

LIFE AMONG THE SEA DYAKS

IT was towards the end of last year that William R. Roff, talks officer with the NZBS, woke to the "enormous crow of a cock" in the village of Kanowit, on the Rejang River in Sarawak, Borneo. He dressed in the dark listening to "the first gentle stirrings of the day in Kanowit. I went into the street. The rain, like an overnight cleaner, had washed and gone, and the first light from the East shone back from the smooth surface of the river strewn with endless floating blossoms. By it I could see the Kanowit bazaar . . . all sorts of shops, yet all of the same kind. Most had something of everything but more of one thing. This perhaps was the chemist, for he had more ointments, herbs and packets of flyblown soap than umbrellas, brass trays and tins of biscuits. Another was certainly the tailor, for I could see his sewing machines behind the rows of umbrellas, brass trays and tins of biscuits. Bang went the shutters, bang clatter, and now the street was full of people, carrying water, fetching wood, taking the washing to the river, stepping on geese and children. And the radios roared, the pans banged, the people shouted and the noise rose like steam from a pot coming to the boil. . .

"And with that we were away, enveloped in our outboard maelstrom, heading up the Rejang—like all rivers in Borneo, the main highway, the larder, the well and the bath. It flows like a carelessly thrown ribbon, a mile wide in parts, between endlessly green banks, and we tacked from side to side to avoid the force of the full, brown monsoon flood . . . so, trailing behind us the cry of Kanowit, we swept on up river, an ever narrowing river now, towards the

quieter reaches of the jungle and the Dyak longhouse that was our destination."

In his documentary, *Ulu Rejang* ("Ulu" means "interior"), to be heard from the YAs and 4YZ on Sunday, April 8, at 9.30 a.m., Mr. Roff records the events of the day and night he spent in that longhouse where lived 80 to 100 Sea Dyaks, a people whose friendliness and charm he found not at all impaired by the fact that, not so long since, they were headhunters. The

headman of the longhouse (seen below with his family) was Penghulu Jugah, paramount headman for 40 similar-sized longhouses. He himself had taken one head—that of a Japanese during the last war. A feature of Mr. Roff's documentary is the recordings of the longhouse orchestra, similar to that shown on the top of the page, with its *inkurumong*, a row of gongs played with two wooden batons, its *bebendai*, a hanging gong, its *tawak*, a big deep gong held between the knees, and its *ketetsong*, a drum shaped something like an egg-timer.



WILLIAM ROFF, of the NZBS Talks Department, with Penghulu (Chief) Jugah and his family—his mother Cherai, on left; his daughter Sudau (wearing head-dress), and his wife Indot

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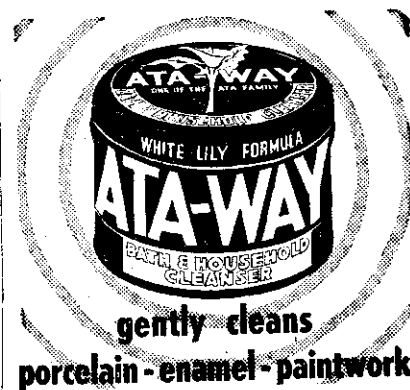
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