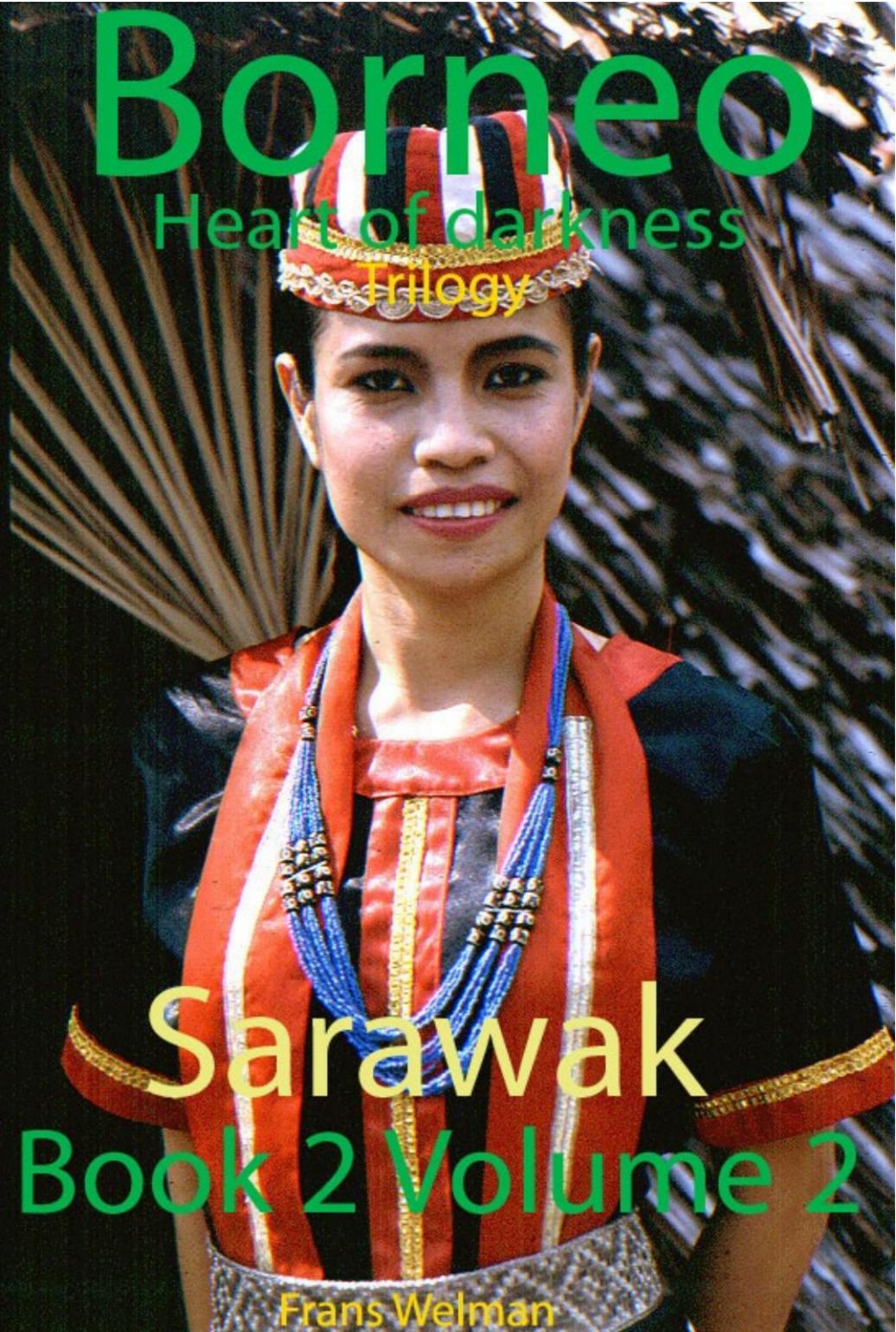


Borneo



Heart of darkness

Trilogy

Sarawak

Book 2 Volume 2

Frans Welman

BORNEO TRILOGY SARAWAK: VOLUME 2

The Quest for Bornean Independence

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THE TINJAR RESURRECTION

I wanted to go to Niah from Sibu but stopped in Bintulu, the gas town of Sarawak. A long time ago, on my first visit to Sarawak, I had flown from Kota Kinabalu to Kuching on a Fokker F27 which stopped at every major town on the coast and from the air I saw then how enormous gas tanks were being built right on a cliff towering above shore. It was then being constructed for enormous offshore gas fields were discovered and practically ready to be in operation. Bintulu boomed and had become a town in less than a decade. Years later and thinking of the Bakun project, I knew it would go through another boom again. I let it be this time, just like I had let it be the first time, though I wondered what these developments would mean to the people. Of course in Bintulu hardly people of the interior were living there but the economic impact it had was hard to miss as the reverberations would be felt all over Sarawak. I could have stopped but felt more like being with the people and the history of this Heart of Darkness than documenting on this ‘progress’ which resembled the progress of Brunei. But I postponed my visit to Niah caves because I heard from reliable sources that that a few longhouses along the Tinjar River protested and since no official had reacted on their grievances the people of these longhouses blocked logging roads in their area. Since the Tinjar is close to Bintulu I decided to go there first. Traveling is not easy, I knew that well, and so I had to find out first how to get there. With only the names of the longhouse and its headman on me I started to ask around. To avoid unwanted attention I did not go to government office but just went to the bus station to ask how I could get to the Tinjar River and when there how to get inland:

“That should not be a problem whatsoever,” the station manager assured me. “just take that bus over there,” he pointed, “then when you are at the mouth of the Tinjar you walk 2 minutes to get to the jetty from where the long tail boats leave. Early morning is best. The boats usually wait for the bus. That longhouse is in a side river so you get off at the village first, the village where the boat makes a stop,” he explained.

“So better to leave early morning then?”

“Right,” he said, “because there is no accommodation available at the bus stop near the jetty, or you must go with the bus to the next village?”

“Anything of interest there?” I asked.

There is a nice beach there. Sometimes tourists like to stay there a while, you know.”

“Nice, it is not what I have come for,” I smiled, “thanks a lot you have been very helpful!”

“Not at all, I am glad to help when needed,” he smiled, “oh the first bus goes at 7am.”

“Thanks again, how long will it take?”

“Just about an hour and at that time there is a boat so you can connect right away.”

“How convenient,” I said in reaction then left the station to find me a place to stay. Perhaps the same hotel would be good, I thought, and since I am not tired I discover Sibuhut a little too this time. But, what was there discover? The buzz was about Bakun, so lots of people around offices, others off duty from the platforms at sea wandering around too and a few hotels of course. The airport was right next to town and had more traffic than before too. Once I had slept in one but now I wanted to visit one with a view high. I was not impressed with Bintulu. As it had grown from a fisherman’s village it looked rather new and impersonal. Still when I found a 10 story hotel building I arranged to go up to the roof to hopefully shoot some unusual pictures. On top of the concrete roof with the manager I saw the sea on one side, a few platforms and harbor too, and the forest and villages around Bintulu plus the airport and shot all of it. Satisfied I went down again to mix with the people at a nearby pasar for something to eat and a look around. Sitting there at a food stall all by myself a man came up to me:

“You are alone; do you need anyone, a woman perhaps?” he asked in conspiring tone. I looked up at him to show shocked I was.

“Do you mean you would like to show me some of the nightlife of Bintulu? Though it is late afternoon, the sun is not down yet!” I reacted to his surprise.

“Yes, if you like I can do that too,” he smiled trying to conceal his surprise.

“You are a runner for women and night spots? Is that how you earn your money?” I asked a little further. He laughed in reaction then said:

“Yes, I am but it is an honest job for I get some commission, not too much, self employed I am,” he smiled.

“And, enough customers, foreigners too you get or approach?”

“The locals know the joints and spots. They know where to go, so I

am of use to newcomers like you,” he explained.

“Oh, but I am leaving tomorrow, so I only have tonight?”

“Excellent, so let me introduce you. Sir, tell me what you like and I shall try to accommodate.”

I wondered if I should test him a little by way of asking him some out of the way, if not abnormal, requests to be fulfilled.

“Well, how about some SM, of and if you have virgins on offer, I shall be delighted?”

“Are you joking? He asked earnestly.

“Not quite,” answered and waited for him to come up with something or to reject me in disgust. From the look on his face I thought both could happen.

“If you really mean it, I have to enquire. I am sure though SM is possible. How do you like it. You want submission or you want to be dominated?”

“Forget it,” I smiled, “I do not want anything really. I just wanted to know how far out of the ordinary you would go!”

“Oh I see,” he laughed, “you worried me man. Virgins and SM, ha,” he laughed out loud now.

“Tell me,” I asked him seriously now, “before I hire you to take me around for the purpose you mentioned, is it true you get requests like the ones I mentioned and are there people here who accommodate?”

“You want to hire me? I will show you everything in Bintulu,” he happily reacted.

“When you answer my question I will,” I confirmed.

“Oh, I see, well I get them but vey rarely. I don’t know actually if there is anyone accommodating. I bring them to the joints where women are available and then inform the owners of the clubs or brothels,” he explained.

“So, you don’t know if SM is played here?”

“That’s right Sir,” he said and looked sincere.

“In other countries like the one bordering here I know virgins are on sale too, but you don’t know if that is happening here, you are the expert right?”

“Right Sir, are you a journalist, or a detective?” he now asked.

“I am a curious man and so I like to see beyond the obvious. Does that answer your question?”

“Yes it does, but I also like to know what you do?”

“That means you are also a curious man which makes me wonder what your tribe is,” I smiled.

“No tribe Sir, I am Chinese.”

“Ah, an entrepreneur, right?”

“You can say that, but not a professional one,” he elaborated.

“Well, I am a kind of detective because I investigate at times, analyze and publish the results. I do this because I want hidden things to come out, to see daylight, otherwise the woodwork may get bad? We want the rotten people come out of the woodwork?”

“Right, right,” he agreed, “do you still want me to be your guide?”

“Okay, tell me your price for an evening out?”

“It depends if you are quick in choosing or that you want to see all and so that may take a couple of hours,” he said.

“Count on the last option and tell me what that would cost me?” I answered him. When he had mentioned a very agreeable amount I said:

“That is all right then and it is all walking distance right?”

“Sort of, in any case by walking we will see more, which means also the non nightlife attractions.”

“Better even and while in between spots we can sit for a drink, oh on me of course,” I laughed.

“When you are finished we can go?” he asked.

“Yes we can,” I smiled teasingly. I did not fancy letting him wait and so soon after I had finished the meal and got up to pay.

“Come we go then,” I said.

“Now?”

“Yes, now, what is the problem?”

“No, nothing. I thought I had to wait some time, I mean you said it was too early for nightlife?”

“It is not?”

“People work early morning, so here it has already started,” he said then smiled.

“Then we go, but mind you, for me it is primarily to watch.”

“Understood,” my china man agreed. So, we walked and as we left the stall near the market we moved towards the center of Bintulu town.

“You know,” he said as we walked, “we can do the hotels first, then the nightclubs then the high class hidden brothels?”

“We can, are the hotels similarly organized as the ones in other cities, like Miri, Limbang or Sibul?”

“More or less, but there is a difference,” he said and enigmatically in smiles.

“I am pretty sure you are going to introduce me to that difference,” I replied equally in smiles now as we stopped at a not too shabby hotel but not a three star one either.

“Did you ever have ice-cream?” he asked when he went up the stairs with me in tow behind him.

“Hhmmmm, I think I was suggested to me in KK,” I replied, but I found that too servile, so I declined.”

“Oh, this joint specializes in it,” he reacted.

“Well then we will see what happens!!”

We reached a floor where some noise was produced and we entered it a panorama quite familiar to me opened up. Women, girls on either side of a corridor stood in door openings to show themselves in close up when a man or a group of men passed them. For me this was nothing special till my china man guide told me that here the ice cream special was the specialty of many a girl here and so the joint had the nickname ‘ice-cream parlor special’.

“Do you want to check them out?” my man asked.

“That will do no harm indeed,” I replied, “but tell me what the rates are because I may want to talk to one of the girls, and oh yes tell me too about the women, because I like to know where they are from?”

“Oh that is easy to answer. You know man it is 30 ringgit for a ride home, some are just 20 and ice-cream is 15, most women are not from Sarawak but Indonesian or are Sabahan, some are even from as far as the Philippines.”

“Thanks,” I said to him then stepped up to check out the ‘merchandize’ as the saying around joints like this goes.

“Hello sweetheart, I am going to take you for a ride,” said a young lady to me in passing.

“I think ice cream is a bit too sweet for me,” I replied, sensing that I had gone through all this before and did not feel like repeating myself, foremost because I remembered the lovely women I had met in Miri and Limbang and I did not think I could have such luck here again. But, it seemed I was wrong.

“My ice cream is not so sweet,” she said in smiles, “and I do not even like it. If you want it, there are many here who could serve you that way,” she advised.

I wondered if there would nightlife here at all. Before I set off to Kapit and Belaga I had not taken the trouble to check it out things like that in Sibul, but since I had only this night I felt was determined to explore. But this joint was no news, not yet anyway.

“Yes if I want ice cream to be served you are right,” I replied, “what do you actually for the price you charge,” I asked in pleasant voice.

“Hmm,” she hummed but also pleasantly, kind of seducing, “what do you like?”

“Hmm,” I copied with a smile, “not particularly anything, “but would it not be nice if we both find out what we like? For that we need to invest some time, I think, het to know each other?”

“You want that? You don’t want to fuck and go?” she asked, “are you serious?”

“What is your name, where do you come from, may be a good beginning, right? Something in that direction would you like?” I suggested but thinking that I had gone through this before; women like her did not understand it and surely would judge me as weird or as a sincere person who was not out to take advantage. Yes, weird because women were here to sell themselves and the men happily paid up but did not want to know any of the women if only because of their background, poverty, or family problems. Who would want a woman who as been used dozens of times anyway. The social aspects were not at stake here, they were kept private because primarily no customer wanted to know as it would disturb the ‘fun’.

“Yeah, a good beginning,” she agreed, “but of no use for me, because you leave after you got what you came for.”

“Okay, let’s talk a little; I pay you for your time, okay?” I said, sort of reluctantly because I did not really feel like it this time and I had to leave my china man behind too. But she changed her attitude and now smiled, slightly mockingly though as she said:

“Okay, come in, let’s talk and from there see what we can do?”

“Right,” I answered and winked to my china man, who winked back like he understood and would stand to guard. So, I followed her inside as she walked towards the bed after locking the door. Again, this was a ritual I knew, so I waited for things to come.

“Sit next to me so we can talk eye to eye level,” she said, “my name is Myrte and I am Indonesian, no not from Kalimantan but from Sulawesi.

“Interesting,” I said, “I was there once and visited the Bada Valley

en Torajaland.”

“You know my land, you know my home?” she cried out.

“You are a Toraja?”

“Yes, I am,” she said with pride.

“That’s right and you should be proud,” I smiled, “but tell me Myrte what are you doing in a place like this. I cannot remember that Toraja people have it in their culture to sell sex?”

“Of course not man, I do it because I am in trouble and work here to get money to pay someone off?”

Okay I understand, so I will pay you for your time and perhaps take pictures of you, is that’s alright?”

“What is your name?”

“Oh sorry, I am Frans, a Belanda.”

“You pay for my time and so you should do what you paid for. I mean when you go to a warung to get you something to eat you do not want to pay the woman for talking to you right? You want food? And, her you pay for the action you want.”

“Then, dear Myrte, what I want is to portray you naked, nude, without clothes, but not sexually, and without your face, so nobody can recognize you?”

“Why,” she asked.

“I like to talk to you, but I do not want sex. Since I do not know you it feels too egotistic for to me sex is a mutual matter. So, to get to know you is to photograph you, is my motto Myrte.”

“But here I get paid for sex. You can buy sex here, how can I ask for money when I only talk and pose?”

“Look, don’t ask anything. I will pay you twice for an hour, may be two hours work, outside, in the sea, on the beach and further up in the forest. I pay you for being my model and in the process we get to know each other. I am sorry Myrte, I am not a man who pays to get laid?”

“No problem then,” Myrte reacted like she felt relieved, “but without my face right? When?”

“Tomorrow I am on the Tinjar, most likely the day after too. So, let’s say in three days? Do you have a phone number I can call just in case I am late? And, let’s do it in the morning, I take it there is not much business during that time?”

“Right, right,” she agreed.

“Well then all arranged. Come to my hotel early morning, say at

eight? We will get to work immediately and before ten we are finished. Then when it is a good day with good light the same but before sunset?"

"You will pay me twice? You must be crazy because no sex?"

"No sex to pay for, who knows what will happen when we actually get to know each other Myrte, but first I want to know you?"

"I never met a man as crazy as you," she said shaking her head, "you want sex for free, but want to spend twice the money for some pictures?"

"Sex is never free Myrte, not in ordinary life too. Sex as such is like eating when you are hungry and the one providing, in this case you, is not satisfied but with the money earned only. I do not like that, I mean I don't like to feel that egotistic. But, I need you for some good pictures, pictures I have in mind but not in reality yet. I am a photographer and you can do your job being a paid model!"

"Okay then, may be you care not crazy, but I think you want to see me before you decide?"

"If you would like to do me the honor, yes," I smiled,

"Then you will," she reacted and began to undress. I looked at her, her challenging eyes on me with pride as she took off her dress. In panty and bra now only she looked at me seductively. I smiled at her and said:

"A lovely proportional figure you have Myrte, I am sure I will not ruin it with my picture taking."

"Ha, you cannot, your pictures may be bad but not my body," she laughed as she now unhooked her bra to slowly lower it striptease like to the point that her breasts were freed and her nipples rather than her eyes were staring at me.

"My, oh, my," I sighed, "such a beautiful sight you are Myrte!"

"Don't you flatter me now," she reacted as she continued undressing placing her fingertips in her panty to lower it then sat on the bed again as she looked at me, her panty on her feet still.

"Okay Myrte, stand please and turn around, then lie on the bed."

She did what she was told knowing I wanted to appreciate her full body.

"I know what I look like," she superfluously said.

"Okay, you can get dressed again," I said for I had seen her and knew what to do and how to do it.

"What? You don't want anything else?"

"I wanted to see your full body; I wanted to know if you had some impurities too like, tattoos, piercings or scars. I already knew that you