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## Fashioning Cultural Representations Pioneer Colonial Explorers and Dutch Borneo's Gentle Headhunters

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“A thick veil of ignorance covers this great country and these hidden tribes who live there.” (Major Georg Müller, cited by J.E. Tehupeiurij [1909: 59].)<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

Nineteenth-century colonial history of Southeast Asia developed from mid-eighteenth-century Western moves into tropical archipelagic waters along with the swift growth of the trade with China, focused on forest and marine products. Aggressive Western maritime trade seeking access to these resources disrupted the indigenous networks, stimulating privateering and slave-raiding, while foreign adventurers tried to carve a kingdom for themselves on Borneo's coasts.

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Following James Brooke's progress, in the 1840s, in building his private estate in Sarawak, the Dutch in Pontianak, on Borneo's west coast just south from Sarawak, were hard-pressed to begin driving military expeditions into Borneo's hinterland (see Sellato 2021b). After confronting defiant sultans and warlike independent upriver tribes, they were able to control the coasts and the trade from major river drainages. Before long, they recognized, however, that actual territorial control was needed, complete with administrative and military structures and set international boundaries and, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, major expeditions were launched to hitherto unexplored remote regions, chiefly along the major Barito, Mahakam, and Kapuas river drainages (S.W. Tromp, 1879-1880, G.A.F. Molengraaff, and A.W. Nieuwenhuis, from 1893 onwards). More exploration followed in the twentieth century's first decade—by S.C. Knappert on the Mahakam (see Knappert 1905), J.J.K. Enthoven on the Kapuas (see Enthoven 1903), J.J. Stolk on the Busang River (see Stolk 1907), E.W.F. Van Walchren in the upper Kayan River (see Van Walchren 1907)—and more again till, by the 1930s, the whole of the island's southern interior regions had come under actual Dutch control and administration (Fig. 1).

In the major expeditions of the turn of the twentieth century, political and military goals, especially mapping and pacification, along with medical assistance, were combined with scientific and economic goals, including surveying natural resources and reporting on the local population to be administered. Technical personnel, on assignment from museums in Java and the Netherlands, were in charge of collecting minerals, fauna, and flora and, shortly enough, an ethnologist of sorts was added to expeditions' personnel, as well as a photographer.

Photography had been introduced to the East Indies by the colonial government in the 1840s (Arnold 2022) and was promptly made use of among its agencies. In long-distance expeditions, despite constraints due to terrain and climate, in addition to technical difficulties (transport, conservation, chemicals), photographic documentation became standard operating procedure—hence the need for a professional photographer—as did the collecting of cultural artefacts, thus matching geologic, botanical, and zoological samples, to be shipped to museums.

Photography, therefore, documented the nature and cultures of the regions explored, creating images later to be made accessible for consumption by the home public. These images, then, both bore witness to the beauty of the Dutch East Indies' nature and landscapes and to the wealth of its communities' traditional cultures, and contributed to shaping the views that the Dutch public held of them. Today, they bear witness to these Indonesian communities' rich cultural heritage and can be used by younger generations to boost their ethno-cultural identity and pride.

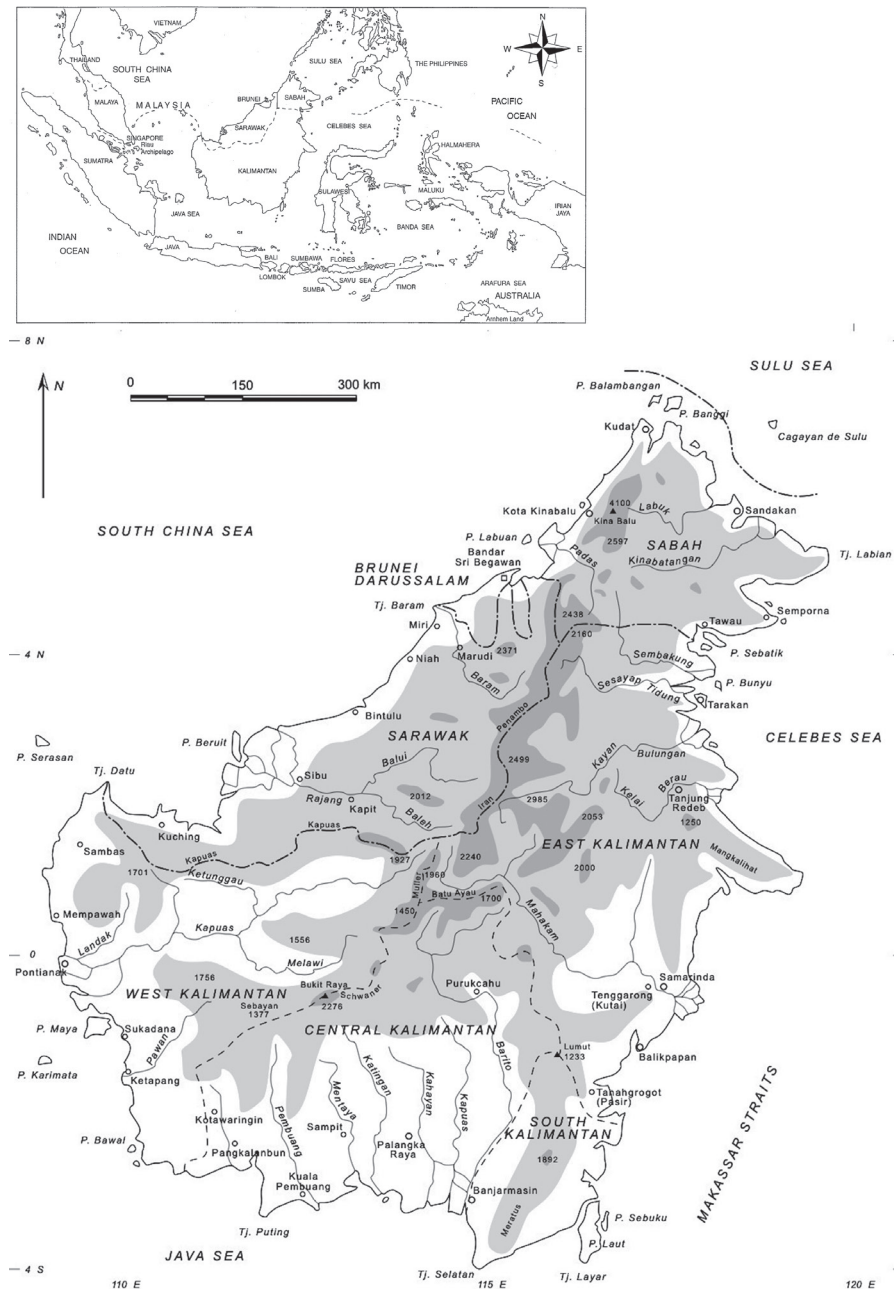


Fig. 1. Borneo, physiographic and political

Source: Sellato (1989: 6)

Inset: Borneo in Southeast Asia, political

## JEAN DEMMENI (1866-1939)

On the vibrant scene of photographic activity in the Dutch East Indies before and around the turn of the twentieth century, Jean Demmeni's position stands out as somehow special, as he was neither a native "East Indian," like Kassian Cephas (see Groeneveld et al. 1989; Knaap 1999), nor a Batavia or Java Chinese, like Tan Tjie Lan (see Ouwehand 2017), nor a complete foreigner, like Walter B. Woodbury (see Reed 1991; Wachlin 1994) or Ohannes Kurkdjian (see Hinzler 1991), nor even a member of the rather loosely defined category of "Foreign Orientals" (*Vreemde Oosterlingen*, e.g., people of Chinese, Arab, or Indian descent). His name, however, is forever associated with Indonesia and with early Borneo photography.



Fig. 2. Jean Demmeni, Aoheng village, 1898

Photo: J. Demmeni

Jean "Jan" Demmeni (Fig. 2) was born on Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1866, in Padang Panjang, West Sumatra, of Henri (or Henry) Demmeni (1830-1886), a French national from Mulhouse (Mülhausen, Alsace), who had enrolled in the Dutch military (see *Encyclopaedie* 1917), and Christina Ramers, a probably Christian *Indo*<sup>2</sup> woman from

Madura (*Imexbo* 2021). Much information on Jean's biography can be found in Haks and Zach's (1987) excellent book, as well as in his Army records (*Stamboek* 2021).

Henri Demmeni had enlisted, not necessarily as a refugee (see *Tempo* 2014), in the Dutch armed forces, like many Alsatians did at the time (his brother, H.C.V.A. Demmeni, was also in the military), was posted to the Dutch East Indies in 1849, fought in the 1851-52 Aceh War, rose to captain in 1866, to colonel in 1883 and, after being named civil and military governor of Aceh in 1884, he was appointed major general in May 1886, but he soon fell ill, resigned his position, and died at Payakumbuh (*Imexbo* 2021; a bridge and a street in Aceh were named after him).

After technical training in the Netherlands—possibly thanks to a state pension awarded by the Army after his father's demise (his mother had died earlier; *Imexbo* 2021)—Jean also joined the Dutch army as a non-commissioned officer in the Third Infantry Regiment in March 1887, was quickly promoted to corporal, then sergeant, and took his stationing in Batavia in May 1888. He became a noted sharp-shooter in 1892 but, as he had developed a fervent interest and skill in photography, he was, in November 1893, seconded to the Army's Topographic Service (*Topografische Dienst*) as an assistant photographer. He married a woman named Mas Sarinah, a (noble?) Javanese from the Solo area (Haks & Zach 1987: 11).

Jean Demmeni did not take part in the first (1893-1894) cross-Borneo expedition (*Stamboek* 2021; *contra* Haks & Zach 1987: 9, *Wikipedia* 2021). However, when the exploration of the big island's unknown hinterland grew to a larger scope, he was assigned for two years, starting in April 1896, as a photographer to the second expedition (1896-1897), which Nieuwenhuis led on the first successful traverse across the island. This assignment was renewed in April 1898 for another two years, and Demmeni joined the stretched, wider-scoped third expedition (1898-1900), again under Nieuwenhuis' leadership (Fig. 3).

In May 1904 Demmeni, back with the Topographic Service, was promoted to *adjudant-onderofficier* (warrant officer). Later on, in 1908, he took part in a topographic survey of Krakatau Island, twenty-five years after its volcano's 1883 cataclysmic explosion, and he is credited as being the first to reach its summit. Then, in 1909-1910, on a leave of absence, he was attached for a few months as a photographer to the Mamberamo River Expedition led by Capt. Franssen Herderschee in north-western New Guinea (see Demmeni 1937; Sellato 2021b), with duties including the supervision of the Dayak crews recruited for the expedition ("a mentor to the Dayak coolies"; *Nationaal Herbarium* 2021). And in 1911, he worked for six months on assignment for the Dutch National Tourist Board's promotional photographic project, *Indië in beeld* (see Wagenaar Reisinger 1911).

At the end of 1911, Demmeni left the Army's Topographic Service, "with full pension and benefits," and joined—as *photograaf*, *burgerlijk ambtenaar* [civil officer], [and] *chef* [head]—the civil Topographic Service (*Stamboek* 2021; Haks & Zach 1987: 11), which, after Independence, would become the Bakosurtanal (*Badan Koordinasi Survei dan Pemetaan Nasional*), Indonesia's surveying and mapping agency.



Fig. 3. The third expedition, 1899

Center: Bier, Nieuwenhuis, Kueng Irang, Barth, Demmeni

A few years later, in 1915, Demmeni was assigned, again as a photographer, to Carl Lumholtz's expedition to Borneo (see below), across from the Barito to the Mahakam. Lumholtz, a senior Norwegian explorer and ethnographer, was already famous for his books about the Australian Aborigines and the indigenous peoples of northwestern Mexico, both places where he spent several years. Borneo was his last expedition, from which he published an illustrated book (*Through central Borneo*, 1920). Demmeni, who had been offered a snug monthly salary of 300 florins, plus a 100-florin monthly bonus, and an eight-florin daily allowance (*Stamboek* 2021), unfortunately fell ill early in the voyage and had to return to Java, and it is likely that no more than a few, if any at all, of his photos are gracing Lumholtz's book.

In August 1917, Demmeni was appointed the head of the Photographic Unit of the Topographic Service, from which he finally retired in December 1920 (*Imexbo* 2021; *Stamboek* 2021). He went on to work as a free-lance photographer with the Central Office of Dactyloscopy, Police Department (*Cyclopedia* 1950; Haks & Zach 1987: 13). Jean Demmeni died in Buitenzorg (Bogor) on October 23, 1939, and was probably buried in Batavia.

## NIEUWENHUIS AND THE CENTRAL BORNEO EXPEDITIONS

By the turn of the twentieth century, three major expeditions across Borneo's central mountain massif were carried out to explore its unknown areas. The Dutch thus attempted, through the central water divide, to link their current positions in the upper Kapuas River (some 1,143-km long), in the west, and in the Mahakam River (980-km long), in the east (Hubrecht 1894: 307), where they were planning to make a move (*ibid.*: 309). Solco Walle Tromp, the *resident* (governor) of West Borneo, wanted to control the narrow east-west corridor (Fig. 4) between the sources of the Kapuas and Mahakam (Nieuwenhuis 1898) and the Rajang river basin in Sarawak, in the north, from where they felt they had reasons for suspecting the Brooke raj of contemplating an expansion of its possessions (Black 1985; Eghenter 2007); at the very least, the Raj did encourage its own tribal people to collect forest products beyond its southern and eastern borders (*Sarawak Gazette* 1872, 1879; Pringle 1970) and tried to persuade people from beyond these borders to bring their trade to Sarawak's market places, and even to migrate into Sarawak.

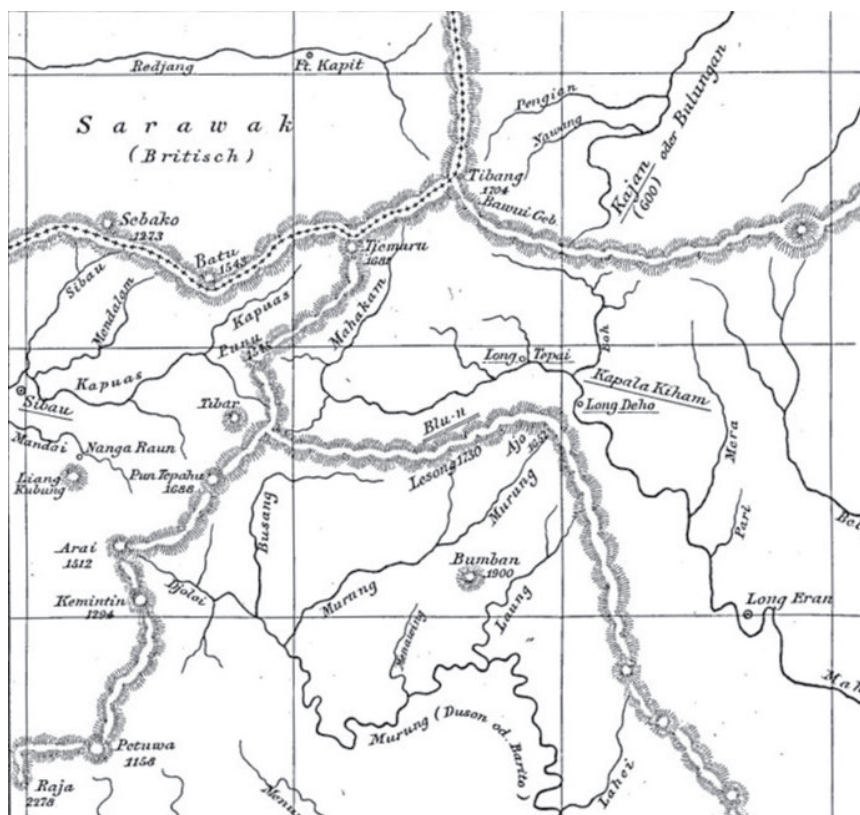


Fig. 4. The central Borneo East-West corridor

Source: adapted from Finsch (1905)



That region between the Kapuas and Mahakam headwaters is one of Borneo's most remote areas (see Sellato 1981, 2002a; Nieuwenhuis 1902a). In the upper Mahakam, a region isolated from the low plains by very dangerous rapids (Long Deho to Long Tepai section, see Fig. 4), various Dayak groups (Kayan, Busang, Long-Glat) occupied the rare and narrow plains, while others (Aoheng, Seputan) inhabited the mountains' eastern foothills. In the upper Kapuas, the small market town of Sibau (or Putussibau; see Fig. 4) was surrounded by Senganan (Malays) and diverse Dayak groups (Taman, Kayan, Aoheng). In-between, the central mountain range, reaching up to almost 2,000 m a.s.l., was home to nomadic Bukat and Kereho and semi-nomadic Hovongan. The first explorer to reach and cross this mountain range did not live to recount his travels. However, his name lives on.

Major Georg Müller (b. 1790), an engineering officer in Napoleon's *Grande Armée*, enlisted in 1817, with the rank of captain, in the Dutch East Indies military in Batavia, but soon transferred to the civil service and served four years in Sambas, on the west coast (Hubrecht 1894: 301). In the name of the colonial government, he made official contact with the sultans of Borneo's east coast. In 1825, in spite of the sultan of Kutai's reluctance to let the Dutch penetrate through and beyond his territories, Müller went up the Mahakam with a dozen Javanese soldiers. Only one of these made it alive to the west coast.

News of Müller's death fed, in the regional press, a controversy that lasted well into the 1850s (von Kessel 1849-50; Van Lijnden & Groll 1851; Veth 1854-1856; Hageman 1855), and episodically revived each time "new" information became available (Molengraaff 1895, 1902; Nieuwenhuis 1898, 1900a; Enthoven 1903). As late as the 1950s, visitors to the area continued to inquire into and report on its circumstances (Helbig 1941; Ivanoff 1955).

To this day these have not been quite clarified. Indeed, the region remained *terra incognita* until the 1890s. It appears, however, that Müller did cross the watershed into the Kapuas drainage and was killed around mid-November 1825. The murder, it is said, was committed on the Bungan River, possibly at the Bakang Rapids, where his team had to build canoes to paddle down to the main Kapuas River (see Molengraaff 1894: 1010; 1900: Plate 30). He would then have been only a few days away from safety. It seems likely that the murder was ordered by the sultan of Kutai—an order conveyed from one tribe to the next up the Mahakam—and finally carried through by members of some local group, perhaps the Aoheng, as Nieuwenhuis himself believed. As it took place in the Kapuas drainage, the sultan could not, of course, be made to bear the blame for it.

## Nieuwenhuis' First Expedition (1893-94)

When this initial expedition first crossed the watershed, almost seventy years later, the mountain range was given the name of Müller Mts. Allow me now to introduce Nieuwenhuis (Fig. 5), with the following pages mainly based on my earlier work on Nieuwenhuis' life, deeds, and works (Sellato 1993 & 1994a, also 2021a), as well as on a few obituaries (Bertling 1953; Vogel 1954; Smythies 1955),

and later studies (Van Goor 1995, 2000; Van Ginkel 2009; Ouwehand 2014). An extensive, albeit by no means exhaustive, reference list is given in Sellato (1993).



Fig. 5. A.W. Nieuwenhuis, with local associates, 1896

Source: *ICB*, I: Frontispiece

Anton Willem Nieuwenhuis was born on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1864, in Papendrecht, The Netherlands. After studying medicine at the State University in Leiden from 1883 to 1889, he took in 1890 his doctoral degree in medicine from the Albert-Ludwigs University in Freiburg-im-Breisgau, Germany, with a 32-page thesis entitled *Über haematoma scroti*—indisputably a fascinating medical topic. He joined the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL, *Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger*) in 1890 and was stationed in 1891-92, at Sambas, West Borneo, as a medical officer in the service of the Dutch East Indies Army. S.W. Tromp (1848-1897), the newly appointed *resident* and an old Borneo hand (see Tromp 1889), having traveled in east Borneo earlier, took the initiative for the scientific exploration of central Borneo.

That central mountain range, as mentioned above, was a critical area, especially its northern part, giving access from the sources of both the Kapuas and Mahakam to the upper course of Sarawak's Baleh River (and then, to the Rajang), while its southern part opens to the upper right side-streams of the Barito River (890 km), particularly the Busang River, a wide territory that remained uncharted until J.J. Stolk traveled up its nasty rapids in 1905 to cross over to the Mahakam (Stolk 1907). The same testing trip was the goal of Carl Lumholtz's expedition in 1916 (see below).

Thus, after lengthy consideration by its scientific committee (the Indisch Comité, acting as an advisory body), the Maatschappij ter Bevordering van het Natuurkundig Onderzoek der Nederlandsche Koloniën (Society for the Promotion of Natural History Exploration in the Dutch Colonies) in Amsterdam decided to organize an expedition, whose main objective was the scientific exploration of central Borneo, particularly the upper Kapuas and its main tributaries, i.e., the western side of the mountain range. The upper Kapuas' northern tributaries were the main zone of untiring encroachment by Iban bands and of clashes and even bloodbaths with local residents.

This initial multidisciplinary scientific expedition included Johann Büttikofer, curator at the National Museum for Natural History in Leiden, for zoology; J.G. "Hans" Hallier, assistant at the Herbarium of the Botanical Gardens in Buitenzorg (Bogor), for botany; Prof. Dr. Gustaaf A.F. Molengraaff, for geology; and Dr. Nieuwenhuis, as a young medical officer, also in charge of physical anthropology and ethnography—although he was not an ethnographer by training.

The expedition got under way in November 1893 and, from its headquarters at Semitau, where all members finally gathered on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 1894, it left for the Mandai River (see Fig. 4). Nieuwenhuis and Büttikofer stayed from March through May 1894 on the upper Mandai, in the village of Nanga Raun (see Molengraaff 1900: Plate 9; later dubbed "the longest longhouse" in West Kalimantan), among the Ulu Air Dayak (a branch of the Ot Danum, which calls itself Orung Da'an). Meanwhile, Molengraaff carried out geologic survey and mapping. Then Nieuwenhuis and Molengraaff went to Putussibau to prepare for the journey towards the Mahakam.

*Controleur* Van Velthuysen (Velthuijsen), the civil district officer in Putussibau, who had traveled already up the Bungan River in 1891 (Hubrecht 1894: 297, 310), was appointed the leader of the expedition, which included, besides Nieuwenhuis and Molengraaff, 19 *prajurit* (East Indies soldiers), 5 Malay coolies, 8 Batang-Lupar (Iban) Dayak in the special service of the *controleur*, and 85 Kayan Dayak from the Mendalam River (Fig. 6) as boatmen and porters. They departed from Putussibau with 24 canoes on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1894. As noted above, connecting Dutch positions, west and east, over the watershed—Nanga Bungan, the last place under Dutch control up the Kapuas, and Lirung Tika, the last spot up the Mahakam where Dutch agents were permitted to penetrate—loomed large in the expedition's goals (Hubrecht 1894: 307).



Fig. 6. Kayan leader Akam Igau's longhouse on the Mendalam River, 1896

Source: *ICB*, I: Pl. 5

Travelling the southern path (from the Bungan and Bulit rivers across to the Penane River; see *Encyclopaedie* 1918), the expedition walked into the Mahakam basin on July 14<sup>th</sup>. But the regional political situation had not changed much since Müller's times. Preparations were being made for a hostile reception by the tribes ahead<sup>3</sup>—or so went the rumor brought by a Dayak messenger just returned from the Mahakam (Molengraaff 1894: 1009-1010)—and the *controleur* decided to turn back. All were again in Putussibau by July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Molengraaff and Nieuwenhuis then parted ways.

Molengraaff (1860-1942), making both geologic and ethnographic observations (Büttikofer & Molengraaff 1894-1895; Molengraaff 1900, 1902), went back to Putussibau, Sintang, and Nanga Pinoh on the middle Melawi River; then, from the Bunut River, on the upper Kapuas, he crossed over to the upper Melawi, climbed Bukit Raya (2,278 m), the highest summit in the mountain range later called the Schwaner Mts. (after the early-nineteenth-century German geologist), and went south, down the Samba and Katingan rivers (now in Central Kalimantan province), reaching Banjarmasin in November 1894<sup>4</sup> (see Molengraaff 1900, 1902; *Cyclopedia* 1950; and Fig. 2).

Meanwhile, Nieuwenhuis settled among the Kayan at Tanjung Karang, on the Mendalam River, for two months (August-September 1894). Regarding their chiefs as the key to the Mahakam, since they were well acquainted with other Kayan chiefs there, he made them promise to take him across the watershed, which

they agreed to do on the condition that there would be no armed escort. In late September, chief Akam Igau, of the Kayan Uma' Aging sub-group of Tanjung Karang, now on friendly terms with Nieuwenhuis, accompanied him to Pontianak and pledged to *resident* Tromp his people's assistance to another expedition to the Mahakam (Van Goor 1995: 223).

## The Second Expedition (1896-97)

In 1894, a war in Lombok had erupted and Nieuwenhuis was posted there as a medical officer. He returned to Batavia in 1895 and sailed to Pontianak in February 1896. A second expedition was then organized, with the same objectives. Thanks to his previous experience and his acquaintance with the Kayan headmen, the 32-year-old Nieuwenhuis was appointed as its leader.

This second expedition included Friedrich von Berchtold, for the zoological collections, and "Jan" Demmeni, as its topographer and photographer. Other members were two Sundanese men from Buitenzorg, Jaheri and Lahidin, in charge of botanical specimens and collections, and Midan, Nieuwenhuis' personal aid and cook. Nieuwenhuis stayed in Tanjung Karang again from April 7<sup>th</sup> to June 15<sup>th</sup> to gain a better command of the Kayan language and learn the closely related Busang lingua franca of the Mahakam. Demmeni, arriving in May, immediately started taking photographs (featured in Nieuwenhuis' *In Centraal Borneo*, 1900).

On July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1896, the expedition started from Putussibau with twelve canoes and fifty Kayan boatmen, including the odd Kenyah, Beketan, Punan, and Aoheng tribesmen. Following again the southern route, it went up the Bungan and Bilit rivers, stayed put for a while—at the very place where, in 1975, I would build my geologic base camp for two months (a great riverside spot!)—to ascertain that no major problem was to be expected ahead, and then went across and down the Penane and Kaso (Kacü) rivers on the eastern side (see Van Hasselt 1901: 606). The party resided first with the Aoheng, then with the Kayan at Long Blu'u, and spent altogether some eight months on the upper Mahakam (Fig. 7), exploring various side streams, the Cihan, Meraseh, and Blu'u rivers (*Cyclopedia* 1950), with Demmeni acting then as surveyor.

The Kayan from the Mendalam River and chief Akam Igau played an important role in the favorable course of events. It is clear that, without Akam's help, Nieuwenhuis would never have succeeded.<sup>5</sup> On the other side of the watershed, the part played by Kueng (Kwing) Irang (1840-1901; spelled Kowin-Iran in Molengraaff 1894: 1009), the respected elderly chief of the powerful upper Mahakam Kayan (aka Kayan Mekam), coordinating moves with Akam, was equally instrumental.

In fact, Nieuwenhuis had just landed in the midst of a complex global-economic *cum* local-political situation—that of a robust boom in the trade of forest products (see Ooi 1995: 358-360), prompting a vicious struggle for access to territories where these wild resources thrived—in which the main local stakeholders soon realized how they could use him as a new political tool available to them. The independent upper Mahakam tribes were caught between the sultanate of Kutai,



Fig. 7. A longhouse by the river, upper Mahakam

Source: *QdB*, I: Pl. 64



Fig. 8. Kueng Irang's new house, Kayan, upper Mahakam

Source: *QdB*, I: Pl. 24

in the lower river, and a bunch of extremely aggressive Iban tribes in Sarawak (see Baring-Gould & Bampfyld 1909). The sultan of Kutai was trying to force them to acknowledge his authority and to trade with him;<sup>6</sup> and the Iban, especially after their 1885 massive attack on the upper Mahakam that destroyed all the Aoheng villages and Kueng Irang's Kayan settlement, kept on confidently encroaching in the upper Mahakam and remained a permanent impending threat.

Kueng Irang, the most influential chieftain on the upper Mahakam, was striving to keep his upriver region free from Kutai, whose interference had done much harm among the tribes of the middle Mahakam area. Contending for prominence, Belareq, one of the Aoheng chiefs, had pledged support to the sultan of Kutai, and wanted to break Kueng's resistance, while another important Aoheng chief, Paron of the Cihan River, had pledged allegiance to the sultan of Banjarmasin, and another, Amun Lirung of the Huvung River, was traditionally trading at Putus-sibau, to the west. Tingang, the head of the most upstream Aoheng settlement, scorned and coldshouldered by his peers as the man responsible for causing the 1885 Iban attack, was keeping a low profile at a place far away from the border (Sellato 1986, 1992, 2002b).

Belareq, playing Kutai's game, was probably behind the unrest that prevented the first expedition from entering the Mahakam drainage in 1894. The Kayan chief who made the second expedition's success possible, Kueng Irang (Fig. 8)—through his contact with Akam Igau and the Kayan of West Borneo, where the Dutch had already made a show of force—had rapidly become aware that these foreigners were powerful and could become his trump card in local politics (see Nieuwenhuis 1904-1907, II: 504). He asked Nieuwenhuis, “on behalf of all the Mahakam groups,” to petition the Dutch authorities to take direct control of the area from the sultan of Kutai. Nieuwenhuis could not have been happier.<sup>7</sup>

The expedition left for the coast on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1897, reaching Samarinda in late May. The Borneo journey ended a few days later, when the expedition members left for Banjarmasin, Surabaya, and Batavia. Upon his return to Batavia, Nieuwenhuis held talks with Government officials to convince them to fund a third expedition, in order to explore ways and means of extending Dutch rule to the upper Mahakam region and, further north, to the Apo Kayan plateau, in the upper Kayan River region, “to establish peace and security,” at the expense of the sultan of Kutai's interests and of those of other coastal trading concerns, such as the Bulungan sultanate (see Lumenta 2017).

### The Third Expedition (1898-1900)

This expedition, therefore, had principally political aims. In addition, the same ethnographic, sociological, and medical goals were maintained. Under Nieuwenhuis' leadership, once again, it included “Jan” Demmeni; J.P.J. Barth, a *controleur* (first-class) who had studied the Busang language; H.W. Bier, a topographer; Midan, Nieuwenhuis' cook; Sekarang and Hamza, two Javanese employees of the Botanical Gardens at Buitenzorg, for botanical collections; and Doris Tengsi, an

*Indo* hunter and taxidermist, for zoological collections. This time, Nieuwenhuis took an armed escort of five East Indies troops<sup>8</sup> to deal with possible roving bands of Iban. He had made a special short trip to Singapore to procure glass beads and ivory bangles, unobtainable in Java, to be used as presents. He decided to go, again, from west to east, knowing that the sultan of Kutai would try to bar him if he attempted to start his journey from the east.

The expedition left Pontianak on May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1898, for Putussibau, which it reached in June. But, as the Kayan of the Mendalam River were busy with their farming chores, it was only able to leave Putussibau on August 18<sup>th</sup>, with 25 canoes and accompanied by Akam Igau and 110 men, mainly Kayan, plus some Bukat, Beketan, and Punan. On September 15<sup>th</sup>, this party reached Pangkalan Howong (Huvung), the starting point of the northern footpath, from the Mecai (Becai) River, a branch of the upper Bungan, to the Huvung River, a tributary of the Mahakam. There they ran short of food: The famous “rice equation” went wrong (though with suspicion of pilfering; Smythies 1955: 499) and they had to rely on wild sago.<sup>9</sup> To make things worse, Demmeni came down with malaria. After some quick topographic work along the watershed, the party made for the first Aoheng village downstream, reaching it on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1898.

Nieuwenhuis and his team spent, again, eight months in the upper Mahakam area, studying the people, their customs and languages, the animals and plants, and climbing peaks for mapping. They produced a map of the region—which, in 1993, was still the best available—and Barth composed a Busang-Dutch dictionary (Barth 1910; with Kayan, Aoheng, and Long-Glat wordlists). And important collections of Dayak material culture were gathered.<sup>10</sup>

Nieuwenhuis was by then unaware that the Aoheng chief Belareq, who had impressed him so favorably in 1896, might in fact have resolved—and, possibly, twice attempted—to have him killed, conceivably on Kutai’s orders; at least, this is what Carl Lumholtz, visiting in 1916, later reported (Lumholtz 1920: 210; see also Molengraaf 1894: 1008-1010). Kueng Irang, eager to secure Dutch assistance against Kutai and its allies, would have managed to thwart this hostile endeavor. If true, it was a close call, and Nieuwenhuis might have ended like Georg Müller.

The expedition finally left Kueng Irang’s village of Long Blu’u on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1899, and went down the Mahakam, to reach Samarinda on June 9<sup>th</sup>. Barth and the escort, plus the two plant collectors, were sent ahead to Java. The plant samples were shipped to Buitenzorg and the animal collections to the Museum in Leiden. Nieuwenhuis set off again very soon, on June 17<sup>th</sup>, for Long Blu’u, accompanied by Bier, Demmeni, Doris, Midan, five young Malay soldiers, and four Malay aids. From there, on September 30<sup>th</sup>, he left on an important trip to the sources of the Mahakam, to map the area of Lasan Tuyan, the mountain pass to and the border area with Sarawak. On the way back, one of the boats overturned, fortunately with only material losses. In 1975, when I walked from the Mahakam across to Sarawak, Lasan Tuyan was just a spot in the middle of a densely forested nowhere—today, it is an Indonesian military border post.



Nieuwenhuis' trip to the Apo Kayan plateau (see Fig. 5), which had been scheduled for 1900, proved a difficult, lengthy undertaking. Acting as a representative of the Dutch colonial government, he paid a formal visit to the sultan of Kutai, who expressed his opposition to this second part of the expedition. From November 1899 till March 1900, Nieuwenhuis had to wait, mostly staying put at Long Blu'u, for ongoing official Dutch talks with Kutai to reach a favorable conclusion, but the sultan meant to use every means to obstruct the extension of Dutch rule into central Borneo. Moreover, as the peoples of the Mahakam and the Kenyah of Apo Kayan were bitter foes, Nieuwenhuis found it challenging to procure guides to go up the Boh River and across to Apo Kayan. In mid-May 1900, he was able to position his party at an advanced camp, Long Boh. Bier and Demmeni later joined him there but, as they had to wait another three months, they wished to return to Batavia. Finally, Bier was ordered back, but Demmeni endured (see Smythies 1955: 503-504) and took over Bier's topographic duties (Nieuwenhuis 1904-1907, I: 308).

### The Apo Kayan Expedition (1900)

In June 1900, at last, Nieuwenhuis received notice that the upper Mahakam region (called Boven Mahakam) had been formally placed under "direct" Dutch governance (*rechtstreeks bestuur*),<sup>11</sup> and Barth was then to be installed below the rapids, at Long Iram (misspelled as Long Eran in Fig. 5), as its first *controleur*. On August 6<sup>th</sup>, the expedition finally set off from Long Boh with Kueng Irang, only to face another rice shortage en route—leaving one to wonder at Smythies' praise of Nieuwenhuis as an "efficient and successful traveler" (Smythies 1955: 493), as a rice shortage is one unforgiving way for an expedition to head straight for disaster.



Fig. 9. A large Kenyah settlement, Long Nawang, Apo Kayan, 1900

Source: *QdB*, II: Pl. 87

The expedition reached Apo Kayan (Fig. 9) in late August and remained there about two months,<sup>12</sup> then crossed back to the Boh River, having collected a wealth of information on the diverse Kenyah sub-groups of this high plateau of the upper Kayan River. The Kenyah were quite responsive to Nieuwenhuis' offer of Dutch protection against the sultan of Kutai, from whom they wished to keep a safe distance. Nevertheless, and despite frequent Iban headhunting raids from

Sarawak, they had ongoing trade relations to market places in the upper Balui and Baram rivers in Sarawak and wanted to uphold them, so they worried that an association with the Dutch might annoy the Rajah Brooke and jeopardize their access to Sarawak trade, and they asked Nieuwenhuis to write official letters to him (Nieuwenhuis 1901c: 1112). Charles, the second rajah, who had long tried to persuade these Kenyah to migrate to Sarawak, replied that, since the Dutch were already there, Apo Kayan was no longer a concern of his (Lumenta 2010: 197, 2017: 17). Kenyah people actually emigrated en masse to Sarawak after Nieuwenhuis' visit to Apo Kayan (Lumenta 2008).

The expedition, starting back down the Boh on November 4, 1900, reached Long Iram on December 3, and Batavia on the 31<sup>st</sup>. In view of his successful journey to confirm Dutch control over several interior regions of Borneo, Nieuwenhuis was appointed the government's counselor for Borneo affairs. Having managed to keep remarkably healthy throughout his travels, he returned to the Netherlands in 1901, traveled a lot through Europe (Vogel 1954: 119b; certainly partly as self- and book-promotion). In 1902, he married Margaretha Johanna Toni, baroness von Üxküll-Güldenbandt, a doctor in Biology he had met in Buitenzorg (Van Ginkel 2009: 49).

In 1903, another *controleur*, E.W.F. van Walchren, went from the east coast up the Berau River to Apo Kayan—where he stayed six months—and again in 1906 to settle a internecine feud among Kenyah tribes. That year, there were talks that Nieuwenhuis would return to Apo Kayan—he had made plans to sail again to the East, but he never went (Vogel 1954: 119b, Van Ginkel 2009: 20). Instead, Capt. L.S. Fischer went to Apo Kayan (June-October 1907; see Fischer & Gramberg 1910), to prepare for a military outpost to be established at Long Nawang in 1911 (Black 1985).

And, in 1904, Nieuwenhuis was appointed a professor to a chair in “Geography and ethnology (*Land- en Volkenkunde*) of the Netherlands Indies” at the National University of Leiden, Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, a position previously held by the famous P.J. Veth (1814-1895; Van Ginkel 2009: 34, 39). His inaugural lecture (May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1904) was titled *Living conditions of peoples on a high and on a low level of civilization* (Nieuwenhuis 1904). He became an editor of the important scientific journal published in Leiden, *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie (IAE)*. Eventually, the mountain range between the Baleh River of Sarawak and the upper Mahakam was given the name of Nieuwenhuis Mts. (see Krol 1931).

After a long academic career as an expert on the Dutch East Indies, including one year as the rector of Leiden University, Nieuwenhuis retired in May 1934. The next year, J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong (1886-1964), holder of the chair in “General Ethnology” (1922-1935), of structuralist distinction, took over Nieuwenhuis' chair, then renamed “General ethnology and Indonesian ethnography” (1935-1956), on which occasion he gave his well-known lecture on the concept of “Ethnological Field of Study.” The numerous colonial civil servants Nieuwenhuis trained during these thirty years evoked with appreciation his broad-mindedness, kindness, and

simplicity (Vogel 1954: 119b), personality traits clearly transpiring from his writings (see, e.g., Van Goor 1995: 278).

Nieuwenhuis died in Leiden on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1953, leaving a number of scientific works. While Cornelis Bertling (1953) acknowledged the significant part he played in Indonesian anthropology, Bertram Smythies (1955: 493), more sensibly focusing instead on his daring pioneer expeditions, dubbed him “a Borneo Livingstone.”

## The Expeditions’ Output and Significance

Nieuwenhuis’ expeditions fulfilled their political goals (see his 1900b and 1901a/b/c reports, chiefly 1901c) by making headway toward demarcating an international border with the Brookes’ kingdom of Sarawak in this central region and establishing a *Pax neerlandica* in these areas plagued by tribal wars and headhunting raids (see Note 7). Officers appointed to upper river district posts also supervised trade, ensuring that Dayak groups were not methodically deceived by their down-river trading partners in their barter deals. In this respect, the Dutch followed the example set by the Brooke administration in Sarawak. Furthermore, the *controleur* of Boven-Mahakam soon had to halt serious warfare erupting between Bugis and Banjar collectors over forest products.

These expeditions produced accurate maps of regions hitherto untraveled, including the first topographic map linking western and eastern Borneo and a survey of the upper Mahakam, the “blank on the map” being finally filled, though not in as much detail as in the upper Kapuas region. And a wealth of cultural, ethnographic, and historical information on the various local tribal communities was made available, including linguistic studies (Barth 1910).

They also gathered important zoological and botanical collections (Smythies 1955: 509): 1,500 skins of 209 species of birds (a rare species of bulbul, captured in Apo Kayan in 1900, was named after Nieuwenhuis) and 659 specimens of fish (including 51 new species) were sent to the Museum in Leiden; some 2,000 plant specimens were sent to the Herbarium in Buitenzorg; and an important set of rock samples found a home at the University of Utrecht. Altogether, scores of scientific publications in the following years were based on the expeditions’ observations and collections.

Dr. Nieuwenhuis’ medical and health-related observations, as illustrated in his German-language *magnum opus* (1904-1907, see below) by Demmeni’s photographs, were also reported in his scientific articles (e.g., 1903a/b, 1906, 1929), showing, for example, that smallpox and cholera epidemics, spreading up the rivers from the coasts toward the hinterland, were fairly common, often killing one-fourth to one-third of the population of an infected village. Chronic malaria and syphilis were very common in the Kapuas, Mahakam, and Apo Kayan regions. These observations caught the government’s attention, which, before long,

established in those isolated areas basic local medical stations with resident nurses and traveling medics.

Moreover, Nieuwenhuis' work about tropical diseases helped trigger, in Dutch colonies, east and west, an eager interest in the creation of a Dutch association devoted to tropical medicine, as already existed in neighboring European countries. After a meeting in The Hague (December 1907), the Netherlands Society for Tropical Medicine (Nederlandsche Vereeniging voor Tropische Geneeskunde; Jaelani 2017: 159-161) was founded and, a few years later, when the Koloniaal Instituut was established (1910) in Amsterdam, its Department of Tropical Hygiene (*Tropische Hygiëne*) became the first Dutch tropical medicine institute (Mehos 2008: 180).

Altogether, apart from acting as expedition leader and as medical officer, his sole real formal training, Nieuwenhuis' personal contribution can be deemed extraordinary. He participated in the collecting of natural history specimens (e.g., *Floramalesiana* 2021), as well as in photographing, which back then was not an easy task. And, despite his lack of training in ethnology, the remarkable corpus of ethnographic data he assembled, in the Kapuas, Mahakam, and Apo Kayan areas, along with the vast ethnographic collections he gathered, ranks among the most valuable ever from the interior of Borneo, and remains to this day, thanks to his two books, a major and quite reliable source of information on local Dayak groups' cultures and history (Fig. 10).

*In Centraal Borneo* (1900; henceforth *ICB*), written in Dutch, and *Quer durch Borneo* (1904-1907; henceforth *QdB*), in German, are two essential products of Nieuwenhuis' expeditions. To a significant extent, they are different books, although they are mostly concerned with the same peoples and topics. *ICB* describes Nieuwenhuis' stay on the Mendalam River (August-September 1894) and upper Mahakam (August 1896-March 1897), whereas *QdB* reports on all expeditions.

*ICB* consists of two volumes totaling some 700 pages, whereas *QdB*, also in two volumes, reaches over 1,000 pages. *QdB* also includes 170 beautiful black-and-white photographic plates and 18 hand-painted colorized photo plates of ethnographic artefacts. While *ICB* is a "popular" book meant for a general readership, *QdB*, due to the German pen of Dr. M. Nieuwenhuis-von Üxküll-Güldenbandt, the explorer's wife, is more "scientific," with an extensive ethnographic account of the customs and material culture of the groups of central Borneo (Fig. 11). *QdB* is, in Smythies' words (1955: 494), "a truly monumental work."

Jean Demmeni's photographic production, in no way lesser in quality than Nieuwenhuis' written works, forms a large and remarkable portfolio, documenting all aspects of the nature and cultures of the regions he visited, from mountainous landscapes and white-water river navigation to ritual objects or details of daily life and practical or technical activities, as well as many handsome and sensitive personal portraits. His equipment, which Nieuwenhuis describes at length (1904-1907, I: 312), featured a Zeiss lens mounted on a 13x18-cm wooden box, and the (then) high-speed films he used had just been made available on the market, prior to the advent of photo plates.



Fig. 10. Tattooed nomadic Bukat chief, upper Kapuas

Source: *ICB*, I: Pl. 2, *QdB*, I: Pl. 80

Demmeni's photographs have been rated among the very best of his time and place (Groeneveld et al. 1989) and his skills and art have received high praise in a book devoted to his work (Haks & Zach 1987). The vast stock of the Nieuwenhuis expeditions' photo archives can now be accessed through the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen's (NMVW) website.<sup>13</sup> These 120-year-old photographs still stand as invaluable evidence of—and homage paid to—Borneo's great tropical forest and rivers, and the lives and traditional cultures of her free Dayak peoples.



Fig. 11. Manufacturing bark cloth, Kayan, upper Mahakam

Source: *QdB*, II: Pl. 48

## CARL LUMHOLTZ AND HIS EXPEDITIONS

Carl Sofus (Sophus) Lumholtz (1851-1922) was one of the world renowned explorers of the turn of the twentieth century, a truly tough and seasoned one, “in command of the rain forest” (King 1992: xviii)—and an important one for Borneo. He was 65 years old when he completed, in 1916, his trip up the Barito River, in the south, and across to the upper Mahakam, in the east, which was his last expedition (Fig. 12).

Lumholtz was born in 1851 in Fåberg, a village near Lillehammer, Norway. While his father wished for him to become a clergyman, he was attracted to zoology and much enjoyed close contact with nature (Lumholtz 1921). After studying theology, he read zoology at the University of Christiania (now, Oslo) and, with his professor's recommendation, he was able, in the early 1880s, to travel

to northeastern Queensland, Australia, to gather zoological collections for the museum of Christiania.

The book he published upon returning from his research among Aborigine peoples (Lumholtz 1889), along with the scientific lectures he gave, made such a strong impression that the American Museum of Natural History and the (U.S.) Geographical Society, in 1890, commissioned him to carry out natural history research in the Sierra Madre region of Mexico. Later on, he also did ethnographic research among the Tarahumares, Huichols, and other Mexican peoples and, in 1909-1910, among indigenous peoples of the American (U.S.) Southwest. He abundantly published his Mexican research data (e.g., Lumholtz 1902-1903, 1912; see also a list of articles in Langlois 1922), and provided various museums with good ethnographic collections.<sup>14</sup> He was in 1905 a founding member of the Explorers Club, intended to promote exploration and scientific research in the field (*Wikipedia* 2021). In the course of his travels, he discovered many new animals and plants, some of which were named after him.



Fig. 12. Lumholtz in Bulungan, May 1914

Source: Lumholtz (1920, I: frontispiece)

## Lumholtz, his Expeditions ...

Yet, Lumholtz's long-time dream (his *plus vif désir*; Langlois 1922: 215) was to explore western New Guinea. He had been able to secure funding for this project—from the Norwegian monarchs, the geographical societies of Norway, Great Britain, and the Netherlands, and some American friends (Eek 2007: 375)—and he sailed to Batavia in 1913, but his plans were to be upset by the outbreak of the First World War, as the Dutch governor-general declined to provide him with a military escort and advised him against attempting to travel without one. Lumholtz turned to eastern Borneo, a move meant to anticipate the need to procure a crew of Dayak tribesmen for his New Guinea expedition (Lumholtz 1920, I: 96-97), certainly based upon Dutch expedition leaders' recommendation, in view of the part played by Dayak crews in previous New Guinea expeditions (see Sellato 2021b).

From Tanjung Selor, a port on the east coast, he went up the Bulungan River (i.e., the lower course of the Kayan River) and visited and got acquainted with Kayan, Kenyah, and Punan communities, reaching up as far as Long Peleban, below the Kayan River's great, impassable waterfalls (Fig. 13; see also Fig. 15). Upon his returning to Tanjung Selor, a Dutch government officer offered to recruit for him eighty Dayak men from the upper Mahakam.<sup>15</sup> As this would have entailed a two-month delay (Lumholtz 1920, I: 96-97), however, Lumholtz chose to return to Banjarmasin and, from there, travel on the Katingan River and to Sampit, on the south coast (see Fig. 2). After further traveling to British Singapore, Penang, and Madras, where he spent eight months, he returned to the Dutch East Indies in April 1915. As the situation still would not allow for a trip to New Guinea, he decided to wait out the War and, meanwhile, extend the range of his travels through Borneo.

By August, Lumholtz was, again, on his way to Banjarmasin.

Several weeks had to be spent in preparation for the trip. It was decided that in Borneo I should be furnished with a small [military] escort. Further, Mr. J. Demmini [*sic*], photographer in the well-known Topografische Dienst [Topographic Service] in Batavia, was attached to the expedition, as well as Mr. H.P. Loing, a native surveyor of the same institution. (Lumholtz 1920, I: 109.)

After traveling to Banjarmasin, however, Jean Demmeni soon came down with dysentery (*ibid.*: 163) and, by mid-February, before even reaching Jojang, on the upper Barito (Fig. 14), he had to be sent home (*ibid.*: 165), and Lumholtz took over Demmeni's still photography work (*ibid.*: 175), apart from his own movie camera job.





Fig. 13. Lumholtz's Southeast Borneo journeys

Source: Lumholtz (1920, II)

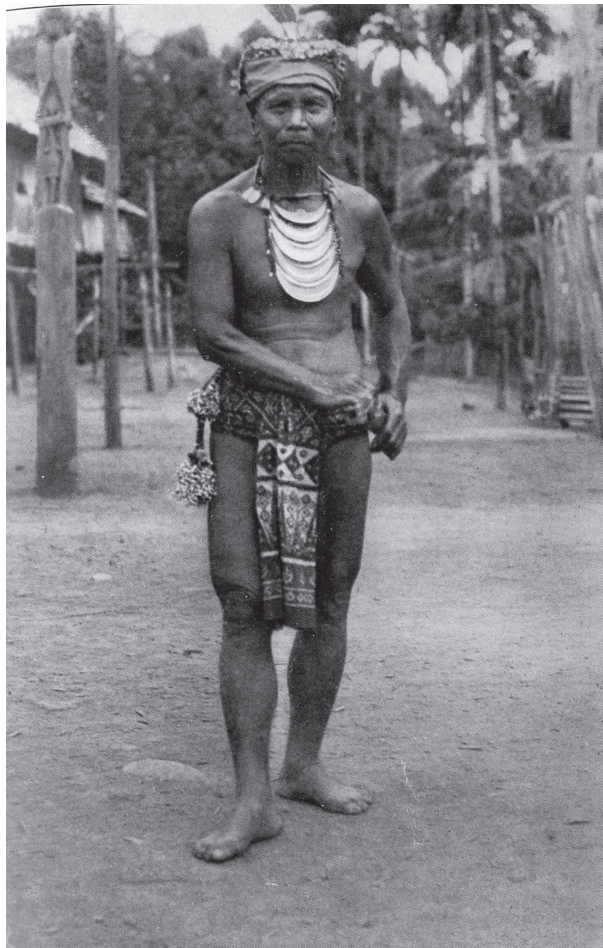


Fig. 14. Village chief wearing gold breast plates, Ot Danum, upper Barito

Source: Lumholtz (1920, I: 152)

Demmeni “arrived safely in Batavia, where he had to undergo further treatment” (id.), which is about all Lumholtz had to say about Demmeni’s contribution to his expedition. Lumholtz went on up the Busang River, walked across to the Mahakam, remained in that river’s upper reaches for a few months, then made his way down to the coast, where he reached Samarinda in early August 1916, later proceeding to Banjarmasin and Surabaya, in order to, again, try to negotiate with Dutch officials their permission for his New Guinea expedition (see Versteeg 2020). By late October 1916, forced once again to postpone—albeit not forsake!—his project, he was back in Banjarmasin and visited various adjacent areas (Martapura, the upper Katingan, Kasongan) and ethnic groups of the interior of the southern regions (such as the Bukit, Dohoi, and Tamoan).

After the simultaneous release, in London and New York, of his last milestone book, *Through Central Borneo* (1920), an excellent illustrated report in two volumes on his travels, a seventy-year-old Lumholtz, “the quintessential professional explorer” (King 1992: 152), was, again and obstinately, trying in 1921 to raise funds for his New Guinea expedition, expected to be a one-year, south-to-north traverse of the Snowy Mts., a mountain range assumed to rise to some 18,000 feet a.s.l. (c. 5,500 m), with the help of a team of 175 Dayak as carriers, canoe builders, and paddlers, and with the “hope to make a valuable contribution to the history of the earth, as well as to our present knowledge of the mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms” (Lumholtz 1921).

Carl Lumholtz passed away in May 1922, in a sanatorium at Lake Saranac, New York. But the routine of recruiting Dayak men from eastern Borneo, preferably Kayan, Kenyah, and Aoheng, for military or scientific expeditions to Dutch New Guinea endured till the outbreak of the Second World War (Sellato 2021b).

### ... and Beyond

Lumholtz brought back from Borneo important ethnographic collections (some 1,400 items from eighteen ethnic groups; Klausen [2012: 237]), now housed in the Ethnographic Museum of Oslo (incorporated in 2004 as the Ethnographic Section in the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo; Klausen [2012: 234]). Unfortunately, but for very few narrow studies (Klausen 1957; Sørensen 1970, 1972, 1973), these collections—which I briefly visited in 2010—have remained untouched and “have not received the recognition they deserve,” as King (1991: xi) aptly wrote (see also Klausen 2012: 234), while Lumholtz’s book is the “only substantial published record” he left us (King 1991: v, 1992: 153). Likewise, Lumholtz’s Borneo photographs and his field notes and diaries have remained pretty much “as [he] left them, in the museum archives” (Klausen 2012: 237).

A 40-minute film, known as *Borneo Gefilmd* (*The Filming of Borneo*), which Lumholtz had shot with a *kinematograph* (a French Pathé movie camera; Fig. 16), and now regarded as the first film to ever have been taken in (the interior of) Borneo (Eek 2007: 414; Klausen 2012: 237), was shown in Amsterdam in 1916 (*Wikipedia* 2021). It was probably released in 1919 or 1920 under the title *In Borneo. The Land of the Head-Hunters*, and it is reported to be now the property of the Royal Geographical Society in London (Eek 2007: 414). According to Alison Griffiths (2017: 172), however, there are records of only two screenings ever of this film, at the London Geographical Society and in Oslo in 1920.<sup>16</sup>

Having settled, as early as 1890, in New York, Lumholtz had remained relatively poorly known in Norway (see Klausen 2012: 234), despite the Norwegian editions of his books. After the release of a new English edition of *Through Central Borneo* (1991; see King 1991; Sellato 1994b), a volume in Norwegian was devoted to the history of his life of travel and research (Klausen & Sørum 1993) on the occasion of an exhibition in Lillehammer, his home town, which also showed in Oslo in 1994, and the same year, the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation produced three



Fig. 15. Hauling canoes up the Barito rapids, "From a kinematograph film"  
Source: Lumholtz (1920, I: 163)



Fig. 16. Punan rhinoceros hunters, upper Busang River, Barito area  
Source: Lumholtz (1920, I: 178)

television programs on Lumholtz's expeditions (Klausen 2012: 237). Some twenty years later, Carl Lumholtz was rediscovered again, and now raised to the status of a national hero: In 2013, a major photographic exhibition, "People meeting people," about his ethnographic research in Mexico was held at the Museum of Cultural History, Oslo (NRK 2013), reminding his countrymen that, as an internationally famous explorer (and thanks to his books published in English), he (almost?) stands on a par with legendary polar explorers Fridtjof Nansen and Roald Amundsen, and even with Africa's Henry Stanley and David Livingstone.

As a documentary photographer (Fig. 16), he is now equated in importance with Edward S. Curtis and his peers (Eek 2007: 415) and, as a documentary film maker, with the likes of Robert Flaherty (Iversen 1994, cited in Eek 2007: 414).<sup>17</sup> A beautiful electronic book followed, bearing the engaging subtitle "Rediscovering the Photographs of Explorer Carl Lumholtz" (Broyles et al. 2014), but regrettably quite unconcerned with Borneo. Yet, in a recent volume, *Small Country, Long Journeys* (Hanssen & Lund 2017), devoted to films by Norwegian explorers in a visual anthropological and film theory perspective, Lumholtz' Borneo expeditions (Griffiths 2017) feature along with Amundsen's and Thor Heyerdahl's.

As for Jean Demmeni, altogether, he only accompanied Lumholtz from August 1915 (travel to Banjarmasin) to February 1916 (return to Banjarmasin), including periods when he possibly was not operating due to sickness. The photographs in *Through Central Borneo* carry no credits (nor are they numbered), and I do not know whether the photographs stored in Oslo (some of which are glass plates) have ever been sorted between Demmeni's and Lumholtz's work. Museum photographer Ann Christine Eek assumes that "the majority of the photographs were [...] taken by Lumholtz" (Eek 2007: 376), himself "an eminent photographer" (Klausen 2012: 234), with "a remarkable sense for both the aesthetic and documentary value of photography" (Eek 2007: 376). As Griffiths (2017: 140) remarked, "Lumholtz took credit for all of the photographs that appeared in the book." In fact, Lumholtz himself (1920, I: ix) stated: "With few exceptions, these photographs were taken by myself." As these exceptions are explicitly credited to various named persons—though none to Demmeni—it may be assumed that they were loans. The only photographs in the book that might, possibly, be ascribed to Demmeni are featured in volume One, between pages 116 and 166, with the exclusion of those flagged as "From a cinematograph film," since the movie camera, presumably, was operated by Lumholtz himself.

Apart from being an evidently very determined man, as well as a dispassionate observer and reporter (King 1992: xiv), Lumholtz was described as broad-minded and "full of humanity" (Langlois 1922). Although he could be perceived as sometimes displaying a condescending or prejudiced behavior (King 1991: vii) or suspected of still holding "certain paternalistic and evolutionist assumptions about non-Western peoples" (King 1992: 153), he was reported as having, at the end of his life, changed his view and gained great respect for the peoples he had met (Klausen 2013, NRK 2013). As V.T. King put it, Lumholtz was "obviously wholly sympathetic of Dayak peoples and cultures" (King 1992: 153), in which he

“found much of interest” (King 1991: xi): “Never have I been among a people so close to nature, strikingly intelligent, friendly, and the most aesthetic on the globe” (Lumholtz 1920, I: 9; Fig. 17). He also “deeply admired the artistry of the spiritual objects with their abstract ornaments, the expressive masks used in dances to chase the bad spirits away, and the beautiful basketwork and extraordinary bone carvings that decorated swords and knives” (Eek 2007: 377). And he happened to participate in ritual Dayak group dancing, as shown in his film—something anthropologists of my generation quite commonly did, but which sounds eccentric for a hardly post-Victorian explorer in a pith helmet and gaiters. “I felt inclined to join the dancers,” he delicately wrote (Griffiths 2017: 163 & n32), “as was his habit” (Eek 2007: 376)—possibly under the influence of the local rice beer?

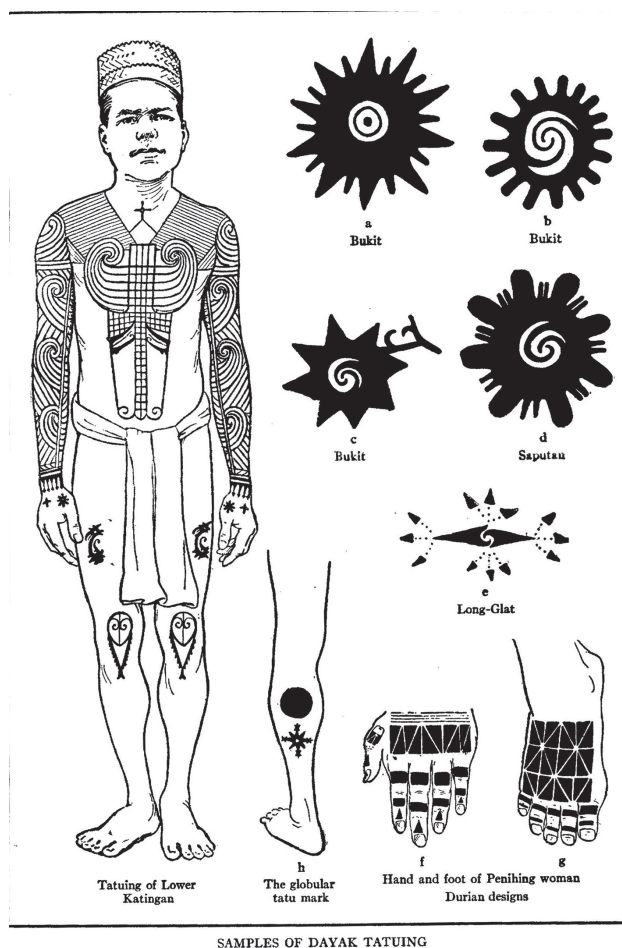


Fig. 17. Samples of Dayak tattooing, Lumholtz’ drawings

Source: Lumholtz (1920, II: 349)

In the pages he published shortly before his death (“My Life of Exploration”, 1921), which may be regarded as his final intellectual pronouncement, Lumholtz flatly writes: “The Dayaks are hospitable, generous, and loyal” (1921: 241; Eek 2007: 376) and claims “the credit for having been able to put the head hunters of Borneo in the right light before the civilized world” (Lumholtz 1921: 238), a credit he must share with Nieuwenhuis, who preceded him in Borneo.

## BORNEO AND DAYAK IN WESTERN EYES AND MINDS

Jean Demmeni’s widely exposed images (e.g., Fig. 18) altogether made the East Indies familiar to the Dutch public, though his images of central Borneo, combined with Nieuwenhuis’ writings, conveyed to their readership a daunting feeling of a breathtaking tropical setting of dense forest and wild rivers, sparsely populated by warlike primitive tribes often caught in violent encounters with one another. By the turn of the twentieth century, such explorers were the first ever to spend extended periods of time amongst tribal villagers with appalling reputation, and to engage in the study of their life ways and cultures. From personal experience, they nevertheless intentionally attested not only to these people’s quality and value as “true human beings,” but also to their refined cultures and artistic sense (see Sellato 1989, 2012), hence strongly contributing to dispelling their earlier public status of cruel, bloodthirsty headhunters.

Indeed, early accounts by Western explorers, travellers, and administrators had contributed to fashion, about either Borneo’s northern (British) or southern (Dutch) territories (or both), representations of the wild Dayak (see, e.g., Bock 1881; Perelaer 1881; see also Cleary 1966; Sellato 1987a/b; King 1992; Saunders 2018), which endure today as popular images among tourists and deeply rooted preconceptions within Indonesian society.<sup>18</sup> From the onset of the island’s exploration, the Dayak’s—or, rather, some Dayak groups’—exotic customs, such as fanatical headhunting or extravagant mortuary festivals, had become, grounded as they were in Western crowds’ common views of primitiveness and fantasies about tropical savages, the focus of explorers’ writings and of their public’s attention. Later, headhunting, really a complex form of social and cultural behavior with diverse conflicting explanations, attracted scholars’ interest (e.g., McKinley 1972, 1976; Freeman 1979; Maxwell 1996; Metcalf 1996).

## Fashioning an Image of Borneo at Home

A standard product of his time and education, Nieuwenhuis held a typical Victorian view of evolutionary anthropology, with “high” vs. “low” levels of civilization (as did Charles Hose, his Sarawak contemporary and counterpart; see Hose 1894, 1927; Hose & McDougall 1912; Durrans 1988: 361; Guerreiro 2021), as well as of western colonial powers’ humanitarian duties toward those wretched primeval tribal peoples they were meant to dominate and administer.<sup>19</sup> And the “something worse than paganism” from which he had set out to free the peoples of Dutch



Fig. 18. Kayan village, Blu' u River, Mahakam, Demmeri's Series

Source: *QdB*, I: Pl. 48



Borneo, as Smythies (1955) noted, was not so much slavery—though slaves did exist, of course, and on occasion were sacrificed—as the chronic intertribal head-hunting raids, and the ensuing situation of reduced prosperity caused by a general and permanent state of insecurity.

Nieuwenhuis' disposition, however, borne out of his fieldwork experience at a time when ethnographic fieldwork was not yet the way to do and theorize anthropology, did not quite match the persona that his public position then demanded in its academic context. In the course of his expeditions, beyond the need to document the land and its natural and human resources for subsequent appropriation and exploitation by the colonial state, he revealed his deferential approach to and genuine sympathy with the native population, possibly attendant on his medical background, and his deep interest in their cultures and traditions, which his published *œuvre* scrutinized in great detail (Fig. 19 & 20).

He developed unexpected personal relationships with certain individuals—his close connection with Akam Igau and Kueng Irang, the Kayan chieftains in west and east Borneo, respectively, is well documented in his *ICB* (1900) book—which, beside their converging political interests and purposes, were based on trust and proved to be an essential factor in his expeditions' success. Indeed, his 1896 decision to travel without a military escort into unknown and potentially hostile territory was simply unheard of. His writings efficiently helped dissipate the common notion that Dayak tribesmen were just sadistic criminals, stressing instead that they were, at heart, the world's most gentle, considerate, and peaceful people (Nieuwenhuis 1904-1907, I: 3; 1901c: 1074; see also Smythies 1955: 496; Ouwehand 2014: 38).

Nieuwenhuis often wrote appreciatively of the indigenous people and their cultures (King 1995: 36). Clearly, he was impressed by both the sophistication of these Dayak's cultures, material as well as spiritual, and the artistic level that they expressed through form, color, and ornamentation in the objects they created (Nieuwenhuis 1904-1907, II: 279-280), eventually claiming that “artistic sense” (*Kunstgefühl*) was more widespread and developed among Dayak, both men and women, than in more “civilized” societies, though he conceded that only members of chiefly families had enough leisure time to devote to creating fine handicrafts (*ibid.*: 235).

Born in Sumatra as an *Indo* boy and raised in an Indies home, Jean Demmeni most probably had a favorable disposition, which could effortlessly be coined “Indo sensitivity”, toward local peoples and cultures and, as a professional photographer, he must have developed the proper social skills (see Haks & Zach 1987: 18). Like Nieuwenhuis, he became personally involved with the Dayak communities he was working among, probably developing friendships with local expedition personnel and learning Kayan and/or Busang language/s, as Nieuwenhuis had done.

In April 1898—i.e., between the second and third expeditions—Demmeni, who probably had already also acquired some knowledge and understanding of the Dayak's traditions and customs (*adat*), as well as behavioral patterns, was called upon and appointed to a committee established to initiate an inquiry into the



Fig. 19. A dragon-dog carved in Kueng Irang's house, Kayan

Source: *QdB*, II: Pl. 33



Fig. 20. A fine Kayan headhunting sword hilt carved from deer antler

Source: *ICB*, II: Pl. 108; *QdB*, II: Pl. 64

violent disputes between the Dayak of the upper Mahakam (Aoheng and Kayan) and the Batang Lupar (Iban) Dayak encroaching from Sarawak (*Stamboek* 2021: 1; Haks & Zach 1987; and see Note 3), which in 1885 had gone off into all-out tribal warfare—and had been carried on sporadically along the border ever since. A decade later, in 1910, Demmeni acted as “mentor” or supervisor to the Dayak crews recruited for an expedition to interior New Guinea (Sellato 2021b: 61-62).



Fig. 21. Portrait of a young Kenyah, Apo Kayan, 1900

Photo: J. Demmeni

Source: NMVW-collectie, Inv. No. TM-60005444

Both Demmeni and Nieuwenhuis, then, became personally engaged with the Dayak people—who hosted, fed, guided, transported, assisted them, and with whom they lived for many months in close proximity (Fig. 21)—and with their daily life and culture, which their job it was to document, by pen and camera, and they came to highly value these Dayak they worked with.

The two men apparently got along well. Demmeni's name and activities are often mentioned in Nieuwenhuis' books, and appreciation is frequently expressed for Demmeni's skills and dedication, stressing that his work was not an easy one and often faced technical problems (see also Haks & Zach 1987: 12), e.g.:

Although we had carefully pondered a wide range of issues when we chose our [photo] equipment, we would not have succeeded [in the field] without Demmeni's special skills as a mechanic, who could repair anything on the camera. (My free translation; Nieuwenhuis 1904-1907, I: 311.)

Although it is not clear to what extent Demmeni's photographing reflected Nieuwenhuis' requirements and vision, we know that he took pictures when on his own on mapping trips, while he catered to his leader's decisions when shooting medical or anthropometric photographs. When in villages with Nieuwenhuis, he was probably instructed to shoot posed scenes or particular objects, to which he gave his own artistic flavor, although, according to Nieuwenhuis himself (see Haks & Zach 1987: 18), he preferred to photograph people in natural situations. Captions of photographs in Nieuwenhuis' books, usually quite laconic, must have been by the writer himself, with descriptions rarely elaborated beyond indications of place and activities shown, although they sometimes mention personal names, suggesting that care was taken, possibly by Demmeni, to report people's names in writing in records relative to the themes of photo sessions.

Quite possibly, they shared an interest in the scenes or objects photographed. Demmeni's technical skill and artistic perception certainly made him a talented photographer. Nieuwenhuis' particular combination of ethnographic interest, medical concern, and sincere human empathy met Demmeni's personal sensitivity to traditional peoples—"he worked with his heart," wrote Indonesian National Archives historian Mona Lohanda (2014: 6). This generated the most exciting single photographic collection ever completed on Borneo's peoples and cultures.

As mentioned above, after his return to the Netherlands in 1901, Nieuwenhuis never went out again to the East Indies, where Demmeni lived. The two men had parted ways, though they may have collaborated on one of Demmeni's later photographic projects (see below).

After a series of self-promoting articles (between 1898 and 1903) reporting on his expeditions and his two milestone books on Borneo, Nieuwenhuis went on writing tens of scientific works, mostly in *IAE*, in the course of his thirty years as a professor, and even after retiring in 1934. These concerned not only the Malay Archipelago, but also Australia, and included medical, physical-anthropological, and health-related articles, in Dutch, German, English, and French. Some focused on Borneo (e.g., 1929), as did illustrated general-readership articles on Dayak

culture, particularly material culture, in journals and magazines, such as *Tropisch Nederland* and *Nederlandsch Indië Oud & Nieuw* (e.g., 1907, 1925, 1936-37). Interestingly, the 1925 article deals with objects of “Dayak art” gathered personally by Demmeni in 1898 and 1899 in villages of the upper Mahakam, a assortment of which he sold to the famous Dutch artist and collector W.O.J. Nieuwenkamp (1874-1950; see Ferrand 1927).



Fig. 22. A waterfall in the dry season, 1896-97

Source: Demmeni's Series, *ICB*, II: Pl. 68

Demmeni, for his part, endeavored to broadly circulate his work (see, e.g., Fig. 22) and, indeed, in the course of the first half of the twentieth century, his photographs appeared in various encyclopedias (e.g., Colijn 1913; Gonggryp 1934), books (Nieuwenhuis' own, 1900, 1904-1907; Van Eerde 1920-1921), and articles in magazines (monthlies, such as *Cultureel Indië* or *Nederlandsch Indië Oud & Nieuw*, or weeklies, such as *Tropisch Nederland*). Soon enough, he was commissioned by a Dutch travelers' association (or touring club; De Koninklijke Nederlandse Toeristenbond ANWB) to carry out a photographic campaign for the promotion of tourism in the East Indies, especially Java and Sumatra, leading to the publication of a book of photographs, *Indië in beeld* (see Wagenaar Reisinger 1911).

His photos also served as teaching material in Dutch institutions of secondary education, *Platen van Nederlandsch Oost- en West-Indië*, under Nieuwenhuis' direction, which included both large-size prints to be used as wall posters (a dozen of which concern Borneo) and companion volumes by prominent experts (Nieuwenhuis, J.F. Niermeyer, L.A. Bakhuis, H.D. Benjamins). This material was designed to promote the diversity, beauty, and cultural wealth of the nation's overseas colonies and disseminate knowledge about them (see Niermeyer et al. 1911-1913; Anonymous 1913: 274-275). As Haks and Zach (1987: 13) wrote, "Demmeni's work provides a comprehensive record of the Indonesian islands at the turn of the [twentieth] century, unmatched in its singular insights into that era's peoples, cultures and natural features" (see Fig. 23).



Fig. 23. Masked dance festival, Kayan, 1898-1900

Source: Demmeni's Series, *QdB*, I: Pl. 56

It may be relevant to bring up the fact that, as in the early twentieth century the notion of copyright attached to images had yet to spread beyond Batavia, photographs were commonly circulated, loaned or borrowed between writers or travelers, freely reprinted in books, magazines, or brochures, and reproduced and

sold as postcards (see Haks & Wachlin 2004), often without even giving credit to their authors. Thousands of images—often of the “exotic” variety, showing menacing Dayak men in war outfit (see Protschky 2011: 131 n9) or scantily clad young women with elongated earlobes—then traveled home to the Netherlands, carrying the standard formula “*Groeten uit ...*” (“Greetings from ...”) and, when mailed from Borneo towns, they often read “*Groeten uit de rimboe*” (“Greetings from the jungle”).

## Summary ... and a Recent Revival

With his published works, Nieuwenhuis contributed to position Borneo in the minds of the educated Dutch public, and Demmeni’s photographs, used as educational material in schools, both in textbooks and as posters, made the East Indies more real and familiar, and from an early age, to the wider Dutch society. The Indies, their beautiful nature and their rich cultures, along with their culinary specialties, were somehow made part of the ordinary Dutch household. Although, for obvious reasons, most of Demmeni’s work was focused on Java, Borneo and her peoples also benefited from this broad exposure to public appreciation.

Nieuwenhuis’ satisfaction with his Borneo expeditions’ Dayak recruits, as expressed in his writings, won over other explorers, who then actively sought out these Dayak tribesmen for their “jungle & river expertise,” which made them select crews—and the key to success—to many expeditions to west New Guinea in the following four decades (see, e.g., Lorentz 1913; Stirling 2006 [1926]; and Sellato 2021b). Frequent reporting in illustrated books and magazines on ongoing west New Guinea expeditions further exposed the Dayak and their feats, while striking photographs of Dayak on snow-covered mountains (Fig. 24) and repeated praise for them contributed to the diffusion amid the broader Western public of an advantageous view of Borneo and to the waning of earlier unflattering imageries.

After 1940, Borneo and her Dayak star “experts” disappeared from the news. Whereas the couple of decades following the release of *Indië in beeld* (1911) and the *Platen* (1911-1913) saw much continuing interest in Dutch colonies through publications and cultural events, the Second World War years and, particularly, Indonesia’s accession to independence led to some degree of disaffection with now less relevant Dutch colonial topics.

Interest in “early” photography as, at the same time, a testament to the past and a form of art arose, in the late 1980s, with two exhibitions, *Toekang Potret* (Museum voor Volkenkunde, Rotterdam; see Groeneveld et al. 1989; Chambert-Loir 1992a) and *Toward Independence* (San Francisco, 1991; see Reed 1991; Chambert-Loir 1992b) and, more particularly, with Leo Haks and Paul Zach’s (1987) book, which was devoted to Jean Demmeni’s visual *œuvre*. Almost concomitantly, Victor King released a new edition (1989) of H.F. Tillema’s great photographic book, *Apo-Kajan* (1938), about his travels in the far interior of eastern Borneo.

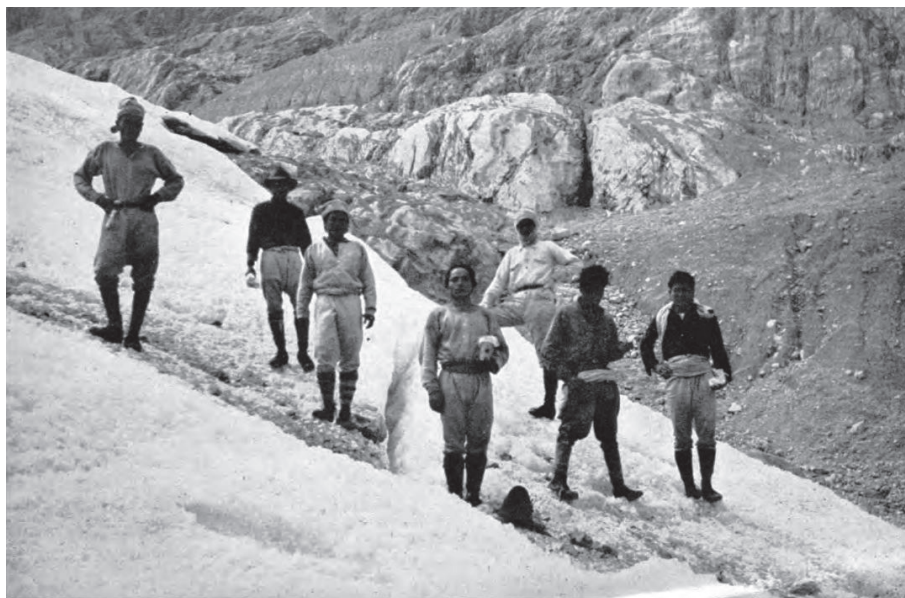


Fig. 24. Dayak team on a glacier tongue (c. 4,400 m a.s.l.) in West New Guinea  
Source: Anton Colijn (1937: 156)

As part of the celebration of the centennial of Nieuwenhuis' first expedition to Borneo, an exhibition, *Di Pedalaman Borneo. Across Borneo. Dwars door Borneo (1894-1994)*, which the present author initiated and prepared (June-August 1994) at Erasmus Huis, the Dutch Cultural Center in Jakarta, displayed dozens of Dayak cultural artefacts, as well as over sixty of Jean Demmeni's Borneo photographs, a gracious loan from the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden. The same photographs also enriched an Indonesian-language abridged edition of *ICB* (Nieuwenhuis 1994; Sellato 1994a). Several expeditions were carried out—for government ministers, journalists, natural scientists—retracing (*tapak tilas, menapaktilasi*), with copious popular press coverage, Nieuwenhuis' traverse across Borneo from West Kalimantan to East Kalimantan. From then on, the journey across the Müller Mts. became a popular as well as iconic challenge for domestic and foreign tourists—whose refuse now litter the footpaths.

The early 2000s saw, again, a revived interest in Jean Demmeni's work, featured in a book reviewing the history of Dutch ethnographic photography (Roodenburg 2002),<sup>20</sup> then with another exhibition, *Through the eyes of the past*, held at Erasmus Huis in Jakarta (January-February 2008), which displayed, on a small scale, some of Demmeni's photographs (see *Tempo* 2014). A follow-up exhibition, entitled *Portrait of Life. Moves and Works, a collective memory of the past*, was held (May-June 2014) in a "cultural village" near Gianyar, Bali, by the same gallery owner, allegedly unveiling (and offering for sale) seventy photographs by Demmeni, bought in



2008 from a Dutch collector. Accompanying the exhibition were a catalogue text written by Mona Lohanda (2014) and press articles likening Demmeni to Eduard Douwes Dekker and praising his “Max Havelaar’s Eyes” (*Tempo* 2014). A respected local cultural player, however, expressed regret that the photographs were mere reproductions, while another suggested that actually very few of them were by Demmeni (see Helmi 2014).

Another exhibition, with almost the same title as that of 2008, *Nederlands-Indië door de ogen van het verleden* [Dutch East Indies through the eyes of the past], was held in Nijmegen (July-August 2015), showing old photos and wall posters from *Platen van Nederlandsch Oost- en West-Indië*, few of which really had any relation with Demmeni (see Nijmegen Exhibition 2015). Some of Demmeni’s northwestern New Guinea photographic work featured in a Nationaal Archief exhibition in March 2015. As the exhibition artist nonchalantly put it:

A non-commissioned officer who had a camera with him took a picture of the population for the first time. The reports and photos by Jean Demmeni of the Mamberamo expedition let us look over the shoulders of the expedition members at what they found and how they experienced it. (See Coppes 2015; Van Teffelen 2015; *NA Magazine* 2015.)

Further developments in the current trend of disentombing old Borneo photographic archives must be expected. Following from a more thorough study of early anthropologists’ and explorers’ written archives, their Borneo photo archives have also been mined and studied, and a few come to mind: about Charles Hose (1863-1929), Tom Harrisson (1957), Brian Durrans (1988, 1989, 1993), Lara Michalke (2020), Antonio Guerreiro (2021); about H.F. Tillema (1870-1952), Victor King (see Tillema 1989); about Alfred Cort Haddon (1855-1940), Cosimo Chiarelli and Olivia Guntarik (2013). More generally, the reader is referred to Brian Arnold’s recent (2022) history of photography in Indonesia.

## Notes

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1. “Een digte sluyer van onkunde lag over dit groote land en verborg de volksstammen, die deszelfs binnenste bewonen.” A veteran of Napoleonic wars, Major Georg Müller was the first explorer to attempt the east-west, coast-to-coast traverse of Borneo. He was murdered en route by hostile Dayak in 1825 (see below).
2. A Dutch East Indies term for a person of mixed native and European descent. Such ethnic admixture was not encouraged by the colonial state, and the *Indo* (Indo-European) category was both socially looked down upon and viewed as a threat to Western values and colonial society’s stability (see, e.g., Stoler 2002).
3. Less than ten years earlier (August 1885), the ethnic groups of the upper Mahakam had been the target of a massive attack by several thousand Iban warriors from Sarawak, who burned their villages and made several hundred casualties (see *Sarawak Gazette* 1885, Nieuwenhuis 1904-1907, I: 289-292, Sellato 1986)—which accounts for these groups being particularly edgy and apprehensive of unknown visitors showing up unexpected.

4. Prof. Molengraaff himself was also a photographer, as stated in his beautiful 1900 volume (e.g., pp. 197, 319), which includes over fifty good-quality full-page plates and scores of in-text photographs.
5. Akam Igau seems to have become famous enough to warrant a personal notice in R.J. Howgego's *Encyclopedia of Exploration* (2006). His alleged mixed earthly and celestial genealogy is discussed in Aijmer (2010).
6. While the whole Mahakam River drainage was officially part of the sultanate of Kutai, the sultan's actual control did not extend beyond the great rapids. The Dayak people of the upper river were described as "semi-subjected and fully independent" communities by Nieuwenhuis (1938: 7; cited in Oesterheld 2020: 206).
7. On political and social issues, see Nieuwenhuis' recommendations (1901c), and (1902b); on the "high tide" (1896-1909) of Dutch expansion, the figure of Governor-General J.B. van Heutsz, and "ethical imperialism," see Note 19, Lindblad (1989), Cribb (1994), Locher-Scholten (1994), Bertrand (2007).
8. Although it is clear that Nieuwenhuis' exploration travels were not military expeditions, it is striking to compare them, attended by an escort of five soldiers (1898-1899) or none at all (1896), with later Dutch expeditions to or through western New Guinea, which took along a large military force, sometimes up to 100-150 soldiers, and hundreds of convicts as porters (and were often attacked by hostile Papuan tribal peoples; see Sellato 2021b).
9. The "rice equation," a famous classic among explorers and travelers (and my kind in my exploration days), refers to a sophisticated computation of figures: the number of expedition members, the number of porters assigned to the transport of food supplies, the number of days away from any source of rice procurement, the daily rice ration (750 gr.), and the porters' average payload (25 kg); when it "goes wrong," for whatever reason (often, a rice loss due to a capsized canoe), one runs short of food and must keep on walking on gradually reduced rations or starve in the middle of nowhere. The limit of this rice-equation exercise is reached when the number of days away is such that, whatever the number of porters, they cannot even carry their own food.
10. These excellent collections are located in Jakarta, at the National Museum, and in Leiden, at the National Museum of Ethnology, now a section of the National Museum of World Cultures (Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen), under series numbers 1219 and 1309 (see also, in Leiden, S.W. Tromp's collections, series 717, 893, 959 and 979; and more).
11. In the times of the Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, or VOC, 1602-1799), trade contracts were signed with local rulers (kings or sultans) or self-ruled communities, evolving with time into forms of governance by proxy ("indirect rule"). Taking over from the VOC, the Dutch colonial administration, known as the Netherlands East Indies (or Nederlandsch-Indië), continued this indirect system as the basis of its colonial governance through the nineteenth century. After c. 1900, various areas of the archipelago, such as the Boven Mahakam and Apo Kayan districts, came under "direct" Dutch rule, after military subjugation or administrative takeover.
12. On Apo Kayan's early colonial history, see Fischer & Gramberg (1910), Jongejans (1922), Elshout (1926), Sierevelt (1927), Pringle (1970), Rousseau (1990), Eghenter (2007), Lumenta (2010, 2017). See also Nieuwenhuis' reports (1901a/b/c).

13. URL: <https://collectie.wereldcultureen.nl/>; Demmeni's Borneo photo collection (434 records); see also Nieuwenhuis' Borneo material culture collection (258 records).
14. The NMVW also holds a small collection of Lumholtz's southwestern (U.S.) American Indian ethnographica.
15. In a previous article (Sellato 2021b), I made a point that "forest and river experts" from Borneo were highly sought after for their skills, particularly from certain ethnic communities, such as the Kayan and related peoples of the upper Mahakam (see above) and the numerous Kenyah sub-groups of the eastern Bulungan region (see Soriente 2002), which all exhibited a strictly stratified social organization (see Whittier 1973, Rousseau 1990, Sellato 2002b). They were thus hired as very efficient hierarchically self-disciplined and fully operational multipurpose teams.
16. About a unique corpus of Dutch colonial films shot in the East Indies in the 1910s and 1920s, nowadays a wealth of social, historical, and ethnographic information, see Ray (2021).
17. Fortuitously or not, E.S. Curtis (1868-1952) released in 1914 a film with almost the same title, *In the Land of the Head Hunters* (Griffiths 2017: 137 n2), about a people of British Columbia, the Kwakwaka'wakw (aka Kwakiutl).
18. Old prejudices die hard. In its economic development policies aimed at "isolated peoples," the Indonesian government readily embraced representations of the Dayak as "primitives" in need of civilization (see Sellato in press). In 1993, I interviewed several Javanese MA students in Linguistics from the nation's most distinguished Universitas Indonesia in Jakarta for an interdisciplinary research program in the interior of East Kalimantan province. When I brought up the name "Dayak" and the prospect of living among Dayak in their villages, the students cried out: "Oh my God, but the Dayak are cannibals!"
19. The turn of the twentieth century is precisely the moment, in Dutch national politics, of the advent of the "ethical colonial policy" (*etische koloniale politiek*), establishing the priority to be given to the pacification, welfare, and development of the indigenous population (see Note 7 and Locher-Scholten 1994).
20. Another book, *Indonesia: de ontdekking van het verleden (Indonesia: The Discovery of the Past*, see Hardiati & ter Keurs 2005), appeared in the homeland, a chapter of which (Zulkarnain 2005) is devoted to Nieuwenhuis' and Van Walchren's expeditions, in relation with a travelling exhibition at the National Museum, Jakarta (August-November 2005), and at the Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam (Dec. 2005-April 2006), which certainly featured some of Demmeni's photographs.

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## Captions

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- ICB source: A.W. Nieuwenhuis, 1900, *In Centraal Borneo*; all photos by J. Demmeni.
- NMVW: Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (N.M. of World Cultures, The Netherlands).
- QdB source: A.W. Nieuwenhuis, 1904-1907, *Quer durch Borneo*; all photos by J. Demmeni.

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## Disclaimer

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In anticipation of a time soon to come when the following statement will be part of mandatory standard procedure in scientific publications, the author hereby declares that this essay was generated without the use of Artificial Intelligence devices in any way whatsoever.

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**Abstract:** Photographic images of interior Dutch Borneo's nature and, more particularly, her peoples and cultures are examined as they were produced and used around the turn of the twentieth century, from their creation in the context of pioneer exploration across the island to their presentation and display, in various forms, for consumption by the general public back in Europe. A young Dutch army medical officer, later university professor, Anton Nieuwenhuis, a talented *Indo* military topographer and photographer, Jean Demmeni, and an elderly Norwegian professional explorer, Carl Lumholtz: These three major, yet quite different, players of the "there and then" scene strongly contributed, each in his own way, through the combined power of their visual and textual testimonies, to the shaping of affirmative representations, ideas, and imageries among their home public about Borneo and the peoples of her hinterland, these independent Dayak tribes, which had long been suffering from prejudiced reports, disrepute, and outright ignominy.

### *Images culturelles du Bornéo néerlandais :*

#### *les gentils chasseurs de têtes et leurs explorateurs coloniaux*

**Résumé:** Une documentation photographique des régions intérieures de Bornéo, de leurs peuples et de leurs cultures, produite au tournant du xx<sup>e</sup> siècle par les premières explorations au centre de l'île, fut utilisée sous diverses formes pour être présentée au public européen. Derrière cette documentation, trois acteurs importants, quoique très différents – Anton Nieuwenhuis, jeune médecin de l'armée coloniale hollandaise et futur professeur d'université, Jean Demmeni, topographe et photographe militaire métis de talent, et Carl Lumholtz, un vieil explorateur professionnel norvégien –, contribuèrent vigoureusement, chacun de sa façon, par l'effet conjoint de leur témoignage visuel et textuel, à la création parmi le public de représentations, d'idées et d'images avantageuses de Bornéo et des tribus de son intérieur, ces tribus dayak libres qui avaient si longtemps souffert de descriptions malveillantes et d'une épouvantable réputation.

**Keywords:** Borneo, exploration, photography, headhunters, text and images, cultural representations

**Mots-clés:** Bornéo, exploration, photographie, chasseurs de têtes, textes et images, représentation culturelle