta which is only where they work. I caught a taxi home and dropped Robert off along the way. Wanting to give him something for his trouble without embarrassing him I gave him Rp20,000. His instant response was "I'm not a poofter!" I told him I was giving him the money to buy something for his new son, and he accepted that.

I had resolved to eat only local food on this trip and mainly managed to do so. Tati cooked Indonesian dishes when we ate at home and Des and I ate Indian curry, nasi kepiting, and whatever else appealed to us from local menus including street stalls. There were some street stalls that I would never have eaten from though, and I never suffered from any stomach problems throughout the entire six weeks. Water, particularly ice, was promoted as a problem by health authorities, but using bottled water and drinking soft drinks without ice, or hot coffee gave me no problem at all. What did impress me was the fact that even though the streets and gutters were filthy the people were clean. Their clothes and their skin were almost invariably commendably clean. Crowds in the Hero and Golden Truly supermarkets we patronised were just like those in Australia, and the multitudes of workers in uniform were spic and span.

Traffic was becoming a real object of interest with the frequent traffic jams. Road rules were blatantly ignored by drivers, and the traffic patterns condoned by police because the system works to its own best advantage. There are 460 traffic light intersections in Jakarta, only 20 of which are controlled by a modern system (Area Traffic Control System). Roundabouts should give way to the left - the vehicle trying to enter the roundabout. In practice nobody gives right of way and everybody just fits in where they can. Zebra crossings have no meaning whatsoever other than indicating a likely place to cross.

Traffic pays no attention to pedestrians on or off crossings and it's an exercise in luck to cross any road. Prominent signs exhort drivers to *Hormati Pejalan Kaki* (Respect Pedestrians). Wags change the signs to read *Mati Pejalan Kaki* (Kill Pedestrians) and seem to enjoy the challenge. The only prominent police presence in our area is at the intersection of Gatot Subroto and Rasuna Said. Here, between 0630 and 1000, every vehicle headed into town must carry at least 3 persons. Police man the intersection in force and fine probably hundreds of offenders. Kids down the road try to sell their services as passengers through the intersection but I never saw any picked up. Motorbikes predominate in Indonesia because of their economy and the ease of negotiating traffic jams. They function as taxis and as family transport. I saw mum, dad and three children on one bike, taking frightening risks and relying on the car drivers for their survival. Women probably equal men in numbers as bike riders and are no less competent. Diesel fuel throughout Indonesia is fixed at Rp350 per litre and standard fuel at Rp700. The Australia dollar was around Rp1,700 to the dollar.

Jefferson Dau, my host in Jakarta for the Kalimantan part of the trip, returned from business in France on Monday 6th, and instantly started organising my transportation and accommodation. He gave me introductions to family and friends, suggested an itinerary, and organised his brother to meet me at Palangkaraya airport for accommodation at his Pelangi Hotel. He also suggested I take 2½ million rupiah in notes. Instant millionaire. Indonesia's notes were 100, 500, 1,000, 5,000, 10,000, 20,000 and 50,000 rupiah. Coins were 50, 100 and 500 rupiah, though I only saw one of the latter, and the 100 came in both silver and newer copper varieties. The travel bureau brought my airplane tickets to the unit and I paid Rp480,000 for jet transport to Palangkaraya and return from Banjarmasin. The itinerary had me travelling from Palangkaraya to Banjarmasin by speedboat. By the time I left Kalimantan I had logged many hours in speedboats. They are the buses and taxis of the jungle where roads do not exist. Des and I went to the George & Dragon for dinner on the Wednesday night. Strange name for a good Indian restaurant with local Bintang beer. Des bent a traffic rule on the way there and was pulled over by the police. His diplomatic licence prompted the policeman to offer to 'help' Des out of his problem. So with the passing of Rp5,000 all problems were solved and we were ushered back into the traffic flow.

## Kalimantan, 9 - 27 November 1995

*Kalimantan is the world's third largest island after Greenland and Papua New Guinea. It is shared by Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, with Indonesia's area being 539,460 sq km of the total 746,540. Of that, the province of Kalimantan Tengah (Central Kalimantan) occupies 152,600 sq km, 82% of which is jungle. Dayaks were the original inhabitants of Kalimantan Tengah where the prominent tribe along the Kahayan, Kapuas and Barito Rivers was the Ngaju.*

Thursday 9th October was the beginning of the Dayak Interlude that ended with my return to Jakarta on Monday 27th as a ceremonially accepted member of the Dayak community. I was up at 0345 for the 0600 F28 flight with Merpati Airlines. Breakfast was a cold plain omelette on the 1½-hour flight. Palangkaraya was only established with massive Russian aid in 1957 by President Sukarno and the name on the roof of the terminal at the airport, 'Tjilik Riwut, reflected this era. Now it would be spelt Cilik Riwut. Udir Dau was there to meet me in his 12-month old Feroza four wheel drive with houseboys from the Pelangi Hotel. There were not the rundown wrecks of vehicles here that Jakarta had. My first duty was to register with the police. This was a formality I would encounter further along the track too, and to effect this we picked up another of the Dau extended family, Sunaryo. Like Jefferson he had his degree in law, and I was to find out gradually that most of the family have their Masters in Law or are studying for it. Ngaju Dayaks have become the educated class of Central Kalimantan and hold the reins of power in government. Jefferson had run for governor of the province of Central Kalimantan in the last elections but had been defeated by a more politically acceptable opponent. He still has a strong following in the province and has taken his defeat to the courts for consideration. Governor of a province is a very powerful position, the equivalent of state premier, and requires a lot of personal involvement in its running.

Towns and villages throughout Indonesia have their descriptive titles. Palangkaraya was *Kota Cantik* (Pretty Town), and Cantik became an acronym to be displayed on signs at frequent intervals along roads or on government buildings. Listed vertically it described the town as:

C, Terengana (Planned)  
A, Aman (Safe)  
N, Nyaman (Comfortable)  
T, Tertib (Orderly)

I, Indah (Beautiful)

K, Keterbukaan (Openness)

The city of 107,000 inhabitants was clean and orderly with a sort of central business district and wide, clean streets, and the sun was shining with blue sky and white cumulus clouds - so different from Jakarta. My first activity in Palangkaraya was to be taken to the Dayak museum to start me on my cultural indoctrination. I had an interesting and attractive guide who had a small command of English she wanted to improve. So we helped each other with the two languages while I admired the implements, costumes, weapons and other artefacts, and had some of the ceremonies explained to me. Then I had a culture shock at lunch time when I was served an enormous prawn, almost the size of a small lobster, done in batter with all its legs, innards, antennae, etc. attached. Try eating that with a fork and dessert spoon, which are the customary utensils issued to those who do not eat with their fingers. I lost my appetite when the yellow innards oozed out as I was desperately trying to coax meat out of the shell, And I was served ice in my Coke. I drank it and suffered no ill effects, and went on to drink ice in reputable establishments despite the health warnings. Many of the larger towns in Indonesia have a healthy town water supply these days. After lunch it was a visit to nearby Lake Tahai and a boat ride with crash helmets for sun protection because we weren't wearing hats, followed by an introduction to a karaoke parlour. Udir, 65 years old and a bachelor, lives for his karaoke and also runs a session every night at his hotel. He maintains close liaison with other karaoke bar owners.

By 1430 I was booked with Dirgantara Air Services on a flight to a national park out to the west, Tanjung Puting, where orang-utans are rehabilitated and cared for, leaving on the 12th. Everything was happening with such orderly rapidity that I was a bit bewildered, and Udir obviously knew everyone who was anyone in the town. Udir needed his siesta so I was finally taken to my suite of two rooms at the hotel and told to be ready at 1900 for dinner. The Pelangi Hotel is a low, airy brick structure with terrazzo floor. Rooms form the top and stem of a T, and off the foot of the T is the kitchen and karaoke parlour. The bedroom had a large double bed, hand basin, wardrobes, attached toilet/bathroom with western fittings; and the second room had lounge suite, refrigerator, TV, study desk and attached toilet/bathroom. There was no hot water and this was to be the norm in accommodation at my level throughout Indonesia. Both rooms were air-conditioned. Yessie, the cook, and also seemingly part of the extended family brought coffee, bread, jam, peanut butter, tinned meat, sliced cheese and margarine to my room so that I could

make my own breakfast or snacks. I didn't get to use much of it. Udir brought 6 litres of bottled water, Aqua brand, and I was rarely without my bottle of Aqua for the rest of my stay in Indonesia. There were other brands but Aqua was by far the most predominant. Yessie was a 31-year old Dayak woman with a 4-year old son and had been married at some stage to an Englishman who had abandoned her to go home.

At 1900 Udir gave me a Dayak shirt to match my blue jeans, then we were off to the Sakura Hotel for dinner with a local singer, Effie, for entertainment. I had actually been introduced to Effie on my arrival at the airport. Then another bar and another singer, but I'm getting the message Udir does not drink. So I learn to order Coke or juice or coffee. After all, I'm not permitted to pay for anything yet. I had to plead tiredness and go to bed with a book at 2100. There were severe storms during the night but no sign of mosquitoes. I'm taking anti-malaria capsules recommended by the government medical officer in the Australian embassy in Jakarta.

The Pelangi Hotel is about 6km from the airport on the way into town, and I never worked out how far from the town. With Udir driving I was never sure where I was at any time. All the surrounding vacant land seemed to be flooded and there was so much room. This was a benefit of the town's recent establishment and the sensible planning that went into its layout. Yet the housing establishments that were under construction were tiny, crowded affairs. As I found out later these were for the poorer element of society including the transmigrants from crowded Java and, while basic, were popular. These units apparently cost Rp1½ million down payment and Rp5,400 a month over 20 years. To put these figures into perspective, Tati has been working for 20 years and has just saved I million rupiah (less than \$600).



*The Pelangi Hotel at Palangkaraya.*

My second day in Palangkaraya was a pretty slow affair. Udir didn't get up till 0930; full of apology for sleeping in when he found out I'd been up at 0600. I had asked the houseboys if there was any way I could get into town by bus or taxi, and they were adamant there was no way. Udir would look after me. I think there were only ever two guests in the hotel during my stay. Obviously it did not pay its way, but apparently Udir did not need the income. He seemed to have income from other sources, and owned land over the road from the Pelangi Hotel on which he had built a house used by at least one of his houseboys. He is planning on building a housing estate there.

We toured town and viewed the substantial government buildings and monuments with their spacious yards. The government buildings are all built to a traditional, regional style, but commercial businesses could belong in any town anywhere. We lunched with girls from his bank, and visited more family with connections to Tien Soeharto - Mrs President. Then another karaoke parlour, but with a difference. This one has a satellite telephone with parabolic antenna, an indication of the technological development of Indonesia despite its poverty at the village level. The parlour owner said the government had not increased his bills with the upgrade. Sightseeing included the port area of

Pelabuhan Rambang where the speedboats tie up, and a lot of local business is transacted on the raised walkways and platforms above the river and its flood tide area. The Kahayan River is navigable by inter-island boats, especially from Surabaya and Madura, except in the dry season. In the shops traditional old model boats made from the sap of the rubber trees before it is processed were numerous and interesting, as were the flintlock pistols from a past era. But were they real or instant antiques?

In Australia, when pedestrians must walk on the road, we generally walk on the right to face oncoming traffic. In Palangkaraya they walked on the left in groups or as individuals and assumed as much right as vehicles, expecting cars and mini buses to swerve around them or wait for an opportunity to pass.

Dinner at the Sakura again introduced me to two more couples in the extended family. Udir's younger brother, Nelson Dau, was active in business, studying for his law degree at the University of Indonesia, and had been prominent in the Chamber of Commerce where he was photographed with President Soeharto. Yacob and his wife fitted in there somewhere too. Everyone can have a go at singing during dinner. Udir does, Nelson does, naturally Effie does, and so does Mrs Yacob who has quite a respectable voice, which is more than I can say for Udir and Nelson. The embarrassing thing is they sing about me, making up or adapting lyrics to explain my presence in Palangkaraya. Nelson wants to practise his English, which is good but slow. A repeat of last night, we go to the same hotel - the Dandang Tinang - for more singing and coffee, tea, juice or water. The Army Commander for Kalimantan arrives with his escort and, of course, Udir knows him. Quite a little party of about 15 people develops, with the Commander taking the microphone for some respectable singing. Rank knows no barriers here. I get lots of advice on Tanjung Puting and orang-utans in between the lights failing a few times in a severe storm. At midnight we can go home, but Udir is elated and we have to go to the local Telkom office, with its phone booths open 24 hours a day, to phone Alan Cooke.

On Saturday Udir thought he was doing me a favour by taking me to lunch at the Dandang Tinang where they served NZ T-bone steaks. I promised him better when he gets to Australia. Nelson took over for the afternoon by driving us to one of his four houses. This was a small one an hour's drive away up in the hills, with a surrounding small farm where he grew corn, durian, jackfruit and jambu, which is a kind of guava. Since he only visited it occasionally for a weekend or so he had a permanent farm boy looking after

his interests in the plantation. His neighbour was less well off, a local who had a pond that he kept stocked with fish. Currently 2,500, stocks can be as high as 5,000 and are ready for sale every four months. At this level many of the people are largely self-sufficient, with bartering taking the place of money.

Tuty Dau, a younger member of the family, managed a dance troupe that performed traditional Dayak dances in magnificent costume. The troupe had performed overseas in a few countries but was inactive at the moment, with all its members going about their business as bank clerks or whatever. Udir organised for them to come together for my entertainment on the Saturday night, when they performed three dances in the karaoke room for a selected group of invitees. The performance was excellent and the dancers beautiful. I was able to take several photographs, and give them copies later on. The dances gave way then to a session of raucous disco music and karaoke. There was no way I would embarrass myself by singing in the karaoke so Nelson sang the songs I was nominated for. Nobody spoke much English but many had an understanding of it, and had learned the lyrics off by heart even when they had no idea of the meaning.



*Dancers at the Pelangi Hotel.*

The aircraft left at 0900 on Sunday for Pangkalan Bun, and I had peanut butter and jam sandwiches for breakfast from my private store. A Spanish Casa, it was a basic aircraft with high wing, twin turboprop engines and a well-used look about it. Seats were barely more than tubular steel and canvas. There were 5 passengers in the 18 seats for the 1½hour flight across mostly featureless jungle. I had soon chartered a guide, Said, a devout Muslim, at \$US25 a day and arranged for a 5-day tour of Tanjung Puting that required police registration, permits and a boat. This was going to cost me about 1 million rupiah for bed and breakfast in a basic large room with Asian toilet - no air conditioning - and included Said's fee. Jefferson had given me an introduction to a Professor Buhap with long association with Tanjung Puting, and Udir had arranged a letter to the local manager of Dirgantara Air Services. My queries about the professor got me nowhere, but I insisted on going to the DAS office to ensure I was doing the right thing. They were quite happy to see me in my guide's hands, and I was on my way to Kumai in a decrepit rust-bucket of a taxi. Petrol stations are few and far between throughout Indonesia and generally have only one pump for each type of fuel, and little stalls sell quantities as little as a litre from plastic containers.

Kumai, with its title of *Kota Manis* (Attractive Town), was 25km away on the Kumai River and the start of the journey into the park. It was necessary to register here for park entry and obtain written permits for each day of intended stay. I was talked into taking a speedboat rather than a klotok, one of the slower, bigger boats with inboard diesel motors. This had its advantages in terms of time saved but was to cost me a lot more in the long run. The river was truly a pathway through the jungle that, in most places, looked impenetrable. Flowing swiftly with the increased volume of the wet season it was nevertheless smooth. It mirrored the palms choking the edge like a giant mirror. I thought I was hiring the speedboat for just the one half-hour trip to the park, but found out when I got there that I had contracted for the full five days at Rp125,000 a day. After a few chosen words with Said about escalating expenses I cut back the proposed tour to three days.

*Tanjung Puting National Park houses the Orang-utan Research and Conservation Project at Camp Leakey. This was founded some 20 years ago by Dr Birute Galkidas and is dedicated to rehabilitating ex-captive orang-utans. Besides Camp Leakey there are two other rehabilitation centres at Natai Lengkuas and Tanjung Harapan.*

The Rimba Lodge where I was accommodated and fed was the centre of park administration, but everything happened at the camps removed from the

lodge, necessitating a boat ride to do or see anything. It was still daylight when we arrived at the park and we immediately went to a nearby camp to see the younger orang-utans being cared for. Some were indoors in cages; others were free to wander where they wished outdoors. Istok was about 2 years old and loved to hold hands and go for a walk. But he was afraid of being left alone in the jungle. We walked him in and left him with food, and as soon as we left he started crying and came running after us. He will eventually be able to look after himself in the real world, but in the meantime enjoys helping the carpenter repair buildings. Boim was only a little baby, and held up his arms to be picked up and hugged when I approached him at the edge of a track into the surrounding jungle. What I thought were piles of meaningless dead branches and leaves in nearby trees were, in fact, orang-utan nests. Orang-utans are only found in the tropical rain forests of Kalimantan and Northern Sumatra. A 30-minute cruise around the lodge location in the speed boat revealed a wild, large orang-utan and many smaller monkeys including the proboscis monkey before I called it quits to go and light my mosquito coil. The proboscis is a rare, shy monkey that is only found in Kalimantan.



*Terry Bibo with an Orang-utan at the Tanjung Puting National Park.*

Even wearing long trousers and long-sleeve shirt I was bitten twice through the material by mosquitoes as I waited for my dinner in the restaurant. The restaurant was just a big hall, part of the complex set up for the 2nd International Great Apes Conference held in December 1991. Dinner was cooked in an adjoining cabin.

I was the sole guest in the 35-room complex that was built to classical Dayak architecture on the Sekonyer River, with all buildings about a metre above ground and connected by wooden walkways. There were no facilities for entertainment or reading, and I was glad to have brought a book, *River God*, that I was reading for the second time, and the short wave radio I had bought duty free on leaving Australia. But the lighting was inadequate for anything more than finding my way around my room. I had to ask for a reading lamp, and that was so weak I had to remove its cover to get enough light to read by. My toilet was the squatting variety with footprints either side of the floor-level bowl. But at least I had a reasonable shower instead of the tub of water with plastic dipper. And toilet paper rather than another dipper of water as is common throughout Indonesia.

My speedboat driver provided a row boat for an hour's sightseeing after breakfast on Monday and we saw a group of orang-utans feeding close to the river. There are an estimated 100 orang-utans in the surrounding forest, about half of which are wild and the remainder rehabilitated. There was little sign of any bird life and none of the crocodiles that like to eat monkeys for breakfast. The river was deep and clean, but the colour of weak tea. In the dry season it becomes very shallow and not readily navigable. At 0900 I was on my way to Camp Leakey, 45 minutes away. We had not gone half way when we came on a big tree that had fallen across the river last night and had to be hacked into three parts before we could proceed. There was already a klotok at the site with a Japanese researcher on board, and from the roof of his klotok we watched the crew and guides chop and saw the limbs and trunk of the tree to create a free passage upstream. Then the weed-choked narrows clogged our propeller and held us up further. Speeding down a clear, wide stretch of the river I was surprised to see a troupe of large monkeys, probably proboscis, leaping into the river ahead of us and swimming to the other bank. They use the passage of speedboats to avoid being eaten by crocodiles that are frightened by the outboard motors and lie low until they have passed.

The jungle was hot and sweaty with over 2,000mm of rain falling in the wet season and I was generally soaked most of the time. Everywhere I went I took

my bottled water that was available in the most surprising places. It seems to have been the growth industry of the decade, much to the enjoyment of tourists and locals alike who appreciate the necessity for clean drinking water. Generally it was not expensive at around Rp1,300 (77c) for 1½ litres, but the Rimba Lodge, which sold it through the restaurant, doubled the price to Rp2,500 and then added 21% tax. The delays on the way to Camp Leakey were not significant when I found I had a four-hour wait to see the orang-utans being fed. So I just had to lie around and wait, and eat my chicken sandwich boxed lunch. The Japanese researcher arrived and we watched a couple of tame orang-utans put on a show for us with a rice sack. They played together with the sack until one of them hooked it over a broken branch on a horizontal limb, climbed into it, and started swinging himself like a pendulum. Then the camp rangers brought out some white rice wine, a traditional Dayak drink. It was quite drinkable, with a sweet taste.

The original feeding place is a small arena in the jungle, with complex shapes formed by the vines entwining the trees. But now it has been moved to a deteriorating wooden walkway that no longer goes anywhere. Even though the orang-utans are tame there is always an element of danger that must be considered. They sometimes try to take cameras or bags or anything loose from the admiring tourists. The rangers have a small shanghai with which they shoot pellets that deter the animals. As a last resort they use a bamboo wand with an oil-soaked end that they set fire to. After the feeding with bananas and mangoes we returned to Rimba Lodge, held up again at the narrows with a klotok firmly clogged in the weed. Another quiet night.

Yesterday's feeding was not considered sufficiently impressive and I was scheduled for the morning session at another camp, leaving at 0630. This time a clumsy looking hornbill, a massive bird with a grotesque horny casque growing from its forehead over the top of its beak, appeared in the trees during our river passage, and literally squadrons of mosquitoes escorted us through the jungle. They didn't like my Bushman Plus insect repellent, 80% DEET with a 15+ sunscreen built in. All the orang-utans had to be called to eat. They each have a name, and using these and monkey noises the rangers coaxed about 10 in from the surrounding jungle. There is plenty of food available for them in the bush in the wet season, so they are not always waiting to be fed. Among the orang-utans was a tiny baby still clinging to its mother, except this wasn't the natural mother. The baby had been adopted by a motherless adult from a healthy new mother. Apparently this is quite common in the orang-utan community. During feeding the orang-utans were quite

approachable and could be patted. None of them was more than about 60cm in body height - not like the large adults in the deep jungle standing almost 1½ metres tall. Their arms were very long, so that when they walked their fingers could drag along the ground. An American couple attended the feeding session and said they were living on a klotok, saving the expense of accommodation and a speedboat. I think the mosquitoes and lack of sanitation and privacy would discourage my wanting to do that for any length of time.

From here it was off to another camp to see proboscis monkeys, but they had all retreated into the deep jungle and our feeble penetration did not reveal any. I did see a sign warning about cobras though, which I had not considered a threat here. And on the way back to Rimba Lodge we saw a crocodile, like the fresh water crocodiles of north Queensland. We were back in camp by 0930 and I went swimming in a rough wooden enclosure on the bank of the river, while the speedboat driver spent his time successfully fishing for small fish and prawns. Lunch was gado-gado, a vegetable salad with peanut butter sauce. Every cook seems to have a different recipe but this was excellent. My wallet was considerably healthier than first expected when I checked out after only two nights here and returned to Kumai. But I am sure I saw all that was worth seeing. The speed boat driver was disappointed at his reduced earnings and argued for Rp350,000 for the period. I considered that high but reasonable. Said had finally told me that my professor, Buhap, had a house on the outskirts of Pangkalan Bun and it would not be out of our way to call on him in our taxi on the way back there. I had an obligation to Jefferson Dau here and said we certainly should. Professor Buhap was asleep, none of his family wanted to wake him up, so we left Jefferson's card with my regrets and that was the end of that episode until I next saw Jefferson.

Said worked as a guide in conjunction with a hotel, the Blue Kecubung, and this is where we went for my next two nights. It was under renovation and could be a quality hotel when complete. At least I had air conditioning even if I still had the horizontal toilet and a saucepan bath. A severe storm took out the electricity after catching Said and me on a tour of the town and soaking us, and I spent most of the night with candles and fluorescent lamp before it was restored. Said, too, was disappointed at the premature end to my Tanjung Puting tour and wanted to spend a day showing me the town and district to make an extra day's income. We planned on taking a klotok down stream to the river mouth for the scenery and to have a swim in the clean sea. Food in the hotel restaurant was excellent and cheap and I maintained my discipline of eating only Indonesian food. Pangkalan Bun was basically a typical colourless,

decrepit and polluted town by Australian standards but, as elsewhere, the people were happy and clean. The lack of colour throughout the country was caused by the use of unpainted timber for building material. This rapidly weathered to a kind of universal grey, lightened by occasional patches of pastel tones where paint had been applied. Said was a qualified religious teacher had made his pilgrimage to Mecca and worked in Saudi Arabia for two years as a chauffer. He wore a small compass on his watch band to give him west for his five devotions during the day. These devotions are: Subuh, around 0400; Lohor, around 1200; Asar, around 15-1600, Magrib, around 1800; Isya, around 1900. National newspapers publish the times to the minute each day, and national television superimposes notice of Magrib over whatever program is showing at that time.

After picking up my DAS ticket to Banjarmasin where I have decided to go next, we shopped for lunch and caught the same decrepit taxi as last time to Kumai again. I don't want to hurry back to Palangkaraya after being sent on a week's tour; this place has nothing to offer - even Said admits that - and Banjarmasin has appeal for its history and geography. The taxi driver drives like crazy, but so do most other drivers. Centre lines mean nothing and he ignores the one red light in the entire town because there are no police visible. Pedestrians here, too, possess immunity from accident that would not be extended to them by drivers in Australia.

The klotok ride down stream was a leisurely affair in good weather, looking at the variety of local shipping that provides transportation throughout the archipelago. The captain's wife provides coffee, mango, and biscuits for morning tea as we sit on the roof of the klotok. Said takes a liking to my watch with its database of 50 telephone numbers, world time, stopwatch etc, and wants to swap me his cheap and simple one. When I take mine off to show him its features he puts it on his wrist and hands me his. I have to hurriedly tell him that I am dependent on telephone numbers and information in my watch that I do not have recorded elsewhere, and I cannot swap him. He is disappointed. To change into swimmers I use the toilet built off the back end of the boat - out over the water. The floor is only a few open boards and I have to be careful not to drop anything important, like wallet or passport. We are the only swimmers on the beach, but there is a fishing boat anchored there mending nets and we get into conversation with the two crew. This is not the season for their catch, but when the fish are in season they can catch a tonne a night, which is enough for a good living. Back on the boat the captain's wife - we'll call her Ibu, which is her form of address - serves lunch of rice, yabbies,

prawns and noodles. She prepared these in the kitchen/living area at the back of the boat. This is like a separate room, unlike the more open area we sit in to eat. The wooden roof provides a firm protection from elements for the entire length of the boat, and roll-down blinds provide defence against wind, waves or sunshine. Then we pack up for the return journey with a bit of fishing on the way. No luck at all.



*A klotok on the Sekonyer River.*

Disaster struck suddenly when the diesel engine threw a valve and seized up. We were in the shallows with about 60cm of water under our keel, and the few passing boats would not interrupt their own journey and risk coming to our rescue. No amount of waving my shirt attracted any attention from a nearby village on the shore and we looked like being stranded for the night. “No problem,” says Ibu, cheerfully. “If we’re not back by 0400 my sons will come and get us. They have speed boats and we have a standing arrangement for calamities like this.” But prayers directed to Mecca and heaven won out in the long run and a fisherman came from somewhere to tow us home. A man of few words and no nonsense he had us back at Kumai in two hours, where my taxi driver was asleep on the wharf and all Ibu’s family crowded out to see us

berth. We had been seen by her sons as we came upstream. By 1900 I was back in my room in Pangkalan Bun and getting clothes washed and dried for tomorrow's departure. The big tub affair for my bath was great for washing in, and the air conditioning dried clothes overnight.

When I was leaving at 0630 next morning - in the same rusty taxi - primary school kids were doing physical exercises and singing nationalist songs in the schoolyard over the road from the hotel. They started morning session at 0700, and another session started in the afternoon to cater for the numbers of school children. The *Bun* in *Pangkalan Bun* means fog in local dialect and there was a fog on the drive out to Iskandar airport, but it rapidly cleared. Said saw me settled in waiting for the Casa aircraft then went off to chase up more work with incoming tourists.

*Banjarmasin, with a population around 480,000, is the provincial capital of South Kalimantan and is located on tidal swamp land at the mouth of the Barito River, but crisscrossed by several rivers. Muslim Banjarese with their floating lifestyle constitute the greater part of the population.*

It was an uneventful flight to Banjarmasin, which was just as well since my seat belt didn't work. In this part of Kalimantan there was considerably more cultivation, and some roads, along which the strip development of villages associated with rivers was evident. Not until we came in sight of Banjarmasin was there a town that grew in all directions. At the Syamsuddin Noor airport all was clean and orderly, and taxis were obtained by buying a voucher at a ticket window then going to a nominated vehicle. Town was 26km away along a busy road flanked by substantial and conventional houses and businesses. The taxi driver was very pleasant and informative, and took me to the Diamond Homestay backpackers hostel recommended by Said. As with Tanjung Puting I was the sole occupant of the 3-storey hostel. It was basic, but had a TV and refrigerator in a small reading room with old magazines, and a downstairs shower/toilet that was a mixture of western toilet and Asian dipper bath. They did not provide toilet paper even though I specifically asked for it. At around \$10 a night I wasn't complaining. I had a room on the first floor with four beds in it, a ceiling fan, hanging space, and very little more. It looked out over a secure balcony to a narrow lane that led to the Martapura riverside. This was now Thursday, 16 November 1995.

The foil on my Braun electric shaver failed this morning and I was forced to take a becak - the bicycle taxi with the rider behind and the passenger in front - to the local Hero supermarket to buy a Gillette safety razor. Locals were very

pushy in promoting the becak or ojek, motorbike taxi, for local transport. Everyone wants to say hello and talk to me in the street, and it can take ages to go anywhere if I stop to talk to many of them. My shop assistant in Hero, Sylvester, is overpowering in his service and interest in my background, and we collect a small group of shoppers and staff for several minutes of conversation.

The hostel is only metres away from the river where the speed boats and klotoks start their tourist oriented river cruises, and a lady opposite the hostel warned me to be careful of my camera while walking in the tourist area. I saw no evidence of any tourists but I was a bit apprehensive in my first stroll along the riverbank. Subsequently I never felt that there was any problem. My language has improved significantly since arriving in Indonesia and I feel quite comfortable in conversation, which probably removes a lot of the threat to conventional tourists.

One of the things I wanted to see in Kalimantan was a Dayak longhouse but there was none near Palangkaraya. From Banjarmasin I could take an overnight tour to a longhouse 141 kilometres away, with driver, guide, food and accommodation provided for \$US115. That figure had been arrived at because I was the only member on the tour, otherwise it was \$150 for two people.

With only three hours time difference here it was easier to call home than in Palangkaraya with its four-hour difference, and after phoning Susan I wandered around to buy chicken sate from a roadside cart, after which I got lost. My taxi driver from the airport came to my rescue when I stumbled across him in the street, and I was only about 100 metres from my hostel.

At 0830 on Friday morning I was picked up in a Kijang, a Toyota van looking like a two wheel drive Land Cruiser. Grossly underpowered with only a 1.5 litre engine, but immensely popular because they are made in Indonesia and sell for 24 to 40 million rupiah. The commercial versions do not have a right hand passenger door, so that passengers cannot step out into passing traffic. My guide provided all food, drink - including Aqua, though I brought my own for insurance - and wet weather gear for the jungle. It was an interesting drive out along a major north bound road paralleling a river in stretches, with the usual river activities of bathing and washing at any hour of the day and any point on the river. We visited a batik factory making clothes, tablecloths and things, but not the beautiful paintings and drawings produced by Indonesian artists. We passed through Banjarbaru and Rantau, villages probably the size of

Queanbeyan, with extensive markets, prominent local government buildings and occasional police or army barracks. Traffic was more orderly than I had become used to but was still reckless by Australian standards. Double centre lines were ignored by speeding buses that forced oncoming traffic to the edge of their lanes.

Lunch was grilled gold fish at an open restaurant in Kandangan with two storks tethered to a floating platform in front of it, And I was introduced to salak, a local pear shaped fruit with a scaly skin like a brown snake's, and a white, fleshy segmented fruit over big brown seeds. By now rice, supplemented by mainly chicken, vegetables or fish, had become my staple diet. And I was enjoying it and suffering no ill effects. Besides my bottled water I drank Coke without ice.

The last half hour of the four-hour trip was over a rutted, twisting, sometimes slippery, climbing dirt road where I wished we had four wheel drive. This took me to Muara Tanuhi village where my guide and I would start a two-hour walk through the jungle to get to the site of the longhouse. As we left in one direction a Dutch couple from the Metro Guesthouse left the village in another, commencing an eight-day trek in which they would be self-sufficient. Undoubtedly they would spend part of that time in longhouses as guests of the Dayak community. It had been raining but I rejected my guide's offer of a rain cape. Even up here at almost 3000 metres it was hot and humid so that I was soon soaked with sweat anyway, and when it did start to rain on our walk I could see no point in putting on extra clothing to no avail. Jungle paths were slippery, sometimes so steep that I had to stop for a rest, and crossed six suspension bridges. There was a seventh that was too unsafe to use and we used a bamboo raft called from the village on the other side of the stream. Villages we passed through were deserted or nearly so. Most of the inhabitants vacate the village in daylight hours to tend to crops in nearby plantations, and do not return until sundown. With tropical regrowth so fast there is no immediate evidence of logging, but all the big trees have been removed from around centres of civilisation and easily accessible waterways. There is nothing like the rainforest of Lamington Plateau here. A major part of Indonesia's transmigration program to move people from crowded Java to sparsely populated outer islands is centred on logging the forests of Kalimantan.

Loksado resort was a welcome sight as I clambered the last hundred metres along a muddy hillside that I initially took to be a landslide. In a pleasant valley at the foot of the Meratus mountain range, and located on small islands in a

shallow stream that splits into several branches, it was cool and comfortable. I had to cross two suspension bridges to reach my cabin. Motorbikes were common here, and used the same narrow bridges as the pedestrians. My first action after being introduced to my room was to bathe in the fresh water of the rapids just outside. I had a bedroom with standard Asian toilet/bath attached, a bare dining room, and front and back verandas. There were twin single beds, each with only one sheet - in early childhood I had only one sheet, I remembered -and I wrapped myself in the second sheet before the morning came. Shutter windows opened to the wide world giving no protection from mosquitoes, forcing me to liberally apply the Bushman gel. But the atmosphere was all friendly and accommodating because, once again, I was the sole guest at the resort. This 'soleness' had its advantages in that I received individual attention and was not sharing services, accommodation or even conversation with other tourists. But it did sometimes have its flip side when I would have appreciated the company of family or friends to enjoy the circumstances with me. I would have to rate the dinner that was brought to my room at 1800 as the best food I ate in Indonesia. Traditional Dayak food, it was tasty, plentiful and royally served with candles until the electricity was turned on for the night. Dinner was rice, tomato and cucumber salad, krupuks, vegetable soup, grilled gold fish (probably brought up from the lunchtime restaurant), noodles, a dish created from maroon champignons and a sort of thin, sliced salami, and a concoction I can not even describe except to say it was magnificent. The Dayak longhouse could not be visited during the day because most of the inhabitants were out in the fields. So at 1900 on the Friday night I boarded the Kijang with my guide and driver for the 30-minute drive and walk to the longhouse in Malaris. The Kijang had continued up the road to the resort after dropping the guide and me earlier, bringing our packs and food. We had yet another river to cross on foot though in the dark, over a long and unstable suspension bridge in deteriorating condition, and then along a narrow path to the house.

*Dayak culture was preserved in story telling, not in written records, so there is no written history from early periods, though they are known to have inhabited Kalimantan thousands of years B.C. One of the main causes for their spread throughout the island was inter-tribal fighting, causing tribes to seek ever more remote areas where they developed in isolation. On marriage, the wife stayed with her parents and the husband left his tribe to join his wife's, giving rise to large extended families in the longhouses and firm community relationships. Basically animists, Dayaks worshipped ancestral spirits and their religion, later to become known as Kaharingan, motivated their lives. Hinduism and Christianity invaded their*

*culture from the 17th through the mid-19th centuries, eliminating tribal disputes including head hunting and bringing education. Sending Protestants from Germany used the Ngaju language to translate the bible and spread Christianity. Islam entered through the influence of Banjarese traders and the religions have developed side by side Kaharingan has now become Hindu-Kaharingan embraced by a majority of Dayaks. The Banjarese were also influential in changing the slash and burn agriculture techniques of the Dayaks to a more stable pattern.*

Built on stumps about one meter high, the main room of the longhouse was 20m by 30m, and that's a big room. Pigs occupied the area under the house. The 'houses' for the families were tacked on the outside of this room with doorways opening into them. This community was of 25 families totalling 170 people. Family units cooked and slept in their houses. Unattached, elder children of these families slept on grass mats on the floor of the main room. Strangers are welcomed as guests and may stay as long as they wish, and western tourists have spent days and weeks in this longhouse experiencing the culture and community spirit of these Dayaks. Its floor was mainly split bamboo with significant gaps between the sections, but there was a strong central hardwood floor in the centre of the room where ceremonies were conducted. Tall grass decorations were still here from a recent ceremony. The modern age was catching up with these Dayaks in their jungle retreat. The provincial governor had recently provided corrugated iron roofing for the house and a large television. The TV was not working the night I was there. Indonesian state television is strongly nationalistic, and I think the five private channels are closely monitored, so the Dayaks would not be exposed to much of the rubbish that dominates western television screens. My guide had brought a number of balloons for the children's entertainment and this occupied them playfully while I looked around. Some of the handicrafts produced in these longhouses are superb quality. The inhabitants have the time and the patience to devote to their skills, and their weaving and plaiting in particular are impressive. Within easy reach of Loksado there are at least 19 of these longhouses and there is no prospect that the Dayak culture is under threat of extinction.

The return part of my trip promised a bamboo raft ride down the Amandir River to the Tanuhi village and I was not too sure about this. How deep and turbulent was the river? How safe was the bamboo raft? Would I risk being tossed overboard? Was it safe to take my camera? I couldn't get any specific answers from my guide. Just about every query was directed back to me for resolution, but I did ascertain that almost no-one fell overboard and people

generally took their cameras. So I put my swimmers on after an excellent breakfast and boarded the 15-metre bamboo raft for the 2½-hour trip back to the village where I had entered the jungle. The raft was a simple construction with the sharp end being formed naturally by the tapering tops of the bamboo poles. The 19 poles were held together by twisted strips of bamboo skin. For my convenience the boatman had built a small bamboo seat in the middle of the raft, which kept me dry when the rest of the raft was frequently under water. He operated with a bamboo pole at the sharp end and was assisted at the back, when necessary, by the guide. It was a worthwhile experience, sedate, ponderous and safe. The river is very shallow and we were frequently dragging over rocks just below the surface. The rapids were friendly and there were few deep pools. We passed through attractive forest and clearings, past settlements and isolated huts, under suspension bridges that I had probably negotiated yesterday, and saw some bird and animal life. We arrived back at the village for a coffee just as the Kijang pulled in from Loksado.

On the return to Banjarmasin we stopped to look at souvenirs, a diamond-polishing factory in Martapura (diamonds are prolific and cheap in Kalimantan), and a diamond mine in Cempaka. The diamonds are mined underground in tunnels off shafts up to 10 metres deep, using very primitive traditional methods. When the soil from the shaft is brought to the surface it is washed and screened in the nearby river to produce the rough diamonds. Most of the hundreds of miners are poor labourers, and one of them took a liking to my cap that I had bought in Pangkalan Bun for my jungle trip. So I gave it to him. They also fingered my tee shirt, telling me what good quality it was, but I wasn't about to give that away too. When we stopped at the same restaurant in Kandangan for lunch it was crowded with police from a nearby barracks and was obviously very popular. I settled for chicken and rice. Back at the Diamond Homestay I did a massive wash of muddy clothes and shoes in my peculiar bath. The rooms fortunately had drying racks to hang washing out either under the ceiling fan or on the balcony.

Sunday Mass at 0800 was an experience too. I had found the cathedral in my early strolling around town. The church was packed to overflowing and the congregation sang the Mass, in Indonesian of course, with the assistance of a very competent choir. The readers were better than what many, if not most, Australian parishes I have attended produce. It lasted 1½ hours and was an impressive ceremony in this country with the world's largest Muslim population. In this concentrated crowd I was made acutely aware of something mentioned at yesterday's diamond mine. Indonesians are small people. I was a

full head and shoulders over the congregation, something I had not noticed in dealing with individuals or small numbers. And they all have jet-black hair. No exceptions. I think I was the only non-Indonesian in the entire congregation. I was beginning to think I was the only Caucasian in Banjarmasin until I saw another couple later in the day.

On the way home I replaced my cap with a more expensive one with gold wings on the front. For simplicity I told the curious that I was a newly retired navigator from the RAAF and nobody was sufficiently inquisitive to work out that I retired 20 years ago, and this cap later became my identifying symbol. I was accosted in the street by a local guide, Birin, and arranged with him to go to the floating markets at 0530 tomorrow morning, a 30-minute trip by motor boat.. He helps me choose postcards while practising his English and again we collect a small crowd, some of whom want my name and address and information on Australia. If everybody I've given my address to writes I'll need my own postman.

Birin met me at Diamond Homestay at 0530 next morning, and we had a minor problem to sort out before I could go anywhere. I had spoken to other local boatmen about going to the floating markets before going to Loksado, but had not considered that I had a contract with them. One of them was with Birin trying to take my custom but I stuck with Birin and his boatman, Suni, who drove the klotok. It was still dark when we arrived at the Kuin village for the floating markets, but there were already several of the hundreds of perahus and klotoks that would congregate there loaded with merchandise - mostly fruit and vegetables, fish or rice, but including household utensils and cakes. Even having seen the cake boat driver washing his glass tumblers in the river, I decided to have cakes and coffee for breakfast. The markets are famous for the quality and variety of the cakes on these boats. Coffee in Indonesia at stalls, cafes and hotels was almost invariably served in tumblers, posing a problem initially in picking up the hot glass to get the first few mouthfuls until there was sufficient of a collar to hold the glass comfortably. Cakes were chosen by picking up a long rod with a nail in the end and stabbing the selected cake from the variety of plates, and I did this a few times, enjoying the spicy and fruit filled cakes with my hot, sweet coffee.



*Floating markets at Kuin village.*

From the market we went straight to Pulau Kembang, known as Monkey Island, in the hope of seeing proboscis monkeys at close hand. They are active in the early morning and had long retired from view when we arrived. There were several long-tailed macaques willing to take our peanuts though. We came back via a different route so that I could see the life along the waterways. Sometimes wide and spacious, often narrow, busy and crowded, these were the roads and lanes of the villages. Houses were built along every available metre of riverbank and some were built on floating bamboo platforms anchored to the shore. Every house had its access to the river by platform or steps and there were people constantly washing themselves, their clothes or their teeth, or urinating or defecating in the river. The current always provided a flow of water, not necessarily unpolluted, for their continuing activities. Throughout Indonesia I found the people surprisingly clean, body and clothing, considering the sometimes-primitive conditions they have to live under. Their skin glows with health and I can only assume they build up immunity to infection from polluted water with years of exposure. I was starting to get a bit concerned about Birin on the way home. Twenty-three years old, Rp60,000 in bank savings (about \$36), no girl friends, never even goes to a brothel - unlike

most young Indonesians, he tells me. He likes tourists and loves to make up their fortunes by reading palms, because he loves to touch and stroke their skin - stroking his own palm and lower arm all the time he was explaining this to me. Every man to his own pursuits, but he was getting no encouragement from me. Then he wanted to accompany me back to Palangkaraya tomorrow, and became quite insistent. Finally he settled for my address and promised to write to me. (There was a letter waiting for me when I arrived home, asking for money to enable him to learn to speak English better.) He was good conversation value with an extensive vocabulary and wide local knowledge, but I was certainly not going to become involved with Birin.

After the market trip I got all my photos processed. Cheaper than in Australia and very fast service, about 20c per print with free developing. After finding out that the post office was more than walking distance away I took an ojek (motor bike) to post my postcards. That was an experience, riding pillion through the frantic traffic, and not one I would make a habit of repeating. I followed up my morning cakes with local pastries and Java apples. These were like golden delicious but much harder and more fibrous. Fruit markets here were swamped with mangoes, pushing other fruit like bananas to the background. I had to search widely to get bananas and there were a variety of these unknown in Australia. One I ate a lot was only about 7cm long when peeled. Local fruit that I would have liked, such as rambutan and duku, were not yet in season. And had durian been in season I would have been game to try that again. Described variously as *like eating fruit salad in a toilet* and *tastes like heaven, smells like hell* it was another month away from being available.

The hostel where I had become expert at doing my washing with toilet soap, using tourist maps as toilet paper, and spending lonely hours listening to short wave radio or reading newspapers had served its function, and I was ready to move back to Palangkaraya. Banjarmasin had been a relatively clean city with a lot of western influence in its construction as well as local architecture. There was plenty of variety on the radio with AM and FM stations broadcasting western music. Television, radio and banners in the street constantly exhorted dedication to cleanliness and nationalism, and the dominance of Islam as the national religion was constantly apparent but never forced in the nature of radical Muslim countries. Jefferson Dau had intended that I experience the trip from Palangkaraya to Banjarmasin by speedboat on departure from Kalimantan, so I decided to do the trip in reverse since I was already in Banjarmasin. There is no road connecting these two towns, though Australia is

involved in the construction of two bridges that will open up the construction of roads in 1997. Currently only air and river transport are available.

Tuesday 21 November was another day of the unexpected. My ojek driver put my suitcase between his knees, me with backpack on the pillion, and for a couple of thousand rupiah took me to the ferry terminal at Jalan Pos where speed boats left for several destinations whenever they had a full load. These were not ordinary speedboats as known in Australia. They were long and narrow, seating 21 passengers along each side and more in with the driver and on short bench seats squeezed in periodically. We were packed so tightly there wasn't room to fart, but the company was pleasant. Power was provided by twin 200hp outboards, and they moved at my estimation of at least 60km/hr at top speed. It was a four hour trip up three rivers - Barito, Kapuas and Kahayan - with a few stops to clear weed from the engines, pick up or put down passengers, refuel and have lunch at a riverside stall. The first 1½ hours took us past villages and other signs of civilisation, then most of the rest of the way was through jungle until we approached Palangkaraya. The river is used by a lot of these boats as well as larger vessels for trade or the timber industry and horrendous erosion was obvious in some sections. It was good to see a concerted effort at both government and village level to contain this.

I would have to describe river travel in Kalimantan as mildly dangerous. Besides the weed that periodically clogged the motors and was easily cleared, there were huge logs that had escaped from holding ponds, trees and branches from the jungle, and flotsam and jetsam of various kinds. The rivers were in flood with the wet season and were barely concealing submerged rocks and other solid obstacles. Undoubtedly there were significant obstacles that were not visible in the murky water. Still, the drivers seemed to know their work and I neither saw nor heard of any casualties in the amount of traffic that constantly plied the rivers. Considering that there are 10,460km of inland waterways in Kalimantan there must be a lot of traffic.

From the ferry terminal at Palangkaraya I ended up in a becak headed for the Pelangi Hotel. I had no idea where it was from here and it soon became apparent that neither did the driver. I kept insisting that it was a long way and too far for a becak, but he kept insisting that he could take me there. After about half an hour I called a halt and sought help from a nearby stall keeper. We still had about 5 or 6 kilometres to go and my driver was obviously lost. When I tried to dismiss him he got angry and I eventually had to pay him off at Rp10,000. The stall holder then put me, nursing my suitcase and carrying

my backpack, on his motor scooter and drove me to the Pelangi Hotel. Another interesting ride along narrow roads and country lanes.

Once again I asked the houseboys if I could get a bus or taxi into town and once again they said NO. Udir was out visiting friends, and after that he was searching for me with the help of some of his local police friends. He had mistaken my arrival time, had been late to the terminal and missed me, and had started frantically searching for me while I rested at his hotel. His arrival prompted a conference that left me confused and not very enlightened. It was conducted largely in Dayak of which I understood about one word in seven. I was introduced to his brother-in-law, Giman, who was to be my guide on a three-day two-night trip into the interior to see a REAL Dayak village. Then, because we were passing a certain village where Yessie, the cook, had family, it was decided that I would take Yessie and her four-year old son, Ngopi. I would assume total responsibility for all expenses for the party until we returned, but I didn't know that at this stage. With that little problem neatly wrapped up we were off to a restaurant for dinner, followed by two karaoke parlours and lots of attention from the bar girls. Then we had to ring Jefferson in Jakarta to confirm the dates for an important Dayak ceremony. They were Friday 24 to Sunday 27 November at Kuala Kapuas, a village I had passed through coming from Banjarmasin. At this stage I did not know the significance of the approaching ceremony that was to be attended by prominent military and government functionaries, dozens if not hundreds of locals, and filmed for local TV. Obviously I was now working to a tight schedule since the village I was to visit was a six-hour speedboat trip upstream.

The speedboat to Tewah was only a 15-passenger, single 115hp motorboat. We passed through much more jungle on this section of the Kahayan River than on my trip from Banjarmasin since we were already further into the centre of Kalimantan, and I would be within 60 nautical miles or one degree south of the equator at my destination. It was often through narrow and winding passages with the klaxon blaring as the driver hugged the banks. A huge raft of logs passed us going downstream and we passed ponds of these logs at collection points along the route. Obstacles were at least as numerous as yesterday and some looked considerably more dangerous. I had to wonder what the odds were on striking a submerged rock or solid log, and considered them reasonable. This was historically important country in ages past and still produced significant finds of ceramic products, Increasingly frequently as we fought the current upstream we passed primitive platforms with diesel motors and simple sluices mining for gold. The river is a prolific producer and only

simple procedures are necessary to suck up the mud off the bottom and extract the precious metal. Some of our passengers left us at these platforms or at villages along the way. With the sameness of the jungle scenery, a fairly constant 4,500 rpm on the outboard, and the overpowering humidity we were lulled into a stupor and everyone slept part of the time, Lunch at 1200 was rice and fish from a riverside stall, while the boat was refuelled from rusty 200-litre drums stacked on the floating wooden platform. This is a vast country, undeveloped, and extremely poor despite its rich natural resources, but even here there were parabolic antennas for the television.



*Re-fueling at a stall on the Kahayan River.*

Clouds built up during the day but only produced a drizzle that was broken by a brilliant blue and red kingfisher crossing in front of us. As we approached Tewah I could see buffalo and cattle for the first time. Probably they had been further inland in the past, along with the plantations that were not visible from the river. The villagers along here would certainly have had their plantations and small herds. There were some bigger trees than before but not many. People I spoke to said that Indonesia's logging program was responsible, and while there was some rogue logging that could never be fully contained it was

insignificant, and not carried out by big business. In fact, illegal logging is rampant throughout Indonesia, much of it with government and military involvement. At Tewah, with only about 5 passengers left on board, we dropped off Ngopi so that we could continue upstream to Batu Suli, a hill with a cliff face that I was supposed to climb. This was not on the speedboat driver's schedule so Giman arranged for it on payment of another 40,000 rupiah. By the time we arrived there it was 1600.

I had not made any decision to climb this hill. It had been assumed in the Pelangi Hotel that I should do it and planned for accordingly. Having no knowledge of what confronted me and accompanied by Giman, Yessie, a boat boy and a guide from a nearby village I commenced the climb and bit off more than I could chew. With a backpack and camera it was not easy and it just got harder scrambling up almost vertical surfaces with only tree roots for assistance. I had to stop for a breather several times. Finally barefoot Yessie took my pack and camera and helped me up the hard parts, so that I reached a shelter shed most of the way up before dark. Here we decided to go down, by a different route, as it was approaching sunset. The summit was still further away. Easier than the climb, the descent was still difficult because of slippery, muddy surfaces and increasing darkness. Once again Yessie came to the rescue and virtually held my hand down to the base of the hill. I was so exhausted by this time that I could not even walk the gangway to the boat without falling off twice and getting wet to the knees. I just threw myself horizontally on the seat for a good rest and recovery. I was not so far gone that I could not appreciate the irony of speeding **down the same river in the dark**, as I had been concerned speeding up in daylight. Perhaps the increased adrenalin flow contributed to a rapid recovery, so that when we reached Tewah and the guesthouse at 1900 I was fully mobile again.

Losmen Batumas (Goldstone Guesthouse) was a quaint, old, wooden 2-storey building with a truly lovable old Dayak woman in charge. She was so proud of the fact that she cooked with wood, not the gas that other women used. True Dayak cooking is done with wood, she said. Bedrooms on the first floor were not much bigger than the beds they contained. The bed was enclosed on three sides by high wooden sides and had hard wooden slats for a base. The mattress was hard and had only one sheet that I would roll myself in as the night got cold. Windows were shutters opening onto a narrow space beside the next building. The bathroom/toilet was any one of three small stables off an open wooden platform on the ground floor, with the usual horizontal toilet and a 200-litre drum of water for bathing. Fortunately I had packed some

donuts, fruit and water, because we didn't get to cat that night. Instead Gimán took me to meet more 'family'. This was the wife of a professor, who happened to be absent that night, with two teenage daughters. The lady was herself a schoolteacher in the village. We had good coffee here in beer mugs to assist the conversation as I absorbed Dayak culture. The girls were watching TV with its parabolic antenna and tuned into Australia to show it worked. Indonesian commercial TV was essentially the same as Australian with the quality and quantity of advertising.

With Gimán the next morning I strolled around the village looking at the markets, the government buildings and the schools. Then he arranged for a klotok to take us down stream to Kuala Kurun, another village on my list of places to see. I am told the regular speedboat service would cost Rp15,000 but Gimán manages to commit me to Rp 25,000 for the klotok and another 1½ hours on the river, leaving at 1000. Kuala Kurun actually boasts a hotel, the Hotel Ratu Syeba (Queen Sheba), on the riverbank, and it resembles an Australian guesthouse like that in Cooktown. We take twin rooms to contain costs, Gimán and I sharing, and Yessie and Ngopi sharing. At least meals are served here regularly and they are large and tasty, including chicken and pork with the rice and vegetable dishes, and there is always plenty of coffee. By now I want to change some of my American dollars to meet the frequent payments for travel and accommodation, but the only bank here - a government office - does not handle American dollars. Ah well! This was a substantial village of about 1,000 people, with a few roads - two rough asphalt, one of which connected with Tewah - and one car. It belonged to a second hotel and was the taxi to the airport, 5 kilometres away. Schools were well attended, with compulsory education for nine years. There were some magnificent examples of Dayak graves of both the conventional tombstone type and the older ritual type built on tall posts with associated carved totem poles, and a large wooden church for the Christian community. Gimán had a house here that he was trying, unsuccessfully, to sell. Meanwhile he had it rented out.

A little waterfall about 4km, from the village is on my itinerary and we take two boys, extended family, as our guides for a hot and sweaty trek to a delightful enough location. The waterfall is only about 15-20m into a cool, shady pool that provides entertainment for the two boys and Ngopi. Unfortunately the graffiti artists and polluters have been active there too, with 'artwork' on the cliff face and spray cans and plastic bottles littering the area. Back at the hotel, sitting on a balcony overlooking the river and its traffic and drinking coffee, I get into conversation with the local developer who built this

hotel. An enterprising young man, it was his first project and he claims to have been personally responsible for every aspect of its construction. Traders from as far away as Banjarmasin ply the river with their goods and services, and the faithful lay their prayer mats facing west on the boat deck and make their obeisance to Mohammed. After dinner a group forms in the lounge room under the pictures depicting Christ and biblical scenes and we discuss aborigines, the Republic movement in Australia, Queen Elizabeth II and the economy. Not that I am an expert on any of these subjects, but I can give them my opinions, and I am certainly willing to give them my views on the aboriginal situation in Australia.

Rainfall was heavy that night and I put the lack of village activity down to this when I ventured out after dark to make a phone call to Palangkaraya from the local Telkom office. I found out later that, where we had anchored, the bodies of two children had been dragged from the river that morning. Investigations were under way and it appeared initially that they had been abducted the previous night and murdered in what was probably a ritual killing. Most of the local people were keeping off the streets.

Through Yessie's family connections I was able to get a slight discount off the regular speedboat fare back to Palangkaraya, but it still cost Rp100,000. It was an uneventful return trip of five hours in a bigger boat that took 24 passengers and had a single 200hp V6 2.6 litre motor. Being the provincial capital Palangkaraya has some major banks, but none of four I approached would even consider changing my American dollars into Rupiah. I tried the only ATM nearby to get money on Visa or Keycard, but both were rejected. In desperation I asked in the bank if I could draw money internally on my Visa card, and finally managed to boost my ailing finances for the next stage of my trip. Under Yessie's expert guidance I learn that the local mini buses here also serve as taxis and will continue to any destination a patron asks for. (Perhaps Canberra could benefit from a transport scheme like this, and save us taxpayers from subsidising our buses with over \$40 million a year to carry 4% of the travelling public.) Fares are cheap, as I had already observed, and I had to consider my previous experience by becak and motor scooter as we wended our way to the Pelangi Hotel. Here I found out for the first time that there is a dining room at the hotel - that's why Yessie was there as cook - but Udir never used it and there never seemed to be any guests. Yessie served me chicken for dinner in my room. Udir had already left for Kuala Kapuas by aircraft. He had intended driving his Feroza but the road was damaged and there was a five-hour delay getting around the damage.

Enlightenment came on Saturday morning after breakfast of rice, egg and more chicken, when Gimán failed to turn up on time to collect me for the boat ride to Kuala Kapuas, the site for the ceremony. We walked to the nearby roundabout, some 200 metres or so from the hotel, and caught a minibus that became a taxi! So much for the houseboys' denials all this time when I had asked about transport to town. It seems, in retrospect, that they were honouring their allegiance to Udir. As Udir's guest I was his sole responsibility and was not to be encouraged out on my own. It is best not to labour over the confusion of leaving Palangkaraya. I was almost booked on a regular speedboat when Nelson Dau appeared and said he was chartering a boat for the crowd from here. That was easier said than done and it was hours later when we finally started the three-hour journey down river. I filled in part of that time in productive conversation with a government official responsible for animal health in the area. He volunteered the information that he took bribes to do his job, saying that on his salary he could not provide for his family. This is a common and genuine complaint throughout Indonesia, reaching right up into senior military ranks. By now I was quite accustomed to speedboat travel and the logs and obstacles were not so intimidating. We were in the Hotel Soraja in Kuala Kapuas soon after 1400.

This was a pleasant hotel with most of the comforts we have come to expect in Australia, but I was still plagued by the bathroom and I was still shaving without a mirror. I shared with Gimán. As it turned out we were not to spend much more than sleeping time at the hotel. My first duty was, naturally, to accompany Gimán to visit more 'family' here at Kuala Kapuas. It is certainly a widespread family and I was to find out that it spread a lot wider yet. They were also obviously Christian with holy pictures on the walls such as I had seen in both Palangkaraya and Kuala Kurun. We took a klotok across the very wide, fast flowing Kapuas River and down stream to a small village of scattered houses on the edge of Kuala Kapuas, where Udir had set up headquarters and built a 6 x 20 metre platform at the site of a sandung. The platform was a basic structure with wooden floor, open bamboo framework and blue polytarp roof. The floor was covered with a mix of grass mats and linoleum. A sandung is a traditional Dayak coffin on a platform supported by four poles and can be elaborate, though this one was relatively simple. The sandung had its own plot of land with a low wooden fence. A large sign had been erected in the sandung yard proclaiming this to be the burial place of Patih Andoeng and his descendants, Malik and Bahar who bore the titles of Raksapati I and Raksapati II. Malik had founded the village of Kuala Kapuas

200 years ago, and this ceremony was to commemorate that fact and to reinter his and Bahar's remains, a ceremony of *pemugaran*. It was scheduled over two nights and one day and included television coverage and VIP guests.

Having located the ceremony site Gimán and I returned to the hotel for a short rest and dinner before returning for the night's celebration, commencing at 2100. With other guests from the hotel now we returned by Kijang and primitive car ferry, dressed for the occasion. I wore my Dayak shirt and I met Jefferson at the site. He had come over from Jakarta by aircraft. We got away to a slow start, with groups sitting on the mats or strolling around until food was brought from a nearby 108-year old house. A large group of villagers, mostly women, was active in this house preparing large bowls of curry and other meat dishes for the morrow's ceremony, while children in a side room folded paper napkins. Our food tonight consisted of cake, rice and a coconut concoction, and the white rice wine known here as *anding*. Udir had made 100 bottles of this and it was 8 days old. I drank my fair share over the next 24 hours, and enjoyed the sticky rice with coconut the colour of syrup and the texture of fairy floss. A simpleton dropped in on us late at night, sat down in our midst and ate and drank until satisfied, then ran off into the night. He couldn't or wouldn't speak and had peculiar, long fingers that appeared to have been frost bitten. Everyone treated him with respect and let him eat and leave in peace. I asked about sleeping arrangements for the night and was told that people would just sleep on the mats. I thought this included me as I had been told that Dayak ceremonies are continuous. Fortunately my hosts had other ideas and, at midnight, we boarded the Kijang for a return to our proper beds in the hotel. The lesser guests did stay at the site, making their own arrangements. The river was dark with big waves and I was glad to be on the ferry instead of in a klotok.

Sunday, 26 November, was the day for the formal part of the ceremony commencing at 0900 with the arrival of the bupati and his wife. The bupati is regional head; one rank below the governor, and his attendance was a measure of the importance of this ceremony. A piglet had been killed, and its blood mixed with white rice to be sprinkled around the site as the chief celebrant sang the ceremony. The fresh carcass was still at the foot of the sandung. In times past a buffalo would have been sacrificed by being speared to death, tethered to one of the poles. The disinterred 200-year old bones were separated from the earth and rubbish accompanying them and placed in a new bowl as the history of the Dayak community and the family tree of the tribe were sung. A broad chart of the family was spread out at the foot of the

celebrant to assist him in his vocal rendering of history. The Dau family and their descendants figured on this chart and could trace their lineage and their relationships over centuries. There were also stones from a necklace and a sword with deer horn handle dating back these 200 years. Finally the new bowl with the bones was filled with gifts of cigarettes and cash from family members, and sprinkled with scented oil before being carried up to the new sandung. The family hopes this will become a local, and hopefully national, shrine to the founder of Kuala Kapuas, with ceremonies held annually. Putting the money in the sandung was a point of contention for a while. Obviously it could be easily stolen. So it was decided to bank it towards maintaining the shrine rather than leave it as a temptation.

We sat in the shelter of the nearby platform for the speech making that followed, all being recorded by RCTI, a commercial channel. Jefferson was the first speaker and outlined the historical significance of this day. Tony Babu, a senior naval officer, followed with his thanks to those who made the ceremony possible and attended the site. Then the bupati outlined government plans for development of the area, including improving the immediate vicinity, but more importantly improving access to Kuala Kapuas. Already there were two bridges under construction over the river that would permit a major highway to be built from the south to the interior. I was not expecting it when Jefferson called on me to make a speech after the bupati, but apparently I didn't disappoint him. The bupati and his wife were surprised and impressed, and part of my short speech appeared in the TV program *Seputar Indonesia* on Monday night. Lunch was then served, complete with more *anding*. I had seen and photographed this lunch being prepared in the ancient house yesterday.

After the bupati left there was time for a siesta - for some. The old house was used by groups playing chess, sitting around talking, or lying on the floor sleeping. At this stage I was besieged by a lot of the local school children and had to accompany them on a walk around the area. We went to a family sandung nearby that was more elaborate than our ceremonial one, and continually cared for by the family who warned me about cobras in the grass. I was then taken to the bridge construction site to see the drawings and the progress. It will be a solid and impressive bridge with the steel being supplied by Australia, which was a point in my favour and a subject for further discussion. The children's questions were interminable and their thirst for knowledge insatiable. They were exhausting.

Back at the house I watched a pig being cut up and prepared for another meal. Nothing was wasted and the skin was scraped free of bristles before being thrown into the pot. I tried again to get some rest on the floor with other bodies that were stretched out asleep but to no avail. The children stood in a crowd in the doorway and waited for me to stir, so I was off again in a different direction. Fredik Ronaldo Bhutan had gradually assumed predominance in the group. He was a student at the local junior secondary school, where he lived in a shack with his mother. We went there first and I was shown his drawings, which were his mother's pride. He is quite skilful at illustrating stories and makes his own comic books. In a different world his talents would be exploitable, but this school does not even have electricity connected to it. Power lines stop less than a kilometre away but there are no plans to connect it in the foreseeable future. So the school uses car batteries to power its TV for lessons, and any other equipment. Like many other villagers he lives on a subsistence level with little prospect of improvement or chance of reasonable employment. From here we wandered the countryside to a cool bridge over a stream where local kids just liked to gather to pass the time and enjoy the fresh air. And always the endless questions, but good for mutual understanding.

As it got dark I was able to make my way back towards the sandung and drop the children off along the way. Jefferson met me coincidentally along the track, and we visited a local retiree who had a pleasant house on a back lane and raised chickens, quail, fish and fruit trees. The house and yard were very neat, clean and well cared for, if necessarily simple. Because of the expense of electricity in Kalimantan the basic lighting is provided by low power long life fluorescent bulbs that provide little more than a glow in the dark. We sat on the veranda under these lights until it was time to eat. Jefferson, like myself, wanted to avoid the pork I had seen being prepared and we visited another friend of his who served other local delicacies. I ate the chicken but could not handle more than a little of the salty prawn paste that was a speciality here.

It seemed hundreds of people gathered for the continuation of the ceremony at 1900, with five drummers providing background music and voices. This session, I was told, could go all night, and involved the celebrant singing Dayak history in the Dayak language. He was supported by the other four drummers who provided a kind of chorus. To bring history up to date people were invited to write notes for the celebrant who incorporated the content in his singing. Udir asked me to write a short note and I did, expressing pleasure at being invited to the ceremony and thanks to those who arranged it. Udir

wrote about me with a little of my background and recent activities. The writers in turn were required to sit cross-legged in front of the celebrant, a cape draped over their shoulders and holding another rolled cape that connected them like an umbilical cord to the celebrant who held the other end. In this way they were sung into history in a Dayak chant that was very easy to listen to if impossible for me to understand. My turn came after about four or five others. Jefferson and I shared the floor with me on his left while he was sung into history, then we changed places and I had the position in front of the celebrant, holding the cape. My face was now thickly rouged, done with great joviality by Tony Babu when he realised it had been overlooked as I first sat down. A translator sat on my right to interpret what the celebrant was singing, and he broadcast this through a microphone and amplifier for the benefit of all present, many of whom may not have spoken Dayak. And thus I was inducted into the Dayak community, something I had not anticipated and which constitutes an honour.



*The author is adopted into the Dayak community.*

Dayak history was condensed that night because, being pragmatists, these educated people do not need to spend the entire night in customary revelry

after a long day. The party came to an orderly conclusion about the time the river broke its banks and flooded the area around the sandung and under the platform. Udir tells me that the timing of my induction into the Dayak community was most auspicious. The river only seldom breaks its banks in flood, the new moon had been sighted for the first time that night, and the induction coincided with the pemugaran ceremony.

We had arrived in a Kijang but we departed in a klotok, trousers rolled to the knee and shoes in hand. The night crossing involved several bumps and thumps as we struck floating obstacles in the current, to walk back along the streets from the dock to the hotel barefoot in the dark - seven adults like children enjoying the floods. I was in bed by midnight.

Monday was a very lazy day with a slow start, most of the morning spent sitting around in casual discussion in a small group - Jefferson, Udir, Giman, Tony Babu, and a couple of others. It was also an indication of the generosity of the Dau family. Jefferson and Udir paid for everything from the speedboat at Palangkaraya, through the accommodation at Kuala Kapuas to the next speed boat down to Banjarmasin for our entire group. My education continued here with a call on another member of the family, Alfian Dau, a company director of C.V. Citra Abadi and, naturally, a holder of a Masters in Law. Alfian's house contained some Chinese urns and artefacts of inestimable value, rated by the family as superior to those in national museums. Udir had another car at Alfian's, a short wheelbase Toyota done up in gleaming chrome and paintwork with instrumentation and radio to match. It was not a car for off-road work, but apparently only for periodic exhibition along with other car buffs of Indonesia.

Jefferson and I were travelling together by Garuda 737 back to Jakarta, scheduled to depart at 1600 and required at the airport by 1500. My ticket had been open and Jefferson had arranged my booking with a simple phone call to the airline on Saturday or Sunday. It was an estimated 45-minute drive to the airport and I was a bit concerned when, at 1330, Jefferson and family announced that we were all going to a special restaurant for lunch. This would surely make us late. Lunch was a leisurely affair in a local riverside restaurant with the basic kitchen only separated from the dining area by benches. It would probably never be permitted in Australia but it served excellent meals at long wooden tables. Their speciality was a massive fish served whole in a steaming bowl, complete with the head, from which we were invited to drag off portions with our fork and spoon. That was OK but I preferred the steaks

from the same fish, grilled to a crisp, golden brown. Along with this there were tiny birds, probably some kind of pigeon. All eaten with rice and vegetables and garnishes.

It was close to 1500 by the time we had boarded the car, another Kijang, for the drive to the airport. But we had to deviate along the way to see a new house being built by Alfian to replace his present cramped quarters. We must be late for that aircraft, I thought, as the time approached 1545 and we were still battling unruly traffic and occasional traffic lights. Not to worry. Udir dropped us at the terminal door to go and park, and when we walked into the foyer we were greeted by a pilot. It was another member of the extended Dau family and coincidentally the captain of our aircraft. There was no way that aircraft was going anywhere without us on board.

A taxi from the Jakarta airport into town should cost around Rp20,000 including tolls. Rogue drivers, refusing to use their meters, will try for Rp45.000, and it was one of these we first boarded. Jefferson said a few direct words to him and we left him in the middle of the road to join the queue for a regulated taxi service that guaranteed honesty. Jakarta peak hour traffic was at its worst and it was after 1830 when I arrived at the Palma Citra. I had no access to a phone in Kuala Kapuas, despite asking at the hotel front desk, and had not been able to notify Des of my return. So I bought a phone card at the Jakarta airport to phone Tati about my imminent arrival and to arrange passage through building security. In a hassled sweat by the time I arrived at Palma Citra I gave no thought to tuning in to RCTI and I missed seeing the segment on the pemugaran ceremony, though Jefferson, whom I had dropped off at his office on the way home, rang to say he had seen it. He thought it was shorter than it should have been but mentioned my appearance in it. Tati made me a dinner of cap cay, rice and vegetables that I had become fond of, and I sat up late waiting for Des to come home with his daughter, Jackie, who was visiting from Japan. Jackie was 30 years old, tall, blond at the moment, and quite capable of looking after herself. She had been to school in Jakarta 17 years ago on one of Des's previous postings.

The Dayak interlude was over and I was back in the familiar world of hot water, toilet paper, sit down toilets and proper showers. It felt good to be back, but I was tired.

## **Jakarta 27 November - 7 December 1995**

Des was on shift work and had a few days off between work sessions. He was not going to let grass grow under our feet, so next morning he, Jackie and I were headed for Java's west coast in his Suzuki Carry. This was after I had successfully changed \$US 150 at a BIG bank in Jakarta where all they wanted to see was my passport. And I had all films processed to date. This was very convenient, with a Kodak laboratory just around the corner near the Golden Truly supermarket. They would process films in about an hour, and when I wanted copies of certain photos they would do them on the spot for me. Before leaving Jakarta I knew all my photos of the pemugaran ceremony had come out. My camera had started to malfunction occasionally and I was becoming concerned. Anyway, by lunchtime we were in our cottage at Sambolo, overlooking Anak Krakatau which is the tiny island remaining after the explosion of Krakatoa on 27 August 1883. The coast here is lined with estates of cottages owned or leased by individuals or companies. The Australian Embassy leases a few for use by its staff on a rostered basis free of charge. These have 3 bedrooms, for maximum family benefit, and can sleep seven people. They have a large open living area with a good view out to sea when the blinds are up. Linen and utensils are provided and it is only necessary to take food, water (in 37-litre plastic bottles for water dispensers), and toilet gear. Each cottage has a permanent houseboy who maintains the grounds and the building and looks after security, does the barbecuing, and washes the cars. Guests at the cottage pay the houseboy for his services.

It was raining, but that was to be expected in the rainy season, and we swam off a gravel beach with small piles of rubbish dumped by heavy waves. Des tells me that this is not normal. Usually the beaches are clean and sandy. Hills to the back of us seemed to concentrate the rain and wind, but this was sporadic and we were able to enjoy a swim before having to bargain with the traders who descend on every guest. These are local village women selling mostly clothing, either batik or printed with local emblems or names. They also try hard to sell their services for massaging, offering 'special oils' that they are quick to open for their aroma. I bought a shirt and trousers that I intended using as summer pyjamas, paying less than was asked but more than I should have. That's the nature of bargaining over there. It's always cheaper later on or somewhere else. Our houseboy, Satria, managed to cook our barbecue in between showers.

The weather was typical wet season with severe squalls, and appeared to have set in with a vengeance the next morning. We drove along the narrow beach road looking at local villages and new development projects. The village markets are the source of fresh seafood and vegetables at reasonable prices and there are some respectable little restaurants there. No provision has been made to upgrade the roads to service the new apartments and cottages under construction, and this area will obviously follow Jakarta into traffic confusion when the new buildings are occupied. It was too wet even to think about wandering through the markets and we returned to the cottage to read or listen to the radio. I was glad of the rest after the activity in Kalimantan. Apart from a mangy and noisy cat and a couple of fine looking local dogs we were the only guests in the compound, which, considering the weather, was not surprising. Weather reports had Jakarta enjoying fine weather. We barbecued on the stove indoors for Wednesday's dinner.

After we left to return to Jakarta the next morning there were severe floods around the Sambolo district, with considerable damage to village shacks and property and roads inundated. I guess it was not the time to expect a leisurely beach holiday, but we were not complaining.

Jackie had gone to school here with Reina in years past and they had remained friends and maintained contact. Reina was now married with two children, Amanda born in 1991 and Gavin born in 1994, lived in Bogor 50km away with her parents, and was in a family business as well as trying to set up a small business of her own. With Reina and husband, John, and another couple, the three of us were off to a Padang restaurant for dinner on Thursday night. Udir Dau was partial to Padang food and I had eaten it before, but not in the palatial surroundings of this first-floor restaurant in Jakarta. Padang is in Sumatra and has a particular style of spicy food. It is served like a smorgasbord, but in smaller portions laid out on the table at which the diners sit. Besides the ubiquitous white rice there were portions of two kinds of curried beef, two kinds of chicken, eggs, vegetables, chillies, brains, liver, fish, and jerky. Untouched food is returned to the kitchen to be re-served to later diners, and in Palangkaraya I had wondered how many times what was in front of me had been recycled. I had not come to any harm by eating there, though, and I didn't expect to come to any harm here, even when I had seen the waiters frantically dancing in the doorway at street level to catch and kill a rat trying to escape from the restaurant. I never ate the brains or the liver but I enjoyed the rest of it.

Fortunately Des had to start work early next morning, getting out of bed at 0430, because our next venue was a nightclub dedicated to Elvis Presley. The noise, and I can only describe it as that, was deafening. After one drink and a polite period of time Des and I quit and left the younger generation to their own pursuits.

John Hogan, Reina's husband, picked Jackie and me up at 2000 next day for a weekend in Bogor. John was an accountant on contract work in Jakarta. Bogor is only an hour's drive from Jakarta and part of the greater metropolitan area of Jabotabek, as I said earlier. It is higher than Jakarta and sitting on the foothills of nearby mountains, and is primarily known for the 87 hectares of Bogor Botanical Gardens and the Presidential Palace that was built for the Dutch Governor General in colonial times. We had rooms in the guest section of the massive house belonging to Reiria's parents, bordering on the swimming pool. Reina's father had been a senior executive in Pertamina, Indonesia's oil company, until his retirement. He had designed and built the house to his own specifications and the whole complex of house and yard was magnificent, with an indoor waterfall, pool and garden fronting a living room delineated by Grecian columns. He now spends half of each year on travelling the world, primarily to Europe, New Zealand where he maintains another house, and Australia. The family business bids for oilrig inspections throughout Indonesia, and some of the stories they tell about the official graft necessary to procure a contract from the government are frightening. But it is all part of the way of life in Indonesian business deals. The yard included a fowl run, fruit trees including mangoes, durian, rambutan and an exotic fruit from Irian Jaya called metua, I think. Some mangoes were tasty; others were not, depending on the variety. The metua was not quite in season but the two I tried were interesting - a soft, sweet white flesh over a large seed in a fruit about the size of a macadamia nut. The other fruits were not yet in season.

John slept in on Saturday morning while Reina took us for a stroll through the botanical gardens and later on to the animal museum. The gardens are certainly worth the visit but our visit to the museum was cut short by the staff wanting to close and go home. This gave us the chance for a rest before dinner and going out to a 'bad taste night' at the Goodyear hostel. There were certainly two female staff at the house and probably two male staff, but there was no cook. Reina had an arrangement with an elder sister or aunt, I'm not sure which, who lived not far away, to provide a full day's complement of cooked food every morning. This was then heated in the microwave as required. Many Indonesian foods are served cold so this was not a problem,

and it meant that meals could be served at all odd hours of the day depending on individual activities. Suffice to say that the meals were always excellent and plentiful. Expatriate staff in Bogor have a tradition of meeting once a month at the staff hostel for Goodyear. It's an open, friendly place with swimming pool and bar and provides a perfect venue. Each month has a different theme and a door prize was awarded to the costume considered most fitting to the occasion. November's had been 'Australia night' to commemorate Anzac Day. December's was 'bad taste'. Jackie's idea of bad taste was to dress in long white socks, black heavy shoes, short black skirt with blue denim jacket, and a long blond wig. Reina's outfit was a black pants suit with brown wig, dark glasses and frangipani flower in her left ear. My bad taste was to be accompanied by this pair. Jackie and I were strangers to this community and obviously not recognised at the hostel, but Reina, known well to most of them, completely fooled everyone until she spoke. The short brown wig over black hair changed her personality. There were about 50 expats there and it was a social night of talking, drinking and billiards - at which both Reina and Jackie were competent. I don't know who won the door prize because at midnight we left the party and moved on to the Bogor Lakeside nightclub. This was not my idea of entertainment and I suffered in silence for the next four hours while the band assaulted my senses, but almost everyone else obviously enjoyed themselves immensely. I was glad when John finally drove me home at 0400 as the Moslem call to prayer was just beginning. Reina and Jackie arrived in Reina's Kijang after I was in bed.

On Sunday Reina drove us back to the embassy where Des was on duty and I was able to ring home at cheap rates. While Indonesia has advanced telecommunications facilities they are not cheap. Reina's father, quoting from accounts he has paid, estimated his phone bill to be up to 10 times as expensive as in Australia, and his electricity bill to be around four times as expensive. Certainly my calls back to Australia through Telkom were not cheap. The embassy had dedicated lines that permitted staff to make cheap calls on weekends.

Sunday meant a temporary return to western food. Jackie, Reina and I had hamburgers and stuff from Wendy's for lunch, and Des and I had steak for dinner at an Indonesian steak house after Jackie had left for Sydney by the 1930 Garuda flight.

The problem of currency raised its ugly head again next day. Neither the ANZ bank in Jakarta nor the prestigious BNI (Bank Nasional Indonesia) had

facilities for processing withdrawals on Visa card! I had to go to Citibank, they said. There was a magnificent drive-through ATM here that was in use, so I joined the queue. After refusing to process my transaction the machine took almost forever to return my card, by which time I was worried that I had lost it to the system. I had to use the teller facilities inside the bank to get money, but there was absolutely no problem here. That success called for a lunch of swordfish kebabs and saffron rice. Back to eating local.

I'd had three extra copies of all the pemugaran photos done; one for Jefferson, one for Udir and one for distribution to people who figured in them, like the children and the cook and the drummers and other guests. Udir was in Jakarta on business on Tuesday, 5 December, and called on me with Jefferson to pick up the photos and take me out to dinner. We went to a Japanese place that had a steamboat at every table and a fixed price for the meal. Nelson was there too with Tony Babu, and even more family including a hostess from Garuda. We later moved on to Le Bistro, an exclusive French restaurant, for live piano music with an attractive local singer. Jefferson and I had a beer; everyone else had coffee or fruit juice. And once again they demonstrated their inhibitions and their talents by singing at the piano bar, either solo or with the local singer. They really are great people, and I could only contrast this night with my own generation to the other nights at the Elvis or the Bogor nightclubs with a younger generation.

## Yogyakarta, 7 - 12 December 1995

Des had taken leave from the 7th to go to Perth for a while. I decided to move out at the same time and go to Yogyakarta for a week to see the cultural centre of Indonesia. Yogya houses the Prambanan and Borobudur temples dating back to the 8th and 9th centuries, and should be on everyone's itinerary in Java. To see more of the country I opted to go by train, a 10-hour journey in daylight for only \$12 second class. Tati knew all about the trains from talking to her friends but she had never been to Gambir station. She used the cheaper buses when she went home for holidays. She wanted to see that I got the right train and the right class of carriage, so we made an excursion into town to book my ticket the day before I left. There was still one popular form of Jakarta transport that I had not tried, with good reason. It resembled a motor scooter with a cab built on to it and could seat three passengers. Called a bajaj, hundreds of these things stumbled and blundered their way through city traffic at little more than a walking pace and seemed to invite disaster. With Tati's insistence I ended up in one of these things from Gambir station to a major bookstore I wanted to visit. Once was enough.

My second-class carriage was pretty basic with firm seats and no air conditioning. This revealed more of the squalor of Jakarta than I had seen from the city streets. The canals, yards and even rooftops were filthy with discarded rubbish. Villages were built right out to the railway line, and in one place the walls of the houses were only a couple of metres from the carriages - like a man-made canyon for a while. But the people were clean, and I cannot emphasise that too much. Gradually the dense slum villages of the city gave way to less dense and cleaner villages of the country, set in among fields of rice, vegetables and trees. Traditional villages were sometimes replaced with blocks of town houses - the new look, but without the same visual appeal as the traditional houses.

Railway staff brought everyone a cushion to sit or sleep on, waiters from the buffet car constantly patrolled the train taking orders for food or drink, and at every stop along the way hawkers filled the train. They sold everything from rice, fruit, eggs, nuts, and regional foodstuffs wrapped in banana leaf to cigarettes, sweets and even animal dolls. And much more besides. I sipped my bottled water and ordered fried rice and coffee for breakfast. Farming, especially the rice, is labour intensive, and groups of workers were already in the fields ploughing, harrowing and planting. Around Jakarta they used small

diesel machines but after we had passed Cirebon I saw the traditional buffalo being used. Some of the scenes were straight from the books and lessons I used at the language school 33 years ago. Change will always be slow in this society.

I took the first offer of accommodation from the hordes of touters at Yogya station and ended up at the Metro Guesthouse in a big room with fan, shower and sit-down toilet. There was a swimming pool; tours were organised at the front desk; and any number of small restaurants were within easy walking distance. The tariff was reasonable at Rp22,500 (\$13) a night. I immediately organised my activities for the next few days, starting off with the Ramayana ballet that night and including lengthy tours to Borobudur, Prambanan and the Dieng plateau, and culminating in a booking to climb Mount Merapi, an active volcano. Probably the best thing for the moment, though, was the food. Delicious, varied, friendly service, and cheap. \$2 bought a main course and \$1 bought a bottle of Bali Hai beer to go with it. Only 320-ml bottles, but enough. I checked out a couple of places but adopted one where I ate most of my meals and made friends with the staff. There were countless other guesthouses in Yogya, and also rooms available in family homes. It is very tourist oriented.

The Ramayana is a spectacular Sanskrit epic with its origins in the 3rd century. With gamelan orchestration and brilliant costumes it was performed as a ballet over two nights in the Purawista theatre. I saw the first half only; the abduction of Queen Sinta up to the burning of Hanoman, and it was certainly impressive. I had wanted to see the entire play performed outdoors at the Hindu Prambanan temple where it is performed on full moon evenings, but that had ceased in October with the onset of the wet season and would not resume until May.

After the food the next surprise came with the becak drivers, Very friendly towards tourists, on whom they depend for their livelihood, they were content to settle for what they were offered rather than state a price for a journey. Bearing in mind that most tourists probably offered more than the locals, who were themselves restricted to minuscule earnings, this might have been a good ploy. I was to find out just how good later, after I had arranged with my becak driver after the Ramayana performance to take me around town on Sunday morning. However, some becak drivers made no income at all on some days.

Breakfast served in the room was included in my tariff and was invariably a boiled egg, 3 small slices of toast, a slice of pineapple, coffee and fruit juice. I

had an early breakfast before joining seven other tourists for a three-hour drive through mountainous countryside to the Dieng plateau, 137 kilometres to the north-west. Central Java is so different from Central Kalimantan, with lots of habitation instead of hectares of dense forest. Ordinary television as opposed to satellite television was widespread here, with antennas sprouting from roofs of houses, shacks and businesses.

The steep slopes of the mountains were transformed into terraces where vegetables were grown. Terraced hillsides for rice fields are a common sight throughout Asia and figure prominently in tourist advertising because of their beauty, but these terraces were smaller and steeper and must have required enormous energy to cultivate. It was cold and wet when we stepped out of our minibus at 2,300 metres on the plateau. Some people were shivering with the cold and would have bought cardigans or coats had there been any for sale.

The Dieng Plateau is a volcanic site with boiling pools and sulphurous gas vents. It also includes Buddhist temple ruins dating back to the 7th century, and predating the better known and more spectacular Prambanan and Borobudur. But what attracted most interest was the barren landscape with slippery, muddy pathways and unfenced pools of bubbling grey water. The biggest of these was producing filthy steam that smelt of sulphur and was rolling over the landscape in all directions with the fickle wind, enveloping us all in its cloying warmth. The temperature of the water was 126 Celsius, and had recently claimed the life of an English woman who fell in. It had taken five hours to recover what remained of a well-cooked corpse.

*Borobudur is the largest Buddhist temple in Indonesia and one of the world's wonders, dating back to the 8th century. Strictly speaking it is not a temple as it is a solid edifice built on a hill, in the shape of a storied shrine capped by a stupa. Originally 42 metres high it has been reduced to 35m after several lightning strikes removed the top of the stupa. It is built with 2,000,000 blocks of stone on a rectangular base covering over 14 000 square metres. There are 10 levels rising to the primary stupa, with smaller stupas surrounding it on three lower levels. Four stairways aligned with the four main points of the compass and guarded by stone lions connect the different levels. The shrine has 504 statues of Buddha, some of which have been damaged and have parts missing. A 505th statue, that of the unfinished Buddha representing perfection, has been removed to the nearby museum for display. For 150 years Borobudur was a place of pilgrimage for Buddhists but was inexplicably abandoned, lost in undergrowth and subsequent soil coverage, and not rediscovered until the 17th century. In the 19th century Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles took considerable interest in its recovery. In 1973, under the auspices of UNESCO, total renovation was commenced. Over the next ten*

*years the structure was disassembled, treated, and reassembled, correcting for damage and deterioration.*

We left the ruins at Dieng plateau to return to the more recent ruins of Borobudur. They are far more impressive, located in spacious parkland with an attendant museum and theatre. Commercial interests are catered for and there is a thriving marketplace that is kept a discreet distance from the ruins. Each of the structure's levels represents a stage on the way to Nirvana, and bas-reliefs on the alley walls and the balustrades depict people, events and activities encountered at each stage. At the foot of the structure alone there are 160 relief panels. The lower seven levels are rectangular while the upper three representing the spiritual world are circular, rising to the primary stupa. People still accost me and want photos taken with me, none more aggressively than Miss Darnelis on one of the upper levels. Without invitation she had her family grouped around me for a photo she took, then organised one of them to take another with my camera with her standing beside me. Then we traded addresses and I was 'ordered' to send her a copy of my photo to her address at the Department of Information in west Sumatra. I had a copy made and sent it to her before I left Jakarta. The peddlers provide amusing but interesting background as we bargain over the price of postcards and brochures. A contrast with the essentially Buddhist scene at Borobudur is the Hindu temple of Prambanan, a century younger than Borobudur and much of it not yet restored. Both Borobudur and Prambanan are quite close to Yogya and could easily have been visited without joining a tour, but the tour has an orderliness and information that suits me for this kind of sight seeing. Prambanan is not nearly as big as Borobudur and is impressive in a different way, being a complex of 8 temple structures called candis. The three main candis are dedicated to Siwa, Wisnu and Brahma, and the main temple of Siwa houses a statue of his consort, Durga. Here the visitor can walk into the various temples as well as walk around them. Ornate and intricate carvings adorn the walls in bas-relief, and the whole Ramayana is told in 41 frames on the Candi Siwa. Two young schoolgirls, barely teenage I suppose, engaged me in conversation on the steps of one temple for over half an hour. They were studying English and wanted to practise as much as they could. I was surprised that English is not taught as a basic subject in government schools, but must be learnt in private study.



*A statue of Buddah at Borobudur.*

Yogya is famous for its batik and its silver, and we were scheduled to visit factories on the way home from Prambanan. The silver products were intricate and beautiful but I wasn't tempted to invest in silver on this trip. Batik paintings throughout Indonesia are generally superb, whether of typical natural scenes or of more abstract form, and there is a confusing array of hundreds to

choose from in any establishment. I was to see an even greater range the next day, Sunday, when I met my promise to the becak driver to let him show me around town. Meanwhile I was back at the Metro for a swim by mid-afternoon, dined on kakap, the Indonesian equivalent of barramundi at my Java Restaurant, and finished reading *River God* before I went to sleep. The restaurant was built entirely from bamboo. Walls and ceiling were woven mats of bamboo skin on bamboo frames. Furniture was chunky and comfortable and the whole front was open to the laneway over a small shady garden. Other food worth mentioning at the Java Restaurant included bak mee goreng, sate shrimp, chicken and pork, and gado-gado, with meals generally served by either of the two young waitresses, Nurul Arista or Lucia Triturti, who would call greetings to me as I passed at other times of the day.

Actually I was ready to go home at this stage but I had booked for the Mount Merapi trip the next night. This promised a night drive/climb to the top of the mountain to see the red-hot lava in the cauldron and witness the sunrise at 0530. Sounded too good to miss.

Sunday started much more sedately with Rohmadi, the driver, and his becak named *Atika* waiting for me at 0730. In the cool of the morning, before the traffic got too frantic, it was pleasant to be driven around the streets and through some of the villages that constitute suburbs in our world. We wound our way through narrow, irregular streets and alleys to batik and silver factories better than any before. These were smaller and less patronised than those on the regular tourist routes, but the quality of their products was not less. I debated bringing some home but what I liked most was expensive and bulky, and my hand luggage already exceeded aircraft regulations. Throughout this ride there was plenty of filth in the ditches and on some of the roadsides but generally the city was clean - certainly much cleaner than Jakarta. Becaks are slow transport, having only one manpower, and at one stage I got out and walked beside it up a slope that was too much of a challenge for Rohmadi.

The Sultan's Palace, or Kraton, is one of the major attractions in Yogya, this city of 500,000 people. It occupies a special place in Indonesian history with the Sultan of 1945 playing an important role in Indonesia's battle for independence. After the declaration of independence in 1945 Yogyakarta served as the provisional capital of Indonesia until replaced by Jakarta in 1950. Yogyakarta has the status of a province and is one of three such areas. Jakarta is a *Daerah Khusus Ibukota* (Special Capital District), and Yogyakarta is a *Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta* (Special District of Yogyakarta). The third is the Aceh

district in north Sumatra and is *Daerah Istimewa Aceh*. Along with 24 other regions including the disputed East Timor they make up the 27 provinces of Indonesia. The present Sultan lives in the palace that is surrounded by its own village within a substantial city wall with gateways. His living area is off limits to tourists, but half of the palace is open for inspection every day. Historic furniture, silverware and crockery, much of it gifts and awards from overseas, is on display but, when needed for ceremonial occasions, is put into service. The halls, stages and rooms here are also used for State functions, at which time they are closed to the public. I had my personal guide who was very knowledgeable about everything on display, and was happy when I told her she could explain everything to me in Indonesian rather than English. The culmination of the Kraton visit was a display of classical dancing with gamelan support. I joined the crowd for the first two dances while Rohmadi made himself comfortable in the background, but I am not dedicated to long sessions of this art form. Undoubtedly superb artistic performances, they have a sameness that doesn't hold my attention.

My phone card wouldn't work for overseas calls at the Metro and I blamed the phone. But a walk around the district produced four phones, one of which was unserviceable and the other three refused to accept it either. I could call Palangkaraya but not Australia. Finally I rang from the local Telkom office and had to leave a message on Paul's machine because nobody I rang was home. Sunday afternoon was obviously not a good time to call even if it was the cheapest rates. The phone card worked later from Jakarta.

People have been telling me to be careful on the climb to Mount Merapi. With Batu Suli fresh in my memory I wonder just what is in store for tonight. We leave at 2200.

Monday. I bit off more than I could chew. Nine of us left the town in a diesel minibus after picking up at two other guesthouses. It was a steep winding climb for two hours but I didn't sleep like some of them. I listened to the engine and looked into all the bends. There were several small landslides that had fallen across the road and had just been cleared enough to permit passage. We halted in a village at a hut set aside for climbers. It had a wooden platform with grass mats for those who wanted to sleep or rest before the climb, and a table and chairs for those who wanted tea and sandwiches provided by the guides who were waiting there for us. And it was cold. Everyone had jackets and/or cardigans and I had my warm nylon spray jacket with hood. I found out that we were 1,500 metres up the mountain and there was a climb of

another 1,500 metres. We were to have an hour's rest, leave at 0100, and get to the top in time to witness the sunrise at 0530. I still did not know what to expect, but I was already apprehensive about climbing 1,500 metres up the mountainside in the dark. It was only on 22 November 1994 that Mount Merapi last erupted, killing at least 64 people. Many of these were farmers killed in avalanches on its slopes; others were inhabitants of Yogya - only 70 km away - killed by its poisonous gases. But that was on its dangerous southern face. The northern face we were to climb was considered quite safe. Safety is a relative term however, as Merapi is the most active of Indonesia's 130 active volcanoes and suffers a small eruption every 2-3 years, a large one every 10-15 years and a very large one every 50-60 years.

The first half hour was not too difficult. We walked in a loose group, 9 tourists and 4 guides, along a rough, mostly concrete pathway. It was hard work but not impossible, and the guides kept saying "Take it slowly, take it slowly." After 30 minutes we rested at a shelter shed and waited for the stragglers to catch up. From here there was no cement, it was just plain dirt and it went up at a more severe angle. After ten minutes of struggling along a narrow, rutted, slippery goat track I knew that I could not survive for 1,500 metres, and I told the head guide I would quit and go back on my own. He insisted that I could do the whole journey by just 'taking it slowly'. He was rugged up in a heavy shawl but only had sandals on, and for him it was no problem. A French woman, trailing me with her partner, was also talking about quitting but wanted desperately to complete the climb. We agreed that if we stuck together and 'took it slowly' we would really make the effort to reach the top. The main body left us to go on and one guide stayed with the three of us. After a further 20 minutes, during which time the track deteriorated even further, it was obvious that we were incapable of reaching the peak by sunrise. The guide estimated that, at our present rate of progress, we would reach the peak around 0630. He qualified this by saying that the track was really quite good here. It got 'much worse' later on. So the French woman and I backtracked carefully to the hut and left her companion and guide to follow the rest of the party. We slept, if you can call it sleeping on a wooden platform, until sunrise. Actually I was so cold I was shivering at times, and had wrapped myself in one of the grass mats in a vain attempt to get warm.

Up at first light we had a sandwich made with chocolate sawdust. That, with a banana and a cup of tea, was breakfast. And I don't drink tea. Indonesians seemed to love these chocolate sandwiches and I had previously seen Udir eat them, plus the chocolate gratings were included with my breakfast at the

Metro. Our driver had slept in the minibus and, when a young trainee guide offered to take us for a morning walk, told us to be back by 0830. He estimated the main party should return by then or soon after. We wandered through the village and into the foothills of adjacent Mount Merbabu to look back and photograph Mount Merapi with cloud swirling around its peak, and to estimate what point we had reached in our climb. Suddenly, at 0730, our guide frantically wanted us to return to the hut and took off at a run. He had seen the main party returning down the mountainside.

Hearing their story when we had all grouped at the hut made me realise that fate had worked in my favour early that morning. None of the 9 tourists or 4 guides reached the peak. Other tourists dropped out along the way and had to stay where they were in the dark. Some pushed on almost to the peak but were forced to give up when visibility was reduced to almost zero in the cloud. They all had to shelter from freezing cold and strong winds by crouching near massive boulders. All of them complained of the oppressive cold, the wet and the wind. The track had degenerated to the point of non-existence and they had been forced to clamber up the mountainside in the dark, although everyone had a flashlight of some kind. No-one saw the cauldron or the sunrise, and I was mollified at my decision to quit when I did.

Our departure from the hut was delayed by an honour guard of school children lining the road for several kilometres at strategic points, and a parade of marching troops preceding the local bupati on an official visit to the area to commemorate a ceremonial day for one of the army or police units nearby. In the daylight I could see the deep chasms off the side of the road that had not been obvious last night. And there were teams clearing the road of all the landslides. We could also see the scar left by the lava flow down the southern face of Merapi.

I had made arrangements with Rohmadi for another becak ride at lunchtime, but decided to cancel it. So I went to the street corner at the appointed time to tell him, only to find a stranger there. He wasn't waiting for me but wanted to take me for a ride just to get some money. We talked about my previous trip with Rohmadi, whom he knew, and he asked how much I had paid him. I told him that was none of his business; it was strictly between Rohmadi and me. (Actually I had given him Rp20,000 (\$12) for a good four hours of his time and guidance, as well as conversation.) He told me Rohmadi hadn't been at work all day because he was on a spending spree with his family! I must have made his day. I took pity on a group of becak riders outside the Metro later

that night when they waylaid me in conversation. They had almost no money between the five of them, and I gave them Rp10,000 to go and buy a meal. In the right markets they could each feed a family on that, and I hoped they wouldn't squander it on cigarettes.

## Jakarta, 12 - 15 December 1995

On Tuesday, 12 December, I left Yogya on the Fajar Utama train for a nine-hour ride back to Jakarta, and ate kambing and rice from a street stall for dinner. Tati had not expected me back until the morrow and volunteered to buy the sate from her local market rather than cook. This was my first taste of goat sate that I had avoided in favour of chicken, and I was not unduly impressed. It was a bit tough and stringy.

One of Jakarta's attractions is the 120-hectare theme park Taman Mini Indonesia Indah. Opened in 1975 it presents the culture of each of its 27 provinces in separate areas. Each area has one or more buildings in traditional style, displaying ceremonies, artwork, costumes, weapons and a range of museum stuff. There are theatres and information centres, a free bus service around the park, a monorail, and a cable car across the top. Enormous walk-through cages house about 600 species of birds native to Indonesia, and a lake has islands in the shape of the Indonesian archipelago. It is a very well organised exhibition. I had talked about going there by taxi before going back to Australia, but Tati said she would escort me by bus to show me how the locals do it and also save money. So along with her 14-year old friend, Nani, we headed off on the Thursday. Besides wanting to see the park for its overall exhibition I specifically wanted to see the Kalimantan Tengah section for more background information on the situation there. My shopping in regular book stores had not produced anything of real value. I could not have asked for more support than I got here. First of all it was difficult to get away once I started speaking Indonesian. The chief attendant had recently been to Sydney on a cultural visit and wanted to talk about it. A younger attendant was impressed that I had not long ago visited there. Everyone was supportive of my interest in the area, and they provided me with free copies of every publication they had available, including recent government and university research papers on development and investment opportunities. I have enough material for extensive research. Nani had never been on a cable car and was frightened at the thought, so with Tati's support we all took a return ride across the top of the park and I think we all enjoyed it.

On the way home we stopped off briefly at Blok M, the shopping centre, to check on buses to the airport. Tati again had volunteered information here. Where Des and I had previously only considered taxis, and I had learned about airport taxis on my return from Banjarmasin with Jefferson, Tati knew

about buses. Air-conditioned buses left regularly from Blok M with a fare of only Rp3,000. I confirmed that with the driver of a bus waiting for passengers. Since it was now long after lunchtime and I had not been able to convince Tati we should eat at Taman Mini we got a taxi home. The fare was not much more than the combined bus fares for three of us. This was my last experience of Jakarta except for the taxi and bus rides the next day. Tati and two of her close friends escorted me to Blok M to see that I got aboard the bus safely, and I was on my way back to Canberra.

The six weeks had been a success in terms of learning the language, and I will ensure that I do not easily lose that ability again. I have made new and firm friends whom I will make the opportunity to visit again. Indonesian people in general, and those I have named in particular, made my life enjoyable and were always willing to help, and I will always remember them for that.

I no longer have any intention of learning to ride a horse.

In fourteen months time I was back in Indonesia, making the most of another opportunity to visit.

## Jakarta, 15 - 16 March 1997

*With a population of around ten million Jakarta is one of the largest and most densely populated cities in the world. Within the administrative divisions of Indonesia it carries the title of Special Capital City District (Daerah Khusus Ibukota) and has the status of a province. It is a rapidly expanding city, with an extensive network of toll roads to overcome the frequent and horrendous traffic jams that occur on the inadequate city streets. It is a thriving metropolis with multiple skyscrapers under construction within the city proper to provide for the industrial, commercial and cultural activities of the capital of the largest Muslim nation in the world. Its 46-storey 343-metre high BNI City Tower, built in 1995, rates as one of the Notable International Buildings.*

Susan and I left Canberra on QF594, an Eastern Airlines Dash 8, high wing twin turbo-prop at about 0900, having been delayed for three-quarters of an hour by fog - which had us concerned about making our connecting flight in Sydney. But for this delay we would have met Paul on his way home from Canada. We both used lounge 22 at Sydney airport, but Paul's aircraft had left fifteen minutes before our arrival.

Qantas runs a shuttle bus between the domestic and international airports and we were checked through Customs and airborne by 1130 on QF41, with a 6 hour 45 minute flight ahead of us on a Boeing 747SP. SP stands for Special Performance, and the 45 short body 747SPs produced by Boeing were designed to carry 331 passengers over 10,900 kilometres. At 5,527km it is only about half that distance from Sydney to Jakarta. It was a relatively comfortable flight even in tourist class, with all cabin announcements being made in both English and Indonesian. At least one of the cabin staff spoke quite acceptable Indonesian. The big TV screen showed aircraft progress when it wasn't showing movies and, as an ex-navigator, I was interested to see our height and speed. It took me back to the countless times I flew across this part of the world between Australia, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam during five years of the Vietnam War. We climbed initially to 28,000 feet and finally cruised at 39,000 feet. Aircraft fly in feet but they are called flight levels in multiples of thousands of feet. So we flew at FL280 climbing to FL390 as we burned off fuel and got lighter, and our cruising speed was a comfortable 900 odd km/h

It was only 1430 local time when we landed at Soekarno-Hatta airport on the northern coast of West Java, with a four hour time difference during Australian daylight saving. By the time we had cleared Customs and retrieved our baggage I was in no mood to get the bus into town, so we took a taxi.

Buses are cheaper, probably no slower, and the fare includes the three separate tolls on the 30km ride. But with the temperature in the early 30s and a humidity that caused a permanent sweat, we weren't prepared to wait around for one and lug our baggage more than necessary. With an Indonesian phonecard from my previous visit I was able to call Des Cooney at the Palma Citra apartments and tell him we were in town. Des was waiting for us with a cold drink at this luxury and secure apartment block in south Jakarta, and I met Tati again - his maid who had looked after me so well in 1995. Palma Citra is a twin tower two-storey apartment block overlooking a small mosque, a cluster of very basic dwellings and a vacant allotment housing a soccer field where the local enthusiasts practise every day and hold competitions often. They also forage in the vacant allotment for edible weeds that they harvest to supplement their meagre rations.

Des had to go to work at the Australian Embassy, working 12-hour shifts from 1800. Linda, his wife, was out visiting friends, so I took Susan for a walk around the corner to the local Golden Truly supermarket and shopping centre on Kapten Tendean Road as an introduction to Indonesia. There is no twilight near the equator and it was dark and after six o'clock by the time we got back to Palma Citra. Already there were displays of clothing, shoes, watches and a variety of cheap goods laid out on their sheets of plastic or cloth on the footpath for the evening market. A group of about eight young men were playing chess in the dim light and wanted me to take their photograph. I did, but I'll never be able to give it to them.

Tati had not prepared dinner and we were not particularly hungry, having eaten well on board the aircraft. At Tati's suggestion we went out to the food stalls on the side of the road at Mampang just to buy some chicken satay for supper. Here the food stalls and carts crowd each other out, taking up all the space on the wide footpath, with gas or kerosene stoves and woks producing soups and indescribable creations, and the smoke and smells to go with them. This walk was through a couple of crowded intersections and across busy roads. Des tells me that this area is no longer as secure as it was last time I was here, and he did not recommend walking through it alone at night because of the increased threat of being accosted and robbed. I felt quite comfortable with Tati for company and we waited while the satay sticks were cooked over a small charcoal burner. We took them home with two balls of sticky rice in banana leaves and a savoury sauce to eat in the air-conditioned comfort of the apartment.

Linda finally arrived home, and proudly showed me the photos of her wedding in Perth the previous December. Linda's family live in the nearby suburb of Bekasi, and a representative selection of them had attended the wedding. She was to look after us very well in the brief time we spent together in Jakarta. Susan was very tired after a long day and would see the photos later. Our accommodation was comfortable; twin beds in a large room with its own air conditioner, and a shower and toilet next door. The lounge/dining room was almost vast, with full-length windows overlooking the city over a small balcony. It and the master bedroom had separate air conditioners - essential for comfort in Jakarta's climate.

Sunday brought promise of reasonably clear weather in this smogged-in city at the end of its wet season, but 'clear' in Jakarta is only ever relative. After breakfast of fruit and toast we took a taxi to Monas, the National Monument in Merdeka Square in the northern part of town. Monas, inaugurated in 1962, is one of a number of imposing monuments erected by Soekarno, Indonesia's first president, to proclaim the country's identity after over 300 years of Dutch rule. Taxis are interesting in that many do not use meters and the price is set by bargaining. Our driver must have been desperate when we flagged him down outside the apartment because, when he asked for 10,000 rupiah and I offered 4,000 he took it. It was really worth more than that and I gave him 5,000. Big deal, with 1,000 rupiah worth about 60 cents. Monas was crowded with sightseers, many of them groups of children from Islamic boarding schools. Indonesia's Muslim community takes a responsible approach to providing religious and secular education for its youth, and supports a number of orphanages and schools. With only one lift taking 12 people it was a long time before we got to the viewing platform near the top of the 120m monument with its 50 kilos of gold plating on a symbolic flame. This gave an excellent view of the important buildings ringing the monument - among them the Presidential Palace on the north, Gambir railway station on the east, and the National Museum on the west. The outer suburbs of the city were lost in smog, and the sparse city traffic on Sunday lent a false impression to what is a bustling and competitive arena during business hours. Jakarta traffic can be chaotic and unruly with frequent traffic jams. A road three lanes wide will carry five streams of traffic, and crossing double lines to pass in the face of oncoming traffic is the norm. But the problem is being addressed by defining areas consisting of several city blocks as 'orderly traffic areas' and policing them accordingly. In these areas even taxi drivers are too frightened to infringe the rules.

Finally descending from the relative cool of the viewing platform to the steamy heat of street level we visited the museum. This housed a large collection of artefacts chronicling the settling of the archipelago by a succession of different religions from the Hindus and Buddhists from India of nearly 2,000 years ago, through the Muslims of the 15th century, to the Dutch from whom Indonesia snatched its independence in 1945. Susan was particularly taken with the elephant-headed Hindu God, Ganesha, son of Shiva the Destroyer and Restorer, who is responsible for clearing obstacles from one's life in his role as counsellor. Other strange exhibits included a flintlock blunderbuss rifle at least two metres long, and a grotesque skull with piercing blue eyes mounted in a 30cm, intricately carved wooden support, honouring ancient ancestors.

Culture of a different kind then when we moved into the modern world and the department store of Sarinah in Thamrin Road, the central north-south thoroughfare of Jakarta. Plenty of attractions here for the foreign tourist at the right price. Susan did buy a few things before we settled on McDonalds for lunch. None of the Indonesian food stalls we checked out had what appealed to us, and I knew that we would be getting plenty of local food - and no choice - in the near future. So make the most of it. The Grand Hyatt is one of the most imposing hotels in central Jakarta and houses the Plaza Indonesia, an up-market shopping mall for those without financial restraint, but well worth the visit. We enjoyed a big ice cream in a crunchy cone there. The day ended with our return to Palma Citra for a swim in the excellent pool and a cool evening drink from Des's well-stocked bar. Tati, on her day off, had called at Gambir Station to buy us tickets on the Fajar Utama train to Yogyakarta, leaving at 0610 the next day, Monday. I wanted Susan to travel on this business class train to see as much as possible of the countryside and people in the eight-hour journey across Java.

## Yogyakarta, 17 - 19 March 1997

*Yogya, to use its common abbreviation, is the cultural centre of Java and has much to offer in silver, batik, wood carvings, classical dance and theatre, and access to religious, geographic and historic centres of attraction. Its centre of learning is the University of Gajah Mada. Like Jakarta, it has special significance within the administrative divisions of Indonesia. It dates back to 1756 and played a special role during the struggle for independence and was, during 1949-50, the provisional capital city. Its reward is in being classified as the Special District of Yogyakarta (Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta) and having the status of a province.*

Up at 0500, but Linda was ahead of us and preparing breakfast for us to eat on the train - curry and rice with tempe, a soybean cake. Very tasty. It should have been an eight-hour journey from Gambir Station, over the 500 kilometres through rice fields and plantations, past small villages and through several towns, and over the central mountain range. Indonesia is notorious for its 'rubber time' and time is a very elastic measure. It took nine hours in a non-air-conditioned carriage with electric fans. The windows were big enough for comfortable viewing but too dirty to photograph through. Only the small top section of every window opened for fresh air or unobstructed photography. We made several stops where local people got on to sell their foodstuffs, cigarettes, drinks or fluffy toys, parading through the carriages until the train had started to pull away from the station. And children begged for coins outside the carriage windows. But it certainly opened the window to Indonesian country society. Villages varied in size from groups of thatched or tiled houses separated by bare earth walkways and shaded by fruit or forest trees, to busy communities with shops and paved roads where traffic waited impatiently at the boom gates for our train to pass.

In most of the sawahs the rice had already been harvested and the fields were ugly with stubble, or ash where this had already been burnt. Some groups of farmers - women as numerous as the men - were threshing the cut stalks by manually pounding them on the ground or on large plastic sheets. In a few instances towards the south of the island replanting for the next season was under way. But there were no vistas of the rolling green hectares of rice ready for harvesting, or the traditional buffalo ploughing the muddy partitions of the rice fields, so favoured by travelogues appealing to overseas tourists.

Coincidentally I suppose, the first person to approach me as we got off the train in Yogyakarta was a staff member from the Metro Guest House. Or was it smart business sense? I had stayed at the Metro in 1995 and could see no

reason no to do so again. They provided transport from the station, organised tours, had reasonable accommodation, and were close to good restaurants and shopping. We were soon booked in.

Susan wanted to call home from the Metro but my phone card would not work here and her universal dialling code was also inappropriate for some reason. So we opted to walk the few hundred metres to the local Telkom office where booths are available 24 hours a day. When the becak riders offered us a bicycle taxi for two for 1,000 rupiah (55 cents) an hour we didn't argue. So with Bagong providing the muscle power we sat back for a short tour of places producing batik paintings after the phone call. And Susan found one she wanted. Batik paintings and clothing are made by waxing the area of cloth not to be dyed, dyeing it, removing the wax by scraping or boiling, and repeating the process for each separate colour used. The Javanese have been making batiks in this way for about a thousand years, and they produce some beautiful artwork.

The Java Restaurant had been renovated since I last ate there, with the bamboo walls replaced by cement and the little front gardens now paved. The atmosphere had changed for the worst, I thought, but we went there to check on two waitresses I remembered from 1995. Lucia Triturti still worked there and would be in tomorrow. Nurul Arista had moved to a different restaurant. We ate our dinner and moved on to an outdoor performance of episode 2 of the Ramayana Ballet culminating in the holy fire of Sinta. This is based on an epic Sanskrit poem incorporating many ancient legends, and was a colourful and spectacular performance that was enjoyable if not understandable. We had booked for a tour of Dieng Plateau and the Borobudur Temple for the morrow so we were not long out of bed after the ballet. Our room was not air conditioned but had a ceiling fan that was useful in drying clothes overnight on a folding frame. The shower was one of those removable ones over a bath, and the toilet was conventional, as we know them. Many Indonesian toilets, especially the public ones, are simply an ornate hole in the floor with footprints moulded into the tiles to show where to squat.

Breakfast was a hard boiled egg, toast, fruit, juice (watery), coffee (strong, black and distinctive), chocolate and cheese. We ate in the courtyard waiting for our minibus to leave at 0700, sharing the tour with a young German couple. I started to have misgivings when we pulled in to refuel (diesel - 21 cents/litre) and the driver had to top up the radiator. Dieng Plateau is over 2,000 metres altitude, and a steep climb in places. The 100-kilometre journey

to the northwest took us past the smoking Merapi volcano. It had erupted in January and, as the most active volcano in Indonesia, suffers at least a minor eruption every two years. We left behind the wet cultivations of sea level and climbed through cassava, corn, tea and tobacco plantations until the inevitable happened. On a narrow road skirting a massive terraced valley the Kijang boiled and lost water. We had to stop while the driver and our guide found a water supply in a nearby small plantation, and topped the radiator up using a borrowed plastic bag. No problem. And while we waited we could admire the intensive cultivation of vegetables on the steep hillside terraces. No room for mechanical contraptions here, this required just back breaking manual labour.

From there it was a slow grind along a narrow road with numerous potholes, past Mount Sumbing until we reached the town of Wonosobo. The road was described as having steep grades, being slippery, and subject to fog. But it wasn't really that bad although it took one hour to negotiate the last 26 kilometres. Roadside and rooftop signs proclaimed Wonosobo as being ASRI, an acronym for Aman, Sehat, Rapi and Indah. It was therefore Safe, Healthy, Tidy and Beautiful. It was also festooned with yellow banners promoting the ruling Government party, Golkar (Golongan Karya - Group of Functionaries), for the forthcoming elections. Golkar's symbol is the banyan tree, representative of nationalism in Indonesia's five State Principles, or Pancasila. There are only two other approved parties, whose banners were not as obvious: the Indonesian Democratic Party using the buffalo head, representative of a just and civilised humanity; and the United Development Party, a Muslim group, using the star, representative of belief in the Almighty God.

Dieng offered a series of Hindu Temple ruins dating back to the seventh century; a series of four separate Candis with steps leading up and into an enclosure that would have housed a statue of a Hindu God. These were near Sikidang Crater, easily visible from here. It had erupted as recently as January 1997, producing deadly gases but no casualties. Farther on we could experience these gases at close hand as we walked around boiling mud pools and smoking fissures in the ground. The smell and visible evidence of sulphur were all around. Erosion had recently claimed a footbridge over a stream, limiting the area available for exploration but leaving enough to create a lasting impression of the destructive power of this active volcanic area.

It was about 1230 when we left Dieng Plateau to return to Wonosobo for lunch in the Dieng Cafe, choosing from a variety of rice, vegetable and meat

dishes to create individual plates of appetising food. Wonosobo was starting to exhibit the traffic chaos of Jakarta, with multiple double parking. But it was orderly chaos under the control of self appointed traffic wardens who manipulated the traffic flow and shuttled vehicles to keep the traffic flowing.

Borobudur was next on the list. A massive Buddhist temple built over a hill, it has no interior but rather clothes the hill. Standing almost 40m high and covering over 14,000 sq m it was built around AD 800 and has eight important levels. The five square lower levels have carvings on the walls of the external corridors depicting phases in the life of Buddha before enlightenment. With increasing height these phases move from the mundane to the spiritual. The upper three circular levels leading to the primary stupa represent enlightenment and have no carvings, but support hundreds of stupas and 504 statues of Buddha. A museum in the grounds details the history and renovation of Borobudur as well as housing the 505th statue of Buddha. Under United Nations supervision Borobudur, with its 2,000,000 stones, was completely dismantled and rebuilt between 1973 and 1983.

We returned the 40-odd kilometres to Yogya via a silver cooperative with an impressive array of artwork on display, and were given a very friendly reception. I window-shopped and talked with the staff while Susan went about the serious business of selecting and buying treasured items. Even without the language she didn't need me to interpret or bargain, and managed quite well on her own.

Back home we ate at the Agni Restaurant looking for Nurul Arista. The usual story: she would be in 'tomorrow'. Food in these restaurants is ridiculously cheap. There are some western dishes and a range of local foods. A meal for two, with drinks, was costing around 15,000 rupiah - or just over eight dollars. Then we went back to the Java Restaurant to say hello to Lucy, who easily remembered me and welcomed us with a face full of smiles. And after that another shopping trip.

It was about four kilometres from the Metro into town and I rejected Bagong's offer to take us by becak. We walked towards the main road to hail a taxi to Malioboro Mall and were accosted by another becak rider who convinced me he could get us to town in ten minutes - or I would not have to pay. I allowed that the 'four kilometres' I had been told may have been an exaggeration and we took the becak. Halfway into town the rider admitted he had lied to me because he had not had any custom that day and had earned nothing. Taking pity on him I let him take us to town, wait while we shopped, and bring us

back to the Metro. But I made him drop us off short so that Bagong would not know. We didn't get to the Mall anyway because it was too close to closing time when we reached the main shopping centre. There was plenty of opportunity for good shopping in the little shops along the side of the road, and we were content to browse and buy in them until they pulled their shutters down. Coming home from shopping we passed through a roadside market where everything from fresh vegetables through clothing to kitchen utensils was laid out under acetylene lights. This was the night market that ran from dusk till dawn. The pulse of trade beats continuously in these competitive areas.

A becak is a very basic vehicle, consisting of a seat for two mounted on bicycle wheels. The rider sits on his bicycle seat behind this and uses a bar across the back of the twin seat to steer. There is obviously no protection in the event of a traffic accident but such accidents are rare. There is little cause for alarm when riding correctly in the left hand lane because the passenger cannot see overtaking traffic. Taking a short cut across the right hand lane in the face of oncoming traffic was another story. And this happened often enough. Actually many of the becak riders earned nothing on some days because the tourist traffic was in a slump. Overseas agencies were avoiding Indonesia during the pre-election fever that had caused severe local rioting in Java and West Kalimantan in past months. However I had no worries about being on these roads with Susan at night, and could think of a lot of a lot of other cities where I would not feel so at ease.



*Bagong on his becak.*

No visit to Yogya would be complete without going to the Sultan's Palace or Kraton. So, after allowing ourselves a sleep-in until 0725, we enjoyed another breakfast and allowed Bagong to take us there, and to craft shops to look at the carved wooden figures that are used in the wayangs, or small theatres, where the stories are told with thin leather or wooden puppets or small figurines. We bought one to give to Linda, but subsequently found a better one so I still have the original. It is a carving of Rama, the great prince in the Ramayana. The 18th century Kraton is a vast walled palace dominating the centre of the city. It is still very much in use and only part of it is open to the public. We were given a tour of the open area with an English-speaking guide, who described the history of the Hamengku-Buwono family who have provided Sultans up to the present one - the tenth. The family photographs and heirlooms are quite interesting. It was this guide who told me that 49 European tour groups had cancelled their visits because of the threat of unrest leading up to the elections.

Bagong took us further afield to see the small horse drawn carriages still used as taxis in the city, and to more silver exhibits where Susan was able to add to her collection. But we were back at the Metro by 1100 to rest and write

postcards before a gado-gado lunch at the Agni. Gado-gado is an Indonesian salad dish served with peanut sauce. I have enjoyed many meals of gado-gado but no two the same. It seems every chef has his own idea of how to create it.

After lunch there were just the two of us in the minibus tour of Prambanan, about 20km out of town. Prambanan is the name given to a complex of Hindu temples built around the year 900 and dedicated to the god Shiva. They are similar in a way to the Buddhist Borobudur, with ornate carvings telling the stories of mythology and providing photographic opportunities for scholars and tourists alike. It would take volumes to tell adequately the stories of Prambanan and Borobudur, and all we can do in a short time is ponder the cultural significance of these historic monuments and enjoy the visual impact. During the full moon in July through September the complete Ramayana opera is performed in the open-air theatre at Prambanan, and it must be an artistic spectacle beyond comparison. Obviously sensitive to our interests, the driver of the minibus pulled off the road on the way home to let us photograph a classic scene of a water buffalo ploughing a rice field. This is still the prime method of ploughing, with mechanical devices only employed on the larger and richer plantations.



*Hindu temples of Prambanan.*

Dinner that night was in the Agni again, and this time Nurul Arista was there. She sat and talked about her move from the Java Restaurant. The boss wouldn't give her holidays when she wanted them, so she left. She seemed like the kind of girl who could look after herself and go a long way. Though working in competing restaurants she and Lucy were still good friends. We took a taxi into town after dinner to visit the latest shopping mall, the Galeria, opened in December 1995. It would do credit to any city, with an extensive display of quality merchandise. To our surprise prices of silver and carvings were frequently lower than we had found at the recommended local galleries, and we both spent well. In addition, the main shop was offering 50% discount on its wares. A great place.

## Jakarta, 20 - 21 March 1997

There is a new train service since I last travelled this line, and Des had recently travelled on it with Linda. They both recommended it and we were convinced to return to Jakarta on the Argo Lawu. It's a fast, comfortable, air-conditioned service with clean windows and television. There are only three stops between Yogya and Gambir and no rubber time. The six-hour trip got us into Jakarta at 1500. Yogya station is big and busy - and flat. Train lines are not sunk below platform level and people wander haphazardly over the tracks in between train movements. We were served a box snack immediately after departure and I was not surprised to find chocolate and cheese as fillings for the sandwiches. Lunch was included in the ticket price of Rp70 000 and consisted of rice, egg, savoury beans, chicken, mandarin and glass of water. Coffee was available at any time from the stewards.

Television was interesting from two points. During a movie I timed the commercial breaks at two minutes after twelve minutes of program. Here in Australia it is in danger of bordering on the reverse. Subject matter was explicit around lunchtime with teachers and students being interviewed in depth about a teacher who had been charged with sodomy. They have an essentially frank approach to life but don't approve of pornography.

Linda excelled at dinner by creating a western style meal of meat and vegetables, to Susan's enjoyment. Which brings up an interesting observation on Tati's cooking. Tati only eats vegetables and rice, and never tastes any of the meals she prepares. And yet I have found all of her cooking - including curries - well balanced and extremely tasty. Thursday night though, was a celebration with Des off work. And we enjoyed Champagne, good red and white wines, and a musical selection from Des's CD library.

We tried to contact Alan Cooke who had arrived in Jakarta on business the previous day and was staying at the Aryaduta Hotel, and finally had to leave a message. Alan rang in about 2300, just as we were preparing to quit for bed, and we set up for dinner on the Friday night when we would have our first chance to meet as a group before leaving for Kalimantan on Saturday afternoon. Before leaving Australia I had coordinated our travel to fit in with the Cooke's and Jefferson Dau's for the Kalimantan segment of our tour.

Saturday was interesting. I wanted to confirm our Garuda flight to Kalimantan that I had made through the travel agent in Canberra. Merely finding a Garuda

telephone number was a hassle. Most people must be familiar with the telephone directories of large cities like Melbourne and Sydney, even if they have only seen them at post offices. Imagine, then, a telephone directory for more than half the population of Australia, and you can appreciate Jakarta's problem. Their directory is split into three books: residential, trade, and shopping. Garuda figures under shopping, not trade. But none of the numbers looked like what I wanted to confirm a flight. The Australian Embassy was prepared to help - Des was back at work on morning shift - but Linda solved the problem with Jakarta's excellent help service. Just dial 108. With that out of the way we were free to let Linda escort us to American Express to change some travellers cheques, and then go sight-seeing by bus and taxi to Ancol and Sunda Kelapa on the northern Jakarta coast. Even the taxi driver got lost and caught up in traffic jams before we got to Sunda Kelapa, hot, sweaty and just a little irritated.

Jakarta was originally called Sunda Kelapa when it was settled as a trading centre by Hindus and Buddhists from India about the 5th century. It was later renamed Jakarta, meaning 'victory,' by the sultan of Bantam, who won a battle against the Portuguese there. Sunda Kelapa is now a colourful port where distinctive, local boats from the western archipelago, particularly Sumatra, come to trade. Most of the boats in port seemed to be carrying timber. We hired a long, thin rowing boat under an old man's control for a look at the boats from the water rather than the land. The filth in the water had us concerned about capsizing, because even brief immersion in that soup would cause serious problems.

A long, hot walk to the big Fantasy Land at Ancol should have given us access to a journey through Old Jakarta, Africa, America, Indonesia, Europe, Asia and the Palace of the Dolls. But it didn't open until mid-afternoon and we were not prepared to wait that long. So Linda directed us to the Horison Hotel for lunch where we admired the facilities provided for tourists at this probably four star resort, and settled for the less expensive menu of local foods rather than the costly American beef menu. At least the Ancol closure had the effect of getting us back to Palma Citra for a rest before our big night out. And I was able to get all our photos processed at the nearby Kodak laboratory.

There were about 14 of us at the Aryaduta for dinner. Alan had reserved a private dining room where the Cooneys and Bibos joined the Cookes, the Jefferson Dau family and associated others after pre-dinner drinks. Jefferson was late, having been pulled over by traffic police for a minor infringement.

He had inadvertently followed a bus into a bus only lane. When the police saw his credentials as a local lawyer they were prepared to release him with just a caution. Normally it is necessary to buy one's way out of trouble. Both of Jefferson's attractive daughters are singers of some renown with CDs on the market. In addition the younger one, Sharin, is a competent actress making more than enough to pay her school fees.

Live music in the Tavern downstairs was our after dinner entertainment, with a different view of Indonesian society. The clientele here is almost strictly young men on the way up in business and society, and young ladies to provide encouragement and enjoy the fruits of their success. The night could not be over until we had been taken on a tour of the banci district. Bancis are attractive Indonesian transvestites who popularise a few blocks of town where they parade their wares both for the passing trade and for the benefit of tourists and onlookers like us. They cause minor traffic jams with cars banking up to ogle them. The comfort and security of the Palma Citra were ultimately welcome.

## **Kalimantan, 22 - 26 March 1997**

Saturday. Our problem of getting to the airport was solved by Jefferson's offer to pick us up in a taxi at 1130, on his way past from his home further south. That gave us plenty of time for a leisurely breakfast of bubur ayam, a kind of chicken flavoured porridge made from rice cooked to a mush. Linda was very proud of this and had put a lot of time into preparing it for us. Initially hesitant, I came back for a second helping when I appreciated how good it was. Des had not got much sleep after last night's adventures before he had to start work this morning at 0600. Linda had an early appointment with friends and Susan and I were left to our own resources for a few hours.

Through the three tolls with their fees of 500 and 2 000 rupiah and we were waiting at the airport terminal for Alan. Susan went to make a phone call home. A character sidled up to Jefferson and unwrapped some newspaper to display what looked like three pieces of grey cabana sausage, bargaining for a price. Jefferson dismissed him with a short argument. When I asked what it was all about Jefferson said, 'He's selling crocodile genitals. I told him I own a crocodile farm. You don't know if they're genuine anyway'.

While we waited outside Alan was already waiting inside the terminal, and we eventually got together. Six of us for the trip to Kalimantan: Jefferson, Alan, Sharon, Paul Whitely, Susan and myself. Rubber time was evident again when, waiting in the lounge for a 1310 departure, we saw the crew of our aircraft abandon it and return to the terminal. The aircraft was unserviceable and would be replaced, eventually to depart at 1430. We were offered compensation in the form of a box lunch. Jasmine tea in a popper at room temperature, a sweet or savoury roll, and a piece of fruit. Neither adequate nor appealing. But we did finally get away in a Boeing 737-400 for the one hour twenty-five minute flight across a relatively featureless sea to Banjarmasin, the capital of South Kalimantan. Why Banjarmasin, when our destination in Central Kalimantan was Palangka Raya with a good regional airport? The burial site for the Dayak ancestors was only an hour or so upstream from Banjarmasin by speedboat, and we were going to visit that and call on Jefferson's elder brother in Kuala Kapuas - the village founded by the Dayak ancestors.

We were met at Syamsuddin Noor airport by more members of the extended Dau family and taken the 26km into town to the Istana Barito Hotel. The youngster driving our sedan could barely have been old enough to hold a

licence, and he drove as if he was competing in a gran prix. He wasn't alone in that. So did many others. Lane markings don't mean much when there is room for another car to squeeze in - or to pass on the wrong side of the road for extended distances. We had gained an hour in crossing to a new time zone in South Kalimantan. It must have been around 1800 when we gathered after cleaning up to go to Alfian Dau's new house to meet Jefferson's 86-year-old mother. A little hard of hearing, but she has done well to reach that age in what was a primitive and undeveloped part of the world for most of her life. Her husband had been executed by the Japanese during their occupation of the island in World War II, and his portrait held a prominent place on the lounge room wall. Throughout the house there were large, priceless urns over 500 years old. We were all shown over the two-storey house that was only under construction when I was last in Banjarmasin in late November 1995. We couldn't believe it when Yensi told us how cold it was on the upper floor veranda. But she was serious, and found the slight evening breeze at that level uncomfortable. We welcomed it.

After a cool drink, cake and social chatter we moved on to a cafe for dinner. And I think this was Susan's first great culture shock. The cafe was an unimposing, open shop on a busy road in a drab section of town. Foodstuffs were on display in open glass cupboards, not protected from the invasion of flies or whatever. The tables were long benches, and we were seated around a couple of these. Then all the food was laid out in several small portions of about three servings each. Chicken, fish, vegetables, piles of massive prawns and lots of rice. Unused portions from each serving would be returned to the showcases for serving to the next customer. We knew the chicken had been walked on by flies because they were still there when we arrived. There were no cold drinks, and we would not drink the ice. The only safe water is out of sealed bottles, sold cheaply on every street corner. Ice is to be avoided unless its origin is known and can be guaranteed pollution free. Some of the party had coconut juice, served straight from the shell. Nothing unhealthy about that. I had warm Coca Cola that I have become used to. Susan and I both avoided the chicken and concentrated on the freshly cooked rice; massive prawns that seemed to have been cooked on a hotplate and were served whole, straightened out along a wooden skewer; and tiny black fish that seemed to come from an aquarium and were still hot. And some vegetables. Visitors can eat safely in these places with a degree of restraint and caution, and the proof of that is none of us suffered any ill effects.

The after dinner entertainment was different, even quaint. We went to an enormous room with a stage and mezzanine floor, and row upon row of tables crowded with people enjoying their dinner. It was a massive family restaurant with live entertainment. Children were performing on the stage in colourful costumes with lots of balloons. Members of the audience would get up and sing periodically. Indonesians love this kind of entertainment and have no inhibitions at participating. The manager of the Hotel Istana Barito - obviously one of the best in Banjarmasin - was on stage singing along with the best of them. The Dau family knew people here and were recognised and greeted by some of the guests. This was obviously a different restaurant from the one we had just left and we enjoyed a variety of drinks until it was time for bed. The Barito was a modern hotel with commensurate facilities including a swimming pool and good restaurant.

We had intended leaving relatively early on the Sunday morning to make the most of the short visit to Kuala Kapuas located at the junction of the Barito and Kahayan Rivers. But Nature was to have her say. The river level was very low, and we were told it would not be navigable just a little way upstream. We would have to wait three hours for the water level to rise. So we were taken on a shopping trip to buy batik shirts and bolts of cloth, not the paintings, and to a riverside restaurant for Soto Banjar. It was too soon after breakfast for me to want a watery soup with large portions of chicken and vegetables in just yet. And the term 'riverside restaurant' cannot paint a true picture of the premises for those who have not been there. It fronted a narrow lane with almost no parking space to cater for its steady flow of patrons. The river was muddy and crowded with housing that would mostly be classed here as slums. The restaurant was a bare wooden structure with the usual bench tables, projecting out over the thick brown river. But the area was as clean as could be expected for this part of a tropical swampy island, and the food was probably quite good.

It was around midday when we left on the chartered speedboat. I had thought we would go up on the regular public 42-passenger boats since there was only a handful of us. These have twin 200 horsepower outboards to move them like tourist coaches on a freeway. But the Dayaks were in control and we had our own smaller boat with only a 115 horsepower Yamaha motor. It would have taken about 15 passengers. Even that had us doing 60 km/h, and the motor was badly out of tune. Before 1245 we saw the reason for our delay. Several larger boats were stranded midstream; some of them had been there for three hours and we would have been with them had we left earlier. A group of

young people on one boat were holding their own concert to pass the time. The river was slowly rising, and willing hands from off the boats and from the shore manhandled us past the blockage to put us on our way again. We left them a few thousand rupiah for their efforts.

Erosion in the lower reaches of these rivers is an environmental disaster, and significantly worse than late 1995. The main cause is the wash from the speedboats providing public transport and from the boats used by the forestry companies in the hinterland. There were massive works to restore and reclaim the riverbanks, but they covered only a small proportion of the area under threat. Without an enormous injection of funds from the government or the forestry companies - most unlikely - the situation can only deteriorate. We ate rambutan and some other tropical fruit, both of them tasting basically like grape but the unknown one having a bitter seed that had to be avoided.

Our arrival at Kuala Kapuas deserves special mention. Jefferson was head of the group and doing all the organising, included arranging transport. He tried to arrange a group of becak riders to take our baggage and us to the Seroja Hotel. We would probably have needed five. The lowest price he could get was Rp2,500 each, and he reckoned that was robbery and told them so. A Kijang driver volunteered his van and we piled in as best we could, nursing some luggage. But there was no way we could all reasonably fit, and Jefferson tried to get one becak driver to supplement the van. But after his previous outspokenness there was no way any one of them would have anything to do with us. So to save about a dollar we nursed each other and the luggage in the van the short distance to the hotel. Jefferson can be very determined.

Discussion with the Kijang driver revealed he was a local boy and the becak riders were from Madura, an island off northeast Java. Transmigration has been a policy for decades, to shift the population from densely packed Java and Madura to the less populated islands like Kalimantan. Despite the best of intentions it causes racial tensions that can manifest themselves in a variety of ways.

The Seroja was a clean, cool, single-storey hotel with the rooms fronting onto a wide patio overlooking a leafy courtyard with shady rotundas. After checking in we returned to our speedboat to go across and down river to visit Jefferson's elder brother in that part of the village where Jefferson was born and initially educated. From here we continued to the site of the sandung, where the ancestors are buried, to pay them our respects. A sandung is a coffin for ancestral remains, and is generally on a roofed platform held up by four

poles. Sometimes it is accompanied by a totem pole and it may be ornately carved. Dayaks have enormous respect for their ancestors, and the family tree for the Ngaju tribe is a treasured document tracing the families from the present day back to antiquity. I saw it at the re-interment ceremony I attended.

Jefferson's brother's house was a comfortable home fronting onto a village walkway and backing onto the river. Boats could pull up at the back of the house, but the river could be two metres below floor level. The front of the house was for living. The back of the house was for the kitchen, laundry, workshop for motorbike and outboard - and two pigsties. But the pigs and the sties were very clean. This was the end of the durian season, that enigmatic tropical fruit whose taste apparently outweighs its smell for whole Asian populations. We were assured we could taste it in this village, and were taken on a long, hot and sweaty wild goose chase. Jackfruit there were plenty, but all the durians had long gone.

Back to the Seroja for a shower, and try to arrange a steak for Susan's dinner. The Pontianak Restaurant, they said, has beefsteak. It's easy walking distance from here, they said. Like rubber time, distance in Indonesia is highly suspect unless it is accurately stated by a reliable source. So we called some becaks to take us to the Pontianak Restaurant. There is no way I would have walked it, and the becak riders were smart enough to wait outside to take us home. In the restaurant it was a familiar story by now. Warm drinks, bench tables, and no beef steak. I can't even remember what we ate, but it was obviously filling and healthy.

Susan was ready for bed in our air-conditioned twin room by the time we got back to the Seroja. But I still had a few hours of discussion in one of the garden rotundas, complete with warm beer before I could retire. It was an interesting time, hearing from the ground level about the measure of discontent with the Soeharto government. Indonesia has undeniably benefited from the progress initiated and stimulated by the Soeharto regime over the past thirty years. But too much of that benefit has flowed into the pockets of the President's family and selected friends, with nepotism a festering sore in Indonesian society, especially the younger generation for whom the coup of 1965 has no personal relevance. It was this Communist activated coup that led to Soekarno's downfall and the ascent of Soeharto's star. The forthcoming elections for the 500-member Peoples Representative Council may well be a precursor for interesting times.

We had been exhorted to place our orders for breakfast at the front desk, and Susan and I had both ordered fried rice for 0800. Monday morning at 0630 brought two boiled eggs and coffee with a hammering on the door. Never mind the order; never mind the sleep in. Since I was awake anyway I decided to query this arrangement and was assured that my breakfast would arrive as ordered. Apparently everybody got eggs and coffee at 0630, regardless. Our 0800 breakfast arrived at 0730. Rubber time.

Kalimantan is not well endowed with roads. There is a road connecting Kuala Kapuas with Palangka Raya. When it is not obstructed by natural obstacles like floods or subsidence the journey takes about the same time as by river. Kuala Kapuas also connects to Banjarmasin by road and, with Australia's help, a bridge has been built over the Barito to permit road traffic now from Banjarmasin through to Palangka Raya. It was due to be opened by the President this month. We chose the river, and our boat today for the roughly four-hour trip to Palangka Raya was a twin of yesterday's. But its motor was much better tuned. There were no problems with water levels, and less to nil erosion on the Kahayan River. But when we passed through some of the rain showers that still persisted with the wet season we had to roll down the green, heavy vinyl roof that was basically providing only sun protection. Jefferson's brother had joined us for the excursion to Palangka Raya.

Using 65 litres per hour we had to refuel once on the trip. What had been a decrepit little food house and fuel stop in 1995 was now becoming a large, new cafe and shop, with construction still in progress. Business must be prospering in some sectors along the river. We passed villages, built ribbon style along the riverbanks with their fields and plantations stretching behind them at right angles to the river. But mostly we sped upstream with just the jungle to look at, and that devoid of any trees big enough to interest the log market. Traffic was both fast boats like our own, and bigger and slower boats carrying their trade up and down river. Occasionally we passed log rafts heading for the factories at Banjarmasin, and holding ponds of felled trees, impounded until they were needed by industry. There was ample evidence of partly submerged or floating obstacles and I had to wonder why there were not more accidents on the river.

It was 1300 when we berthed at the Rambang jetty in Palangka Raya and a lot later than that when we finally got away. There was an element of confusion over who should have picked us up where. Tuty Prayogo in her Kijang was first, and finally Udir Dau in his Feroza. Udir had been waiting hours ago and

given up and gone home. Fortunately everyone of any importance there has a mobile phone. Indonesia Telkom's booming mobile phone facility beats Australia's. Obviously their satellites play a big role in the archipelago in providing contact between major population centres, whereas we rely on the more restricting fibre optic cable. Jefferson's phone was working overtime.

*Palangka Raya is not just a town, it is a Municipality of 2,400 sq km located about two degrees south of the equator. It was proclaimed the capital of the province of Central Kalimantan as the city of Palangka Raya on 17 July 1957 and became a Municipality on 17 June 1965. This date is commemorated within the regional coat of arms by the number of leaves and grains of rice and the leaves and buds of cotton. Population in 1997 was around 145,000. The city itself is spacious and orderly, complete with universities, museums, and all the necessary institutions for culture and commerce, particularly mining and forestry. The municipality is a centre for the transmigration of families from Java, and has been chosen as the site for a 1,000,000-hectare rice project. Except in the dry season inter-island ships can navigate the Kahayan River to berth in Palangka Raya.*

The drive from the harbour to the hotel highlighted the fact that Central Kalimantan is essentially swamp and jungle. The jungle has been cleared to create Palangka Raya but the swamp remains. The Pelangi Hotel sat like an island in a vast swamp, but right next to it a Muslim hospital was under construction. Across the raised bitumen road from the Pelangi stood the first of a series of town houses being built in two simple rows. The road into this site was a quagmire but obviously the foundations for construction were stable. We were settled into this simple rural hotel on the outskirts of town and owned by the Dau family, then almost immediately taken to the nearby more pretentious Dandang Tingang Hotel for lunch. We had returned to the Jakarta time zone and it was now 1530 - past my lunchtime. Susan was given a temporary respite from local food and was able to enjoy a T-bone steak from New Zealand.

With no time to waste we had to change back at the Pelangi Hotel and be taken to the Balai Kaharingan where the Dayaks of Hindu Kaharingan faith worship. We dressed for the occasion and I was able to wear my Dayak shirt, given to me by Udir Dau on my previous visit. The hall had been prepared for our adoption and the guests and celebrants were waiting when we arrived. After an introduction to the local Dayak elders it was time for the ceremony. Because of his 30 year involvement with the Dayaks Alan was the chosen spokesman and elder for our group. He had to crush an egg with his foot on the steps of the temple, remove the batik cloth covering two urns blocking the

entrance, and move the urns aside to gain entry to the hall. Inside we given traditional white rice wine and were seated on the floor below a small stage hung with colourful artefacts and backed with cultural symbols. Here the celebrant and his four drummers sat and the paraphernalia for adoption were gathered. The local elder welcomed us with a short speech and Jefferson responded as the proposer for our adoption. Alan followed with a short speech on our behalf. All of this was in Indonesian and must have been a bit mystifying to Susan and Paul. Sharon spoke and understood some Indonesian as the daughter of an Indonesian mother.

The ceremony proper began with Jefferson and two other Dayaks being sung into current history by the celebrant and his drummers. In the early days there was no written Dayak language and history was recorded and handed down orally. Present day ceremonies follow this tradition with a lengthy series of pantuns chanted to a captivating rhythm. In the pantun each verse consists of two couplets, the first suggesting the second by sound or other similarity. Since they were sung in Dayak even Alan and I could not follow them, but we knew and appreciated their significance.

Our induction into the tribe followed the pattern set here. Alan, Paul and I were seated side by side on brass gongs covered by a batik cloth. Our shoulders were draped with another batik to unite us as one body, and Alan held a rolled batik connecting us to the celebrant who held the other end. At appropriate times in the ceremony we were blessed with holy water, sprayed gently with perfume, and had our faces powdered. It was almost hypnotic listening to the pantuns being sung by the celebrant and taken up by the drummers. Following our induction the ladies were adopted. Susan and Sharon were accompanied here by Tuty Prayogo, a prominent Dayak personality and member of the family. At the conclusion of each chapter of the ceremony, which may have lasted ten minutes, the three participants presented the musicians and celebrant with rice wine, and attendants supplied them with a quid consisting of a betel leaf smeared with lime. This is commonly chewed throughout Asia for its mild narcotic effects. Then, very proud to be adopted members of the Ngaju tribe, we socialised with the celebrants and assembled guests with coffee and delicious cooked sweets, before returning to the Pelangi Hotel for yet another spectacle.

Dayak classical dances are colourful, spectacular and active. There is a group in Palangka Raya, organised by Tuty Prayogo, who have performed professionally overseas, and they were co-opted to perform for us at the Pelangi Hotel on the

Monday night. We were treated to a series of three dances by a group of strikingly handsome male and female dancers with a small orchestral accompaniment. With swords and shields, candles and fire, and outstanding costumes they were undeniably a highlight of the trip and a photographer's dream come true.

Then, with their penchant for community singing, we were led into a night of public performance with a small band of university students. Alan and Jefferson performed strongly in duet. Udir put on a brave performance in his own karaoke bar, where the dances were held. Nelson Dau and Tuty sang according to their ability. Tuty can easily hold her own with the best of the entertainers at these functions and was never unwilling to take over the stage. Paul, having a band of his own in Sydney, was commanded to appear. Paul doesn't sing, but composes and plays his own music. He was happy to get up as long as he could play his own composition with a borrowed guitar. Not very many bars into his music he was subverted by the local musicians and ended up playing along with them for several tunes. The Dayaks can be overpowering in their friendship and activities, and it was a long day and night. At least our rooms were air-conditioned and we had the luxury of individual rooms. Water pressure was very low, though, and taking a shower was a lengthy experience. Like the Seroja, the Pelangi Hotel had toilet bowls but no flushing capability. For that there was a tap in the wall and a plastic bucket and dipper. Room lighting was totally inadequate and consisted of small, low wattage fluorescent bulbs. I was able to get reading lamps for Susan and myself.

Tuesday began unfavourably with a 0800 breakfast of 2 barely boiled eggs, bread, jam, cheese and margarine. This is a special breed of margarine that survives in the tropics at room temperature, and Alan describes it as cream axle grease. It functions effectively as a spread. Alan had stories of past experience with these soft-boiled eggs. In one place in his travels he had ordered two eggs boiled for six minutes to ensure he got them hard-boiled. He had gone into great depth of explanation using his watch face to make sure there was no misunderstanding. For breakfast he got six eggs boiled for two minutes! Alan sent one of his eggs back for cooking once he found the problem here. But by that time both of mine were congealing on the plate while I ate bread and cheese.

Sharon wanted to buy first day covers from the post office for a friend, so that's where we went next. The reception was astounding. As a group we were welcomed and taken behind the counter to a desk where the limited range of

first day covers was presented and explained. Indonesia's use of stamps goes back to 1864 and Dutch colonisation. Both Susan and Sharon bought souvenir copies. These were for the National Flora and Fauna Day, 5 November 1995, and New Year's Greetings stamps dated 15 October 1996. Then to the Telkom office where there are booths available 24 hours a day, the cost of the call is continuously displayed on the phone console, and payment is made at a desk on the way out. International phone calls are not cheap in Indonesia.

Next was a visit to Tuty's home, a substantial and roomy house in a well-established suburb, where we collected her precocious daughter - eleven going on twenty-five - to accompany us out to the hills to visit Nelson Dau at his plantation and weekend retreat. Retired, Nelson is trying to cultivate fruit and vegetables as a profitable pastime. In a small three-room house with a paved front patio his wife served about ten of us lunch: pig trotter soup, chicken, pork curry, rice, and watermelon. Very tasty and very satisfying. From here Udir went home in the Feroza, and Jefferson in the Kijang drove the rest of us about another eighty kilometres to the village of Kasongan, over the Katingan River and as remote as we would get on this trip. Near Kasongan is a place sacred to the Dayaks and known as Batu Keramat - The Sacred Stone. Here Tjilik Riwut, a Dayak hero of the revolution for Independence, hid out and meditated, planning strategies to defeat the Dutch. He went on to become the first governor of Central Kalimantan. Although he died some years ago his spirit is believed to still be in the area of the Batu Keramat, and a small ceremonial sandung has been provided there for him. Another sandung stands beside it for Dayaks who have died since him and are believed to be there also. A large roofed viewing area has been built there and is marked for renovation soon. The arched entrance to the area is flanked by two big earthenware urns with embossed dragons.

Kasongan was typical of an advanced but remote Indonesian village. There were shops selling a variety of household items, cafes of sorts, even a Coca Cola machine with cans slightly above ambient temperature. A major paved road passed nearby over a substantial bridge and the road through the centre of the village was paved. A wooden jetty provided berths for a number of colourful boats. And houses were built out to the river's edge but well above the waterline. But the piles of refuse rotting around the stumps of these houses was a harsh statement of the progress that has yet to be made in these communities.

The road back to Palangka Raya was not busy but it had its share of large trucks, all competing for space with other vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. Obviously only moments before our passing one of these had clipped a bicycle carrying bundles of firewood. One bundle lay in the centre of the left lane, and a few metres further on lay the bicycle with the remainder of its load of firewood on the back and its rider sprawled on the road with his head smashed open. He was almost certainly dead but his chances of survival under the circumstances were almost nil anyway. That part of the world does not have the facilities to cope with accidents of this nature and the logistics of getting help were beyond consideration. Some trucks had stopped at the scene, but if the guilty driver was among them his chance of survival would depend on racial differences and the mood of the villagers. We drove on to the Pelangi Hotel.

Tuty took us all to dinner that night, again at the Dandang Tingang. Unfortunately there had been a group dinner the previous night and all the New Zealand meat had been consumed. So the choice was strictly local. The fish was nice. Dinner music was provided by a female vocalist with whom Tuty shared the stage. Indonesians seem to come alive when the sun goes down and they want to play all night. So it was around 2200 when we left the Dandang Tingang for the karaoke bar at the Pelangi Hotel. Udir could cheerfully spend all his spare time here I am sure. He loves the place. I watched and listened while the songs and film clips rolled off the videodisk. One of them featured Jefferson's young daughter. Very poised and professional acting. But some time after midnight I had to leave Jefferson to his enjoyment that took him through till almost dawn.

Wednesday marked the end of our Kalimantan adventure. Tuty took us shopping to see local artefacts including necklaces, brooches and rings incorporating precious stones and Kalimantan diamonds, weavings and leatherwork, and the Dayak speciality of boats and statues moulded in exquisite detail from raw rubber. We visited the Dayak museum with its display of weapons, houses, boats, and dioramas of traditional ceremonies - complete with quaint English explanations. How I would like to correct them, but this is not the time.

With a mid-afternoon departure scheduled from Tjilik Riwut airport we returned to the Pelangi Hotel to pack our bags. Rubber time came into being once again when our 1450 departure was put back to 1600. The one and a half hour F28 flight was different from the Jakarta-Banjarmasin flight in that it

flew over a lot more of the jungle and its serpentine rivers, and presented a fair picture of the vast undeveloped, but not unexploited, area of Central Kalimantan. This is the third largest island in the world and we were seeing only a tiny part of it. The sparseness of population and traffic in Kalimantan gave way to the congestion of the airways into Jakarta and we were put in a holding pattern, doing aimless circles in the sky, while we waited for our turn to land. Instead of a taxi, this time we used an air-conditioned bus to get into the city after we had seen Alan, Sharon and Paul on their way at the domestic terminal. Alan was going on to Australia and then home to America. Sharon and Paul were continuing their holiday in Bali before returning to Sydney.

## Jakarta, 27 - 28 March 1997

Linda had dinner guests, her niece and her husband, Maria and Alex Santos. Only recently married they were excellent company and kept the conversation flowing. Linda had prepared a spaghetti and salad that Des supported once again with fine wine. That dinner, and a real shower with copious hot water, marked a return to the comforts of home. Life in the interior of Kalimantan has much to offer, but adequate electricity and good water pressure are not a high priority.

Despite a late night Linda and Des were packed and aboard a taxi soon after 1000 on Thursday. They were heading for Singapore, Malaya and America where they planned to meet up with Alan Cooke. Tati took us under her wing with a shopping expedition to Blok M, a shopping mall well known and patronised in Jakarta. It has modern sections like our malls here in Australia, plus a big contrast in the more basic but equally appealing local shopping facilities. The footpaths and alleyways were crowded with people, and the way the stalls were packed in left little room for pedestrian traffic. Decisions, decisions. The range and quality of the merchandise on display were mind numbing. Susan seems born to shop and had a field day collecting souvenirs.

We treated ourselves to lunch at the cafeteria in Golden Truly where I had a burger and root beer while Susan had a waffle and orange juice. Kodak nearby was processing our latest batch of films. Inspired by Sharon's going to Bali we thought we might be able to change our tickets to take in a couple of nights there on the way home. We even had a recommended resort that was run by a friend of Tuty. Alas, we could change the departure date on our tickets but not the itinerary. So we opted to go home a day early on the 28th.

That meant we had to go in to the STA office in Jakarta to update the tickets which took up the rest of the afternoon, leaving us comfortable time for dinner at Planet Hollywood before taking in *Jerry Maguire* at one of its several cinemas. Des had warned me that Planet Hollywood could be expensive and that the soundtracks in the cinemas were played too loud. He was right on both counts. Two pizzas with a drink cost \$A33. And the soundtrack was so loud as to be painful. I didn't like the movie anyway. Planet Hollywood was only a short walk from Palma Citra, about fifteen minutes along the main road of Jalan Gatot Subroto where the biggest threat was the potholes and obstacles in the footpath.

Our last day in Indonesia was a public holiday throughout the archipelago. Hindus were celebrating Nyepi, the last day of the Balinese calendar, and Christians were celebrating Good Friday. At least the traffic would be reduced. Tati wanted to make an early start for our visit to Taman Mini Indonesia Indah, a theme park presenting the diverse cultures of Indonesia's twenty-seven provinces. She wanted time off to be with her friends for the afternoon. So we took an air-conditioned taxi along the tollway, the most hassle free way of travel.

The kiosks and shopping mall here took our fancy and our rupiah before we commenced the tour of the park. In the parking area a group of barefoot clowns, magicians and acrobats from Surabaya was performing, complete with blowing and eating fire, doing handstands and building a human pyramid. They were a scruffy lot in their red and black costumes, but enthusiastic performers. Susan has some excellent photos. We sat in the gutter and enjoyed their performance for some time before contributing to a collection for them. They were good entertainment.

The park was hot and crowded, and we limited our sightseeing to Bali - which we had been unable to see in reality, and might be thought responsible for the nationwide holiday, and Central Kalimantan - which we now knew something of. The displays of costumes here were more colourful and elaborate than in the museum at Palangka Raya. A large painting of a pemugaran ceremony in earlier times reminded me of how I became involved with Kalimantan. In addition we took the cable car ride over the top of the park to see a bird's eye view of all the presentations, and the artificial lake containing the islands of Indonesia in miniature. At first we were able to use the free public carriages constantly circulating around the exhibits. But these became so crowded we could not get on, and then suddenly ceased to circulate. The park has much to offer to both tourists and students and could easily absorb a day or more. But even a cursory visit like this leaves a lasting impression of the diversity of culture enshrined in the words of their national emblem - *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, (Unity in Diversity).

Homecoming was relatively straightforward. Tati insisted on accompanying us to the bus at Blok M, to ensure that we got away all right. And she took along one of her friends for company. We got a Qantas Boeing 767 that actually left on time and got us to Sydney at 0810. No more rubber time.

Being a day early we were only wait listed and did not have confirmed seats to Canberra. Not to worry. There was room to spare on the Eastern Airlines

Dash 8 leaving at 0955 and we were home soon after 1030. For myself it was another visit to a land I want to get to know even better. And for Susan I hope it was a visit that opened new horizons, made new friends, and one she will never forget.

Terry Bibo, April 1997