

Religious rites and customs of the Iban or Dyaks of Sarawak.

By Leo Nyuak.

Translated from the Dyak
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With figures.

Preface.

1. The account given in this pamphlet of the religious rites and customs of the Iban is a translation of an account drawn up by a Dyak, who when a child, had acquired the knowledge of reading and writing at the Mission School at Kanowit, which he attended for several years. In the translation I have adhered as closely as possible to the original.

Occasionally useless repetitions have been omitted and here and there words and parts of sentences supplied where imperfect sentences rendered such additions necessary to bring out the sense.

With these exceptions the translation is a literal one.

To make an idea of the original Dyak text the first chapters may be given in both original text and translation.

2. As a description of the Iban, his mode of life and religious notions will be necessary to render intelligible to the ordinary reader the Dyak account of the religious rites and customs of his people, I have made this description the subject of a somewhat lengthy preface.

The Dyaks are an uncivilized race to be found occupying large tracts of country along the western coast of Borneo. They are divided into various tribes possessing different languages and customs. Of these the Iban or Sea Dyaks of Sarawak are by far the most powerful and numerous tribe and it is the religion of this tribe only that forms the subject matter of these pages.

The physical characteristics, language and traditions of this people point to a common origin with the Malays, and the distinctive features of the two peoples may easily be accounted for by the Mahomedanism of the latter. Judging from the genealogies handed down by tradition the Iban emigrated from the west and arrived in the island of Borneo some 25 or 30 generations back.