

Everybody knows that Mount Kinabalu is the highest mountain in South East Asia and stands in an area that has been declared as a World Heritage Site. It is the site of the famous mountain race every year, where members of the international community pit their strength against locals in conquering the mountain.

There are many and various factual information about Kinabalu, available in brochures and textbooks.

I believe that most tourist guides share these facts with their tourists. There are however more interesting stories and legends on Mt Kinabalu that will interest tourists. As we all know, most tourists are interested in statistics and the environment of the mountain but not less are interested in the tales and legends attached to the mountain.

Perhaps we can share about this belief which was handed to us by our forefathers. Because my grandmother was a bobohizan (faith healer, medicine woman) we grew up with legends and tales of spirits and souls and the otherworld.

She told us that in the mountain lies the portal to the other world. This portal is where all Dusuns souls will pass through when they die. Therefore, this mountain is called the last resting place of the souls or the dead. Or in a Dusun dialect 'pongoluan'.

However, the portal was located at the top of the mountain so the Dusun soul had to travel up the mountain. On his journey he would come to a steep cliff where he had to hang on precariously to pass through. He would hold on to the rocks with his nails and if he fell he would go on to the portal and if he did not he would return to his body.

In my community, when a man died we must never fry our food, nor should we eat oily items as whatever we eat will 'follow' the poor soul in his journey. If we, the living, ate oily stuff, the poor soul's journey would be impeded by slimy oily route.

This belief is further strengthened when a strange occurrence happened there in the past.

A hunter from my father's ethnic group chased after a deer one day. He ran after the deer for a long time and when he sat down to rest, he realised that he was at the foot of Kinabalu,

As he was resting, he heard the gong being beaten in the slow sombre tune of the 'dunsai' or 'gong for the dead'.

A funeral procession started to pass him. He was astonished for all the participants were little people called in my dialect as 'totumolong'. He was also surprised to see a beautiful girl on an open stretcher apparently dead and being carried up to the mountain.

Without thinking the hunter made a grab for the girl. Suddenly the little people disappeared, leaving him holding a piece of twig. He was puzzled but decided to continue his journey. He kept the twig in his hunting belt and walked on.

As he passed by a village, he suddenly heard the ululating call of crying women, grieving for someone or something. Curious he decided to explore. A little while later he was standing at the compound of a long communal house where many people gathered. It seemed that the chief's only daughter had died.

According to custom you had to pay respect to the dead when you visit by looking at the deceased's face, which he did. He was jolted by the fact that the dead girl was the same woman who he saw being carried up the mountain my little men.

So he asked the father of the girl for permission to try and do something about the situation. The girl's father acquiesced

The hunter then went to the prone maiden, took out the twig and placed it near the girl. He told her to wake up and she did just that. We can only imagine the pandemonium that broke out and the feast that resulted.

This strengthens the belief the dead went through to the next world on top of Kinabalu, although the mode of transport seemed to have differ.

I can add to the probability of a spiritually peopled mountain in Kinabalu. A couple of years ago, a man from West Malaysia went to climb this mountain in preparation of a similar conquest of Mt Kilimanjaro Africa.

Upon his return he called me and asked whether there was a village halfway up to Kinabalu, at Laban Rata just before the rocks began. I said no, there was no village there. He replied that he saw many people there, all Dusunic looking, with children, going about their everyday business. The best part was he was the only one who saw the people.

Interesting.

Actually there are many eerie and uncanny tales about the mountain that have been related around fire places since time immemorial.

So if you want to add a little zing to your tourists' stay, incorporate these legends and beliefs in your camp fire tales. This will add colour to the otherwise hard facts usually written concerning the mountain.

## Summer Cruise Holiday (S) Sdn Bhd

Sabah Package : Summit Kinabalu Climb, Island/Cruise, Ground arrangement, Hotel Reservation, From RM25+++  
For Reservation : Call : 8-088-272-398, 8-012-828-3888  
Email : info@summercruiseholiday.com.my



# Knowing Mt Kinabalu

## RE GUIDE

COVER  
Wonders of  
i, Borneo

This map is endorsed and supported by:



sabahtravelguide.com



Sabah Tourism Board  
www.sabahtourism.com



Sabah Chapter of:  
Malaysia Association of  
Tours and Travel Agents  
www.mattasabah.com



The way to  
get yourself  
discovered

For advertising enquiries,  
Call 088-230055 (New  
Sabah Times)  
019-840 2911 (William-  
Sabah Travel)

