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Borneo writing

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BORNEO WRITING

Literally and closely defined, writing is the graphic counterpart of speech, the 'fixing' of spoken language in a permanent or semi-permanent form, or, in the words of a French scholar, '*une représentation visuelle et durable du langage, qui il rend transportable et conservable.*' By means of it, language is made capable of transcending the ordinary conditions of time and space.

(David Diringer, *Writing*,
London, 1962, opening sentences).

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man knead,
And there of the Last Harvest sow'd the seed:
And the first Morning of Creation wrote
What the last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.

(Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyam*).

I. FORMS OF BORNEO WRITING.

SEventy years ago the great Bornean encyclopaedist Ling Roth suggested that curious marks, such as were found on Dayak-owned pots, represented a native script.¹ The pots have proved to be Chinese; and this overstraining of imagination helped divert attention from reality. For there are at least four distinct forms of "writing" — using charcoal, ochre, "ink," incision — which predate the advent of Magellan's world circumventing galleys to West Borneo, 1521.² Since 1947, the Sarawak Museum has gradually collected material even the existence of which was, in most cases, hitherto unknown. A sketch of this effort was given to the first conference of Asian Historians at Singapore, 1960.³ Here is the first report of field results.

¹ As usual, much of what Ling Roth wrote (in "The Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo;" London, 1896, Vol. II: 286-292) remains good sense. It is rather astonishing that after his clues, still not even the great missionaries like Howell and Perham got on to the *genuine* writing around them.

² Pigafetta's account of the first European contact at Brunei in 1521 is contained in all Magellan accounts; most conveniently in the Hakluyt Edition.

³ A survey of all area materials is in "Malaysian Historical Sources" ed. by K. G. Tregonning, University of Singapore, 1962; Sarawak is at pp. 105-112.

I follow the greatest expert, Dr. Diring, but deliberately use "writing" for Borneo a little loosely. Later reports may suggest the need to reconsider some current distinctions between script, art and general symbols over a quite wide arc of thinking in the Borneo culture-context. I refer here to marks deliberately made on wood, bark, bamboo, leaf-parchment and sometimes stone, to record complicated information which can be "read" correctly again later (e.g. in old age) either by the writer or others acquainted with the system — in Borneo usually both to a limited extent. Commonly, but not automatically, these records are in the nature of *aide memoir* on long term themes. Short term information is more readily conveyed by other but not unrelated means, including knots, twigs, vines and leaf designs of which elaborate system exists, even among the remotest nomadic Punan.⁴

It may seem strange that at this late date we can collect what are in effect "texts" from, for instance, the Leppo Tau Kenyah of Long Nawang in central Kalimantan, among whom the talented Dutch Dr. Elshout lived and studied so intimately, marrying a local girl up there half a century ago without suspecting anything of the kind did exist.⁵ Almost as astonishing is the persistence of several varieties of writing boards among the numerous sub-coastal and heavily western-influenced Iban Dayaks in three out of five of Sarawak's Divisions, as an essential nexus and systematic register of folklore and song which passed unrecognised by the great Iban chronologers of previous generations like Perham, Gomes and the lexicographer Howell.⁶ But these written records are deeply bound up with and guarded by pagan rites, semi-secret crafts and specific initiations; accentuated by a justified feeling that any native method of record appears (superficially) inferior to the European's and is likely to be ridiculed by the white skins. Thus

⁴ A good description for certain aspects of message making with vegetation is for the Punan Gang, Fourth Division, Sarawak, by Guy Arnold in *J.M.B.R.A.S.* XXXI, 1958, 2: 40-82; a similar 16-code system for the hitherto unstudied Punan Busang is in press; compare the Sabah Muruts, Ivan Polunin in *Man*, LIX, 1959, 134.

⁵ This first-hand record by J. M. Elshout deserves translation and editing with commentary from the original Dutch "De Kenja-Dayaks uit het Apo-Kajan-gebied;" Hague, 1926. (See also 7. below). Now that Dr. Rodney Needham has well done Schärer's Ngadju study, would he turn his eye to this rewarding text?

⁶ Much of this work is reproduced in Ling Roth (as at 1. above); see also *Sarawak Museum Journal* (hereafter referred to as *S.M.J.*), 1, 1911, 1; and the *Sarawak Gazette* (Kuching), monthly over the whole of that period, and with later pieces by Howell, renewed since 1964 with new matter of the same sort by Mr. Benedict Sandin (see 8. below).

I have known the Leppo Tau casually since 1932, intimately since 1945; only in 1961, as a moving mark of trust, they finally revealed to me the inner core of the *mamat* society, with which their particular records are immediately linked.⁷

The following account covers a single Iban (Sea Dayak) text of the type written in charcoal on a board, *papan turai*. It is selected as thoroughly documented and in a fairly vague way "typical" of one main branch in this crypto-literature. In selecting and preparing this abbreviated account I must express warm thanks to three Sarawak Museum colleagues, the late George Jamuh (Balau Dayak), Mr. Benedict Sandin (Iban), who has given major help throughout, and Mr. Tuton Kaboy (Kajaman Melanau);⁸ and for wider Sarawak discussions, Dr. Erik Jensen (Dane; C of E priest) and the Right Rev. Dennis Galvin (Irish; R.C. Bishop).⁹ From the start it must be stressed that Borneo material, even when distinctive and locally specialised, cannot be treated in isolation. While preparing this paper, I visited Manila, Hongkong and Australia to check broader views, with the especially kind help respectively of Professor Juan Francisco from the University of the Philippines, Dr. Michael Lau at the Hongkong University Museum, and Dr. F. McCarthy at the Australian Museum. I also thank my Indonesian contemporary, Dr. P. L. Tobing, unique Toba-Batak scholar from Sumatra, temporarily cut off by confrontation.¹⁰ Mr. Charles Letts of Jardine Waugh gave other valued assistance.

II. THE MUKAH BOARD.

The upriver area behind the little town of Mukah in Sarawak's Third Division, roughly half way between the Niah caves and the

⁷ Some preliminary notes on Kalimantan *mamat* in Dr. S. Kooijman's "Ornamented Bark-cloth in Indonesia;" Leiden, 1963; a fuller study in press for *J.M.B.R.A.S.* (Gibson-Hill Commemorative volume, 1965). Bishop Galvin (cf. 9. below) is currently collaborating in a wide survey of *mamat* graded rites among the Kenyahs of Sarawak.

⁸ B. Sandin has published major papers on Iban folklore in *S.M.J.* since 1949 (New Series, No. 1-23 and continuing) Tuton Kaboy worked most of 1964 with Dr. Stephen Morris of L.S.E. on a joint Melanau folklore project, which also touches the Mukah work.

⁹ Dr. Jensen's first paper on Iban is in *S.M.J.* XI, 1964, 23: 544-552; Bishop Galvin has contributed four papers to XII, 1965, 25, now in press.

¹⁰ P. L. Tobing "The Structure of the Toba-Batak Belief in the High God;" Amsterdam, 1956: esp. pp. 106-110 and plate 15; cf. also Dr. Jansen's new monograph referred to in Section V.

Sarawak Museum at Kuching, was colonised by Iban from much further south, in quite recent times. Difficult communications in this out of the way corner have left them less "disturbed" by western impact than most of the accessible parent regions in the First and Second Divisions and on the Rejang/Balleh in the Third Division. Through excellent local help by Jamuh family ties and particularly by an interested District Officer, Mr. Geoffrey Barnes, we gained intensive co-operation at the secretive level in the Mukah headwaters, two long days by outboard from the coast.¹¹

There are at least five different "kinds" of board on which records are kept among the Iban, and at least three more or less "distinctive" styles of writing recognised by us so far. The most elaborate and from a western point of view "purest" Iban writing is that on *papan turai* (lit. board [with] design) used by the female chanters employed at the wake rites on the night of death, to perform the long dirge, *sabak*, initially tracing — and thereby, if properly executed, insuring — the journey of (the spirit of) the dead one. Enormously complex ideas, some of which I have indicated in an earlier *Bijdragen* paper, are involved.¹² For the moment, we must stick here to essentials relating strictly to what I will hence forth — for convenience and without prejudice — call the "script." Similarly, without any grand design, I shall hereafter blithely call each separate mark upon the board a "character."

This particular Mukah board is 75 inches long, 5 inches wide, just one inch thick, with 37 characters on the start side, reading from left to right, 27 on the reverse second (in this sequence) side, reading similarly but the other way up. This type of reversal ("*boustrophedon*") is, of course, well known. The Easter Island boards alternate series of many such lines upon one plank face. In Iban *thinking*, however, the upside-downness is little to do with any sort of textual tradition, but much to do with the conception of life and completion (not conclusion) of death. Upside-downness is, at this level, the foundation of Iban theology; their visual *and* verbal picture of the universe, with the great divisions: here and not here, this world and another(s). Yet neither is rigidly set; the easiest of several bridges is by dream. Black is white, live dead, beauty ugliness, silence an uproar, your sister a brother in this mystical (and it really is that, in the minds and on the

¹¹ Mr. Barnes has specially studied death rites, see. e.g. in *S.M.J.* IX, 1959, 2: 643-645.

¹² "Borneo Death," in *Bijdragen*, 118, 1962, 1: 1-41.

tongues of initiates) system. In many ways alien to western thought, even the kindest missionaries probing Iban life in the last century failed to recognise and receive the full confidence of their converts on such subjects as board writing and dirge singing, inner mysteries.

The characters upon the board are still today, though precariously, the essence of this mystery central to *sabak*. Such must have been intensely so a hundred years ago.

The characters on the Mukah board are just about two inches high. This is a little larger than on other Iban boards collected in recent years, though there is no set standard of size — the board is to suit the taste, the eyes and other senses of the chanter, and the preference of the writer upon it as well. The writer is always a man; his normal medium is charcoal. It is a man to inscribe even *sabak* boards, which can only be chanted by women; and which, in Iban belief, was the form brought to earth through the famed female Remi, twenty-four generations ago.¹³

Without going into the full folklore background it must be emphasised that all four principal Iban deities of the "bird" x augury x war-ancestor group, Sengalang Burong (eagle "god of war"), Sempulang Gana (earth), Anda Mara (wealth) and Menjaya Raja Manang (medicine, including one element of "shamanism") have one or more personal *lemambang* ("shamanistic") bards whom they taught — by means of writing (*turai*) inscribed on wood, — the various classes of essential wordage, including the scope of *pengap*, *sampi*, *renong*, *sugi*, *pelian*.¹⁴ Some of the more important of these relate to Gawai Antu, the feast of the spirits (souls) and greatest Iban ritual focus. These deity bards, which included Ingkat (that astonishing primitive primate,

¹³ Remi is also in the key genealogy for Iban migrations across Borneo which I have published and discussed in Prof. Wang Gung-wu's "Malaysia: a Survey," Singapore, 1964: 172-174; also B.S. in *S.M.J.*, VII, 1956, 7: 54-81.

¹⁴ To Sengalang Burong (cf. Singa Lang = "Lion Hawk") the Brahminy Kite (not an Iban omen bird *now*, but most important in this regard for Kenyah, Kayan, Dusun etc.) is usually attributed the initiator role in passing this lore around through his siblings, chiefly to Menjaya Raja Manang, as this *youngest* brother's name implies, as also earthwards via his grandson (note 17). This happened at Rabong Manang in the upper Kapuas; cf. notes 36.3, 41.2, 46.5 and 63.4 following.

the Tarsier), Empulu Arang (the beautiful Faery Blue-bird) and Luong (a cricket) taught all subsequent *lemambang*.¹⁵

BUT none of these knew the text writing for *sabak*, which passed through male agency into *female* hands (or rather eyes). *Sabak* came down through the so-called "eastern branch" of Iban classical descent. The genealogies permit some legitimate distinction between three (and a shadowy fourth?) principal and persistently remembered "lines of origin" among the "best people" in their present south-west Borneo settlements. In the sixth generation of the "indigenous" line Serapoh had a daughter Remi, whose famous traveller-son, Menggin, married the daughter of Sengalang Burong over in the "eastern" line. Folklore of this sort (*tusut*) telescopes many prehistorical ideas into increasing time-span per generation once we get back past about twenty. Sarawak's present Minister for local Government and Museums, Mr. Dunstan Endawie, traces direct descent twenty-two generations to Menggin, twenty-four to Serapoh, sixth from the Iban "start" in his line.

¹⁵ Despite a great respect for Dr. Derek Freeman's Iban work (expressed by me previously in *Bijdragen*, *op. cit.*: 40), one must express reservations about his account of Iban bird augury as such. This was published in *Bijdragen*, 117, 1961, 1: 141-167, as originally written and similarly published for the different public of B. E. Smythies' great book, "The Birds of Borneo"; Edinburgh, 1960 (hereafter cited as "Smythies"). The emphasis is all on birds, therefore. But as a result, Dr. Freeman accidentally underestimates four factors:

- (i) the considerably smaller part birds play in Iban augury if seen in the full context of omen mammals, reptiles, insects, flowers, trees, intestines, stones, charms and — in parallel contexts — accidents, positions, contacts, dreams; (this *sabak* text illustrates, incidentally, the overall balance of some of these);
- (ii) the vital importance of sound *not* relating to the human voice (which he stretches far by inexpert bird sound interpretations) and of soundless omens too;
- (iii) the importance of numerical, musical and especially colour factors (using each of these terms in a loose sense) as well as directional (and topographical) considerations which he discusses from the left-right point of view, correctly;
- (iv) contradictions between the animals identified as theoretical omens and the *actual* distribution and frequency of those; e.g. one of "his" birds, *Lacedo*, is unlikely to be found in present day Iban country; if heard by rare chance, it could not in fact make the sound "like someone speaking kindly" which he attaches to it (Smythies: 83; cf. actual and notably non-gentle calls, Smythies: 299).

Beginning at six:

This link between the two lines is of importance in Iban mythology and ritual even today. It gains from the prior marriage of Dara Tinchin Temaga to that most important bird-god figure, Ketupong, the Rufous Piculet.¹⁶ So she is a woman of immense double accomplishment. Her first was a "spirit marriage," childless and terminated when she strayed in the sky and was shot down by Menggin's blowpipe, so came to earth and met Menggin, then a youth at the start of his career as adventurer in far lands. They had one son, Sera Gunting. But she returned without a word to the skyworld, resuming relations with Ketupong there, as a "third" marriage, still without issue. Later, in a saga common to Land Dayak and Iban lore widely, Menggin takes his son to visit Sara Tinchin Temaga in her father Sengalang Burong's house in the sky.¹⁷ There Ketupong and his friends, back from overseas

¹⁶ On Ketupong specifically, B.S. and I have found no one who accepts Dr. Freeman's suggestion (Smythies: 77) that this, the senior Iban inaugural god — and the symbol of Iban "drive" — may still be living in the room (*bilek*) of his father-in-law, Sengalang Burong, thus illustrating one of Freeman's own special kin terms, "uxorilocal." Some find the very idea horrifying. B.S. takes it as an insult both to the gods and to Iban manhood! The marriage brought no offspring, further reducing any possible special dependence. Ketupong must live in the long-house to the *right* of Sengalang Burong and Bejampong (Crested Jay) to the *left*. This right-left ambivalence lies at the heart of much Iban (and Chinese) augury, and to deny Ketupong's special place in it is to undermine the inherent "logic" of the system. Local variants for the Balleh (Freeman's main area) are possible; but this variant would be remarkable, as the issue appears basic. See also 10.1 below.

¹⁷ Sera (also Surong) Gunting revisited his mother in the other world on his own as a well-grown boy, and this is an important Iban epic in its own right, also closely matched in some Land Dayak and Kenyah lore. He there lived with her father, Sengalang Burong, because mother feared that "step-father" Ketupong might do the boy some harm — he was a sore reminder of Dara Tinchin Temaga's previous fertile intercourse with earthly Menggin and his own godly sterility. Here we are reminded of Prof. H. J. Rose's

on a search for valuable (stoneware) jars, made friendly gifts of these and other things, so that Menggin and son returned satisfied to earth with the first fine jars then known. This was one key point in Iban socio-economic development.¹⁸

It was Serapoh, Menggin's grandfather, who first learned from the spirit Puntang Raga many new ideas of head-hunting and respect for the dead. When his three sons were killed in revenge attack by the dreaded Kantu people, it was thus his only daughter, Remi, who chanted the first all night mourning dirge, "Leka Sabak Bebuah." In so doing she was (according to this folk-theory) the first to introduce the use of *turai*, predating the *lemambang* instructed by Sengalang Burong's lot eastward on Rabong hill in Kalimantan.¹⁹ This is something of a quibble, no doubt, back into fragile uncertainty. But as so often in Bornean legend it may well have sequential validity.²⁰

The Mukah text, then, is *sabak*, in the oldest Iban tradition (on our present information). The charcoal outlines on the board for use were copied into paint, then on to other boards as well as separately on to paper. There is variation between the daubed and paper versions, not important at this stage: wide variations (individual,

shrewd dictum: "fertile dieties are often attended by the unfertile, whatever exactly the reason may be" ("A Handbook of Greek Mythology"; London, 6th ed. 1964: 114). Sengalang Burong took a great fancy to his grandson and initiated him into the techniques of augury, with special reference to the *sequences* of the six verandah (*ruai*) offerings, three each side of his central place in the long-house — the basis of bird usage today. (Included are avoidance terms, such as the non-use of your father-in-law's name, "derived" from position there).

After Sera Gunting had become expert in the exact sequences of bird — which here and elsewhere appear as a late accretion on to an older system — he then had an incestuous affair with his (other world) aunt, Indu Dara Chempaka Tempurong Alang, and she became pregnant by him. For this he was sent back to earth, there to pass on the new bird-lore and to tell the Ibans of new marriage prohibitions. The baby was killed on birth. On earth he subsequently married his mother's second cousin's grand-daughter, Seri Ngiang, from whose son, Sera Kempat, B.S. and many leading Ibans trace descent today (cf. genealogy in Wang Gung-wu, *op. cit* at note 13. above; also 36.3 below).

¹⁸ Jars are further discussed at note 63.4. They feature greatly in some other *gawai* and *turai*.

¹⁹ See especially note 36.3 below.

²⁰ Although Sengalang Burong, and his godly group, briefly discussed in this section, are crucial to the story of Iban writing, they do not directly play so large a part in the actual cued verses of Mukah *sabak*, which "predates" them in part, in the sense indicated. Brother Sempulang Gana is important here, but again very definitely as an "outsider," albeit vital in the wider life-sphere (cf. notes 41.2, 57.4 etc.).

local, casual, etc.) in execution of characters is a feature of *papan turai* especially, — as indeed it is in hand written English! For present purpose, it is wisest to work off the board characters, nothing wherever they vary from our working “type papers” (d. below).

Unfortunately, it is not possible at present to give any further identification of the Mukah source. To obtain the full information as well as the board was in itself a major operation taking weeks. For instance, after all was agreed, the lady found she could not perform adequately without a real corpse. But with a real corpse the mourners would resist outside study. In the end, she chanted to a dummy corpse by candlelight. All was carried through on the understanding of complete anonymity. Only full initiates to an exclusive and potentially lucrative profession can properly look at these *sabak* boards, though some other and usually simpler kinds are more freely exposed.

Let us take each of these 64 characters in correct sequence, with this information for each:

- a. The lady's own stated verbal “explanation” (really to herself) as comment, a chant cue; this does not necessarily correspond with the text's emphasis felt by us, and sometimes illuminates considerably.
- b. The particular Iban “verse” of the chant she says must be recited to this cue; this need not be true for all chanters, whose following passages are decidedly variable and extensively extemporised; *sabak* starting normally about dusk, ending before dawn, when the other world(s) comes the other way up so that human life would be gravely endangered by continuation of this particular sort of spirit contact.
- c. The English version: provisional translation with Benedict Sandin (first draft with the late George Jamuh); deliberately factual rather than “poetic” for present purposes.
- d. Character variation, as here illustrated. Here, two points must be emphasised;
 - (i) Individual and local variation is high, as it is among Dutch schoolboys or English anthropologists, and more so; this is not a set script so much as a secret tool (see also note 3d).
 - (ii) Nor is this in any sense a static script in time; everything suggests that it changes, but that some basic elements in characters have endured over a very long period. To postulate such a thing as prototype *papan turai* or any definitive and final “text” of unimpeachable authority or purity would of itself be absurd in living Borneo terms. We take this board and these characters as good average material — no more; no wit less.

In singing *sabak* (but this is now rare) the woman should chant every “cued verse” twice, with different emphasis each time, and reversing the metaphor in accord with the reversal method, black-white,

though not changing the essential clued themes, the places and persons named. The effect is rather like some Malay to and fro *pantun* singing, but there between man and woman. I have taken the first (and basic) verse each of 64 times.

III. THE CHANTED SAGA OF DEATH-LIFE: SABAK.

It will rapidly become evident to the reader, even though here he will have to depend on 64 "key verses" only, that this is a saga of "journey of the dead" type. Such sagas are widespread and enormously important in Borneo, from the upland Kelabit to the west coastal Melanau, Sabah's Orang Sungei for to the north-east, and the Ngaju down in the deep south-east. Incidentally, they document a great parabola of belief and of funerary practices — including *funerary practices no longer actually practised* today. In recent years I have collected a fairly wide range of these. Where there is *no* surviving mnemonic system to assist, it is conspicuously true that the wealth of textual material has nearly always deteriorated or been largely lost even among the oldest and most revered specialists such as the late ex-Penghulu Aban Uan of the Baram from whom Stephan Wan Ulok (his kin) and I obtained several basic Kenyah (not Leppo Tau) journeys before his own death.²¹

The Kenyah type journey is much more personal, more "heroic" in essence, than the Iban. And in this it is matched by both Kayan and Kelabit. A main factor is probably the development of a powerful hereditary class structure in these groups, though the role of the warrior, warleader and head-hero in Iban is by no means unrelated. Iban alone lays such emphasis on a wealth of particular animals and plants, in sequences characterised mainly by some total setting of natural environments rather than (in Kenyah) by some episode or excitement generally originating in lovely women and culminating in a protracted, bloody battle of he-men.²² He-manism is very much present in *sabak*, but with great emphasis on the unmarried young, even to making monkeys bachelor (Nos. 1 and 38), tortoise-shells the

²¹ Others of these Kenyah "death journeys" related to Iban *sabak* are so far published in *J.M.B.R.A.S.* 37, 1964, 2: 60-86; cf. *S.M.J.* IX, 1959, 14: 14-20; X, 1961, 18: 191-213; XI, 1963, 22: 64-87.

²² A comparative analysis of Kenyah and Iban death ideas is in course of preparation; see also "World Within," London, 1959, for Kelabit he-man sagas.

subject of bachelor lies (No. 32), spoiled bachelors (Nos. 14 and 53) and a famed bachelor who even ignores the omens (No. 46). Individual relationships are also very important in Kenyah, including curious kin-meetings, such as with a long lost sister, resumed intercourse with a mistress dead in child-birth, recognition of a previously unknown son. Emphasis is constantly put upon the idea of resurrection, the return of the dead, an idea implicit in the crucial rites of Iban Gawai Antu, but never carried so far as with Kenyah's to-and-fro culture heroes like Balan Nyaring and Oyau Ambing Lian. Again, it is likely enough that some of this is overlaid emphasis, obliterating less dramatic and more detailed (e.g. zoological) information, preserved more persistently and in detail with the *papan turai* script as *aide memoir*.

Finally, to assist in seeing the wood for the many sacred trees, here is a rough outline of the journey to be taken along both sides of *papan turai* from dusk to Mukah dawn:

Outward Bound

At first we move, with a little melancholy, through deserted long-house sites, old rice fields, fenced lands, becoming overgrown and unclear (character Nos. 2 to 6).

On into rather older land, half-wild trees (7-9) and the first low hills of the inland (8).

Up the river — but not yet Mandai, "river of the dead" — through more mountainous country (10) but still with agriculture signs, rich in animals, several of them rare (12-15) and the first upriver trees (13).

We reach the famed landing place with the great tree at the mouth of the Mandai river and the bridge of fear (16) and come into the arc of actual death; atmosphere surcharged now with spiritual forces (17-21) to reach the first of the many classical figures, Bujang Agang Gemurai (22); so coming out of the vaguer lowlands of after-life into the more elaborate levels of "immortality," sacred places, celebrated heroes.

The Harsh Middle Reaches

The going grows harder in this difficult land. Ridges and peaks gather, linked with game, dense ferns, cutting grass, glowing cinders (25-27), and then the first in a long sequence of great ranges, rich in association (28).

Each of the serried mountains has a surrounding stream with its special aquatic character — skin poison, dress loss, monster prawns and tortoises, giant snails, gold-whiskered shark and whale, sacred wine into water, bright crystals and entangling roots (28-37).

Here the board is turned, other side and other way up

After such climbing, we emerge into the deathly silent forest (38) and uncertainly back among favourite fruits rather than wild river foods (39-41), before facing the definitive doors into beyond (41).

The Stations of Destiny

Through six doors to one other world (42-44) we emerge as last into the fixed stations of destiny — for those killed in battle, beheaded, dying of other wounds or of love, drowned, eaten by crocodiles, poisoned by derris or mushrooms, lost out hunting or impaled on a hunter's trap, fallen from a tree, dead in childbirth or youth (45-58), until lastly the widows and widowers (59).

Those who have passed through all these to the final, "healthy", complete goal, pass on the (here highly obscured) ship of death (60) and the great fig tree with blessed rice once again (61), through the purifying pool and up into the jar-rich room of the ultimate long-house (63) at dawn (64).

In considering all this, it is needful to bear in mind that these verses are part of a tremendous, dynamic, soaring trajectory of words across the night, so splendidly preserved in Iban partly *because* of the survival (albeit secretly) of the script, however weakened, into the twentieth century. It is perfectly possible for a non-Iban to master this system. By putting boards over the bed, inside a month my wife and I "knew" all 64 characters at once, with their cues and verses. In this way too, we became more familiar with the complex associations between different characters and ideas; and only too aware of the hazy undertones which divide (or don't divide) alphabet and ideograph — what I can only here call "syllabic and melodic values," moved from word on to board, back into chanting through the smoky, multi-dimensional mourning of the long-house night = other life day = sleep-death-dream.

IV. THE 64 CHARACTERS AND THEIR VERSES.*

1

- a. This is the old site of a long-house, whence the journey to the other world begins.
- b. "Tembawai madang rembai, bungai bekabuchai nyila isang. Tembawai madang rian buah merabingan baka selayan gantong gendang. Tembawai madang isu buah bekatalu baka jelu nyumboh bujang. Tembawai madang siku buah keterungkup baka lupong manang".

* See plate I, after p. 56. The notes immediately follow the verse they refer to. As the verses are nearly all short, the reference can easily be located; the

c. "An old house site is overgrown with *rembai* trees, their flowers hanging like fan palms. An old house site is overgrown with durian trees, their fruits hanging like gongs. An old house site is overgrown with *isu* durians, the fruits like bachelor pig-tailed monkeys hanging upside down. An old house site is overgrown with mangosteen, the fruits like shamans' magical boxes".

d. The board character is less regular than usual with a slight curve into the opening, asymmetrical "pincers effect"; cf. note 1/3.

1.1 *Rembai* = a fruit tree (*Baccaurea motleyana*) planted on old house sites. The night-long chant starts with the first of many trees and fruits and other plant materials specified. Most have been identified botanically, but the material is incomplete. Thanks are due to Dr. Robb Anderson, M.C., and in detail to Dr. Peter Ashton of the Forest Herbarium (partly owned by the Sarawak Museum), Kuching, for much help in this field. For the *origin* of all trees, out of a marriage between Owl and Moon, see B. Sandin, *S.M.J.* XI, 1964, 23: 534.

1.2 *Isang* = a small fan palm growing wild, much used in ceremonies and head rites, where it ranks with the croton = *sabang* cultivated round long-houses, often in special enclosures. The brightly coloured croton and fine shaped *isang* leaves are important in many Borneo rituals, notably Iban, Kayan and Ngaju. (cf. 22.1). See also 33.1.

1.3 Durians here signify (but fairly vaguely) "human heads;" reappear at Nos. 20, 38 and 39, 41, in each case with a *circle* in the character. (cf. 8.2).

1.4 *Isu* durian is a special kind (*Durian oxlayanus*) with the big round fruit bearing thick, long spikes; often grown on abandoned long-house sites. The term is also used for short spined, yellow-fleshed *D. graveolens* (referred to in the "alternative verse").

1.5 Long-tailed Macaque = *nyumboh*, *Macacus fascicularis* (Malay: *Kra*), very common in lowlands; see also 38.1, 50.3. The monkey chief, Raja Nyumboh, features in Iban stories, — for instance outwitting the tortoise in stealing a flute made of Honey Bear bone, but then in turn being outwitted by the crab (which it normally eats; cf. *Sarawak Gazette*, XCI, 1965, 1284).

1.6 Mangosteen; "alternative verse" mentions rambutan, and both parallel small durians in metaphor.

nuisance of numbers inserted in the verse texts has thus been avoided. It is necessary to remember that *between* each verse there is a lot of elaborating material similarly chanted — approximately 6-7 minutes worth. These notes are designed not only to clarify the 64 verses, but to fill these 63 gaps. Benedict Sandin is now preparing a *complete* sequence of one *sabak* and we are recording others. But, as already indicated, there are many difficulties before we even get to the tasks of transcription and then the intelligible translation of words which tend to be much more diffuse, and even "wild," in between the cued passages. Throughout these notes, I have had intricate assistance from Mr. Sandin, and have only added his initials, B.S., where there is a special point which I do not see so strongly or clearly as he.

1.7 "Magical boxes;" this is difficult to translate, and refers to wooden boxes specially made for "shamanist" secret gear. No authentic ancient example is known to survive, and nowadays a tin is usually used (see also at 18.1).

2

- a. This is last year's *padi* field.
- b. "Jerami taun siti kemari bedau mengkang sempeli padi bangang".
- c. "Last year's padi fields, but the unripe ears of *padi bangang* are still to be seen".
- d. Upper line shorter, side stroke longer on board; more like two symmetrical oblique angles joined. Both convey, roughly, a padi stem.

2.1 Unripe ears (*sempeli*) are those left after first harvesting by the selective small-knife method used by the Ibans — and all inland people in West Borneo until the Kwijaus at Keningau, Sabah. The inference is that, if the first harvest is inadequate, you go over the fields again for the *sempeli* (if the munias and doves have left any, see verse 61). Also 5.1 and 53.1.

2.2 *Padi bangang* = the latest ripening kind of rice, "seven month padi." This is a way of identifying the season — about March? We return to this particular end-sign of the harvest cycle near the close of the journey, in verse 61.

3

- a. This is one section of a fence.
- b. "Terengkah ba punggang raga ke menyawa tila-tila nimang mata simbang jerungkang".
- c. "When the corner of a fence is reached, a gentle voice is heard praising the trap for pigs and deer".
- d. No significant variation (hereafter n.s.v.).

3.1 Gentle voices are in order at this stage — unlike some Iban chants and dirges for other occasions (cf. 11.1).

3.2 Traps for pig (and deer) need to be approached softly, and have killed many unwary people, even into modern times when they are technically illegal. There is a special death-place for these unfortunates (verse 53). *Jerungkang* is the spear type; usually with three extremely sharp bamboo spikes set on sloping ground at the edge of the fields, at a fence gap. The spikes must be disguised with foliage, or the game will detect them; and barking deer are never so caught. See again at 5.2 particularly; also 50.3.

4

- a. This is a new *padi* field.
- b. "Temuda baru bedau mengkang kutu umbang terbang".

c. "This is a new *padi* field. Scattered logs and tree stumps are still around".

d. Lower line thicker on board; not deliberate? Compare nos. 14 & 38 as similar treatments of "undisturbed" areas. Vary on paper.

4.1 A new field, not yet planted (*temuda baru bedau*). We move in time x space, but not in any simple sequence for the outer mind (cf. 6), and always with "contradictions" as between death and life. Compare the annihilation of the "Tree of Life" with the *Kabalik* slave and upsidedownism in H. Scharer's "Ngaju Religion;" Hague, 1963.

5

a. A low land overgrown with *empili* trees.

b. "Emperan madang empili buah ke nyelai lebat nunggang. Endor sida melanyi bujang tinggi meti ngulih ka jani babi belang".

c. "A low land is overgrown with *empili* trees. The branches bend rather low, because of the weight of strange fruit. Here the tall and handsome bachelors trap white spotted boars".

d. Leftword hook less clear and short arm longer on board than paper, nearer no. 1 (but both top right angles are as here).

5.1 *Empili* (cf. *sempeli* at 2.1) is a very favourite fruit for wild boar (again at 53.1); the general Iban term for oaks (*Quercus*, *Lithocarpus*), and a common textile motif (see A. C. Haddon and Laura Start, "Iban Fabrics;" Cambridge, 1936: 133; this book is hereafter simply referred to as "Haddon.")

5.2 White spots play a significant part in this story; e.g. as an infliction for careless bathing, see discussion at 28.5. A specific link here to the trap of verse 3. The tall and handsome bachelors trap the boars, only to meet their destiny in verse 53, now as "spoiled" (*melanyi*, difficult to translate; cf. 14.3), tall bachelors trapping *spotted* boars, forgetting the marks, dying....

6

a. An abandoned *padi* field.

b. "Temuda repa teleba endor orang nyarin main ngamba, ngulih ka rusa tandok ringkang".

c. "An abandoned *padi* field serves as hunting ground for hunters to net deer and take their crooked antlers".

d. Here rather more "tail" & sweeping stroke on paper than on board — as also no. 24 (see note 6/2).

6.1 Fields now abandoned, trapping game still the theme; *nyarin* (Malay: *jaring*) are rattan lengths with many nooses, about 130-140 ft. long, separately

owned but co-operatively used to make a long line into which deer are driven (as also especially by the Kedayans up north).

6.2 Deer's antlers are implied in the actual character and most Ibans so identified this one (cf. also verse 24).

6.3 Crooked (*ringkang*) as valuable for charms or, if thickened (which the Kelabits do artificially), for bigger and better *parang* knife handles; see also 24.2 on antler rejuvenation.

7

a. A small hill is planted with *lemba*.

b. "Munggu madang lemba. Naka pengelembau aku ninggal ka munggu madang lemba, nya teleba diambi kami suba kena ngaga pua amfang tengkebang".

c. "A hill covered with *lemba* palm. I feel reluctant to leave this small hill, so thickly grown with palms, because it is the familiar place where we collected the good leaves for making blankets with special designs".

d. Less symmetrical thickness on board than on paper.

7.1 *Lemba* = *Curculigo villosa*, the thread for "ikat" on *pua* textiles (Haddon: 151). Grows best in new secondary following rice use, and goes out when the scrub gets stronger (c. 5 years). See also 8.1 etc.

7.2 *Ampang tengkebang* are special designs in which the woman does not use a formalised or prepared pattern, works entirely by personal inclination; *ampang* = lit. "bastard," here improvised — but indicating the unconventional idea involved (cf. 46.3). Only the most expert weavers can do this (see also 8.1, 60.6). (Not mentioned by Haddon).

7.3 On the role of expert and aged female spinners in the earliest stratum of European deity-lore, see H. J. Rose, "A Handbook of Greek Mythology;" London, 6th ed. 1964: 24).

7.4 From this "small hill" we begin to leave the lowland agriculture for the time being; the journey goes into more hills, ranges, then mountains (10).

8

a. A grove of *engkerebai* bushes.

b. "Tatai madang engkerebai buah bekabuchai niti takang".

c. "A long range of low hills is covered by *engkerebai*, fruit hanging from the branches".

d. n.s.v. (see note 3. d. above).

8.1 *Engkerbai* = a bush with a small black fruit, whose leaves give a red dye used in weaving (cf. Haddon: 11 and 21). Howell (*S.M.J.* 1912: 61-64) regards

this as traditional base for Iban dying, but Dr. Ashton considers it is probably not indigenous, a species of *Tarenna*; B.S. considers it ancient. A dead woman would be very proud of skilful use of this red dye and fine designs (7.2), and so would her family. Throughout this dirge there is a strong tone of praise somewhat obscured by allegory and style: flatter the departed, and all those connected with him or her. *Pua* textiles are more important as craft and status symbols than in any ordinary "use." See also 36.5, 44.3-4.

8.2 One use for the best textiles was to receive fresh heads from the war party, thus honouring the weavers. This is the feminine side of gentle praising (also 44.2). The masculine side, more obvious, is in slashing the scarlet juiced betel-fruits, *ranyai* or *nibong* palms. See verses 34 and especially 36; also 46, 47.2, 51.2 and 60.2.

8.3 The above may be supported by a passage outside the present cued text:

"No, you cannot refuse to go," said Kedawa, "since your hands have wrongly held the untouchable magical *ranyai* fruit, not even supposed to be seen with ordinary eyes — else one's very parents must die."

Compare also 14.4 on plant taboos; and 34.1, 47.2. Dr. Ashton cannot identify this as a real plant in Borneo.

9

a. This is the country of *engkala burong*.

b. "Pun engkala burong lembau ka lenyau nyaya chundong, ukai enda udah diambi kami dua mengua karong mengempong ke nengkalong tangan batang".

c. "An *engkala burong* tree sways but is reluctant to die. The bark at the middle of the trunk had been cut away by my mother and I".

d. The thickness at the character's join tapers down to the fork on board, not on paper.

9.1 *Engkala burong*; bark from this tree (*Litsea*, a wild laurel) is a main source of dyes (cf. 8.1), used in making *pua* etc. (cf. 7.2). The tree, which thrives on river banks, survives bark ringing, as here; thus it is felt to "give blood" yet rejuvenate — an idea recurring at 15.5, 23.1 and 24.2; more on bark at 14.2, 37.4, 55.3, 57.1, 57.2, 60.5, 60.6; also plant "skin" at 12.3, 15.2).

10

a. The name of this hill is Layang Ketupong.

b. "Bukit Layang Ketupong baka ke ngentong dikebond langit ngeruang".

c. "This is Layang Ketupong hill, whose peak appears as if it would pierce the dome of the sky".

d. n.s.v.; a "beak idea", (cf. no. 16) though this must *not* be oversimplified, as absent in some other "bird lands", etc.

10.1 *Layang Ketupong* = a place name, combines the names of two birds important in Iban lore: *layang* = swifts and swallows (in confused classification; cf. Haddon: 151) and particularly the edible-nest swiftlets (see verse 56 in main text); *ketupong* = the Rufous Piculet (*Sacia abnormis*), key Iban omen bird (see Section III, notes 15-16).

10.2 *Layang* is also used to describe the act of skimming flight; this is then the hill skimmed over by Ketupong. A more common usage is *Layang Punai*, as place-name for a hill regularly used by *punai* (pigeons) and favoured therefore by hunters. See again in 56; and the ultimate long-house full of *layang* jars at 63.4.

10.3 We have now met up with the bird motif and it becomes for a time strong, intermixed with trees.

10.4 Reference the possible beak motif in the character (10d), see also 61.5.

11

a. This is a country of birds.

b. "Tinting buloh laying munyi kesuling sepu senjau. Tu menoa sapa? Menoa semalau lanjau, ke bejako bechau belau, nyentok ka silau nyentok ka petang".

c. "The ridge of the hill is planted with *layang* bamboo which sounds like a flute playing. Whose country is this? This is the country of young *semalau* birds, which chirp all day, from morning until dusk".

d. n.s.v.

11.1 *Laying* = a yellow bamboo (*Bambusa vulgaris*), good for making flutes with sweet sound (also *buloh laong*). Always used by shamans for their beating rhythm sticks while chanting. Other bamboos are at 12, 19, 28, 64, etc. Ibans do not class these particularly as "bamboos," but each as distinct plants, to which they pay special attention only matched by the Dusuns round Mr. Kinabalu, Sabah.

11.2 Flutes associate with death music widely in Borneo (e.g. Punan, Kayan); found on the oldest known bronze, used in Kayan shamanism far inland (see *Artibus Asiae*, 1965, in press) and a wide range of flute forms in Kenyah after-life epics from the Baram River (*J.M.B.R.A.S.* 37, 1964, 2). Also 27.3.

11.3 *Semalau* = the Magpie Robin, *Copsychus saularis* (Malay: *murai*), common round long-houses and clearings; related to the forest-living and more beautifully singing *nendak* (*C. malabaricus*), an Iban omen bird. The presence of this and the planted *laying* bamboo indicates settlement, but not necessarily rice agriculture.

12

a. This is the country of the black partridges.

b. "Pun engkalat ke berembat angkat sebu. Menoa sapa ditu? Tu menoa pipit antu ke bejako bekadumu, berandau enda udu, masok ka baju beludu, gaga ka sempuli padi baru, ngadang diri tinggang miang".

c. "Here is a thick clump of *engkalat* bamboo. Whose country is this? This country is occupied by partridges who talk with strange noises murmuring, but slowly. They wear velvet coats, because they are glad about the forthcoming harvest, — when they expect to be pleasingly irritated by the itching pollen".

d. Arms rather higher up and thicker on board; looks more like a "human figure" there.

12.1 Black partridges = strangely named *pipit antu*, lit: "ghost sparrow;" actually the Black Wood Partridge (*Melanoperdix nigra*), a very localised jungle bird only found in the southern part of Borneo, but also in Sumatra (not elsewhere in Indonesia; Smythies: 168). The male is a beautiful velvety black (see text), a bit like the Dusky Munia (*pipit* in Iban and Malay; "sparrow" to most expatriates, cf. 61.2). It is *antu* because "it is bigger than a pipit to us, smaller to the spirits" — the constant *sabak* idea that whatever is one way in life is reversed in death.

12.2 *Engkalat* = small hill bamboo (*Racemobambos*) (cf. 11.1; also Haddon: 149).

12.3 *Miang* (also *ansang*) is the dust-like pollen which comes off the ripe padi grain — and causes skin irritation if you have no coat (velvet or otherwise). The more the itching though, the better the luck; a rich harvest. In reality, this partridge never came near human cultivation in Borneo (in Sumatra, I do not know). See also at 15.2.

13

a. This is the country of cuckoo doves.

b. "Urat dandi liat galau kedugau, malik ka kiba, tepeda ka rampa tembawai langkau. Sapa empu menoa tu ditu? Menoa imbok buau ke menyawa talau-talau, nimang lingkau nyeli gagang".

c. "The tough dandi roots grow and press on each other. Look to the left, see the view of an old hut. Whose country is this? This is the country of the cuckoo doves, whose echoing voices keenly praise the stalks of the Job's tears".

d. Tails more regular and less down, lighter effect, on paper.

13.1 *Imbok buau* = Red Cuckoo Dove, *Macropygia phasianella*, (Malay: *tawau*), seldom found in the lowlands, but typical around 2,000 feet, and unlike the closely related Little Cuckoo Dove (*M. ruficeps*) does not normally come into the padi fields. Has a deep, rather mournful note — see verse text. Absent from most present day Iban areas. Another *imbok* dove at 61.4.

13.2 *Dandi* = tree common on river banks well upstream, leaning over the water; probably *Terninalia phellocarpa*. *Dandi* means widely "to wake up;" the idea here is near English "weeping willow;" see again in 17.1.

13.3 Job's tears = *nyeli*, one of the food grains (*Coix lacryma-jobi*) now little cultivated in Borneo (mainly by Iban and Land Dayaks locally for wine) and perhaps important in the earlier, pre-rice agriculture (see my recent paper on upland proto-history, *Geographical Journal*, 130, 1964, 3: 329-336). These doves may indeed like this more delicate seed (cf. Smythies: 237).

14

- a. This is a big forest.
- b. "Pun enteli lelaki, kena sangkut kaki teruna dara mereti, sida begayang bujang melanyi, ke mali belaki, iya ke bebini maioh rambang".
- c. "The foot of an *enteli laki* tree is brushed by the legs of a clever maiden and those of a spoiled bachelor boy. So she is unable to marry him, while he marries but is often divorced".
- d. Tail longer, hook developing more gradually on board, at expense of top "cup", which is relatively smaller on board; cf. no. 38.

14.1 "Big forest" is the Mukah cue, but not much to do with the text, as B.S., Mujah and other non-Mukah Iban advisers stress.

14.2 *Enteli laki* (*Pygeum* spp.) is, however, a big forest tree, (*laki* = lit: male), the bark providing long rolls used as padi storage bins, often to be seen in Iban long-houses on the *ruai* verandah (also 25.2, 32.5, 37.4). Here we have another version of the back-to-front idea. The girl and boy touch the bark of a tree daily used in real life, but have there offended the spirits. The taboos of this world are reversed in the next, and vice versa (cf. 12.1).

14.3 The spoiled bachelor, *bujang melanyi*, as at 5.2, refers specifically to the only son of rich parents, always having his way — and sulky if frustrated. Now he is "punished" in the after life reversal. See also 53.2.

14.4 Actual touch taboo exists in "life" too — and then would not operate here. For instance, during Gawai Batu rites, a leaf of *sengkenyang* (*Eurycles amboinensis*) is used to "pillow the sacred seeds" of the first padi planting, inside a bamboo fence; if touched, this will cause elephantiasis.

15

- a. This is the country of the cuckoos.
- b. "Pun buloh ransi, iya ke richah rami muai miang. Menoa sapa tu ditu? Menoa tiup api, bujang betenggak ka arang".
- c. "A poorly grown bamboo stem that merrily sheds its skins. Whose country is this? This is the country of the *tiup api* birds, bachelors who wear charcoal chains around their necks".
- d. Arms slightly longer, hook slightly weaker on board (see comment at no. 38, etc.).

15.1 *Ransi* = bad land, where bamboo will not grow (on earth).

15.2 "Skin" = cf. *miang* at 12.3 as here; the powder (usually tiny hairs) on the surface of newly ripe bamboo, which is flourishing despite the *ransi* soil (cf. also bark at 9.1, 55.3 etc.).

15.3 *Tiup api* = lit: to put out a fire. Iban name for the Plaintive Cuckoo, *Cacomantis merulinus*, (Malay name the same), common and noisily conspicuous bird of open country, parasitising the Wren Warbler (*Prinia*) which nests often among padi stems — and is there considered an excellent omen, the young even given insect titbits by the Kelabits (cf. 21.1). This is the "Brain-fever Bird" of unhappy rubber planters, and its presence marks a different "sort of country" we are in compared with the previous jungles and following (mysterious) ones. This Cuckoo relates to the very important bird Kuang Kapong, the Indian Cuckoo (*C. micropterus*), "Chief of the Birds" in Saribas Iban folklore (*S.M.J.* XI, 1964, 23: 536) and "King" in another Papan Turai on which B.S. and T.H. are now working.

15.4 Charcoal chains only suggest another cuckoo's plumage, the Koel; there is much transference of identifications in Iban lore, notably with cuckoos and owls x nightjars, as I have emphasised elsewhere (*op. cit* 15.3 above: 539). See also 27.2.

15.5 Bachelors (and damsels) are emphasised often in this text; cf. 1, 14, 26, 30, 38 etc. This is partly reverse-praise = the old and dead; partly sympathy and kindness for the young in this mood, particularly those who died young (and verses 56-58); and partly the ideas of vitality and rejuvenation (cf. 9.1) even more highly developed as regards male virility in the equivalent Kenyah death epics (e.g. *S.M.J.* XI, 1963, 22: 64-87).

16

a. This is the country of the tree partridges.

b. "Pun ensurai ranjing, tumbuh diputing titi penjuang. Menoa sapa tu ditu? Menoa chongking ke menyawa sering-sering, munyi tating gerunong sanggang".

c. "The stem of the *ensurai ranjing* tree is growing at the end of a bridge. Whose country is this? This country belongs to the partridges, their call 'sering-sering', like the sound of a door bell, tinkling".

d. n.s.v.

16.1 Tree partridges = Long-billed (Tree) Partridge, *Rhizothera longirostris*. Smythies has the Iban name for this as *entukar*, and Malay: *kangkang*. All our Iban friends selected this species from Museum specimens as their *chonking*; *entukar* may be a local variant. It is a difficult bird, with a peculiarly restricted distribution in South Borneo (mainly the Barito) and then on a few northern mountains (Smythies: 166; cf. and other partridges at 12.1): but is also in Sumatra and Java. I have never actually *seen* one alive.

16.2 Belangkang Biring is a "praise name" (cf. 44.2) given to this bird by some Iban informants, just as great warriors and culture heroes have dual names.

Biring = red, and there is here a typical "interchange" (cf. 15.3) with the Crested Green Wood Partridge, usual Iban name *sengayan*. B.B. is the guardian of Titi Rawan, "the Bridge of Terror" across to the other world, Sabayan, in the upper Mandai river (16.4).

16.3 The bridge, though only touched on in this one verse, is of much importance in this and other Iban lore. The chanter may even be afraid to mention what is a danger point on the journey (B.S.). We shall have more to say on this in later studies; see also R. O. Windstedt on "The Bridge of the Dead" in *J.M.B.R.A.S.*, XXIV, 1951, 3: 145-147; and the important remarks of J. J. L. Duyvendak in "A Chinese *Divina Commedia*;" Leiden, 1952: 18-24.

16.4 *Ensurai ranjing* = famous single tree at Nanga Mandai, mouth of the "river of death" (cf. Kenyah: Malau R). Mukah Ibans believe this tree is in the upper Kapuas, Kalimantan, and separately we have found it a living idea in the lore of the Malohs from the Kapuas (recorded 1961-62). See also 30.1, 35.4 and 36.3 for "real places" as myth. *Ensurai* is a term for *Dipterocarpus oblongifolius*, a characteristic Borneo riverine tree.

16.5 *Sering* is a reasonable description of the tinkling note in this bird's call; but the verse is constructed with unusually close *ing* stresses, also overriding "sense."

16.6 Bells called *sanggang* worn on swords, doors, etc. as protective charms; on wrists and ankles in shaman and other rites widely; and on burials back to earliest metal in Melanau-Punan and proto-Dayak Niah Cave excavations (cf. also 59.2).

17

- a. This land is overgrown with *dabai nyuntai* trees.
- b. "Pun *dabai nyuntai* munyi serabangai sabak kenang".
- c. "The trunk of a *dabai nyuntai* tree sounds like the loving chant of the singer".
- d. n.s.v.

17.1 *Dabai nyuntai* = a pretty, medium-sized tree (*Saraca longistyla*) growing over water, normally well inland; cf. "weeping willow" metaphor (13.2; 24.3). The roots are used for knife handles. We now begin to enter more difficult terrain on our journey.

17.2 We also move more distinctly into the arc of death manifest and sadness explicit (this is much elaborated, of course, in the "free" passages which fill in fully between the character verses).

17.3 The last phrase directly refers to the dirge itself; *kenang sabak* here really means "talking (chanting) about people with loving words." B.S. adds "as if we were talking now about the late George Jamuh — with a sort of love in our hearts" (cf. *S.M.J.* XI, 1963, 20: ix).

18

- a. This country belongs to good spirits, keepers of money boxes.

- b. "Kerimpak batu burak, iya ke beserak mairoh betinggang. Nya menoa petara biak ngembuan kutak sarang wang".
- c. "Broken pieces of white stone are piling one upon the other. This is the country of the lesser gods, keepers of money boxes".
- d. Top angle and bracket effect obscured (by clumsy finger work) on board, and downward line from there elsewhere straight; two lower curved lines as here.

18.1 Money boxes (*kutak sarang wang*), like shaman's magical boxes (1.7), are not to be found now; they were carved and decorated, long and thin, usually kept inside a jar, its mouth sealed with good cloth. Similar receptacles, beautifully made of bamboo or horn, were still in use by the Potok-Muruts in Kalimantan and some Padas Muruts in Sabah to c. 1946.

18.2 Broken white stones (cf. 49 and 62.2) are recurrent in Iban "journeys," relating also to the white spots (5.2, 28.5, 35.3 etc.); and a general stress on whiteness of death (= black in life; cf. 62.2).

18.3 Lesser gods = *petara biak*, a loose term for a rather ill-defined group of sub-deities, such as Biku Bunsu Petara and Pantan Inan Raja Jadin. See also at 41.3, differently.

19

- a. This is a village where good spirits dwell.
- b. "Manggai ditanah mirah, berandah mandang belakang, tanah kuning perenching mandang lumpang".
- c. "Reaching the red earth which shines brightly on one's back, the yellow earth which shines on the boiling glutinous rice".
- d. n.s.v.

19.1 Red and other colours of earth, involving a conception linking to Sempalang Gana, maker of the good earth (41.2) before the last set of doors to the other world (verse 44); see also bad earth (15.1) and broken hearth (57.4).

19.2 The "shining" comes from the bamboo in which the rice is being cooked direct on the fire, a common method. It is tempting, in passages like this, to revise the language in more poetic symbolism, clearer in English — which is a less suitable language than Iban when you want to suggest allegory without sentiment or any sort of smartness.

19.3 As in verse 18, the general "atmosphere," as set in the cue line, is of good spirits in this sector; but this is not here brought out especially in the cued verses themselves.

20

- a. A lowland is planted with durian trees.

- b. "Emperan besai tumbuh rian blansai, lemai bebungai, pagi beka-berai muai ketupang".
- c. "A wide lowland, wherein grow *blansai* durian trees, which flower in the evening and drop their petals at morning".
- d. Later line longer. Further durians at no. 39-40; the dot and circle theme often reflects fruit, but is more complex if overall Iban writing is considered (cf. no. 25). See also remarks in Section V.

20.1 *Rian blansai* = a big, rich durian, though it does not really flower so quickly as this (cf. 1.3 and 40.1; also 9.1, 15.5, 23.1, 32.4, 46.3, 55.3, 56.3 for similar ideas).

21

- a. This is the country of the pheasant cuckoos.
- b. "Pun ensunut anyut, didinga baka dengut, munyi singut gamang sasarang".
- c. "This is the foot of an *ensunut* tree, sounding like bees in a large hive".
- d. Left hand branch shorter, and horizontal top line longer on paper (cf. comment on no. 20 above).

21.1 "Pheasant cuckoos" in the cue are not referred to in the actual cued verse here, but in following free-style material (and perhaps "should" be in this verse strictly?). *Bubut*, in most languages, is the familiar, noisy, handsome large Coucal (*Centropus sinensis*) of open scrub and grasslands through South-east Asia. The flesh is taboo in many groups. The young, if found in padi field nests, are blinded by the Kelabits — the reverse of their treatment for young of the other *sabak* cuckoo (15.3).

21.2 *Ensunut*: a big forest tree (*Sindora coriacea*) favoured by bees, and often carrying their nests (cf. 37.4). But also used in some districts to describe a black mushroom made into a preventative for drunkenness and with a spongy, beehive texture. This fungal link here also fits with the rather muddled insect association (cf. 51.1). Of course, *both* can be included in the one allegory. A series of beliefs about intoxication and mushrooms are currently being studied in Borneo in conjunction with wider researches by our friend, R. Gordon Wasson (cf. his "Mushrooms, Russia and History," New York, 1957, 2 vols; also at 56.4).

21.3 Bees here are equally hornets (*gamang*), the sort which nest in small groups under tree roots and can give a serious sting. Another "mix up" of the double talk, black and white (see 12.1 etc.).

22

- a. A good spirit, Bujang Agang Gemurai, lives in this village.
- b. "Emperan nyapan mesai perampan tikai senggang, menoa Bujang Agang Gemurai".

c. "A lowland as big as a winnow, made from *senggang* mat. Bujang Agang Gemurai lives here".

d. Triangle to right more compressed on board, and downward line thicker.

22.1 Bujang Agang Gemurai, one of the heroes in Panggau Libau, long-house of the mighty war leader Keling Grasi Nading, along the heavenly river Gelong Batu Nakong Ngelentik Punggang, which is inhabited solely by communities of brave men, head-hunting warriors under Tutong and Laja (cf. 30.2). Keling's own house, surrounded by *isang* and crotons (1.2), is the longest, at the headwaters. The Chief Minister of Sarawak, Dato Stephen Kalong Ningkan, himself an Iban, has lately renamed his residence (next door to mine in Pig Lane, Kuching) "Panggau Libau" (16.1.65).

22.2 Winnow = *parampan*, the sort used for wind-cleaning rice; cf. the role of winnowing trays in Hindu religious mythology (e.g. with Ganapati; see Alain Danielou, "Hindu Polytheism;" London, 1964: 297).

22.3 *Senggang* = stripped leaf of ginger used in mat and basket making; not suitable for lasting work, as it is soft; but easily manipulated (see also 30.2, 35.2). Haddon: 153 is in error here.

23

a. Banana trees are planted in this country.

b. "Pun pisang unai lemai nanam, pagi tangkai bekarundai pinta tebang".

c. "A stem of *pisang unai* is planted in the evening. In the morning the bunches are ready to cut".

d. Branches take off a little lower down, and bottom one comes away down more, on board; resemblance to a banana tree is far-fetched?

23.1 As with the quick durian at verse 20, the swift growth theme, here dramatised. The rare banana called *pisang unai* is in fact a quick grower, wild, and producing rather poor fruit. They are "planted" by the dead in their agriculture, on the other facet of the quick-slow theme: everything the other way round. The poorest wild fruit are instantly excellent here.

24

a. This is the country of the deer.

b. "Tinting rusa gemiling, lemai mipil pagi tekaing, tandok ringkang".

c. "The ridge of Deer Antler hill is sliced in the evening: but in the morning the horn comes forth again yapping".

d. See at no. 6 above. Mujah anak Mambang, the most revered Iban folklorist of the Saribas, when shown this character on paper as above

declared it to the "upside down", as indeed it is *logically*, but he has taught himself to write and record texts.

24.1 *Rusa Gemiling*, a place name of the same class as Layang Ketupong (10.1), as we now begin to climb from the riverine foothill country (roughly). The emphasis on Sambhur Deer (*Cervus unicolor*) in preference to other deer is deliberate (cf. 6.2; also 26.2), but it is noticeable that *rusa* jars are not referred to later (63.4).

24.2 The horn (cf. 6.3) rejuvenates in the morning (9.1), like some bananas (23.1), durians (20.1), and barks (55.3).

24.3 Yapping, like the tree chanting (17.1). The word *ringkang* here indicates as of young dogs (for puppies *tekaing*; for old dogs baying — they do not "bark" in Borneo — *nyalak*). The young horn is, as it were, baying itself as a young dog, not old enough to hunt as it might do. See also 52.3.

25

a. This is a hill with *resam kukut* ferns growing wildly.

b. "Munggu *resam kukut* ke bebalut mesai tibang".

c. "A small hill is overgrown with thick ferns. The plants grow very closely together and cluster thick like a padi bin".

d. n.s.v.; this is the first use of the circle, which recurs at no. 36, 39-40, and after.

25.1 *Resam kukut* = dense bracken (*Dicranopteris linearis*) which invades landslides and uncontrolled soil exposures; much favoured by deer and leopard, extremely difficult for human penetration. Fibrous stems of this are stripped and worked into bracelets; cf. Haddon: 134.

25.2 Padi bins, *tibang*, made from bark (14.2) are theoretically so dense not even a mouse can get in; see also 32.5.

25.3 Succulent fruit, easy protein and rice now fade from the route for a while and we climb into the less comfortable zones (durians return with verse 39).

26

a. This is a vast field of *lallang* grass.

b. "Punggang *lallang* mirah baka dipanjah kijang digayang. Punggang *lallang* pampat, baka kempat guntin bujang".

c. "The edge of the *lallang* grass is red as if with the blood of a speared barking deer. The edge of the grass has been cut like the cropped hair of a bachelor".

d. n.s.v.

26.1 *Lallang*, canegrass (*Imperata cylindrica*) grows as readily and dense as the fern (25), especially after overcultivation.

26.2 "Red" is never the (real) colour of *lallang* grass, but associated with anything here if required (cf. 1.2, 8.1, 27.2, 49.3, 51.2, 59.2 etc.). The Barking Deer (*Muntiacus muntjak*) is an omen mammal for many Borneans (including Iban) and taboo food among others. To be touched by its blood in life could be serious; thus, in death, satisfactory.

27

a. This is the country where the souls of dead fighting cocks gather.

b. "Bukit Tambit Selabit baka ke dibelit bara api, ke menjadi mau rarendang. Nya menoa Ensing Jara tajam mata, manok menang".

c. "Tambit Selabit hill looks as if encircled by glowing embers. This is the country of Ensing Jara, with sharp eyes to look after the spurs of the victorious cocks".

d. This character seems (to me) to differ in "style" from the others, by the "intrusion" of one disconnected line inside. This represents a fighting cock spur (cf. no. 28 following) according to most views — once they know the verse.

27.1 Tambit Selabit — a place name with no special "meaning" here (*selabit* = carrying basket in several Borneo languages); a hill frequented by demon hunters in several Iban tales.

27.2 Cinders glow red; this may be a relic tradition of a volcano, either outside Borneo or from traditions of the past in the island — volcanic activity continued into proto-historic times. More probably some special disposal fire, as at 50.2; and cf. 15.4.

27.3 Ensing Jara is a female kingfisher spirit, who looks after the souls of fighting cocks in the other world. In the mourning song of Suri (f) ak. Liga (para. 90, Museum archives text) we find:

"Leaving that place and presently reaching the hollow trunk of a *bengang* tree, sounding like rapid strokes of merry concert drums; this stood alongside the Manding Kuning hills, which made the flute-like sounds of *buloh bala* bamboo. "Whose place is this?" "This is the abode of the maiden Tengkulas Sabit Mas, whose feathers flap against her breast. She is also the maiden Iyak Sabit Pirak, her feathers shining brightly on her face. She is also Bunsu Ensing Jara, a female kingfisher, guardian of the spirits of all fighting cocks in red plumage with dark grey breast feathers."

27.4 Fighting cocks (equivalent to "warriors") play a big part in Iban ritual and belief, as also among the Mohammedan Bajaus in Sabah and in the early traditions of the royal house of Brunei; a fine cock is depicted among Niah Cave wall-paintings unlikely to be less than 1,000 years old. But the "older" peoples, such as Kelabit, Kayan and Punan, have no such fowl belief or "sport." No other non-human has its "place of death" in this *sabak* system — the first human one is for real warriors (verse 45). See also a Gawai Antu chant passage from Saribas Ibans in my earlier *Bijdragen* (1962: 134) paper with another death

journey and a place for the aborted foetus ("poorest of all creatures") marked by Prin-Ragai wearing "the longest tail feather of a champion fighting cock."

28

a. A hill with a single peak.

b. "Bukit enggal sigi, tuchong naka penyelai, tanam ka orang aur duri, baka tekui taji jungkang. Baroh iya pasir ngapoh dikelingi ai Sungai Rangki, ke mali dipandi, tau ngasoh isi bebal nyadi belang".

c. "The single peak looks very strange, being planted with *aur duri* bamboo. It looks like the elbow of a metal cock-spur. At the foot is a sandy beach, surrounded by the Rangki stream. To bathe here is forbidden. The offender will suffer white spots on the skin".

d. Right hand upper branch keeps higher, not so down-sweeping on board; here the paper version is clearer (as not infrequently), since the elbow motive relates to the metal spur of cockfighting (cf. no. 27).

28.1 *Aur duri* bamboo has strong spikes round the stump.

28.2 Spur as from 27.4 (and see 27.d of main text on the character feature).

28.3 *Ngapoh* = a beach which is liable to washing away at flood time, an irregular river feature (cf. 31.2).

28.4 Rangki — a river which also features strongly in the Gawai Burong (Bird Festival) rites; *rangki* means a white shell armlet (*Trichidna*) resembling ivory. Once again, a stress is on whiteness (see 18.2). The armlets occur again at 30.6 and 46; and specifically as *rangki* in verse 64, the very last words to the night-long song, where the shell properly appears "at sea" — it cannot be riverine in reality.

28.5 White is confined in the spots etc.; the word *belang* here indicates the ivory spot disease common in Borneo. All through, whiteness is even more stressed than red ("blood") — as at 5.2, 18.2, 35.2 and strongly in the last phrases at 61.4, 62.2 and the terminal phrase (64.4).

29

a. A hill with two peaks.

b. "Bukit enggal dua, tuchong nyelai mati, ditanam ka orang bunga jambu lipa. Baroh pasir ngapoh, kelingi ai maioh nanga, berayan enchalanga kain tanchang".

c. "Here is a hill with two peaks. It looks very strange, with flowers from *jambu lipa*. At the foot of the hill is a sandy beach surrounded by rivers from several mouths. Here the maidens often lose their skirts".

d. n.s.v.; the different arrangements to get a *numerical* effect in the following characters should be especially noticed, for correlation with other material subsequently.

29.1 *Jambu lipa* = a cultivated fruit tree (*Eugenia malaccensis*) with fine white flowers (see 28.5).

29.2 Skirt loss is a frequent theme, almost obsessional in Land Dayak and Malay "fairy stories." Usually it is due to male theft, here to forgetfulness (*enchalanga*). What happens especially at this place is the sudden, terrifying appearance of a hovering eagle (*lang terbang*). This bird's main role in the other world is to frighten the spirits of the dead, keep them *moving* and on the right track, so that they do not stray into side places and, above all, do not dare to try and turn back towards this world of life (cf. 42.3; also 34.2, 41.4).

30

a. A hill with three peaks.

b. "Bukit tungku tigai, tuchong naka penyelai, bisi abi kaki indik Simpurai Gundai ke pulai ngiga Kumang belelang. Baroh pasir ngapoh kelingi ai danau Alai, teleba endor sebayen mansai, ngulih ka undai naka pemesai, sepit tau ka simpai bujang berambau mansang".

c. "Here is a hill with three peaks. It looks very strange with Simpurai Gundai's footprints. He is searching for the goddess Kumang. At the foot of the hill is a sandy beach surrounded by the Alai lakes, where those from the other world net prawns with pincers big enough to make armlets for still growing bachelors".

d. Bottom wave tilted rightward on board (this version "better"). Sandy pebble beaches in rivers (cf. no. 29) occur widely in Iban lore, and are often characterized by a rough circle on paper, containing spots, though not so here.

30.1 Simpurai Gundai — one of the "heroes" of Panggau Libau and third in importance there; his enormous foot prints are said to be still visible in the Kelingkang Mts. on the Kalimantan border (watershed to Kapuas River; cf. 16.4). A similar idea is strong among the Kelabits (*S.M.J.* VI, 1954, 4: 104-125). This verse links back to 22, and the Keling x Kumang group appear in much other Iban lore, with strong indications of special "line of origin," as indicated in Section II previously; also 41.3 etc. below.

30.2 Kumang — literally "beautiful," and sometimes applied to lesser persons as a name; e.g. two "fairies" on Santubong Mt. (cf. 37.2; and *Sarawak Gazette* XC, 1964, 1277). Here it is the "top Kumang," the lovely sister of the chief Tutong, patron of blacksmiths. She gets lost with Lulong, sister of Laja, while looking for *senggang* leaf (cf. 22.3, again associated with her father and Keling).

30.3 Lakes are rare in Borneo reality and the only ones in Iban country are those in the Kapuas, Kalimantan (30.1 above, whence *tusut* genealogies trace the westward movement of these people, as in *S.M.J.* VII, 1956, 7: 54-81 and Wang Gung-wu, *op. cit* at note II.13 above).

30.4 Nets here are *mansai*, coarse hand-nets, like Kelabit *nyap* (*S.M.J.*, V, 1950, 2: 274-287, plate XVI, and fig. iii). See also 60.8.

30.5 Pincers play a significant role in the symbolism of the other main sector

of Borneo writing, from Leppo Tau Kenyah; here = crayfish, which do not occur in the upriver areas inhabited by most Iban (incl. at Mukah).

30.6 Armlets cf. 28.4, 46.1, 64.4.

31

a. A hill with four peaks.

b. "Manggai dibukit tungku empat, baka kilat nyelar petang, baroh pasir ngapoh, kelingi ai sungai Anap, serangkap urat maioh bepampang".

c. "The hill with four peaks is reached. It flashes like lightning in the dusk. At the foot of the hill is a sandy beach surrounded by water from the Anap stream, thickly overgrown with criss-cross roots".

d. Less bottom "tail" on board than on paper.

31.1 Anap — no real life locale or "meaning?" I can get nothing on it so far.

31.2 Every "beach" on the way has its hazard or curiosity, vegetable or animal, as here.

32

a. A hill with five peaks.

b. "Manggai dibukit tungku lima, ke menyawa enda jejena, munyi tanda kaul dindang. Baroh pasir ngapoh kelingi ai maioh belempa, teleba endor sida sebayan ke danjan dulu lela, nyagam ngiga tekura, besai enda jena, tau kena sida melanyi bujang bula, dikena nudong tibang".

c. "The hill with five peaks is reached. It gives out a loud noise, as if from a dancing song. At the foot of the hill is a sandy beach surrounded by marshy ground, where those long dead search for big tortoises, whose shells can be used by the lying bachelors as their *padi* bin lids".

d. n.s.v.

32.1 Song = *dindang*; this is strictly a Malay tune, to which no one (in life or expectation) can dance. "Upside-down" (63.1) idiom again, or a "mistake" (B.S.)?

32.2 Noisier here — though *dindang* is soft music (contradiction in tune with idiom); after uproar at 35, back to very quiet in 36-38.

32.3 Tortoises = *tekura*, a general term for various river and land forms, not the larger tidals (*labi*) or marine turtles (*penyo*).

32.4 "Lying bachelors" because they exaggerate the size, multiplying everything out of proportion to earthly reality (cf. 37.4, 61.5).

32.5 Padi bin lid (*nudong*), cf. 14.2, 25.2.

33

- a. A hill with six peaks.
- b. "Manggai dibukit tungku enam, madang bindang ensebam, alai belalai ka ujan laboh ninggang. Baroh pasir ngapoh, kelingi ai Sungai Bulan, saru iyu ikan bam, ke begamal singam-singam, bejanggut ka jadam mau gempanang".
- c. "The hill with six peaks is reached. It is full of fan-palms, whose fronds shelter anyone from rain. At the foot of the hill is a sandy beach surrounded by the Bulan river. Here live the lost shark and whale, both with beautiful golden whiskers".
- d. On board these strokes do not get so markedly larger downward as on paper, following closely the sequence as in no. 32.

33.1 Fan palm = *bindang*, Malay loan-word for *Agathis dammara*; (cf. Iban *binang* = a fan palm, *Livistona*). Different from *isang* at 1.2.

33.2 Bulan — lit. "moon river," so clear. See also 41.4, 60.7 and verse 35.

33.3 Shark (*iyu*) and whale (*ikan bam*, from the Malay) had come upriver and been stranded as the water level fell again, long ago, in "giant times" (cf. 37.4). But again also the idea of paradox, impossible inland presence of marine monsters.

34

- a. A hill with seven peaks.
- b. "Manggai dibukit tungku tujuh, dimadang pinang undoh, ke ruroh laboh ninggang batang. Baroh pasir ngapoh, kelingi ai sioh panchor tengkujoh jalong timang".
- c. "The hill with seven peaks is reached. There are plenty of areca palms with fruits lying close to the trunk. At the foot of the hill is a sandy beach, flooded by the overflow of the sacred wine, *jalong timang*".
- d. n.s.v.

34.1 *Undoh* = collective term for wild sorts of betel palm (*Areca* and *Pinanga* spp.); especially helpful if chewed and then applied as a poultice to a baby's stomach, (for colic). Here links to the sacred wine used at the crucial phase in the head-rites at Gawai Antu, the great Iban festival of the spirits — the follow up, on a mass scale, to the individual rites of immediate death with *sabak* and personal burial. Head allegory with palm top is abundant in Iban lore (illustrated at 8.3). These particular heads are easy to get (close to the trunk)? See also 36.7, 51.2.

34.2 *Jalong timang*, the sacred wine, or better "holy wine," offered only to the "brave warriors" in Gawai Antu, as first in several rising grades of drink, taken in special bamboo cups (see *S.M.J.*, X, 1961, 17: 171 and XI, 1963, 21: 321-326 with plate, on this rather intricate system). *Timang* is used to cover all sorts

of invocations and 'prayers' to deities = birds, spirits, etc., and in one sense means to move things, that is in English metaphor to "get things going" and "keep them moving along." Iban drink and sacrifices as staging processes, with musical accompaniment, would surely make Confucius feel at home, in accord with his Sacrificial Hymn, stanza 3:

The harmonious sounds are heard of drum and bell;
With sincerity the wine-cups are offered.
Reverently and harmoniously
Approach the sacrificers, men of honourable fame.

J. van Aalst "Chinese Music";
(1884), New York 1964 reprint: 34.

35

a. A hill with eight peaks.

"Manggai dibukit tungku lapan, tuchong gunong Semilan, ke menyawa deram-deram, munyi peputan ruan rurus rejang. Baroh pasir ngapoh kelingi ai sungai Bulan, kili ka ayan karangan batu kinyang, kulu ka ampo emperan lentor dan ensurai nunggang".

c. "The hill with eight peaks is reached and so also the top of Gunong Semilan. Gunong Semilan roars noisily like wood bellows with vertical cylinders. At the foot of the hill is a sandy beach surrounded by water coming from Bulan river. The lower stretch of the river is studded with crystals, the upper stretch overgrown with overhanging branches of *ensurai*".

d. Lower support lines shorter on board.

35.1 Gunong Sembilan — "Hill Nine," last in the series, telescoping with Eight of the cue and first verse line. The number eight is variously "lucky" and even semisacred (Kenyah *mamat* grades), and this sort of numerology was stronger in the Iban past. For Bulan river see 33.2.

35.2 Bellows = *ruan*; a very good wood, not affected by insects although soft; also used for hand-drums; cf. ideas in 27.3, 30.2, 36.5. Rather uncommon wood and not yet botanically identified.

35.3 Crystals = *batu kinyang*, white, here quartzite; cf. 18.2, also 28.5.

35.4 *Ensurai* — found along rivers (cf. 16.4), usually those with the best fish (*ikan semah*); neither occur in the Mukah river, but do in streams of the Saribas area, their homeland in the previous century (B.S.).

36

a. The country of *Manang*.

b. "Manggai dituchong Rabong Manang. Ditu kitai anang ragak, anang rindang. Tu ga menoa Kejakang Manang Keliong. Ukai iya

bisi pengawa bukai, iya ga tembu belempai ka punggai pua ubong, tayun-tayun nempa puting besi beliong, ga iya belian bejarau nibong, bayam gupong mayang pinang”.

c. “The peak of Rabong Manang (forever lauded by medicine-men) is reached. Here we must not make any noise nor linger. This is the abode of holy Keliong. He does nothing but hang out woven blankets on a line and forge iron adzes for ceremonial use when he slashes the tops off nibong palms, and reads signs from the hearts of flowering areca palms”.

d. n.s.v.

36.1 The cue line introduces, in effect, a new sequence (though transitions here are never absolute) after the big ranges have been crossed; we continue to travel dangerously and among mountains, but the *sabak* atmosphere subtly changes as we approach the unusually definitive, precise doors to the ‘other world’ (from 42 on).

36.2 *Manang* is always an embarrassing word, which usually ends up in English as “witch-doctor.” I prefer “shaman,” though on some narrow definitions he is not exactly that; and he is often a lot more, yet overlapping with the *lemembang* medium. It would be nice if we could call him “Doctor” and use this as a name prefix, leaving obscure — as often in Europe — whether he is medico, philosopher, ethno-botanist or abortionist.

36.3 Rabong Manang — a “real place” (cf. 16.4, 30.1, 35.4), about 40 miles east of Simanggang over in the upper Kapuas, Kalimantan (300 miles from Mukah). There Sengalang Burong ordained his brother Menjaya Raja Manang as the first and top (*raja*) human *manang*; and for this reason it is specified in such chants (cf. Section II, note 14; also 60.4, 62.1). Menjaya Raja actually changed sex in this process and was ordained a medicine *woman*, then called Manang Bali Menyadi Aki Sengalang, Raja Menjaya Ke Betalaga Baroh Rekong by Sengalang Burong and his brothers and sister. Manang Raja Menjaya then turned to become the chief of all *manang*; he (she) has his/her own bards named Tepong Bulu and Tangga Lulai who memorised their songs with other *turai* writings.

These songs did not include *sabak* and death rite material generally. Sengalang Burong’s full sister (never resexed) was Ini Inee (see genealogy in Section II). When the siblings separated (41.2) and he set up his bird long-house, she — with full name Ini Inee Rabong Hari, Ini Inda Rabong Menoa ascended — also dwelt up in the sky as possessor of most medicinal knowledge among spirits and men.

At this time there was a certain man on earth actually named Lemambang, who went into the forest to hunt with his blow-pipe. During his absence *his* sister waited for him. But he did not return. Worried by this, sister cried and said, “O Lemambang, why don’t you come back; for you leave me alone in our house?” Immediately she said this, a huge demon came and swallowed her up alive. Next day Lemambang came home. He called for his sister. As she was clearly not there, he grew very worried. He looked for her all over; at last he noticed a tiny drop of blood on a leaf. Seeing this, he called for *Manang* Ini Inee Rabong Hari, Ini Inda Rabong Menoa, summoning her to come to his aid immediately.

Ini Inee came. Lemambang told her why he had called her. Hearing his sad

story, she collected a piece of *chekor* root (*Kaempferia galanga*). With this, she shifted Lemambang's sister's tiny drop of blood with a basket and later fanned it with a winnowing basket (cf. 22.2). The blood spot now grew bigger and bigger, till it became a woman again. On her recovery, Lemambang's sister became Kalitak Darah Menjadi, and married Retak Daai, Remi's grandfather. To tie this in with Section II-III (notes 16-20) material previously, we have, from generation 4:

36.4 Keliong — a very high shaman, of professorial status indeed. He live (d/s) on Rabong; *kejakang* is a sort of prefix, roughly equivalent to "the very learned," in Iban feeling = holy ("emphatically so," B.S.).

36.5 Blankets (*pua*), see usage at 8.2; ceremonial *iron* (cf. bronze) adzes are no longer known, but this has provided a clue we are pursuing (cf. 35.2).

36.6 Slashing palm tops = human heads, cf. 8.2, 8.3.

36.7 Areca (betel) flower augury is still practised by the Ibans and probably represents one of a large group of omens earlier than the present bird system as described so coherently by Freeman (in Smythies: 73). See also 46.3 and 51.2; also C. G. S. van Steenis in *S.M.J.*, VIII, 1958, 11: 432.

37

a. A mountain.

b. "Manggai dibukit Sagu Sentubong. Baroh pasir ngapoh, kelingi ai Ilang-ilong, ke teleba alai Ini Inong nengkuyong ke besai umbas tanggong, tau ka rintong bujang muar tapang".

c. "The top of Sagu Sentubong hill is reached. At the foot of the hill is a sandy beach surrounded by the Ilang-ilong stream, where Ini Inong looks for snails as big as *rintong* baskets. These baskets are used by bachelors, to lower the honey-combs from the *tapang* trees".

d. n.s.v.; carefully, the apex of inverted angle touches the lines to the left of centre, tilted as here; compare nos. 35 & 36 as inverted peaks; also no. 43.

37.1 Cue as given — the only really non-informative one; by now are growing tired of all these peaks indeed; and this is the last of them!

37.2 Sagu Santubong — lit. "lifted coffin," there the name of a hill, one such really existing in the Sarawak River delta but not connected with this text by Mukah Ibans, who would not know it. But for anyone coming into south west Borneo it is the first landfall from out at sea; see photos and other folklore associations in *S.M.J.* XI, 1964, 23: 402-414 and plates I, III (also 30.2).

37.3 Ilang-ilong — a place name in folklore only (B.S.).

37.4 *Rintong* — a basket of the sort used for gathering bee's nests from *tapang* (*Koompassia excelsa*) and *ensunut* (*Sindora coriacea*) trees (21.2); made from *enteli* (*Pygeum* sp.) bark (14.2). Shells of this size do not exist on earth (cf. 32.4; 33.3).

37.5 On honey collecting, which has important ritual aspects, see *S.M.J.*, V, 1950, 2: 181-186. Also 55.1.

38

a. This is a vast stretch of forest.

b. "Kampong baung enda didinga ensong nyumbuh bujang, kampong sunyi enda didinga kesui nyawa orang".

c. "A vast, luxuriant forest, with not even the call of bachelor monkeys. The forest is lonely, no human sound is heard".

d. Closer to no. 14 on board — where it starts the reverse side — than appears. It would be possible to treat both characters as minor variants of the same, in which case this is the only duplication in the set and implies considerable ideographic consistency (not always supported by other evidence). N.B. *This is board turn-over point!*

38.1 Monkeys at 1.5.

38.2 Bachelors, see 15.5 *et seq.*

39

a. An orchard of durian *lusing*.

b. "Rian lusing, amat iya lusing, enti disilu bulih sapanding tepayan bengang".

c. "An orchard of durian *lusing* comes into view. It is true that this is thinly fleshed; but when the flesh is gathered it can fill up a *panding jar*".

d. The lower arms are lower on the board.

39.1 *Lusing* = low quality form of common durian, but acceptable enough after a long spell without meeting any planted fruit (since 24).

39.2 *Panding* = low black jar, worth about \$2.00 (Straits) now; not ancient, but utilitarian (durian paste, honey, arak). Other ceramics at 24.1, 56.2, 58.2, 63.4.

40

- a. An orchard of durian *lunak*.
- b. "Rian *lunak*, amat iya *lunak*, tang sasetak ayan lungkang".
- c. "An orchard of durian *lunak* comes into view. It is sure that the fruit is fleshy; but the other side of each seed is fleshless".
- d. The lower arm is straighter — usually on the board the broad lines are *less* straight, but much depends on casual factors again.

40.1 *Lunak* = durian type here stressed as with seeds poorly covered; but this is another allegorical, back and front, statement (see especially 20.1).

41

- a. The land planted with pumpkins.
- b. "Pun labu anya, dan siti ngeleba ka menoa, ngachok ka peranama bulan mandang. Dan siti ngeleba ka menoa orang ke dulu nyaya, ninggang nanga Temaga Gelang".
- c. "Here is the stem of a gourd, one of its branches spreading towards the land of the living touches the halo of the full moon. Another branch spreads out to the country of the people who died first of all, while living at the mouth of Temaga Gelang".
- d. More condensed upward — again, a tendency less characteristic of the board; but the opening character on each side tends to be more "spacious", and cramping sets in somewhere towards the middle. This character is one of those with wider links outside Iban.

41.1 Pumpkins and gourds overlap in Borneo, both introduced in cultivation, the latter long ago; generic term *labu*; strictly, pumpkins do not have skins that harden, but both are equally edible, and grown in among the rice. Water carrying gourds are mostly *labu inyak*, see also 62.3.

41.2 Temaga Gelang — the river where the deities lived "on the fringe of life" before they separated as the result of the dreadful quarrel between Sempulang Gana and his siblings, leading to a re-arrangement of powers and his special jurisdiction over land and earth as such (also 57.4). Sempulang Gana is invited to all feasts which deal with lands, especially by the farmers. As he himself celebrated many kinds of festivals, therefore he has his own bards, Rariga and Rioh, who memorised their songs with writings "*papan turai pengap*." Sempulang Gana married Endu Endun Serentum Tanah Tumbuh, youngest daughter of Raja Semarugah, the "parcupine king." His wife came from the "other world" line.

Here, we are at one parting of the ways (36.3), as explicitly stated by Iban experts and implicitly by the chanter in the connecting sequences. One phase

and in a sense *all* that has gone before is done with, we are to commence afresh, the "new life" of — I am trying to express the idea as I can — *achieved* death. Even to put it like this is grossly to over-simplify.

41.3 Those who "died first" means those who died before identifiable "Ibanism." These particular dead are thus not Iban at any accepted level, but belong to another stream of death-life (30.1); thus they are outside the doors (42-44) and will never be let through. Iban lore becomes exceptionally vague at this stage, in almost the same way as Kayan. Named figures of this phase, known now only to great *lemembang* like Mujah, include Ini (grandmother) Inan and her husband Niram; Indai Bilai and her husband Langgah Lenggah ("like Adam and Eve," B.S.; but "Eve before Adam," T.H.).

41.4 Moon and in general sky references are relatively weak in this Mukah text; but the role is important (cf. 33.2 and 60.7). Here the moon stands outside the first door to the other world, in a somewhat confused status where we have a vague admixture of serial "underworlds" or distinct "worlds," which could be attributed to a merging of ideas from ancient China, later India and endemic culture strains (cf. Ngaju). The phenomenally growing gourds touch the halo of the full moon and the "other death" place. For in those days the moon was much nearer to the earth and it only moved off owing to earthly stupidities (S.M.J., XI, 1964, 23: 539). All this is tied in with Sempulang Gana's epic pursuit after a beautiful porcupine (beaded pig in Kenyah, rhino in Kelabit), the loss of his heirloom spear, the appearance of a horde of pigs to ravage the crops with the hero spearless, etc. Eventually, S.G. comes to a place where seven ways meet, and seven *manang* on their way to cure Raja Semarugah's slave. All fail and return their separate ways — and these are ways the true Iban dead must never stray into if they are to make the journey of death with success (cf. 29.2). But S.G. succeeds in making the cure and thus has the choice of the most beautiful of the Porcupine King's seven splendid daughters; he chose the youngest (41.3). It is on his return from this journey that he finds his siblings back at Temaga Gulang had divided all the family property, led by Sengalang Burong, and leaving no share for him — until his father-in-law, porcupine wise, helped him remould the earth out of the hearth-earth remains (cf. 57.4). Thus Raja Semarugah is also named Semarugah Empo Tana, owner of the earth, actually "created" further back in the other world by Seraginda. All this is symbolised in Temaga Galang territory, lying just off to one side and in front of the first death-door.

42

- a. First door to the other world.
- b. "Pintu rau ke nyeregu maioh meranggang".
- c. "At the door badly made of many dry leaves".
- d. n.s.v. the representational nature of this and the next two characters is rather strong — as befits, perhaps, their clearly defined place in the progression.

42.1 This is an "easy" door; the piles of leaves are recurrent in Iban lore.

42.2 Apart from the general "presence" of deities, *manang* etc., before the doors, there are special guardians for each. Here Ular Naga (lit. "Snake

Dragon,") sees the door is only opened on serious and proved requests, several times repeated, from the genuine dead. She has two assistants, both Bunsu Belut, "Chief Worms," and female also. They make excuses to delay the dead outside, especially insisting that they are busy preparing a godly war-party. Eventually, they open the door latch of *letan* (44.3 below).

42.3 Ibans believe that whenever a person dies in this world, *thousands* of his or her relatives who have already died will come from the other world to fetch his or her soul to live with them. On their way to Mandai Mati, the guardian dragon is mentioned in the song:

Then spoke the maiden Simba,
Who, when she died, was transformed into an eagle.
"Where are you maiden Jawai
Who wears a single red *pelaga* stone,
And you maiden Iyak,
Who is lively and gay?
Please open the door of the dragon snake;
The door of red soil;
So that we can have a way to return to our country.
In the forest full of small mango trees;
With flowers all upside down."

"We have no time!"
Replied the dragon snake,
"Because we are doing most important work,
Having been asked by Punga and Laja
To weave for them coloured petticoats,
Which they will wear on an expedition,
To the mouth of the Kantu diver."

Simba here is "chiefteness of the dead"; Jawai and Iyak are "polite names" for the dragon guardian, Ular Naga. The Kantu were the Iban's main enemies in their Kalimantan migrations. See 29.2.

43

- a. Second door to the other world.
- b. "Pintu urat ke melebat mesai tiang".
- c. "At the door made of roots as big as a house post".
- d. The inverted apex meets the top of the line on the board; the present usage is consistent with nos. 36 & 37, both here and on board.

43.1 *Melebat* = "a bundle of obstruction" or blockage. Here it is Lua Limbu, the Pythan Goddess, who guards the door, with two assistants, Senurok. *Senurok* in life are the large larval forms of mole-cricket, which do much damage to the padi roots. In a song recorded by B.S. we find:

"Please will you move on, maiden Tikal Limar Tekesai, maiden Pelulin Tinchin Bekawai; whose second name is Lulong Sagupong Tampok Bungai, Sudan Meruan Ripan Ambong Rawai; whose settlement is situated at the corner of marshy land full of dried leaves." "Wait for a while," said Bunsu

Kemebai (the millipede), "for I also am unwilling to be touched by falling lumps of soil, until I have picked up my long petticoat, the end of which touches the lower part of my knees. This lovely petticoat was obtained in no ordinary way, but was given me by the Sultan of Brunei, when sailing on rough sea he adopted me as a parent." Sudan continued. "Now you go on maiden Kumbau, whose neck is piebald, Kumang whose hair is curly." "Wait for a while," replied Bunsu Senurok, "for I also do not want to be touched by falling lumps of soft soil. Meanwhile I will pick up my hat, which is like a stalk of empty bread-fruit. This hat of mine has not been obtained locally, but was presented to me when I sailed along the rapid waves, given me by the Raja of Suluk when he and I sat together smoking tobacco."

44

- a. Third door to the other world.
- b. "Pintu tanah ladu, pintu tanah laang, pintu tanah mirah, pintu tanah liat, dipangkang Endu Iyak ke betenggak papong laetan, Endu Teradu Benang Redam".
- c. "At the door made of ordinary earth, then the door of foul-smelling earth; then the door of red earth; and finally the door of tough earth; all looked after by the maiden Endu Iyak, who wears a necklace of *letan*. She is Endu Teradu Benang Redam".
- d. n.s.v.; the small upward line, identical on board and paper, has significance (cf. nos. 3, 19, 22 for similiar continuations of angles otherwise closed).

44.1 Four doors in one, making six in all; the types of earth (cf. 19.1) relate again to Sempulang Gana (41.2).

44.2 Endu Iyak = Endu Teradu Benang Redam; dual names, often quadruple, are common both in Iban and other folklore; persons achieving great things get "praise names" (cf. 16.2), and famous people often have "nick-names." Here a fair lady, equivalent to Aweng Urai in Kenyah death journeys (*J.M.B.R.A.S.* 37, 1964, 2).

44.3 *Letan* = a piece of wood used in weaving cloth; the "beater in," usually about 36" long, and made of *mengeris*, *kempas* or *tapang* wood (all *Koompassia* spp.). Not mentioned by Haddon: 11-14. Could not be worn as a necklace really; as a "yolk" yes; cf. as door latch, 42.2. The inference is also that she is a great *pua* maker, as at 7.2 above. *Letan* is also a popular Iban nick-name for famous men.

44.4 Benang Redam at the end of the longer name means the black and red cottons used in weaving.

45

- a. A country of gallant warriors.
- b. "Manggai ditinting kena banding kemunting umang".

- c. "Arriving at the ridge, confronted by *kemunting umang* trees".
- d. Lower branch line is shorter on board.

45.1 *Kemunting umang* = common wild bush of open parkland (*Clidemia hirta*), with rather bitter but edible fruit which children like as they colour the mouth a vivid blue (cf. red at 26.2 etc.; white at 28.5, etc.). The leaves, rubbed briskly between the hands, are good mixed with fish cooked in bamboo (*lulum*). Dr. Ashton doubts if this is an indigenous plant. See again, 59.1.

45.2 Warriors here are those killed in battle but of "lower status" (though this should not be stated) to those at the second death station (46)? There is considerable doubt among non-Mukah Ibans as to whether or not this and the next character-verse "should" not be merged into one?

45.3 One Iban view is that this "country" is for the bodies of those killed in battle, and the next one for *their* heads if these were lost and could not be recovered. More exactly, this is one *place*, but with two separate long-houses. It may reflect some now obscure kin or class division of the past?

46

- a. Another country of gallant warriors.
- b. "Manggai dilempa putih Terumpa Terumpang Gelang, menoa begayang bujang lempong, enda diau ka burong ngabong puchok tiang. Menoa orang parai berani ke bejalai ngena bu kang magang".
- c. "At a marshy place, Terumpa Terumpang Gelang, abode of the light-hearted bachelor Bujang Lemping, he who never observes the omen birds which perch on the top of the house post — where the braves and the headless warriors go".
- d. n.s.v.; the "shield" motif suggests itself, whereas no. 45 has no "ideographic look"?

46.1 Terumpa Terumpang Gelang — the marshy place (*putih*; cf. 58.1) where a dead woman's bracelets (*gelang*) drop off her wrists, as the flesh decays. ("Where the corpse becomes rotten, so armlets fall off" B.S.). These are metal bracelets, unlike *rangki* (28.4). Death's decomposition has become acute then, since the doors and earthly creatures were passed. For the wider symbolism of marshy places in theology see J. J. L. Duyvendak, "A Chinese *Divina Commedia*," Leiden, 1952: 39.

46.2 Bujang Lemping — "a willing young man," another gay bachelor. Here, as stated, a name is chosen or even changed to give rhythm a "dull spot," an approach which at times becomes almost ridiculous and certainly bewildering with the Kelabits (cf. *J.M.B.R.A.S.* 22, 1949, 1: 123-142).

46.3 Omens not observed. Another case of reversal from life, by spoiled youth, but also an example of great daring, suitable to a warrior of unconventional genius, the masculine alternative to women "free weaving" (7.2); the "reason" why he lost his head, too! See also 36.7.

46.4 Heads are hung under the roof, and this allusion suggests the explanation of 45.3 may be valid, the *lost* heads requiring very special precautions, as indeed they do.

46.5 An omen bird settling *on* (or coming into) a house is widely regarded as of extreme significance (Iban, Kelabit, Melanau, Dusun, etc.). Often the "worst" bird in this respect is the scavenger Brahminy Kite (*Haliastur indicus*), chief actual omen bird of many Borneo peoples, but not (now) the Iban, where he is of course personified as the bird-boss, Sengalang Burong (see remarks on Kite redness and houses in Smythies: 23; and Freeman's apt remarks on birds in houses at p. 88 there).

47

a. Land with thick vegetation.

b. "Tangkai ranyai nyelebai, ke menyawa telai-telai, munyi ke bisi nyebut emperuji ati ambai lalai. Dan baroh baka ke rebah terengkah ditanah matah landai".

c. "A bunch of *ranyai* palms making a gentle murmur, whispering the names of lovers. The lower branches sway, almost touching the ground".

d. Lower sweep more marked, with "two leg" effect, on board.

47.1 Cue describes a dense passage, supported in intervening material, as also with verses 5, 25, 26, 31, 38, etc.

47.2 *Ranyai* — the reference to this here (cf. 8.2) implies a continuation of the warrior death places (45-46), the more so as no death place is here specified (unlike 48-59). Slashing constantly symbolises head-hunting (cf. 60.2).

47.3 "Lovers" — this reference seems to contradict the other: perhaps a delicate reference to deliberate love-pact suicides or persons killed because of improper liaisons. The apparent confusion is not clarified in other material so far. But there is no essential contradiction, as one main incentive for going head-hunting was to prove yourself to your loved one, and this even developed into a deliberate "suicide threat" by husbands and lovers among the Kelabits ("World Within," London, 1959, chap. I; see also more broadly "Some physical and social factors affecting sexual behaviour in Borneo" *Man*, LXIV, 1964, 57: 55-56). Suicide could also be a step towards actual rejuvenation and return on earth, and this idea occurs in several other parts of Iban lore and continually in Kenyah (e.g. Oyau Ambeng Liang saga, *S.M.J.* X, 1961, 17: 191-213).

48

a. A country of people who died from drowning.

b. "Malik kili meda jereki tampun buba, malik kulu meda seregu tampun ensenga, menoa orang parai lemas, bekelai ka rias papong batang".

c. "Looking downriver one sees the dam for a fish trap, *buba*; looking upriver the barricade for fish trap, *ensenga*. This country is occupied by those who died from drowning, as marked by a small piece of a sodden log".

d. n.s.v.; square water "pictograph", cf. no. 62.

48.1 *Buba* = fish trap with double cones, one inside the other; made of bamboo slats.

48.2 *Ensenga* = fish trap with no inner cone, only effective in strong river currents; usually on wooden piles, covered by fresh leaves to give shade and so attract the fish.

48.3 *Seregu* here is hard to translate, but implies "bristling," and applies to the effect of the fresh twigs over the trap, seen from downstream.

48.4 Sodden log = *papong batang*, meaning a length of tree trunk tethered in the water; this is another way to lure the fish, and here signifies the corpse too.

49

a. This country is occupied by crocodile victims.

b. "Seregu batu keru langgar iko rimaung nandang. Nya menoa orang parai empa baya, bekelai ka ujak panggil upang".

c. "Brittle rocky boulders are brushed by the tails of visiting tigers. In this country dwell those killed by crocodiles. The presence of *panggil upang* flowers is the sign".

d. Thicker base-line, smaller circles on board; the "crocodile eye" motif seems "obvious", yet the text goes out of its way (unusually) to explain the sign in a different way. Several folklorist Ibans had no idea what the character could signify.

49.1 Visiting tigers long "extinct" in Borneo, though a tooth has been found in prehistoric but unclear context at Niah Great Cave. They occur in Sumatra and Java, and their teeth play a vital part in Bornean Kelabit, Bisaya and Malay (but no Iban) oath-taking, *sumpa* (62.1); and in the high grades of the Kenyah *mamat* society in the far interior. There is much substitution, in folklore and in tooth-use also, with the indigenous Clouded Leopard (*Neofelis*), in Iban. Tigers are bravery symbols (e.g. Balang in Kelabit "praise names"); leopards are notoriously cowardly and regarded as "effeminate."

49.2 In one Iban version, the *leopard* sits on a half-dead log (48.4) called *ranggas*, sweeping with its tail, as here.

49.3 *Panggil upang* = a scarlet flowering bush of the genus *Clerodendron* (12 species in Sarawak); some introduced. Here probably *C. squamatum*, native, in open and scrub sites. Widespread and widely used for summoning spirits, propitiations, etc. (cf. 36.7) as far afield as the Sakai of Malaya and Batak in Sumatra. *Panggil* is a Malay and general word, but *not* Iban, meaning "to call,

summon." *Upang* is an Iban word, meaning "fruitless." Dr. Ashton does not know of a fruitless species here, but B.S. is sure of one. Indeed, *upang* is a term extended to cover fruitless journeys, etc. in Iban.

49.4 The textual association of the flower and the character (with its "crocodile eyes") is worth emphasis here, to indicate the difficulties — and dangers — of simplified explanations of Iban writing now in 1965.

50

- a. This country belongs to dead hunters.
- b. "Nyau tepansa ka raran purang balang. Nya menoa orang ke parai ngasu, bekelai ka tunu abu peransang".
- c. "Then an unused platform is passed. This is the country of those who died from hunting accidents, marked by a heap of ashes of burnt charms and food — to make the dogs fiercer and braver".
- d. Spots smaller and lines extended further upward on board, giving a *very* different emphasis to one of the least "logical" characters in relation to text.

50.1 *Balang* is an "ancient word," not used normally nowadays, denoting "unused;" here so because the hunter died before he bagged any game to dry on the platform. Also 49.1, 58.2, 60.3, etc.

50.2 The charms (*peransang*) in this case probably vegetable matter from special roots and fibres. These are scraped and put in the rice before the hunt, to feed the dogs and strengthen them for the chase, a widespread Borneo practice. Once given, though, you must then hunt — or the dogs will get fierce and turn on the hunters instead. The residue is burned to prevent the food being eaten by others, including the pigs or other game to be hunted.

50.3 Further study and discussion with other Ibans on this character (see note 50.d in man text) suggests it may in fact indicate the *plan* view from above of a fall trap, the sort called *bubong* (cf. 3.2), used to catch monkeys (1.5) with bait (two dots) and a rope (the centre line of character) released by a hidden watcher, the door falling over the open end (the upward side of the character here).

51

- a. In this country those who died of serious wounds are buried.
- b. "Manggai dimunggu serangkap indu bebari taja tekelah. Nya menoa orang parai telih, bekelai ka upih mayang pinang".
- c. "A small hill swarming with *bebari* flies, which make a noise as if out of breath. In this country are people who died of wounds, shown by the spathe of betel nut palm".
- d. n.s.v.

51.1 *Bebari* = small fruit flies. These would not come around corpses on earth, but are regarded as protective indications on mushrooms. If a mushroom is fly infested, it is safe to eat (56.4). Such is the belief of most people in West Borneo, including Iban, Melanau, Dusun and Chinese (but not most nomadic Punan). Here there may be a carry on to verse 56; links *between* the death places are elastic, as already indicated at 45.3, 47.3, 49.2, 52.2, 53.3, 54.2, 57.5.

51.2 The spathe, *upih mayang pinang*; this is a way of describing the ensheathing spathe on the flowering stem of *Areca* (betel) palm. The spathe is receiving the blood gushing out of the wounds, like the red betel juice. Compare also *Areca* flower as omen (36.7). *Upis* is the Balleh Iban variant; and cf. Haddon: 155.

52

- a. The country of people who got lost in the jungle and died.
- b. "Manggai dikampong madang nyelutong ke tekaung nyaut teguot. Nya menoa orang parai tesat enda ingat ka palimpat jalai mansang".
- c. "A vast field of wild rubber trees, which make noises as if shouting at each other. In this country are people who died from starvation, after losing their way in the forest".
- d. n.s.v.

52.1 *Jelutong* = wild "rubber," much used before Brazilian arrived late in the last century, and still small scale jungle produce in big forest areas (chewing gum base, good steady price to primary producer).

52.2 This death place probably also caters for the insane (*gila*), who otherwise notably lack special accommodation on the Mukah route. In other areas mad folk are specially catered for, as also in Iban Gawai Antu dirges, (cf. the goings on at their special Bali Buling in Kenyah death-lore, *J.M.B.R.A.S.*, 37, 1964, 2).

52.3 Shouting trees; cf. 17.1, 24.3, also 57.3.

53

- a. A cemetery where people killed by pig traps are buried.
- b. "Manggai diemperan madang empili, teleba endor sida melanyi bujang tinggi meti ngulih ka jani babi belang. Nya ka tanda parai beli, enda ingat ka sempiri tibak pesindang".
- c. "A lowland covered with *empili* trees, where the spoiled tall bachelors trap white spotted wild boars. This shows they were foolish in having forgotten their own warning marks".
- d. Top left "barb" (of trap?) longer and quite straight on board — that is, less representational "there".

53.1 *Empili*; again associated with tall bachelors and white spotted boars, as at 5.1, 5.2.

53.2 *Melanyi* — see 14.3.

53.3 The end phrase goes for 52 also, but refers mainly to the stupidity involved, as detailed at 3.2.

54

- a. This country belongs to those who drank *tuba* fluid and died.
- b. "Manggai dipulau serangkap randau kubal arang. Nya menoa orang parai makai tubai bekelai ka punggai randau begitang".
- c. "A small island thickly covered with *kubal arang* creepers. This country belongs to people who drink *tuba* fluid and die. It is recognised by creepers hanging everywhere".
- d. n.s.v.; compare nos. 43 and 61 for style.

54.1 *Kubal arang* = a very thick creeper giving sweet fruit and milky fluid from the stem which was in the past extensively collected for sale to the Chinese (cf. 52.1). There is a general emphasis on fluids from plants, and this one may indicate semen and mother's milk.

54.2 Fibres (cf. 50.2) are of the derris root, again giving a fluid, greenish in colour, used to poison fish. The chance of anyone being killed *accidentally* with *tuba* is remote, except in conjunction with drowning (48.4); and the inference is suicidal (cf. 47.3).

55

- a. This country belongs to people who fell from trees and died.
- b. "Manggai dipuchok bengang bengkok, penindok wok empeliau arang, tinting manding bebelit awit tali gemirang. Nya menoa orang parai laboh, bekelai ka rapoh tali tekang".
- c. "The top of a big crooked creeper where gibbons sleep. The ridge of crooked *manding* trees are gripped by *gemirang* vines. In this country live those who fell from trees and died — as marked by a heap of rope".
- d. Downward hanging piece more emphatic on board than usual.

55.1 Tree fall deaths are usually connected with honey collecting (37.5).

55.2 Gibbons = *wakwak*, regarded as infallibly skilful arboreally.

55.3 *Manging* = a so far unidentified big tree of the upriver jungle. The distinctive yellow bark is compared, by Ibans, to human skin, in that it peels off and rejuvenates afresh (cf. 9.1 etc.).

55.4 *Gemirang* = vines or fibres used as ropes for tying ship's sails; seemingly out of place in this context, but relating forward to the largely lost (inland) sense of a final death-ship, somewhat clarified at 60. This is probably by origin a Malay loan word, for coconut-fibre ropes, and does not apply to any particular species of vine, etc. (as Dr. Ashton confirms).

56

- a. This country is occupied by people who ate poisonous mushrooms and died.
- b. "Manggai dilengkap baka singkap pinggai lalayang, nya menoa orang mabok makai kulat dilah kendawang".
- c. "A shallow valley looks like a *lalayang* plate. This country belongs to the people who died from eating poisonous mushrooms of the kind like the tongue of a striped *kendawang* snake".
- d. The board character looks much like a bird (e.g. frigate bird, oceanic petrel) flying sideways, as the centre section is a distinct lozenge. This could relate to the body text (56/1), though if one thinks of mushroom poison torment the tortured line here is adequate enough.

56.1 *Lalayang* — see swift flying, etc. at 10.1, plus 56.d in main text.

56.2 Plate = *pinggai*, a piece of crockery evidently bird decorated, as are the terminal jars at 63.4.

56.3 *Kendawang* = deadly, smallish snake with black and yellow stripes, red head and tail. It is difficult to tell at a glance if you are looking at head or tail, which specially fits *sabak* metaphor (cf. 20.1, etc.).

56.4 Accidental death from mushrooms is rare (see 51.1), and by present standards a special death place seems out of proportion — but so, of course, it does nowadays for the *headless* warriors. There are, however, indications that in the past mushrooms may have played a larger part in Dayak life — and sometimes death; and that peculiar "stag's horn" types growing in the dark have influenced ideas on the symbolism of antlers and the wide Borneo usage of a *rusa* motif in coffins for primary burial (e.g. among the upland Kelabtis) and the jars for secondary (cf. *Bijdragen*, 1962: also 63.4). Some of this thinking derives from R. Gordon Wasson's pioneer work (cf. 21.2).

57

- a. This country is occupied by people who died at child-birth.
- b. "Manggai ditatai madang lukai terengai bau rengut, tinting madang tekalong kerengkong malu balut. Nya menoa orang parai beranak bekelai ka kerimpak batu bedilang".
- c. "A mountain slope covered with sweet smelling *lukai* trees. And a ridge dense with *tekalong*, sounding like the beating of bark. This land is occupied by women who died in childbirth and can be recognised by the many pieces of broken hearth".
- d. n.s.v.

57.1 *Lukai* = bark burned to keep away mosquitoes and sandflies (61), and on occasion "evil spirits." The term (also *selukai*) covers small species of *Goniathalamus*, widely used in magic through the archipelago (see J. van Steenis in *S.M.J.*, VIII, 1958, 11: 436). For other barks, see 9.1 above.

57.2 *Tekalong* = big trees, *Artocarpus elasticus*, giving bark used all over inland Borneo (until 1945) for bark cloth (see S. Kooijman, "Ornamented Bark Cloth in Indonesia," Leiden, 1963: 20; and *S.M.J.*, XI, 1964, 23: 597-601; Haddon: 4 and 69). Also used by Iban — as is indicated here — for swaddling the belly of a woman after childbirth.

57.3 Sounding trees are now familiar (see 52.3 etc.); bark beating is associated with summoning the dreaded "monster" Antu Gergasi in some Iban and other belief, so that special precautions had to be taken over this essentially female activity (cf. "my mother and I" in verse 9).

57.4 Broken hearth is of baked earth — compare the importance of burned things (27.2, etc.) and of all sorts of earth (19.1, etc.). It was through the broken hearth that Sempulang Gana "recreated" man's earth (41.2-4 etc.).

57.5 Childbirth mothers stay here, but the foetus (27.4) is not specified. A certain vagueness continues (see 51.1) into the next place for those who died young (58). There is nothing here as distinctive as the Balau business of babies growing up in an intermediate place, or the Kenyah post-kindergarten for *anak bala* (my *Bijdragen*, 1962: 34, 35).

58

- a. This country is occupied by those who died too young.
- b. "Dikerapa madang palah, munyi kenempap moa puchong pemandang. Nya menoa orang ke parai dara enggau parai bujang".
- c. "A lowland overgrown with reeds, the sound like striking one's hand on the mouth of the charming bottle. This is the country of men and women who died young.
- d. Paper version has a leftwards extension of base line and looks like a jar, though still with side opening (to drain body fluids?; cf. 58/3).

58.1 Reeds — *palah* (also *pala*) is a thin palm (not really a reed) growing in marshy places, (*Licuala* sp.) (cf. 46.1). Though not yet botanically confirmed, this appears to have been part of the material used for wrapping late neolithic extended burials in Niah Great Cave (and see 30.3, 46.1).

58.2 Charming bottle: this is difficult; *puchong* is an archaic word (cf. 50.1, 60.3) for a small ceramic cosmetic bottle; *pemandang* is especially used for love charms, beautifying by magical association etc. (cf. G. Jamuh, *S.M.J.*, IX, 1960, 16: 468-487). Special oils and incantations were mixed in the little bottle. Charms are a whole study on their own; see 50.2, 60.5, 62.2.

58.3 The character (as indicated at 58.d in main text), bears some resemblance to a jar. One is also tempted to see an association with the extensive earlier use of jar burials for infants — and childbirth mothers — which goes back into the

stone age at Niah and has continued into modern times for the sub-coastal Balaus (now generally classed with Iban and Sebuyau as "Sea Dayak") and among far upland Kelabits (*Bijdragen*, 1962: 8, 11, 34; see also W. S. Solheim, B. Harrison and L. Wall, *Asian Perspectives*, 3, 1959, 2: 167-177). But — for this *Mukah sabak* at least — the words indicate a wider compassion yet tragedy, with the immature (*dara enggau bujang*) of both sexes stalled here.

59

- a. This is a cemetery where widows and widowers are buried.
- b. "Manggai dipun kemunting patu, bebuah kelendu, baka tepeyu terenang dagang".
- c. "The base of an orphan *kemunting* tree. The fruits are like red balls which decorate the scabbard of a sword".
- d. n.s.v.

59.1 *Kemunting*; this is an orphaned (*patu*) version of 45.1.

59.2 These red balls are no longer normally used, but bachelors and newly wed males (only) should wear them at Gawai Antu (34.1); made of "velvet" (12.1) or local cotton (*ubong*; cf. Haddon: 154). Not worn by women.

60

- a. This land is planted with flowers.
- b. "Emperan besai ditanam endu dara Lengunai bungai bekenda-kendai. Pun naka penawas, nadai uras mesai empelias ubat Matai. Burat ka kawat kalingkang dawai. Bandir iya kilir besai makai, besuru ka kumbu ampang belulai, batang iya gendang-gedang lantak tekang mau urai, bedan ka meriam bedil besai. Bepating ka anting ruding telai, bedaun ka kusun kanggan unyai. Kantok iya lenok-lenok ngachok Aki Ungkok dirayok bulan mingkai, lentok-lentok ngira buok ngaga pemansai".
- c. "A wide plain is planted with lovely flowers by the maiden Lengunai. The stems are so clean that not even a piece of the "shaman" Matai's magical war-charm can be seen. The roots are of metal wires, their buttress sharp blades easily wounding the unwary. The outer-bark is soft like an *ampang belulai* blanket. The straight trunk is capped with pieces of gold. The branches are made of large cannons and the twigs are whispering jew's harp. The luxuriant foliage is dark as black calico. The shoots touch the backside of Aki Ungkok who sits upon the bright moon, plaiting his hair while he makes a fishing basket *pemansai*".

d. Less angular, more flowing on board, — where it is more visually a symbolic “ship” to some viewers; see also discussion at 60/1.

60.1 With much the longest verse as originally recorded (without prejudice) at Mukah, this is equally the character and the text with most to be said about it, here and elsewhere. For this, with character and text taken in conjunction, is clearly a “death ship;” but one so modified and formalised through the long inland shipless movements of the Ibans across Borneo from the Kapuas basin over the watershed into West Borneo, that crucial phases are telescoped into a single section and expressed in symbolism distinctly different from the main text. The death-ship idea is one of the oldest surviving widely and with a long continuum of belief and practice, through South-east Asia. It is proved in the Niah Caves over a thousand years ago (*Man*, LIX, 1959, 1: 1-8), and we have just received from New Zealand and the U.S.A. Carbon 14 dates on actual “ship coffins,” running as far back as 165 B.C. $\pm$ 125 years (11.64; sample GX 0213, unpublished). The Ngaju in the south-east and Melanaus in the north-west are notably active modern death-shippers both in the broad style of Niah wall paintings (cf. Dr. W. Stohr, “Das Totenritual der Dajak,” *Ethnologica*, 1962, 1; cf. *Bijdragen*, 1962: 12-13).

In the upriver Mukah setting of this *sabak*, the chanter did not spontaneously realise a ship was involved in this land “planted with lovely flowers.” As the ship has grown, here, into the tree-of-life with which it is continuously identified in many cultures, so no wonder! Almost as puzzling are the tree-branched growing sails of our Niah cave walls. (*Man*, *op. cit.*; colour plate). We have to get down into the big sub-coastal river systems to find the full paraphernalia, of cannons and sails (as illustrated, for instance, in Schärer’s “Ngaju Religion;” Leiden, 1964).

Here the perfectly clear stems are masts; the roots are the rigging lines; the hard buttresses are blades of rudder or paddles (in an early version Mr. Jamuh noted them simply as paddles); the outer bark is the hull; the main mast is capped with gold; there are cannons (*meriam bedil*, usually referring to the cannon manufactured in Brunei since pre-European times); the whispering twigs like Jew’s harps (*ruding*) are perhaps the lesser tackle-lines sighing the wind (cf. 57.3); and the black foliage the sails. I do not wish to labour this theme — the subject of a monograph on the Niah Painted Cave, now well advanced for *Artibus Asiae*. But it “surprisingly” rounds off the Iban journey, and puts it surely in a most ancient tradition, which many (but not I) like to simplify into “Dongs’on.”

60.2 Lengunai — a long haired ‘goddess,’ especially associated with *ranyai* palms and their head symbolism (cf. 8.2-3).

60.3 *Bekenda kandai*: these two words are not translated, as “meaningless” here. Some say archaic sense lost, others that it emphasises the idea of lush flowers. Altogether, this verse is difficult (cf. 58.2).

60.4 Matai — a “hero” associated with Likop and others, especially in songs for the sick and “shamanism” generally (cf. 36.3).

60.5 War-charm here for invisibility (*empelias*); a tiny charm, usually a scrap of bark or cloth (not stone or horn), wrapped up and worn on the belt. “Given” to the weaver by a spirit in a dream. Still regularly used by Ibans in the Malaysian Regiment and the Border Scouts (cf. also 50.2, 62.1).

60.6 *Ampang belulai* = *pua* blanket design, discussed at 7.2; the bark, *kumbu*, is the finest outer tissue of certain trees (as on gums).

60.7 Agi Ungok — a bent old spirit who sits on the moon ("the man-in-the-moon"): (33.2). *Aki* = grandfather; *Bungkok* = bent with age. The moon thus reappears clearly again at journey's end (cf. 41.4).

60.8 *pemansai* — see 30.4.

61

a. This field of banyan trees.

b. "Manggai dipun kara jangkit, dan legit tepan kerengit, bulih mesai pipit, ngelesit lintit padi bangang, dan puchok tepan nyamok, bulih mesai imbok, perintik degok baroh rang".

c. "At the foot of thick banyan trees. The highest branches are perched on by sandflies as big as the munias who consume the grains of *padi bangang*. Other high branches are perched on by mosquitoes as big as the doves, their throats spotted below the edge of the beak".

d. n.s.v.

61.1 "Banyan" — strictly trees where a parasitic fig, *Ficus* (*kara*) grows over the original trunk to give banyan-like effect.

61.2 *Munias* = *pipit*; see 12.1.

61.3 *Padi bangang* — as in 2.2; agriculturally (and in many other senses) we are now "back where we started," after our long journey, past the hazards and in a place of creature comforts, reduplicating this one in reverse, but lastingly secured.

61.4 Dove = *imbok*, (*embok tanah* in Smythies: 241), is the Emerald Dove (*Chalcophaps indica*) found through South-east Asia and the West Pacific; common in Borneo coconut plantations and jungle, but not rice fields. The male's head has a beautifully creamy white patch, but spotting *below* the beak (see 61.5) is more characteristic of the even commoner and eargerly rice-eating Spotted-necked Dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*; *tekukur* in most Borneo languages). The Emerald is essentially a ground (= *tanah*) bird, and the Spotted-necked mostly so. This is probably another case of combination and overlap, within the vaguer use of *imbok* for doves — discussed at 13.1. Almost every Iban is well capable of distinguishing individual species, whether of dove, bamboo or mushroom, but here we are dealing with the other aspect of thinking, registered on *papan turai*, to be expressed through special individuals, their poets, into a language accepted by all, and never fully intelligible at any one instant of reality.

61.5 Beak — the term used here is *rang*, which means jaw, again widening the metaphor (see 64.1 also). On mosquito size cf. 32.4.

62

- a. Watering place of the other world.
- b. "Pendai sebayen endor nyungga nyelam. Terejun iya ka ai, tindik ka batu galang melintang, lalu dijengkau iya batu galang melintang. Tu bai nuan pulai ka menoa, ka batu penchelap, ulih aku nyamah disirap gemalai labang".
- c. "The watering place of the dead can be used for diving. He jumped into the water and his legs stepped on a cross-boulder which he then held with his hands. This you take back to the country for your *penchelap* charm, which I have sliced from the white *gemalai* fruit".
- d. n.s.v.; the last three characters, like the first three, are emphatic and ideographic in a fairly "obvious" way.

62.1 Diving in the watering (cleaning) place at the last phases for the successful dead traveller introduces a somewhat obscure metaphor, related to the Iban method of settling disputes by diving contest (each contestant holding on to a boulder under water to stay down as long as possible — death can result). Here it is the newly dead person who does the diving, and his boulder directs him to produce a small (in life) stone charm (cf. 60.5) which is to return to the house of his mourning family in the living world when the spirit visits it (on three successive nights, speaking in dreams, and "lighting their fires"). At the end of the long, long journey, with the dead safely out of reach to return and haunt everyday life, dawn emphasis returns to contact, linking death to life through the dreams of night. By the same token, the "I" here is the first reappearance of the first person. Since verses 6 and 9 the attitude has been "objective," and sometimes quite "lifeless" (38). The *sabak* is for healthily dead, and the attitude to all the less fortunate life upon the way is one of pity without dangerous self-identification.

62.2 *Penchelap* = a special charm (58.2) used by *manang* (36.2); it can cool the human body as well as protect from illness. The double idea of the stone (*batu*) coming from, out of, or as a fruit is rather deep and complex in Iban and other cultures, and can occur with many sorts of plant, from padi to fungus. This relates to the even more abstruse idea of petrification for certain "sins" — one of the most generalised fears through Borneo. Whiteness (28.5) is often a feature of charm stones, and many prove to be quartzite crystals, often very big ones. But pearls are also thought of in this way, and the metaphor here could, in a way, be taken as pearl diving from the sea-shore?

62.3 *Gemalai* = *buah janggat*, alternative name for one of the gourds (see 41.1), a very green species.

63

- a. The family room in the other world.
- b. "Niki tangga dabong ngengkang, bepurus ka lalau digerempong tunsang. Datai diruai raya udah dikerembai ka sana jawa belanggha punggang, ruai besai dikerembai ka bidai pakan melintang, pulai ka bilik baik, entam bekikik tajau layang".

c. "Step up the cut-notched ladder, hands holding the upside-down bamboo rails. A communal verandah is reached, decorated with *sana jawa* mats whose sides have been beautifully plaited. Go into this fine family room, crowded with jars showing swallows (in flight)".

d. n.s.v.; the ladder idea here occurs on most sorts of Borneo writing (cf. Conclusion, V below).

63.1 Upside-down rails: in line with the frequently indicated obverse of death v. life, and here especially contrasting with their position in the next and final verse. It is also important at the end to warn us all that we are emerging (in the chanter) from the *other* world as daylight approaches, i.e. darkness falls there, and our trauma x coma is over into everyday. To feel this fully, you must spend nights with *sabak* and mourners.

63.2 *Sana jawa* = best quality sleeping mats; nowadays reaching West Borneo mainly from Natuna Islands (until Confrontation) in *pandan* (*Pandanus* spp.) form; here attributed to "Java." It *could* be argued that the death-ship (60) has carried the dead overseas to the old homeland ("Java" is loosely used, like "India"), and this ties in mildly with the value jars of Chinese export ware which are the only other items specified. This sort of association appears much more strongly at the *start* of some Iban *pengap* used at Gawai Burong, and the matter will be pursued further in connection with the *papan turai* for one of these (S.M.J. 1965-6).

63.3 *Bidai pakan* = a large mat.

63.4 Swallows here (*layang*) in the loose sense discussed at 10.1-2, (cf. 56.1 and 56.d in text). Such stoneware jars are uncommon (the Sarawak Museum has one), but not so valuable as *rusa* ("Sambhur Deer," 24.1) types, and probably late Ming. The Malohs of the Kapuas, however, regard this as "*gusi layang*", of highest value. These Malohs have many beliefs in parallel with Iban, and the latter certainly derived a good deal from contact with them (e.g. conceptions of Mandai river in other world). But actual *rusa* jars do not show deer, and *layang* ones are among the very few which show living creatures — other than Chinese dragons. The *rusa* horn is, however, closely identified in Borneo with jar-burials and coffins (cf. 56.4).

63.5 Anda Mara, another brother of Sengalang Burong, was the god of wealth, also known as Gangga Gunggong. He was always called to attend and bless the jars during Iban Gawai Tajau (jar festival). As Anda Mara himself had many feasts to celebrate, he too had his own bards, including the Tarsier (*Inghat*), who remembered jar songs by writing on wood.

64

a. The hand-railings.... ("Sabak" has ended and wailer is going home; this is her own ladder rail).

b. "Lalu niki tangga tampun, numpu ka pun aur tulang. Niki tangga ruan numpu ka pun limau rangan, beduri tajam ke terikan rangki labang".

c. "Up a strong ladder with its grounded end buried below the stem of *aur tulang* bamboos. Going up a ladder made of *ruan* wood, one end buried below the stump of a *limau rangai* tree with thorns as white as fine shell armlets".

d. Rails almost at right angles to long axis on board, opening away to over a foot of space unused at end of this side (not the other).

64.1 The cue specifies railings, and these are "shown" straight in the character, presumably made out of the *aur tulang* bamboo here specified. This bamboo is of special interest because it is one of the few which grows in TIDAL waters. That could be taken as strengthening the belief that we have made a cross-sea voyage (60) on to a new island, at a new harvest phase (61.3, cf. 2.2), on a pearled shore (62.2). Greatly daring, in this penultimate note, I would add that the dove which really best fits the 61.4 description is probably the Barred (*Geopelia striata*), not native to Borneo, but the commonest and sweetest cage bird of the region. It occurs wild, but is remarkably tame; common in Java, Sumatra and on the mainland, favouring open country and notably sandy sea-shores; it also goes freely from tree tops to ground (I have 8 in my big aviary at present; to be sure). However, the Emerald Dove has also been recorded on the sea-shore (by me in Smythies: 241).

64.2 *Ruan* — large tree, good wood for hand drum cylinders (*dumbak*); grows in the mountains, not on coastal plain. See 27.3.

64.3 *Limau rangai* = a smallish very sour lime, used as medicine (but mostly Malay usage); and mixed with fish. The thorns are *not* white (except in *sabak*).

64.4 *Rangki* = see 28.4. These armlets are of *Trichidna* shell, the Giant Clam found in the coral reefs just off-shore — and unknown first-hand to the modern Iban, particularly as the whole West Borneo (Sarawak) coast is too mud-silted from big rivers to permit clean coral-reef growth.

- I. It should be added that some learned Ibans do not "agree" with this Mukah ending. They say it is too sudden, and that other *sabak* carry on or insert before the end some other essential material. It could possibly be that our Mukah lady has "lost a late chapter," so far and remote up there, out of the main stream of modern experience, as well as of present Iban population distribution. But this is a possible limitation inherent in the whole position, as indicated in our opening Sections (II-III). Where the Ibans are numerous and in intimate intercommunication, other influences have powerfully affected *papan turai*; not only "left things out," but utterly obscured them, at least from the written character point of view. Other and possibly "better" boards may have been common-place even 50 years ago; but apparently no one realised it (alas). Now we can only put the best we have on record.

- II. Antu Ribut, the Wind God, is most felt (by Saribas chanters, who have *no* boards now) to be "missing" in Mukah. He should, on some Saribas (Second Division of Sarawak) opinion, appear and then "sweep the chanter back to this world" (cf. Aki Ungok, rather a weak figure at 60/7). There can be several other sequences of more or less importance. But the Saribas Iban do not (now) use *papan turai* for *sabak*; and there are good grounds for believing that at least one "school" of chanters relied on *another* sort of *aide memoir* altogether, associated with the *tusut* genealogies (unpublished material). The principal remaining usage for any kind of writing boards in the Second Division is for *pengap*, shorter performances as at Gawai Umai (for harvest) or Gawai Batu (stone feast, cf. *S.M.J.*, X, 1962, 20: 392-408); also Gawai Burong, the Bird Festival. Some of our friends from that area, shown the Mukah board, confuse its *sabak* function and range with that of *pengap*. They have "never seen anything like" the Mukah board, although aware that present day *pengap* and other sorts of *papan turai* are not in the form of their great-grandfathers' and have been influenced as regards the written characters (only).
- III. Finally, the chanter herself here feels a reduced need for clues at the end, the dawn, of her long night's day. This enlarges the possibility of variations — and of this becoming locally formalised too. But by this time, too, you, the patient reader of some 250 notes, must feel rather as if you'd sat in on a marathon with the Beatles:

"It's been a hard day's night,
And I'm hungry like a dowe"

V. CONCLUSION: CHARACTER VARIATION AND INTERPRETATION.

That these Iban characters happen, in this instance, to number sixty-four — exactly the same as the Chinese hexigrams — is perhaps mainly coincidence. But the presence of some correlation, even if oblique, is a theme to pursue in a following paper on the eight-basis in Kenyah-Kayan writing with its special relationship to a graded society (*mamat*) and to a secret method of augury by eight bamboo figures. Similarly, there are other and wider correlations, illuminated both by the study of further Iban boards and other external materials looked at afresh *from the same point of view*. It is, meanwhile, possible

to analyse and group the Mukah board characters in at least two coherent ways; but the value in such objective analysis remains very uncertain to date. It seems better to do more field work before theorising too far.

What exactly the "correct" point of view is presents something of a headache. It is not yet fully clarified in the mind of the present writer in English. The ideas involved both in Borneo "writing" and linguistics are complex and unlike anything in most western experiences; one must constantly check and pull up sharp, lest the eyes drift into an imagery and interpretation so imposed and "external" as to obscure deeper understanding — however attractive this may read on the Canadian wood pulp of this Dutch journal. Moreover, variant Iban individuality (both in doing this sort of writing and in reacting to it) is extensive, and still not fully assessed in our context.

The range of variability can be seen as soon as we examine other boards and from other districts. The influence of mission schools even in the previous century and government schools since the British colonial regime in 1946, has powerfully modified most *papan turai*. The direction of modification is increasingly towards pictographic, then fully pictorial; and finally, as in one board before me now, with the cues listed partly in writing and partly by signs (but still done in the old way, on a board). No other boards yet equal this Mukah one in relative "purity" of characters, though there are clues to something even less "contaminated" which we are actively pursuing at present!

Meanwhile, we now have to hand eleven other boards from four districts widely separated from Mukah. Mr. Benedict Sandin has collected the texts for most of these, and we are now working on an analysis of the technique and translation of the texts. It is hoped to get one good set published — emphasizing comparisons with the present Mukah material — by 1966.

Not only westerners, but other Europeans and often Ibans, register a wide arc of uncertainty when shown the Mukah board — and much more so on seeing some of the smaller types. No character over the past three months got regular "correct" interpretation. Two with exceptionally high consistency ratings are Nos. 55 and 63.

55 — the "triangle" hanging from the tree is often recognised as at least something to do with its death-fall theme, though my wife insists "why the triangle?"

63 — this nearly always makes people think of a ladder of the normal Dayak "notched log" type. A similar character is used in several; and people felt

that in fact it was "out of character" on the Mukah board, though in fact each element *in* it is also to be found elsewhere in the 64 characters.

What does distinguish No. 63, to some extent, is the *assemblage* of almost pictorial lines; this also makes it the largest character of the lot. This can be regarded, I think, rather as the "end note," where the lady chanter begins to emerge from her night long demi-trance of *utero-dreamworld*. Then we end (as we entered) with the clear, last outswEEPing double curve of the hand-rails as the singer goes home (No. 64). We are reminded of the personal signature found in some north Sumatran Batak symbol-drawing for "the middle-world," as illustrated inside a "double square" by Dr. P. L. Tobing, where he identifies (*op. cit.*, pl. 15) an added axe and adze symbol as the performer's tools, "appertaining to the staff."

But any close affinities with northern Sumatra's Toba-Batak "writing" appear, on present data, to be slight for the Iban, although it is often said that the Iban "originated in Sumatra" — and in a further board saga being prepared there is considerable evidence of close contact, as also in genealogies earlier discussed here (II above). On the other hand, the Kenyah board from Long Nawang, Kalimantan, in the centre of Borneo, has some northern "Sumatran" affinities. However, there is much variation in Sumatra itself, as indicated by the new study of Dr. M. A. Jaspan, Australian National University, on southern Sumatran "Malay literature" scripts on bark, bamboo and buffalo horn ("Redjang Ka-Ga-Nga Texts;" Canberra, 1964; also bark one acquired by me from Holland, 1965). These superficially relate more closely to the Philippine bamboo syllabaries, which require fuller study despite the work of Dr. Hester, Dr. Robert Fox and others. A South Indian affinity is indicated; but *not* so in the Bornean material thus far known.

There are three entirely different extraneous writing systems surviving in 1964 Bornean mass-use (Jawi, Romanised, Chinese), apart from anything "indigenous." The same (with different scripts) may well have been true in 1564. And it is least likely to be the early ("archaic") systems which survived strongly. The past existence of elaborate, extensive and varying indigenous scripts all over Borneo is quite possible.

If this hypothesis is correct, we expect, with further research, to locate other vestiges of prehistoric writing in other aspects of Bornean culture; and perhaps also, where not totally overlaid, in other scripts in adjacent areas. Whereas the Philippines, and equally the south

Plate I Mukah Board (see p. 4).

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Sumatran, writing is basically angular and highly stylised — as Marsden's "Sumatran Alphabets" showed (in his "The History of Sumatra") as long ago as 1783 — the more pictographic and ideographic elements on the Iban (and even more on the unpublished Kenyah) boards thus deserve a brief, final emphasis here. For instance, the use of *circles*, related to fruit, etc., starting late at No. 25 on the Mukah board and continuing at 36, 39, 40, 41, 49 and 59 (paired in three of the last four). *Dots* come in at No. 20, and combine with a circle at No. 36; series of dots or vermiculations are found on some other Iban boards, indicating "spray" and a "sandbank" in two instances. The *peak* series is also interesting here, with the last (No. 35) ceasing to follow the previous "obvious" sequence, and turning towards a more "advanced" convention? But already we are stepping back into deeper waters than justified by our present knowledge of that cold Mandai, river of death.

Perhaps I can best wind up, and at the same time re-orientate, by reference to another and by no means dissimilar approach to secret writing, as used in French casinos. Few ever see what is there written of so many. They need an *aide-memoir*, as do the Iban (and we must, in conclusion, emphasise this *aide-memoir* usage), to recall the faces of the thousands of persons of several shades of desirability, who come in to kill their cash (or, once in a while, the croupier):

"Anybody who has ever gone into the Salles Privées will know that on his first visit a dinner-jacketed character will ask for his pass, scrutinise it, give a smile and probably not ask again for his name however much time may elapse before the next visit. He is known as a physiognomist. The most famous of these was Henri McQuer, who invented a system of memorising visitors by means of entering in a notebook hieroglyphics in blue and red chalks — tiny caricatures. His chief student, Mr. Grillo, who today holds the fort at Deauville and Cannes, has elaborated on this system. Briefly, a red line means an officer of the Legion of Honour; two semi-circles designate a man with noticeable eye-brows; a circle stands for an eye-glass; 2m 50 (2½ metres) means a very tall man; *acajou* stands for a red-head; *pitardier* indicates a "troublesome character."

Charles Graves, "*None but the Rich*,"
London, 1963.

TOM HARRISSON