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Sabah Travel & Leisure Guide

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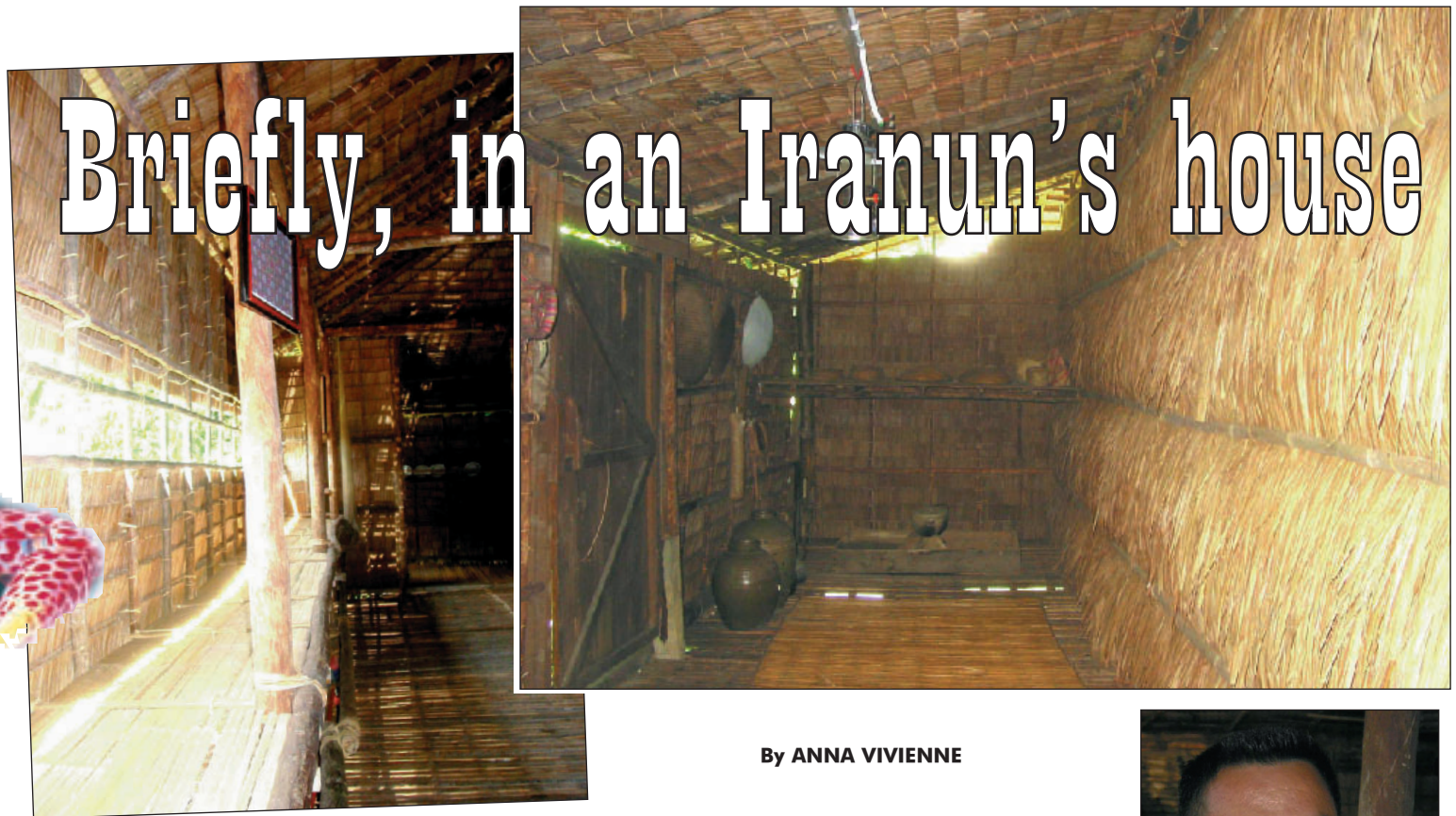
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By ANNA VIVIENNE



Architecture mirrors the material and aesthetic standards of a society. In Sabah however there is no one classical architecture but rather, they seem to spill into other ethnic groups. Given the diversity of ethnic groups in Sabah, there are many similarities in houses, especially traditional houses.

One of the most interesting houses in Sabah is built by the Iranuns, an ethnic group, formerly seafarers concentrated in the districts of Kota Belud and Lahad Datu .

An Iranun working with the State Museum Badrul Hisham , 34, (pic) from Kota Belud shares that in the olden days when a man wanted to build a new house, he must make sure that the moon is full. This may have something to do with the quality of the wood at certain time of the month.

“When he feels that the time is right, he will go into the forest to collect wood materials for the house. He will usually get the toughest wood for the pillars or stilts. The wood is usually acquired from the Mangrove Swamp because it is durable.”

“Materials obtained from this type of wood are also used to construct the beams and the whole house frame. The nibong tree is usually coveted for making floors. The trunks are segmented into four inches in lengths of, say, 20 feet and smoothen. They are then tied to the floor frame.”

The use of timber framework is actually prevalent among the people of Sabah but the house styles are different.

There are three types of Iranun houses, Badrul says. They are called Marigai for the ‘gentry’, Kampilan for the middle class and Ubung-ubung for the lower class.

The Iranun’s house comprises of three sections. First there is the verandah. It is called a pantaran. This pantaran is like a resting place. Visitors will usually sit at this area. The second section is the Indung space, which has its own sub-section. The first being the kalaan sawalai, a guest area. This is where guests will sleep and rest during a visit. The parents’ room is called the pagaigahan. Then there is a special place of single daughters called the angkap.

The last section is the kitchen or Kusina. This is where the family cook and have their dinner.

The space under the house is called Taguwalai. This

is where they keep firewood.

This sort of traditional Iranun house is not a common sight even in Iranun villages, as they have also moved on with time and now reside in modern homes. It can, however, be viewed at the State Museum Cultural Village.



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