R. Needham

Death-names and solidarity in Penan society

In: Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 121 (1965), no: 1, Leiden, 58-76

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DEATH-NAMES AND SOLIDARITY IN PENAN SOCIETY

In a previous paper it was argued that there is a significant relation between certain mourning-terms and social solidarity, and it was asserted that in the case of the Penan it was possible to prove this (Needham, 1959, p. 87). A demonstration was promised as to appear in a subsequent paper, which is now presented here.¹ Its aims are to add to the ethnographic record concerning death-names among the Penan, and to establish a connexion between the employment of death-names and the solidarity of the local group, the major aggregate in Penan society.

I

Lévi-Strauss has recently paid extended attention to Penan death-names, and has offered a characteristically intriguing and suggestive analysis (1962, pp. 253-263). If I cannot entirely accede to his interpretation, this is partly at least due to my own fault, in that I have failed to supply him with a large enough range of facts on Penan culture. He had at his disposal a note on reference to the dead, another on a mourning-usage, and two articles on death-names (Needham, 1954a; 1954b; 1954c; 1959), papers dealing with a variety of names; but in order to assess the importance of these names it is desirable to take into account a number of other Penan usages as well, and these are so far undescribed.² They include Penan personal names and the

¹ The substance of this article is virtually identical with the draft of the sequel referred to in "Mourning-terms" and which was also written in 1958. It has benefited in form, however, from further consideration given to it during the tenure of a Fellowship (1961-62) at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, California, for which I express my gratitude. It is regretted that the information it contains should have languished in its file for nearly six years, but other and more pressing theoretical concerns intervened, and one cannot do everything at once.

² Except, that is, in an unpublished doctoral thesis (Needham, 1953) in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

circumstances in which they are changed; names, which I have called "friendship-names", used in order to mark alliances between individuals; a special vocabulary (*pid' ngeluin*), referring to food and to means of obtaining it, used by the Western Penan during mourning; certain terms, in a related linguistic usage, employed in hunting; and the changing sets of death-names themselves, as listed below. Ultimately, of course, one would require an integrated account of all such customs, within a comprehensive ethnography of the Penan, before interpreting the death-names with any confidence. In such circumstances it is hardly to be wondered at if Lévi-Strauss's analysis does not fully convince. Conversely, it will be better if I refrain from taking up his points until adequate evidence to deal with them is in print;³ and in the present article, therefore, I shall merely continue an earlier line of investigation, and carry on with my own far less ingenious mode of elucidation.

This course, moreover, is the more convenient in that since the publication of the articles referred to above and the first drafting of this one I have revisited the Penan,⁴ though not (except for one) the groups dealt with here, and have not only confirmed my understanding of the naming-system but have also accumulated many additional and revealing examples of its operation. It seems best, therefore, to dispose of the present account first and to take up new analytical issues later

³ On the question of description, Professor Lévi-Strauss observes that my accounts contain "many obscurities" (1962, p. 254). With respect, I should prefer to maintain, while acknowledging my ethnographic inadequacies, that the descriptions of the rules governing the changing of names are clear enough, but that it is the logic of the relations and the changes involved (Lévi-Strauss, 1962, p. 254) that is really obscure. On two points of fact, incidentally, Professor Lévi-Strauss appears to have misread me slightly. It is not the case that it is "forbidden" to call the parents of a child by their names (Lévi-Strauss, 1962, pp. 257, 263); it is simply that as a matter of course they will normally become known by teknonyms, and in reality a teknonym can perfectly properly be used on occasion prefixed to the personal name (Needham, 1954c, pp. 416-417, 420). Nor is it exact to say that a Penan "loses" his personal name when he assumes a death-name (Lévi-Strauss, 1962, p. 263), as though this were a matter of course or of obligation; it is quite common that he should change his name, particularly at the death of a parent or a first-born child, but "there is no obligation of religion or of etiquette to force a man to change his personal name also, and it rests with the individual whether he does or not" (Needham, 1954c, p. 425).

⁴ I am gratefully in the debt of the Cultural Relations Program of S.E.A.T.O. for a Research Fellowship which enabled me to spend June-September 1958 in Borneo, and to the Government of Sarawak for facilities generously provided there.

on the basis of the augmented ethnography. Finally, there are more parallels which I have come across in the literature on other peoples, and any conclusive survey of mourning-terms in relation to Penan naming-customs will eventually have to take them into consideration also. All these circumstances throw the emphasis in this paper more upon the ethnographic record, and it is primarily as such that I offer it here.⁵

II

The Penan are for the most part nomadic, and formerly were so entirely, but a number of groups have left the forest and have settled in fixed habitations and turned to agriculture for their basic subsistence. They have been settled for periods ranging from well over a hundred years to about five years at the time of investigation, and have been moving from the mountains of the interior towards the lowlands and the coast. According to their length of settlement and to their locations they exhibit progressive changes in social organisation and culture when compared with the traditional nomadic groups.

I shall examine here the state of the system of teknonyms and death-names in the majority of these groups, with particular reference to solidarity, taking as model the tightly integrated system of relations which characterises the nomadic group. I omit from consideration a few groups which either have not been settled long enough for any change in their terminology to be occasioned, or which have amalgamated with longhouse groups of other peoples and whose analysis presents too many distracting complications. I have not had equal acquaintance with all of the groups, and have met some for only brief visits of a day or two, but I present what evidence I think I can be sure of. It should be explained, too, that although I enquired about death-names among many other features by which I could compare one group with another, one of my main aims in visiting the settled groups was to delimit the Penan people, to ascertain the mere existence or otherwise of Penan institutions, not to analyse any particular customs among them. There are of course many questions which I

⁵ It is particularly advised, however, that "Mourning-terms" (Needham, 1959) be read first, or referred to, before reading the present paper. I take this opportunity to correct misprints in that article, viz. on p. 70 the Tjapwurong terms should be read as applied alternately to "man", "woman", "man", "woman", and so on.

would now ask about death-names which I did not then (1951-52) think to ask.

Three matters demand attention before the examination of the ethnographic facts. The first, obviously, is the accuracy of the historical data from which ultimately the force of the analysis derives. A history of the Penan will be published in due course,⁶ and I trust that it will be thought to substantiate the dates proposed here. For the present, I can only plead that they have been arrived at by conscientious appraisal of the evidence (genealogies, local recollections, published historical accounts, etc.), and that they may provisionally be accepted as reliable enough. The second matter concerns the estimation of degree of "solidarity" (cf. Needham, 1959, p. 80). This quality is judged by the following criteria: physical propinquity; whether or not there is obligatory sharing of game among all members of the group; whether or not, and to what extent, casual non-obligatory gifts of food are made between one family and another; the degree of communication within the group; and the nature and extent of dependence upon other peoples, such as the Sebug, Malays, and Chinese. Finally, some indication should be given of the means by which degree of cultural change is estimated. This is determined mainly by: changes in the Penan language (e.g., words of a local dialect replacing Penan words) and indeed whether or not it is spoken at all; clothes, such as loincloths or sarongs or trousers; the presence or absence of Penan ornaments, and the adoption or abandonment of such items as the penis-pin;⁷ the form of habitation, whether in a longhouse or in scattered small houses; and a large number of other smaller features which together make, or do not make, a Penan-like impression. In the descriptive notes, however, I do not attempt to cover all of such points, but present instead a brief account of certain features and of the general impression made by each group.

⁶ To publish it now, instead of this paper itself, might well be thought the obvious thing to do, but it would mean a further considerable delay in the appearance of the present evidence on death-names, and it is these, after all, that are at issue.

⁷ An historical and ethnographic monograph on this curious device has been in preparation for a number of years, but it will have to wait for publication (assuming, that is, that it can ever be published at all) until the Penan, at least, have been adequately described in print. Meanwhile, however, some readers may like to be assured that it is a scholarly topic of a quite intense interest, and that a serious study of the instrument, in contrast to its dimensions, engages the widest variety of academic and humane concerns.

III

The following notes indicate the principal features of interest in this connexion among twelve settled Penan groups (see Map). They are dealt with in alphabetical order.

PENAN BAKONG. The group settled about 1850 and now lives in scattered Malay-style houses in the upper Bakong River. In 1951 they gave their number as about 80 or 85 individuals. Their dress is Malay, and there are no outward signs of Penan culture. All of them have been Muslim for about two generations. They do not speak Penan normally but the dialect which they call "Bakong". They do not use the death-names or even Penan terms of relationship. The young people are ignorant of

Penan language and culture, and it is only the oldest who remember anything of such matters.

PENAN BUK. This group has been settled since the early nineteenth century at the latest and lives in a grouping of houses on the Buk River, with a few others scattered as far away as the Tinjar. In 1951 they numbered 103. Although they wear sarongs and trousers, and the women cover their breasts, they still speak Penan among themselves and retain a number of distinctively Penan features of culture. But they are in constant contact with riverine society as far as Marudi on the Baram River, they tend their own rubber trees, fell timber, and make wooden roof-tiles for sale in the Marudi market or to Chinese traders on the Tinjar. In general they lead the normal inter-tribal life of any Borneans of the lower reaches of the rivers. Their hair is cut short (Penan men normally wear their hair as far down their backs as it will grow) and they do not wear the traditional Penan ornaments. Most of the death-names are not in general use, though those given are well known. The term *pia'* was recognised and correctly identified by only one old man.

PENAN KEMULU. (Rumah Inun.) This group numbered 33 in 1951 and lives in a longhouse in a tributary of the Jelalong River. They settled about 1820 or in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The men wear loincloths but are not recognisably Penan. The women wear sarongs, do not distend their ear-lobes, and cannot make the famous Penan mats. The people speak Penan among themselves. They say that they share meat, but I did not see any of the casual gifts of food which are so frequent and striking a feature of the traditional camp. They have frequent contact with Kajang longhouses and with riverine traders, and some have been downriver as far as Bintulu. However, they are fairly isolated and dependent on each other for everyday social relations.

PENAN MERURONG.⁸ This group, which settled about 1850, used to live in the upper Jelalong but in 1952 had split up among a number of other groups. They numbered in all about 35 individuals. Those that I met wore sarongs but still spoke Penan among themselves. They said that one of their number had been buried in a Kajang-type mortuary post (*keliréng*).

⁸ Pronounced Melurong by the Penan Tuyut, some of whom are immigrants from this group.

PENAN MESEKAT. (Rumah Upau.) This group has been settled since about 1865 and lives in scattered little houses along the bank of the Kemena River. In 1951 they numbered 60 individuals. They speak a local dialect which they call "Bintulu", and only the old people know any Penan or use death-names: the young people are quite ignorant of the language and are unconcerned about the names. They wear Malay clothes and cannot be recognised at first sight as anything different from the local peoples who have always been in the area. Three families are Muslim. They claim to share fish and game with those in very near houses, but not equally. The dead are buried with clothes and other goods in a coffin, though the richer may use the raised *salong* mortuary repository. The death-name *belēbui* was recognised but is not used.

PENAN NIAH. These can hardly be called a group. Twelve individuals of Penan descent live in two small houses up the Niah River, and an unknown number of others have entered Islam and live scattered among the local people. They normally converse in "Bintulu", and the younger people can hardly summon up one or two words of Penan. They are completely Malay in appearance, and the bulk of them are said to be ashamed of their Penan origin and to deny it. They wear cotton singlets and trousers, and no penis-pin; the women and girls wear European dresses. There is little Penan about them except their past and the few phrases of Penan which the older people remember.

PENAN NYIVUNG. This group lives in a rude longhouse downriver from the Penan Paro, and in 1952 numbered about 105 individuals. They are very similar in their way of life to the Penan Paro, and settled at about the same time (i.e. around 1880) but appear to be historically distinct from them. They and the Penan Paro regard each other as "different people". They share game and make gifts of food, wear traditional clothes and the penis-pin, and frequently go into the forest to hunt. They had difficulty, however, in remembering the entire series of death-names and disagreed among themselves about some of them.

PENAN PARO. This group settled in the upper Tinjar River possibly about 1880, certainly before 1889. In 1952 they numbered 82 individuals of all ages. Although they live in a longhouse they show distinctive features of Penan culture: they share meat equally and continually pass small gifts of food between families. There are no settled peoples

upriver from them, and their contacts downriver are with the Penan Nyivung and the culturally similar Sebu. In the tenor and content of their daily life and effective solidary relations they are hardly distinguishable from any nomadic group of Western Penan, the tribe to which they belong. They wear the loincloth and the penis-pin; women wear the traditional skirt. They hunt in the forest with the blowpipe, often spending long periods away from the longhouse in search of game or forest products, and they have lost none of the traditional Penan skill in forest-craft. They farm individual plots of land and do not share the harvest (rice, cassava) with other families, and to this extent they are not markedly dependent on each other, but there is no doubt that they are a highly solidary group of people, who live so far as relations of reciprocity are concerned as an isolated and self-sufficient group.

PENAN SEBUBON. (Rumah Mejiwai.) These number about 50, of whom three families are Muslim. They probably settled about 1865. Their dress and appearance are indistinguishable from that of other Bintulu people. Although they still employ Penan terms of relationship they do not use the death-names, and the elder could remember only two of them.

PENAN SUAI. This group is settled in a number of Malay-style individual houses by the Lai tributary of the Suai River. They settled about the first quarter of the nineteenth century. They numbered 47 individuals in 1951, but there were another thirty or so who had entered Islam and lived at some distance, and four of their women had married Chinese traders. In appearance they cannot be told from any other people of the river: their hair is short and they wear Malay and European clothes. In their substantial and prosperous houses they have tables and chairs, table cloths, pictures, pressure lamps, and even record players. They can speak some Penan, with a great admixture of "Bintulu", and still use normal Penan personal names, though with the insertion of the Malay *bin*, son of, as in *Uso bin Arilin*. They have long married into the other local peoples. They claim to share fish and game equally (though this is dubitable), but do not share crops. Their marriage payment is mainly in cash. There are very few signs indeed of Penan culture. They make ironwood roof-tiles, and they sell rice, bananas, resin (*damar*), cane, and medicinal bark to the Chinese traders and to other people on the river. They do not use

TABLE 1

	(relation- ship term)	(death- names)	<i>Paro</i> (1889)	<i>Nyirung</i> (1889)	<i>Seubon</i> (1865)	<i>Mesekat</i> (1865)
1. grandparent	tepun	tupeu	tupeu	tupeu	—	tupeu
2. father (m.)	tamen	uyau	uyau	uyau	(uyau)	uyau
3. — (w.)	tamen	utan	utan	utan		
4. mother	tinén	apah	apah	apa	(apah)	apah
5. uncle, aunt (m.)	vi	ilun	ilun	ilun		
6. — (w.)	vi	ula'	ilun	ilun		
7. elder sibling	padi taken	lineng	lineng	lineng		lineng/lubet
8. younger sibling	padi tadin	lubet	lubet	lubet		bayai
9. cousin	padi pēsak	—	—	bayei		
10. nephew, niece	aong	belēbui	belēbui	belēbui		(belebui)
11. first-born child	anak	uyung	uyung	uyung		uyung
12. second		sadi	sadi	sadi		
13. third		mawa'	lara	uan		
14. fourth		sawang	uan	lara		
15. fifth		larah	lumam	—		
16. sixth		akem	—			
17. seventh		uka'				
18. eighth		lut				
19. ninth		lumai				
20. grandchild	ayam	pia'	pia'	pia'		
21. husband	banen	baleu	baleu	baleu		
22. wife	rēdu	aban	aban	aban		
23. parent-in-law (m.)	sabai	ilun				
24. — (w.)	kivan	ula'				
25. brother-in-law (m.)	kivan	abing	abing	abing		
26. — (w.)	sabai	geleng	geleng	geleng		
27. sister-in-law (m.)	langu	abing	abing	abing		
28. — (w.)	langu	geleug	geleug	geleug		

either the teknonyms or the death-names, and remember only a few of the latter.

PENAN SU'AN. (Rumah Iléh.) This group lives in a longhouse in a tributary of the Jelalong, and in 1951 numbered about 31. They settled perhaps about 1820. They are historically related to the Penan Kemulu, and resemble them culturally. They wear sarongs and sometimes trousers, but speak Penan among themselves. Their ornaments are Malay-style; the women oil their hair and wear small gold ear-rings. They formerly shared a house with some Iban, with whom they inter-

both sides of the lower Tinjar River, the individual houses being as much as one hour's paddling apart. They have probably been settled since the middle of the nineteenth century. They speak Penan among themselves but are not recognisably Penan in other aspects of their culture. Two women were Sebug, another had an Iban father; one man had lived some years at Bintulu and had adopted a son there. They do not use the death-names, and had great difficulty in remembering any other than Uyung. They make a marriage payment (*iok*) in modern goods such as china plates, rice, and cash. They recognise that as Penan they ought to share game with the families of the other houses, but even to those nearby they give "only a little", not the traditional Penan equal share. They do not so much as offer to share with households lying at any distance. When they have the money they buy spirits from Chinese traders and drink heavily, something that no "true" Penan would do. They do not form a solidary group of Penan against the world, but as almost isolated families belong to the wider riverine society of these parts.

IV

The death-names used or recognised by these groups are listed in Table 1, in which this time the groups are arranged in order of settlement, the most recent being to the left and the longest settled being placed to the right. The first column of are names the Western Penan death-names (cf. Needham, 1954c, p. 419) for comparison. The orthography differs slightly from that employed in previous accounts, for the reason that since my own first researches among the Penan Dr. W. C. Lees of the Borneo Evangelical Mission, a trained linguist, has made a phonemic analysis of Eastern Penan and has produced a system of transcription which is more accurate than my own. I therefore adopt certain features of his orthography, so that, e.g., *balou* becomes *baleu*, *piat* becomes *pia'*, etc. I have also used the tilde to mark the long nasalised pronunciation of the vowel /e/. Parentheses around a term indicate that the Penan said expressly that there was no death-name for the relationship in question; a blank space indicates simply that they said that there were no more names or that I have no more definite record in my notes and therefore take it that I could learn of no more.

Comparison of the notes with the Table and the map shows first of all that the disintegration of the death-names system is not a simple function of distance from the coast or of length of settlement. Let us now, therefore, re-order the groups according to the number of death-names used or recognised and the number of terminologically distinct relationships to which they are applied (Table 2). A relationship is defined, for this purpose, by status irrespective of the sex of the bearer of the name; the number of death-names does not include the cases where there are alternative names for one relationship.

If we collate this table with the notes we find that there is a constant association to be discerned, in that the more solidary and traditional groups use the more names, while the less integrated and more assimilated to coastal civilisation use or recognise fewer.

This may be illustrated superficially, to begin with, by comparison of the three photographs in the accompanying Plate. Illustration 1 shows a Penan Nyivung.⁹ The points to be noted are: the traditional hair-cut, shaved at the temples and long at the back, with a short fringe over the forehead; plucked eyelashes and eyebrows; heavy copper ear-rings distending the ear-lobes;¹⁰ bead necklaces, and bracelets on the upper arm, though of metal instead of the traditional wood.¹¹ Apart from the cotton cloth draped around his neck, this young man might belong to any isolated Penan group in the forest. Illustration 2 shows a Penan Buk man. His hair is still cut fairly traditionally, but he has let his eyebrows grow and apparently his eyelashes as well, though the former are nevertheless plucked into a shapelier line; his ear-lobes have at one time been pierced and possibly distended, but ear-rings are no longer worn; he wears no necklaces or bracelets; his clothes are thoroughly European, and no tattoos are visible on his arms. Illustration 3, finally, depicts Uso bin Arilin, headman of the Penan Suai on the Lai. All the traditional

⁹ It is a pity that the quality of the print, made from a negative blotted by heat and damp, should be so poor, but it is the only one available that is suited to the purpose. A better photograph of another Penan Nyivung man, and one making the same points, is to be seen in Guy Arnold's "Nomads of the Borneo Jungle", *Country Life*, February 14, 1957, p. 290 --- "Penan headman from the Nibong River".

¹⁰ The man in Arnold's photograph also has fangs of the clouded leopard thrust through the helix.

¹¹ Arnold's photograph shows large tattoo-patterns on the outer surface of the shoulder and upper arm.

TABLE 2

<i>group</i>	<i>death-names</i>	<i>relationships</i>
1. Paro	18	19
2. Nyivung	17	18
3. Su'an	13	13
4. Kemulu	11	11
5. Buk	8	9
6. Merurong	7	8
7. Mesekat	7	7
8. Tuyut	(7)	7
9. Bakong	(7)	7
10. Suai	(7)	7
11. Seubon	(2)	2
12. Niah	(2)	2

Penan features of dress and adornment are lacking, his features have little of the markedly Mongoloid cast of the Penan of the interior, and there is nothing external to distinguish him from any coastal Malay.

These progressive changes in appearance mark more fundamental social and cultural changes as the Penan become increasingly assimilated to settled and coastal ways of life. The Penan Paro are traditionally Penan in culture and are self-dependent in a degree of isolation approaching that of Western Penan groups in the forest; the Penan Buk are typical of those groups which are to a greater or lesser degree still recognisable as Penan but who are not isolated groups of individuals united by important and even vital relations of interdependence; and the Penan Suai represent groups which are Penan, if at all, chiefly in the memories of their eldest members, and who form practically undifferentiated parts of the larger riverine society and of the coast. The changes involved may conveniently be assessed by reference to the six features previously suggested as being characteristic of societies with mourning-terms or death-names (Needham, 1959, pp. 79-80).

1. In the process of prolonged settlement there is a shift among the Penan from individual relationships defined in terms of descent and affinity to ones defined by neighbourhood and trade; in general, a change from status to contract.

2. The segmentary composition of Penan society is superseded by governmental organisation and by the coercive procedures of the market. There are recognised headmen (*tua kampong*), district chiefs,

the district officer and his superiors and agents, Chinese traders, and all the ramifying and hierarchical social distinctions of lowland society, to which the Penan are progressively assimilated.

3. The small and compact local groups disperse, and contact between them becomes less exclusive and less important. The members of a group tend no longer to maintain close contact with each other.

4. The groups lose their isolation and their self-sufficiency; social contacts are no longer confined to Penan, but a man may marry an Iban woman, go fishing or hunting with a Malay, and become trading-partner to a Chinese.

5. The basis of livelihood is decreasingly a subsistence economy and becomes more assured. Tiles are manufactured for sale, timber is felled, rubber is planted and worked, and the Penan become increasingly governed by a cash economy. Cooperation with other members of the group is no longer essential to survival, and reciprocal services and the sharing of food lose their distinctive import as defining moral features of Penan life. The division of labour, involving as it does a variety of non-Penan partners in pursuits unknown to traditional Penan life, becomes more complex.

6. The groups are no longer in such hostile or fearful opposition to other peoples, and their members are no longer dependent on each other for defence or for mutual support in flight or evasion. The Penan, the longer they are settled, gradually see themselves less as embattled and oppressed by their neighbours and more as members of a wider society in which tribal oppositions are attenuated or mitigated.

All these changes are accompanied by a progressive dissolution of the system of death-names, the degree of cultural change being roughly correlated with the abandonment of the names. This may best be seen by compounding the data in Tables 1 and 2 into the form of Table 3. In this, the groups are ordered according to the range of relationships marked by death-names, which is also a scale indicating approximately the social and cultural changes described briefly in the notes above. The order cannot be taken as precise, of course, for longer acquaintance with some of the groups might have disclosed more names than I was told of, and the estimation of cultural condition is somewhat impressionistic, but the general correlation is clear enough. This marks, I suggest, a progressive disintegration of the solidarity of the traditional Penan group, the replacing of moral relationships inside the group by new contractual relationships outside it and outside Penan society. To the degree that a group remains Penan in culture, the system of

TABLE 3

	W. Penan	Paro	Nyivung	Su'an	Kemulu	Buk	Merurong	Mesekat	Tuyut	Bakong	Suai	Seubon	Niah
1. grandparent	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		(+)	(+)		
2. father	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)
3. mother	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)	
4. uncle, aunt	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		(+)				
5. elder sibling	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	(+)	+	(+)		
6. younger sibling	+	+	+	+	+			+	(+)	+	(+)		
7. cousin	+		+										
8. nephew, niece	+	+						(+)					
9. first-born child	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	(+)	(+)	(+)		(+)
10. second	+	+	+	+	+	+			(+)	(+)	(+)		
11. third	+	+	+	+	+								
12. fourth	+	+	+										
13. fifth	+	+											
14. sixth	+												
15. seventh	+												
16. eighth	+												
17. ninth	+												
18. grandchild	+	+	+			(+)							
19. husband	+	+	+	+									
20. wife	+	+	+	+									
21. parent-in-law	+												
22. brother-in-law	+	+	+										
23. sister-in-law	+	+	+										

tekononyms and death-names is employed according to the same principles as when it is found in its fullest form in an isolated nomadic group; merely the range of effective relationships of solidarity and moral concern to which the terminology refers tends to shrink. It might be objected that dissolution of the terminological system is itself merely one aspect of a general cultural change from traditional Penan ways towards the Malay-type culture of the lowlands and the coast; but it may more cogently be maintained, to the contrary, that in fact it is the change in culture which marks the disintegration of the solidary character of the traditional Penan group, and that the abandonment of death-names thus reflects a diminution of solidarity in the major aggregate of Penan society.

To continue a line of interpretation previously suggested (Needham, 1959, pp. 80-87), we may say that these concomitant variations enable us the better to see that the death-names are part of a social classification of effective and institutionalised solidary relationships, those by which Penan society is constituted and by which the individual Penan socially exists. The terminology of relationship (Table 1), that is, comprises practically the total social classification of the Penan. There are, for instance, no chiefs, judges, landlords, warriors, menials, or other such offices or occupational classes, and these terms of descent and affinity cover effectively all Penan and subsume all general social rights and duties. They do not delimit a sphere of "kinship" beyond which are other Penan who are not kin. Correspondingly, every Penan, to paraphrase Leenhardt (1947, pp. 198-201), is the sum of his relationships with other persons defined by this terminology. This, fundamentally, is indeed a paradigm of social existence, and each of the constituent relationships is marked by a death-name.¹² The death of what the Penan call a "true" relative, i.e., the primary referent of each relationship term, destroys the proximate representative of one of the relationships defining and composing the Penan social personality. Death may be seen as an assault on the society itself as it is thus focussed upon, and encapsulated in, the person, and it is reasonable to suppose that it can be seen as such only in a system of this unusual degree of simplicity and solidarity.

With the social and cultural changes summarily recorded here, however, this feature of Penan life inevitably falls into decline, for not only are there traditionally no death-names by which to mark the deaths of trading-partners, administrative officials, and the numerous other kinds of person with whom social relations become increasingly established, but the wider society of which the Penan become part is of a complexity and variety to which the death-names are as inapt as terms of social classification as are the Penan terms of relationship which they mirror. The individuals concerned with each other are not solidary by common recognition of reciprocal moral duty, as traditional Penan consciously are, or united by being at one in interests, sympathies, and values (cf. Needham, 1959, p. 80), and the social significance of the statuses defined by the relationship terms and by the congruent death-names is accordingly diminished when the Penan are assimilated to this wider range of social life.

¹² For the few differences between Eastern Penan and Western Penan in this regard, see Needham, 1959, pp. 83-84.

Table 3 shows us, not only the progress of this decline, but also the relative social importance of the component relationships of the traditional social system. The first terms to go are those for later-born children and for parents-in-law. Then the term for nephew or niece dead is dropped, and afterwards successively the death-names for grandchild, uncle and aunt, and grandparent; while all the time there is a constant reduction in the death-names for children, from the nine positions originally denoted down through five, four, three and two to ultimately one. The most persistent death-names are those for parents and for the first-born child. The death-names in parentheses are not actually used, it is true, but it may be taken as significant for the purpose that they are remembered at all, and, of course, that on the whole ¹³ the more changed the group the fewer names are remembered.

Now it is not maintained that this process of differential decline, so regular in the table, and the longer or shorter retention of particular death-names, demonstrate the terminological disintegration which actually took place in each of the groups, but the general course seems clear, and it is a plausible inference that the names employed by the Penan Sebuon, for example, during the last one hundred years may have been abandoned in some such order. There is less ground for demur, in any case, to the proposition that the relationships longest marked by death-names are those which are the most important to the Penan themselves.¹⁴ How the successive changes are made, and what the individual considerations may be at each definitive abandonment

¹³ This qualification must be stressed, for although there is no great difference of culture between the Penan Suai and the Penan Niah, and although they appear to be comparably far removed from traditional Penan concepts of the moral cohesion of the group, the former nevertheless happen to remember more death-names than the latter. There are differences, of course, especially in the claim that the Penan Suai still adhere in some degree to the norm of sharing, but these cannot be related arithmetically to the numbers of death-names recalled by those individuals whom I chanced to meet.

¹⁴ Cf. Needham, 1959, p. 72, Table 1, which shows, among other things, the common emphasis placed by seven other societies on the status of parent. There is, moreover, a more certain means of discovering the scale of relative importance, viz. by seeing which names are assumed by the survivors when a number of relatives of different statuses die at the same time, as when a tree falls on a shelter or an epidemic strikes. I have such evidences of this scale, but these concern the traditional Penan and not the settled Penan in changing circumstances who are the express subjects of the present paper, and they deserve a separate examination which will be published later. For the present, it may simply be reported that they tend to confirm the indications seen here.

of a death-name, are matters on which I fear I can offer no useful information; but there is no doubt that the death-names are abandoned, and that there is a constant reduction which appears to be systematically related to the progressive abandonment of traditional Penan social ties.

V

In the earlier paper I correlated certain mourning-terms, of which the Penan death-names were regarded as a specially developed form, with a particular type of society, and then postulated a significant relation between the existence of such terms and a form or quality of solidarity associated with this type of society (Needham, 1959, pp. 86-7). The argument from solidarity, however, could not be convincing so long as merely a congruence between institutions was established; and the point of the present article, and also its methodological interest, is to show in an historical context, by means of concomitant variations, "l'instrument par excellence des recherches sociologiques" (Durkheim, 1901, p. 162), that the employment of death-names among Penan entering a wider society varies with the degree to which the solidary relationships traditional to Penan society are retained.

I think there is fair empirical reason now to believe that this is the case, but it still has to be kept in mind that any such argument is inevitably subject to the qualification that "La solidarité sociale est un phénomène tout moral qui, par lui-même, ne se prête pas à l'observation exacte ni surtout à la mesure" (Durkheim, 1932, p. 28).

These notes by no means conclude the examination of death-names. There is a great deal more to be written about them, first of all as ethnographic record, and only when this is in print will it be feasible or advisable to attempt a more detailed and secure interpretation. Furthermore, although a correct interpretation of the system of tekonyms and death-names is essential, I think, to an understanding of Penan society, it is not so in a way singular to them, since death-names are common to middle Borneo and have therefore no special connexion with Penan culture or with the conditions of forest nomad life.

RODNEY NEEDHAM

*Merton College
Oxford*

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