



# TENOM

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## History

Tenom's history goes most probably back a long time and we must presume that even during prehistoric times modern man roamed through those sheltered, jungle covered but fertile valleys. But even though man might have lived in the area we have no definitive archeological proof as per now, except for Sabah's only rock carving at Tomani, some 30 miles to the south of Tenom. A huge boulder the size of a house has been carved with intricate, distorted figures and faces, and some smaller rocks in the surrounding area have also been adorned with carvings. However, it is unclear who made those carvings, why and when. Only local legends and oral history surrounds the mystical carvings.

Tenom received more attention under the British Chartered North Borneo Company (BCNBC), when coffee and other plantations were established there. A railway line from Melalap - a still existing estate - linked Jesselton (now Kota Kinabalu) already in the late 1890. The construction of the railway line, which began with the appointment of William Clark Cowie as the Managing Director of the BCNBC in 1894, was one of the most challenging tasks the company undertook: Cowie appointed an English Civil Engineer, Arthur J. West, to build the railway line from Bukau north to Beaufort and south to Weston. This town was named after Mr. West, and there was supposed to be a new port of the BCNBC at Brunei Bay. However, upon completion of the railway in 1890, Weston was discovered to be too shallow for a deep-sea wharf. Instead, Arthur J. West extended a 64 km line from Beaufort to Tenom and to Melalap. For the most difficult stretch, through the Padas Gorges, labourers from China were employed, mainly Hakka and Cantonese.

In 1915 Ontoros Antanom, a Murut warrior, lead Pensiangan and Rundum Murut against the English. It came to a bloody battle at Rundum where Ontoros and his men were utterly defeated, having no chance to stand up against the modern fire arms of their perceived enemies. Ontoros remains a local hero. According to the locals he was born in 1885 and possessed exceptional leadership qualities which enabled him at the age of 30 to lead the ill fated Rundum revolt. A memorial to Ontoros Antanom stands in

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