THE LEAVING OF THIS TRANSIENT WORLD

A Study of Iban Eschatology and Mortuary Practices

Motomitsu Uchibori

Thesis submitted for the Degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in the Australian
National University
December 1978
Except where otherwise acknowledged in the text, this thesis represents my original research.

Motonitsu Uchibori
Department of Anthropology
Research School of Pacific Studies
Australian National University
Canberra
ABSTRACT

This is a study of the eschatology and mortuary practices of the Iban of Sarawak, East Malaysia.

The Iban have the notion of a single separable soul, called semengat. While a person is still alive, the semengat is the actor in dream experiences. At death the semengat leaves the body. Belief in the survival of the semengat, evidenced in dreams about the dead, is the core of Iban eschatology. The Iban also have the notion of life-images which represent an analogy of human life to plant life.

A corpse is usually buried after the night of a wake. During the night the identity of the dead is the corpse, to which grief of the survivors is directed. After the burial the longhouse community observes formal mourning. The identity of the dead is shifted from the corpse to the ghost, which is the surviving semengat.

About a month after death the community is freed from mourning. The bond between the deceased and the living is severed by a shaman, who cuts away the deceased's life-image from those of the living. A re-enactment of headhunting is performed to terminate mourning. The marital relationship between the dead and the surviving spouse continues to be valid until a ritual fine for divorce is paid by the surviving spouse.

The most important mortuary ritual is the festival for the ghosts. Traditionally, formal mourning of the bereaved family is terminated on this occasion. The ghosts are invited from Sebayan, the Land of the Dead, and entertained at a feast. At the end of the festival the ghosts are provided with goods which enable them to live self-sufficiently in Sebayan. Thus the festival is a ceremony of final separation. Some present-day Iban celebrate this festival in modified forms which incorporate the ideology of male prestige and headhunting.

The graphic view of Sebayan is depicted in death dirges. The itinerary of the journey of the dead indicates the topographic continuity between Sebayan and this world. In shamanic visions the route of the journey is symbolically equated with the physical structure of a longhouse.

The Iban think that Sebayan is near to this world. Communication between the living and the dead is thus possible. The afterlife is a replica of life in this world with a modest degree of idealisation. To the Iban the afterlife is a natural consequence or continuity of this life without any drastic transformation of personal existence. After a certain span of time the semengat of the dead dissolve into dew and return to this world. The living eat the rice which absorbed this dew and so incorporate the residual elements of their ancestors.

Deviant practices of the enshrinement of the dead are found among some Iban. The enshrined spirits remain in the world of the living as gods or guardians.

The Iban mortuary rituals are the coherent and progressive series of separation between the deceased and the survivors, and in this process the living sustain their belief in the survival of the semengat.
This is an ethnographic study of the rituals and the ideas surrounding death among the Iban of Sarawak, East Malaysia. The fieldwork upon which this thesis is based was carried out in Sarawak between March 1975, and February, 1977.

**Conditions of Fieldwork**

The fieldwork was conducted in the Second Division. At the earliest stage of fieldwork I stayed in a longhouse (Rumah Megat) near Saratok, the administrative and commercial centre of the Kalaka District, for three months and a half (from the end of April, 1975, to mid August, 1975). I learned there the Iban language and observed the festival for the ghosts (*gawai antu*) from its preparatory stage to its aftermath. From the beginning of September, 1975, to the end of January, 1977, the base of the fieldwork was a longhouse (Rumah Ngelambong) in the Upper Skrang. In this longhouse I observed the whole series of funeral rituals (except final festivals) on two occasions.

These two longhouses in which I stayed for prolonged periods were in sharp contrast with one another in almost every respect conceivable under the contemporary conditions.

Rumah Megat, consisting of fifteen *bilek*-families, is located at the distance of only one hour's walk from Saratok. The people of the community have long been involved in the cash economy, either through rubber production or by employment mainly in governmental bodies. They are engaged in wet rice cultivation, which has been promoted by governmental guidance and subsidy. In addition, they recently introduced intensive pepper planting, itself long known to them, in order to meet the expenses of the lavish festival for the ghosts. Although there are only few nominal Christians in the community, most of the people have Christian relatives in other communities or in town. This factor, combined with
an increasing degree of modernisation, must be taken into account when
one sees their religious activity. The modern *gawai antu*, as the
major festival still held among the subgroup of the Iban to which Rumah
Megat belongs, is strongly advocated by these Iban as a core of their
own cultural identity in the multi-ethnic settings of modern Malaysia.
Thus, in 1975, even a broadcasting team from the newly established
television station in Kuching came to a *gawai antu* which was held at a
longhouse in the same region as Rumah Megat is located. The general
level of education among the people of this area is high. Two sons of
Tuai Rumah Megat are primary school teachers, with some secondary educa-
tion and teacher training. Furthermore, there are a few university
graduates (all from universities in the United States) in a rather small
region, comprising fifteen longhouse communities, along the Sebetan
river. Rumah Megat, then, is a typical new Iban community totally em-
bedded in modern socio-economic networks.

In contrast, Rumah Ngelambong (with twenty *bilek*-families) is a
relatively isolated community in the upriver area. To reach the long-
house from the Divisional town of Simanggang, which is the nearest
bazaar, one has to make a seven hour's trip by a boat equipped with a
powerful outboard motor to the rivermouth of a small tributary (Sungai
Menjuau) of the Skrang river, and from there has to walk along a hilly
path for an hour. The activity of these people is concentrated on hill
rice cultivation. Although rubber production is the only source of
meagre cash income, it tends to be sacrificed at every crucial stage of
rice cultivation. Hunting and fishing of various kinds are important
daily activities. The Iban of the Upper Skrang are firmly resistant to
Christianity, as some boasted that there was not a single Christian in
the region. A school was established in 1964 on the riverbank opposite
to the mouth of Sungai Menjuau in order to give primary education up to
the fourth grade to children from six longhouses in the furthest area of
the river and on the hill ridges nearby. Attendance at the school is
good. However, there are no boys or girls who are receiving education
beyond this level. As such their way of life is largely traditional,
firmly conserving their polytheistic religion and their belief in
spiritual beings.

I was able to obtain valuable knowledge of the Iban way of life,
both traditional and modern, in these two communities. In Rumah Megat
I lived in the headman's *bilek* throughout my stay, and, for the initial
three months of my stay in Rumah Ngelambong, I shared meals with the headman's family and slept on the gallery together with "bachelors". I was regarded as a temporary member of these bilek-families, this fact alone showing the hospitable nature of the people. My enquiries were made exclusively in the Iban language, which I acquired rather quickly during my stay in Rumah Megat. From December, 1975, onwards I lived in a hut attached to the edge of the open verandah in the middle of Rumah Ngelambong. My wife and infant son joined me there at the beginning of July, 1976, and stayed until the end of that year. They were kindly looked after by the members of the headman's family. My stay at Rumah Ngelambong amounted in all to thirteen and a half months.

I also made enquiries at a number of other Iban longhouses, some of which I visited quite often and stayed at for several days at each visit, but my survey trips were not geographically very extensive (see Map 1). The focal area of my research was the Upper Skrang and Layar regions. In the longhouses in these areas I observed several post-burial mortuary rituals. Intensive enquiries were made about texts of death dirges, which I recorded on tapes and most of which I transcribed with the help of Iban youths during my stay in Rumah Ngelambong.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was generously financed by a grant from the Research School of Pacific Studies, the Australian National University. I am grateful to Professors Derek Freeman and Roger Keesing, Heads of the Department of Anthropology, and Professor Wang Gungwu, the Director of the Research School for permitting me an exceptionally long period of fieldwork.

Professor Freeman's supervision of my work, from the beginning of my study in Australia in late 1974 to the completion of this thesis, is gratefully acknowledged here. He gave me preparatory instruction about Iban religion before I went to Sarawak. Talks that I had with him in Kuching during July, 1976, were invaluable for the carrying out of the last stage of my fieldwork. After my return to Canberra he patiently read every chapter of the present thesis in its various draft versions, pointing out gaps resulting from my lack of knowledge of the Iban of the Baleh region, whose traditional culture was still intact when he worked among them in 1949-51. He also made his fieldnotes accessible to me in the conviction that fieldnotes should be regarded as historical
documents and be made available to other scholars. Appropriate use of these fieldnotes has been made, especially in Chapter 5. I cannot enumerate all the benefits for which I am indebted to Professor Freeman, intellectually as well as personally. Needless to say, I am solely responsible for all of the descriptions and interpretations contained in this thesis.

I am also deeply indebted to Dr Kirk Endicott who checked and corrected my far from perfect English at the great cost of time. Without his help, which went far beyond his obligations as a supervisor, I could not have completed this thesis. Through discussions with him I was taught how to think and write more clearly.

During the writing of this thesis I have led a rather ascetic life. I wish to thank all the present and former members of the Department of Anthropology, who happened to be in touch with me, for allowing me my own way of life. Particular thanks are given to Dr James Fox, Dr Gehan Wijeyewardene, and Dr Michael Young who read some parts of my draft and gave me useful suggestions; to Dr and Mrs Michael Heppell and Mr James Masing (who are also students of the Iban); and to the Departmental secretaries, Mrs Jill Luton and Mrs Ann Buller; and to Ms Judith Wilson who proofread the final version of this thesis.

There are also numerous persons whom I must thank for kindness and assistance during my stay in Sarawak. Mr Lucas Chin, Curator of Sarawak Museum, and Mr Peter Kedit, Government Ethnologist of Sarawak, gave every possible help in the conducting of my researches. Tan Sri Datuk Gerunsin Lembat, the State Secretary, helped me to gain the permission to stay in Sarawak for two years. I am grateful to Mr Benedict Sandin, the former Curator of Sarawak Museum, for his kind permission to cite various of his publications. I can mention only a small proportion of my Iban friends and informants, who almost without exception proved eager to help me in every way: Tuai Rumah Megat, who died in 1977 two years after his successful accomplishment of holding a gawai antu; Esau Indit and his family in Simanggang; Tuai Rumah Ngelambong and his wife Lenja who were almost my adoptive parents; Unggat and his wife Jami who took care of my wife and son during their stay in Rumah Ngelambong; Anggok, Luing and Sumok (who are ritual bards); Gumbang, Chundi, Gima and Kasi (who are shamans); and Empiang, Rentong, Miloh and Mula (all being death dirge singers).
I should like to express my gratitude to my teachers in Japan, especially Professor Taryo Obayashi, who taught me Southeast Asian Ethnology, and Professor Chie Nakane, who guided me through my graduate study at the University of Tokyo.

I wish also to thank my wife Haruko for taking care of our son Shoku in Japan under very difficult conditions (including the necessity of his undergoing heart surgery) while I was first in Australia and Sarawak. She also typed some parts of the earlier versions of this thesis.

This thesis was typed by Mrs Nell Millist, whose expert services I deeply appreciate.

A Note on the Orthography of Iban

Iban is already written in a standard Roman orthography, which is consistently used in primary school text books and publications from the Borneo Literature Bureau. In this thesis I follow this standard orthography, with the only exception of my use of an apostrophe (') for a glottal stop, which is represented by the phonetic sign of q in A Dictionary of Sea Dayak by N.C. Scott (1956).
MAP 1 Second and Sixth Divisions of Sarawak showing the location of the longhouses in which the enquiries were made.
CONTENTS

PREFACE iii

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION 1
The Iban 5

Chapter 2 HUMAN BEINGS AND LIFE 12
Person 12
Image of Life 19
Death and Semengat 32
Superhuman Beings 37
Notes 42

Chapter 3 DEATH, BURIAL AND MOURNING 44
Death 44
Burial 61
Some Notes on Wake and Burial 72
Mourning 76
Notes 92

Chapter 4 RITUALS OF SEPARATION AND RESTITUTION 94
Serara' Bungai 94
Ngetas Uli: The End of Community Mourning 107
Headhunting and Mourning Termination 112
Permission for Remarriage 121
Notes 127
Chapter 5  THE FESTIVAL FOR THE GHOSTS 129

Introduction: Perantu 129

Outline of Traditional Festival 135

gawai Antu among the Present-day Saribas-Krian Iban 148

Festival for Ghosts in Iban Ethnography 168

Notes 175

Chapter 6  THE JOURNEY INTO THE LAND OF THE DEAD 177

Death Dirge 177

Shamanic Visions 207

Notes 214

Chapter 7  THE FUTURE LIFE AND THE DESTINY OF THE DEAD 215

The Relation between the Living and the Dead 215

The Afterlife 227

The Final Fate of the Dead 249

Notes 261

Chapter 8  THE ENSHRINEMENT OF THE DEAD 263

Types of Enshrinement 264

Lumbong: Past and Present 267

Becoming a God (Petara) 274

Interpretative Comments 282

Notes 289

Chapter 9  CONCLUSION 290

Social Rearrangement 290

Separation 293

Concern for Ghosts: Eschatology 296

Concluding Remarks 299

BIBLIOGRAPHY 307

MAPS  1. Second and Sixth Divisions of Sarawak follows vii

2. Iban subgroups and their migration follows 11

DIAGRAM  Plan and Section of a Longhouse follows 11
Human death is a complex phenomenon. It is however based on the biological fact that every individual organism other than certain protozoa loses its integrated individuality after a finite period of existence. The complexity of the phenomenon of death is created by what humans come to think of it, rather than by the nature of death itself. In other words, death is no less concerned with the human faculty of cognition than with the physical nature of human bodies. It is crucially important in relation to the development of the cognitive faculty of the human species that man came to know that he, among others, would die in due course. Some other animals may discern the state of being dead and distinguish it from the state of being alive. Disappearance of reaction, immobility and the smell of decay make a dead body perceptibly different from living bodies. But human concern with death is qualitatively different from the instant reactions seen among other animals. Man anticipates both his own death and that of others. And, most significantly, he attaches meaning to death, seeing it as inherently evil, or more positively, as humanly acceptable.

Human concern with death is ancient. There is archaeological evidence that the Mousterian peoples disposed of corpses in elaborate ways. And from the fact that such special care was given to the dead we may infer both an awareness of and a concern with the fact of death — attributes that are specifically human.
Man knows that he is mortal. It is not that he knows death personally, but that he knows that he is not essentially different from those who have already died. Man creates images of death from what he sees and hears of the death of others. Practices surrounding death, especially those which are culturally established, and ideas concerning death are the end-product of accumulated images of death which various individuals have contributed to their cultures throughout history. In consequence, we see a remarkable variety of mortuary practices and eschatology (by which I mean a set of ideas about death and afterlife) among human populations, past and present, even though all the different practices and ideas spring from the single phenomenon of death. That may be because, as Edgar Morin (1970, Chapter 1) says, the concept of death is "a concept without content" or "a concept whose content is infinitely empty". The empty concept can be filled with various images or "metaphors of life". Man builds image upon image in order to ornament the bare fact of death.

Anthropologists have been mainly concerned with the images about death found in particular cultures. Virtually all ethnographic reports, from those by missionaries and administrators to those by professional anthropologists, contain chapters or sections devoted to mortuary practices and eschatology. No wonder, since death is found everywhere. However, only a few books or major articles have been written specifically on death and its images, even in particular ethnographic settings. Goody (1962) and Bloch (1971) are among the few exceptions, Goody's study, with its wealth of information, being a most valuable contribution. However, both works (and especially Bloch's) are essentially studies of social groups which function during mortuary ceremonies. To mention just a few from among numerous shorter articles on funerals, Geertz (1957) and Mandelbaum (1959), respectively, take up the topic in
relation to the social conflict manifested in a funeral and the group solidarity intended in funeral rites in general. Generally speaking, recent anthropological studies of death are sociological in emphasis. This does not mean, however, that a study of death rites and eschatology as such is of no theoretical interest or importance. One need only refer to the renewed interest in Hertz's work (1907) on the collective representation of death, stimulated by the appearance of its English translation in 1960.

There are fewer anthropological works on the formal features of mortuary rituals and eschatology than on their sociological aspects. Apart from Hertz's study, we may refer to van Gennep's work on rites of passage (1909/1960), which may be seen as a general application of Hertz's specific schema to a wider variety of rituals. Both Hertz and van Gennep analyse death and the ensuing mortuary ceremonies in terms of temporal transitions from one state to another which the deceased and the survivors undergo in successive stages. According to Van Gennep, rites of passage — rituals of birth, puberty, marriage and death — are essentially identical in their process. In each case the individual undergoes ritual separation, transition and aggregation. In the case of death, the final aggregation or reintegration is the deceased's entering into the community of the dead and the survivors' liberation from mourning. Hertz postulates a schema of parallelism between the states of the corpse, the deceased's soul and the living community. "Death" in primitive societies, he argues, is not instantaneous; rather, it is a process, which can be completed only after a certain span of time. During the "intermediary" period, the corpse has not yet completed its decomposition, the soul is still lingering in this world, and the living are in mourning. A final mortuary ceremony ends all these transitional states. Thus, the states of the corpse aside, Hertz's schema
is identical with van Gennep's. Insofar as they are concerned with formal analysis of ceremonies and of associated ideas, their schemata are valid and even useful. However, they are too formalistic to deal adequately with all the realities of death. One can apply their schemata to what one sees and hears. But, in doing so, one ignores individual attitudes toward death. This is a crucial defect of a formal analysis of death, whether or not it is a collective representation.

On primitive eschatology we can enumerate a number of comparative studies. Tylor (1871/1929) advanced his theory of animism, of which eschatology is a major part. Frazer (1913) dealt with the "belief in immortality" of Australian Aborigines, Melanesians and other Pacific islanders. Two Frazer Lectures, given by von Fürer-Haimendorf (1953) and Firth (1955), have taken up this topic. Malinowski (1916) wrote a lengthy article on Trobriand eschatology. All these studies reveal a wide variety of notions and images of death in different cultures.

My present purpose is to give a comprehensive view of mortuary practices and eschatology among the Iban of Sarawak, a Malaysian state in the island of Borneo. I am concerned more with the cultural and psychological aspects of these phenomena than with formal sociological analysis. The indigenous peoples of Borneo have long been celebrated for their deep concern with death and the dead. According to Miles (1965:161), nearly one hundred descriptive accounts of the Ngaju mortuary festival (tiwah) were published in the last century. The great quantity of data available stimulated Hertz and led him to work upon them and other material from Borneo and other parts of Indonesia. The comparative richness of material also attracted Stöhr, whose extensive survey of the literature on Dayak mortuary rituals is most useful (Stöhr, 1959). Compared with the large quantity of somewhat
sketchy reports from earlier periods and the subsequent ethnological interests shown in them, comprehensive studies of the eschatology and mortuary practices of particular Borneo peoples are exceedingly few. One can count only three: Schärer's posthumous publication of Ngaju material on mortuary rituals and chant texts (1966), Hudson's article on Ma'anyan death ceremonies (1966) and Metcalf's Ph.D. dissertation on Berawan (North Sarawak) mortuary practices (1975). These three people have one thing in common: they practise so-called secondary burials or, using Stöhr's more precise term, "multi-staged" treatment of corpses (*merhstufige Bestattung*). By contrast, the Iban practise, in principle, a conspicuously straightforward form of treatment of corpses, that is, burial or interment. I therefore hope that this work can lay bare another face of Bornean death practices, which have long been characterised by exotic secondary burials. Moreover, the Iban have an elaborate eschatology — the belief in the survival of human souls after death and in the existence of an after world. Of the three Bornean peoples mentioned above, the Ngaju have a sophisticated eschatology somewhat comparable to that of the Iban. On the other hand, neither the Ma'anyan nor the Berawan, despite their elaborate mortuary rites, seem to have clearly formulated eschatology (cf. Hudson, 1966:404). In this present thesis, which is primarily concerned with a descriptive account of Iban mortuary practices, attention will also be given to the content of Iban eschatology and to its rich and remarkable imagery.

THE IBAN

The Iban are a Proto-Malay people, often called the Sea Dayaks. The majority of them live in the southwestern parts of Sarawak, an East Malaysian state. Because of their recent migration into the northern parts of Sarawak they are now found throughout the state. The Iban
The Iban are the largest single ethnic group in Sarawak, constituting thirty-one per cent of the total population of 975,918 in 1970 (Leigh, 1974:1-2). Some sub-groups (including closely related Ibanic groups such as the Kantu', the Bugau and the Mualang) live in Indonesian West Kalimantan. The Iban are the best known indigenous people in Borneo, and the ethno-graphic and anthropological literature on them is now substantial. Not to mention earlier reports by missionaries and administrators, Freeman's study of Iban agriculture and social organisation (1955; 1958; 1960a; 1970) is comprehensive, and, although his research was carried out among a particular sub-group of the Iban in the Baleh region, his description and analysis are valid for other sub-groups of the Iban. Freeman has also published a number of articles on Iban religion (1960b; 1960c; 1967; 1975a; 1975b). Jensen (1966; 1974) has published an account of Iban religion based on his researches among the Undop and Lemanak Iban. Sutlive (1978) deals with culture change among Iban living near to the town of Sibu.

The Iban are a highly migratory people, whose economy is traditionally based upon the shifting cultivation of hill rice. Their quest for new tracts of land (especially primary forest) has resulted in rapid expansion over the past several centuries. Their former habitation, as far as we can reasonably tell, was the western drainage of the middle reaches of the Kapuas river, near the present border between Sarawak and West Kalimantan. Having moved into Sarawak at some point near Lubok Antu, they spread up-river and down-river along the Lupar river, which is called, by the Iban, the Batang Ai ("The Main River"), and its tributaries. Some of the Iban further advanced to the Layar (Saribas) river and its tributaries (see Sandin, 1967a, for oral traditions about Iban migration). This expansion must have been restless, as the later expansion from the various parts of the Second Division into the Rejang
drainage (the former Third Division) in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries well illustrates "land-rush" movements (cf. Freeman, 1970: 130-42).

This comparatively recent expansion of the Iban as a whole explains the uniformity of their language, which has only minor differences in vocabulary and pronunciation between dialects. Their social organisation is largely the same throughout the whole population. Cultural customs and religious manifestations, however, may differ from one region to another, from one longhouse community to another, and even in the same community they may change from time to time. For a salient characteristic of the Iban is their conscious seeking of novelty and change. In advancing into new territories, largely uninhabited forests but partly land occupied by other indigenous ethnic groups, the Iban often adopted practices which looked fascinating to them. Moreover, the Iban themselves are highly innovative. They gain inspiration from dreams and give shape to this inspiration in activities, both religious and secular. Often individual inspiration is incorporated into the culture or traditions of a local community. As a result, differences in customs between different regions have emerged to a significant degree, and they must not be overlooked. In the subsequent chapters I will present some of these variations.

Traditionally the Iban had loosely organised local groupings which were based, territorially, upon divisions of river systems, and, in terms of kinship, upon conglomerations of kindreds (Freeman, 1970:73). Although these groupings had no rigid internal organisation, each of them might occasionally emerge as a political, especially feuding, unit. More relevant to the present purpose is that these groupings had, and still have, their own cultural peculiarities, major or minor, and thus are distinct from each other. Although the distinction is not always
sharp and is blurred by the existence of transitional areas, we may speak of such groupings as cultural sub-groups. In the subsequent discussion, following customary usage, I will refer to them by the river names (except for the Balau, which is derived from the name of a hill (see Map 2)). When a similarity between two sub-groups necessitates lumping them together, the names are connected by a hyphen.

Iban society is a classic case of a cognatic social system. The basic unit of social and economic organisation is a family-group, termed the *bilek*-family by Freeman. It occupies one apartment (*bilek*) of a longhouse. Its members constitute a single household, living and working together in production and consumption. It is also a basic ritual unit. The Iban lack corporate kin groups beyond the *bilek*-family. Cognatic personal kindreds occasionally form an action group in emergency situations such as feuding and retaliation, but there is no rigid prescriptive rule about participation on such occasions. On the other hand, the longhouse community, which is itself not a kin group though most of its members are close kin and affines, functions as a corporate local group. It occupies a territory, within which the constituent *bilek*-families have equal access to virgin forest for cultivation, or, if all the land has once been cultivated, they can fairly easily get permission to use land which other longhouse members retain rights over. The longhouse community is also a ritual unit.

Iban society is conspicuously egalitarian. Individually the Iban are outspoken and straightforward in behaviour. Their aggressiveness was exemplified in their cult of headhunting, which made possible the rapid territorial expansion of the Iban. Success in headhunting was traditionally the most important channel through which Iban males gained individual prestige. This means that the Iban had and still have a male-centred value system, which is closely related to their religious
ideas and ritual practices. Iban religion is complex and permeates every aspect of life. Headhunting festivals and the male cult traditionally occupied a central place. Iban agricultural practice is also inseparable from an immense repertoire of rituals. Success in agriculture brings about material wealth, which is the second source of prestige. Possession of traditional as well as practical knowledge is highly esteemed and brings about another type of prestige to a man who possesses it. Singers of ritual invocatory chants (ritual bards (lemembang)), shamans (manang), augurs (tuai burong) and other elders — particularly longhouse headmen (tuai rumah) — are highly regarded in this respect. But the society which we are concerned with here is an open society, which has no imposed orthodoxy. And religious practitioners' knowledge is not highly secret; at least, it is accessible to anyone who wants to know it. Individuals freely speculate, and will often express their ideas in public. The following chapters will present some of this diversity in personal opinion.

In the mid 1970s, when I stayed among the Iban, they had long been exposed to outside influence. The practice of headhunting had been almost completely suppressed by the Brooke Government by the beginning of the twentieth century (cf. Pringle, 1970; Wagner, 1972). This suppression had a broad impact on Iban culture as a whole. It deprived the Iban of the very core of their value system and led to an overall transformation of their culture. This fact must not be overlooked when we examine the contemporary Iban. Degrees of cultural transformation, however, differ from one sub-group to another. Generally speaking, the Iban of the Second Division and of the lower parts of the former Third Division (the present Third and Sixth Divisions) are much more acculturated than those of remoter parts of the former Third Division (the present Seventh Division). The Iban in the Baleh region (in the present
Seventh Division) had kept their traditional culture relatively intact until as late as 1950, when Freeman studied them. Politically, the government appointed regional headmen (penghulu) nowadays play an important role in administering local affairs, which were traditionally dealt with by independent longhouse communities. Economically, the cultivation of rubber and pepper has become important as a source of cash income, and some lowland Iban have adopted wet rice cultivation. But even today the great majority of the Iban remain hill rice cultivators, and swidden agriculture is still their central economic activity. Conversion to Christianity speeded up after the Second World War. The majority of the Iban, however, are still stubborn adherents of their indigenous religion, though some secularisation, whether due to the spread of primary education or through more general contact with the outer world, is discernible. Conversion to Islam is negligible.

In concluding this brief introduction, mention may be made of the origin of the Iban. Linguistically, Iban occupies a unique place among the so-called Dayak (indigenous non-Malay peoples) languages of Borneo. It may be regarded as a remote dialect of Malay. This fact led Hose and McDougall to regard the Iban as having migrated from Sumatra at the beginning of the eighteenth century (1912, ii, 248). It is likely that the Iban have been in Borneo very much longer than this, but there are numerous indications that they are the descendants of people who migrated to the island of Borneo from the west. Significantly, the Iban are the only "Dayak" people who have practised "single-staged" (in contrast to "multi-staged") interment burials from the time of earliest contact with Europeans (cf. Stöhr, 1959). Stöhr infers that the Iban practised "multi-staged" burials in ancient times and that the transformation to the simple form of burial took place in the course of their migration into Borneo from Sumatra (ibid.:160). His inference is based
on the existence of final festivals for the dead and some exceptional 
treatment of corpses. It seems to me, however, that Stöhr was trapped 
by Hertz's neat formulation about the parallels between the treatment 
of the body and the eschatological beliefs, which are found among other 
Bornean peoples (see Hertz, 1960:58, where Hertz makes a similar 
inference). Whether the Iban practised secondary burials before their 
migration into Borneo or not, we cannot tell. But it is undeniable 
that the mortuary practices and eschatology of the modern Iban, so 
distinct from those of other indigenous peoples in Borneo, is another 
indication of the external origin of the Iban.
MAP 2 Iban subgroups and their migration.
Bilek family apartment
Ruai gallery
Tempuan passage
Pantar resting/sleeping place
Tanju' open verandah
Dapor fireplace

Sadau loft
Tangga' entrance ladder
a. Telenga' Atap adjustable roof
b. Para' Dapor fireplace rack
c. Tempuan Labu' water storing floor

DIAGRAM Plan and section of a longhouse.
I shall begin with a preliminary presentation of Iban ideas concerning the constitution of human beings, for the whole range of Iban eschatology and related rituals rests upon these basic ideas about the nature of human existence.

A human being is considered by the Iban to consist of the body (tuboh) and an entity called semengat, which can be reasonably translated, with certain reservations, by the English term "soul". Both the body and the "soul" are, in Iban ideology, definitely personal and individualised entities. The distinction between these two entities is of crucial importance not only in terms of the compositions of a human being, but also for understanding how the Iban think about their existence in the phenomenal world. This type of dichotomy of "body" and "soul" looks rather simple and obvious at first sight. But people hold a wide variety of opinions about the attributes of the semengat and about its relation to the bodily aspect of a human being, so there exists much contradiction and inconsistency. As aspects of these contradictions and variations are discussed later, I present, in this section, only a general outline of the concepts.

Body

A person is above all a corporeal entity. The body (tuboh) of each individual has definite personal characteristics such as height, size
and aesthetic qualities. The Iban talk about a person in terms of these properties. The body is the visible and active aspect of human beings (and other animals) who lead ordinary lives in this physical world.

It is rather natural in view of the prominence of the physical bodies of human beings that the Iban seem to equate the bodily aspect with the person himself. The body *per se* is thought to be the representation of the person, as in the phrase *tuboh aku empu* ("my own body"), an emphatic expression meaning "myself". The notion of *tuboh* thus has a wide semantic range which extends beyond its simple referent, the "body". First of all, the idiom of *tuboh* can be used to emphasise the first hand nature of the individual's experience. "*Tuboh aku kala' ngayau*" (literally, "My body has once participated in a headhunting expedition") means that the person "himself" has experienced it and implies that his knowledge about it is not what he has heard from others.

Also, the term "body" is used as a unit in enumerating humans — in contrast with the English use of "soul" for a similar purpose. When the Iban count the number of people, the term *tuboh* is often added to the usual numerical classifier for humans, *iko* (lit., "tail"). For instance, they say, "*sida' tuboh tiga iko*" ("they are three bodily"). This is an emphatic version of the simpler expression "*sida' tiga iko*", and is used especially when the persons are engaged in some activity as a group. That the body is the instrumental unit of activity is further shown by the description of work groups in terms of *tuboh*. The Iban say "*kami nadai tuboh*" ("we have no body") or "*suntok tuboh*" ("short of bodies"), when there are insufficient persons for a job. In contrast, when they use a generic term for man (*orang* or *Iban*), "*nadai orang (or Iban)*", they mean simply that there is no person in
a particular place. The Iban work hard in their productive activity of swidden agriculture and in other activities, such as hunting and rubber production. The number in the working force of a household (or a bilek-family) is of vital importance to their level of productivity and to their success in making a living in their subsistence economy. Thus, the "body", the acting and working part of man, is the most important aspect of human beings in their mundane life.

Furthermore, the term is used with a collective aspect, usually with reference to experiences or activities of a certain generation. A hypothetical sentence "Maia tuboh apai agi' nyelutong" ("At the time of father's body, [they] still tapped wild rubber"), for example, means that this work was still done at the time of one's father's generation, that is a generation ago, and implies that at present (maia tuboh kami, "at the time of our bodies") they are not engaged in this work. This usage of the term tuboh is apparently derived from the view that the physical existence of human beings occurs in time, and this is particularly indicated by generational time reckoning. The significance of the generation in Iban ideology will be considered in Chapter 7.

The notion of a person as primarily a corporeal entity has another aspect which is even more characteristic of Iban thought. Various types of emotion are often expressed in Iban by idiomatic phrases which combine words designating emotional states or feelings with the term ati: tusah ati ("mentally troubled"), pedis ati ("being annoyed") and so on. Ati refers to the liver or, less commonly, the heart. Presumably, these internal organs are regarded by the Iban as the seats of emotion. Moreover, the faculty of ideational thinking is also attributed to the organ ati. If one refers to a problem which puzzles one's comprehension, one may express it by saying that one is "astray at one's liver" (tesat ba' ati). The individual's consciousness, emotional as well as
ideational, is thus a function of this physical internal organ.

In view of this it is not surprising that when the Iban speak of goodness or badness of a person's ati, they refer to the person's moral quality, making a judgment of his mental personality. Ati is not an independent entity separable from the physical person. The usual dichotomy of "body"-"mind" does not seem relevant to Iban thought, in which both aspects of personality are absorbed into the bodily existence of the human being.

In sum, the total "personality" in its usual sense, both physical and mental, is conceived by the Iban in "bodily" terms.

Semengat

Semengat is an entity which is intangible and invisible to the ordinary senses. The only humans who claim to be able to see semengat at will are shamans (manang). Shamans often assert that they can recognise individual semengat, because a person's semengat has the same shape as his body. Some ordinary people believe a semengat is like a small black seed, for shamans sometimes show them such minute things and claim they are the semengat they have captured in the course of shamanic healing ceremonies. But usually the image of semengat is of rather little concern to the Iban.

The Iban regard the human experience of dreaming as evidence of the existence of semengat. A dream (mimpi) is considered an experience of the dreamer's semengat, its encounter with the semengat of other humans and with superhuman beings in the realm of what we may call the dream world. The dream world is by nature an extremely changeable world, but to the Iban it nevertheless exhibits certain features of reality. The Iban suppose that what can be experienced even in a dream must exist and in this sense be real.
Often the Iban talk about *semengat* of various objects, animate or inanimate, other than humans. Most commonly, rice plants are supposed to have *semengat*. According to Iban theories, every natural object contains *semengat*, though it is only when the spiritual nature of a particular object is being considered that the existence of *semengat* in an object is explicitly propounded. This theory of the universal existence of spiritual counterparts of virtually everything in the physical world provides the Iban with the profound basis of their religious experiences and practices. Thus things can be seen differently in dreams, and offerings can be taken by spiritual beings.

The reality of dream experiences does not mean that the Iban confuse the world experienced in dreams with the physical world. On the contrary, they clearly distinguish these two domains of experience. When they talk about something unusual and extraordinary by their standards, it is always a point of concern to them whether the topic is an experience in a dream or a waking experience. What is characteristic of Iban thinking about dreams is that they separate the dream world from the physical world, establish it as an independent realm of experience and attribute to it a reality of its own. They do not explain dreams on any psychological principle. They regard them as of external origin, independent of the inner psychic process of the person who dreams. In the dream, they say, something is told or revealed (*utai padah alam mimpi*), obviously by external agents. It is in this way that the Iban regard dreams as meaningful. The dream is the primary source of mystical and religious experiences for the Iban. They regard a dream experience as something beyond human intervention, something that occurs outside the ordinarily perceptible world and at the same time something real in so far as it is an experience.

The *semengat* as the Iban conceive of it, then, is an actor in this mystical realm of dreams. The location of the *semengat* during
daytime is, according to the most commonly held opinion, somewhere inside the person's head. When one dreams, one's semengat temporarily leaves its usual location and wanders about. It is thus an entity which is separable from the body of its owner.

More precisely, we can say the semengat is a distinct entity or substance which can be distinguished from its owner's bodily existence and, therefore, from his conscious personality. The semengat is not considered to participate in the moral personality or character of its owner (which is attributed to ati), as the English notion of the "soul" implies. It is sometimes thought that the semengat has a different character from that of its owner. This is shown, for example, in the way the Iban speak of an evil semengat. The Iban believe that a semengat can be inspired by an evil supernatural being and itself become an evil spirit. Such a harmful semengat is said to hunt the semengat of others in the dream world and sometimes to kill those semengat and their owners. Although the Iban identify the owner of such an evil semengat, they do not attribute any evil intention to its owner. They say it is his semengat, but not himself, that is bad and to blame.

Thus, the semengat is an independent entity which is beyond the deliberate control and influence of its owner's consciousness, again with the exception of shamans. The wickedness of a harmful semengat is explained only on the basis of an external cause, such as inspiration by an evil spirit.

Nevertheless, the condition of the semengat has a definite effect on the bodily condition of its owner. According to Iban theory, if one's semengat stays away prolongedly from its usual place and wanders astray or is attacked by an evil supernatural being, the owner of the semengat will eventually become ill. Such an illness can be diagnosed
and cured by a shaman, the only human being who can release his own semengat at will and cause it to pursue and catch the lost semengat of others. By this power he can also interpret the bad dreams of his clients.

It is significant in this connection that not all kinds of illness are considered to be symptoms caused by the disturbed condition of the semengat. Many minor maladies such as headache and stomach ache are regarded by a shaman as having nothing to do with the condition of the semengat. Conversely, when a shaman diagnoses that somebody's semengat has been wandering, the health of its owner is thought to be surely in danger as a result of his semengat leaving his body, though this does not necessarily mean the client is ill at the time of the diagnosis. Thus, the errant condition of the semengat is not so much a result of illness, but, to the contrary, it is a cause of illness. In this sense, the semengat is a vital force which ensures the life of its owner, not merely reflects his state of health.

The Iban conception concerning the relation between the semengat and the bodily existence of its owner corresponds exactly to the relation between the dream world and the physical world. While the semengat is an actor in the dream world, it is the corporeal being that stands and behaves in the physical world. But, in fact, this division is not impassable. On the contrary, there is a constant flow of experiences from the subconscious realm of dreams to the conscious realm. In a sense, these two realms of experience are continuous. An experience in a dream can produce important effects on the experience and behaviour of the dreamer in the physical world through revealing something mystical to the dreamer's consciousness. We can reasonably say that the semengat functions in this context as if it were the subconscious self and makes up the second personality of an individual, largely distinct from his
conscious physical self. The peculiar ability of shamans consists in
the supposed use of this second self.

Both aspects of human existence, the body and the *semengat*,
have essential bearing on Iban eschatology and mortuary practices,
which will be discussed later. It is sufficient here to summarise
this brief introductory section by noting that Iban conceptions about
human existence are built upon the notion of two distinct personal
entities, *semengat* and *tuboh*, which are respectively the agents in the
two distinct but mutually influencing worlds of experience, the world
which is experienced in dreams and seen by shamans on the one hand and
the world visible and experienced by bodily and conscious individuals
on the other.

IMAGE OF LIFE

We shall now consider another set of notions which has direct bearing
on Iban eschatology and death rituals, namely the concepts of *bungai*
and *ayu*. I shall deal first with the notion of *bungai*, its symbolism
and its relation with *semengat*, because it is a notion peculiar to the
belief system of the Skrang and Layar Iban whom I studied closely. The
notion of *ayu* will be considered afterward and mainly in relation to
*bungai*, because, although this notion is not clearly held by the Iban
I studied, it has been mentioned often in the literature on the religion
of the Iban in other regions, and it has special relevance to the
religious ideas of the Iban as a whole.

*Bungai*

The Layar-Skrang Iban say that a plant called *bungai* grows in each
apartment (*bilek*) of the longhouse. *Bungai* is the everyday generic
word for any kind of flower. But the *bungai* we are concerned with here
is something invisible and intangible to the ordinary senses, like
**serengat**, and has a special connection with people's health. It is said to grow at the foot of a post supporting a rack (para') which is set up over the fireplace (dapor) to store and dry firewood and from which fish and meat are hung to be smoked. The rack has four supporting posts and usually it is not made clear which of the four is thought to be the place of bungai. But, in fact, one post is especially prominent because it stands free, out in the room, while the other three are attached to the walls which form a corner of the room (see Diagram). Presumably, this free-standing post is the most plausible location of the bungai, as an informant, who was a shaman, testified.

This imaginary plant, or rather its reflection, can be seen by a shaman in a quartz crystal (batu karas). In order to see it, the shaman lights a kerosene lamp. He sits in the bilek facing the door to the gallery, and the light is put in front of him. He looks at the fire through the quartz. Therefore, in this shamanic performance, the shaman looks in the direction of the fireplace post, which is situated roughly between him and the door. It is prohibited for anyone to sit opposite to the shaman with the light between them, because it would obstruct the shaman's view of the bungai of the bilek concerned.

The images the Iban hold of bungai vary. Many have no clear image of it other than something that has a plant-like form. Some conceive an image of a certain kind of bamboo (the species called buloh). Others assert that the bungai is like a tree with its branches and leaves. And still others are avowedly sceptical of the existence of the bungai as a real entity. The sceptical would say the bungai is peculiar to the stories told by shamans, and thus is a mere invention of the shamans, who always tend to be deceitful to ordinary people. According to one shaman, who spoke in a rather frank way, the bungai is an analogy or a metaphor (kelulu') expressed in the context of the ritual language.
related to the shamanic performance and does not exist in reality. At any rate, the belief in the existence of bungai is not as firmly held by the general public as is the belief in semengat.

Despite these divergent speculations, the notion of bungai has an undoubted significance for Iban eschatology as well as their social ideology. It is also related to some associated customs. It is prohibited (mali, "tabooed"), for example, to cut a fireplace post because it is the supposed location of the bungai, and such a careless act is said to hurt the bungai and consequently the health of the bilek-family members. The prohibition on eating shoots of the buloh-species of bamboo (which some say is a mere distaste) is interpreted by those who assert this prohibition as due to its connection with the bungai. In contrast, shoots of other species of bamboo are far from being prohibited; in fact, they provide a favourite relish for the Iban. Some people say to eat a buloh-bamboo shoot is to eat bungai, which is really a buloh-bamboo, and breaking of this prohibition would cause confusion within one's (vaguely defined) area of territory and, particularly, mutual killing among the people in that territory ("kachau bebunoh semenoa"). These customs indicate the belief that keeping the bungai undisturbed is a necessary condition for the welfare of the members of a bilek-family and even of the more extended social group.

It is in this connection that a shaman performs a healing ceremony to protect and care for the bungai, if a minor protective measure is thought to be insufficient. This ceremony takes place in the longhouse gallery (ruai). A species of rush (bemban) or a young banana-plant is put in a small jar to represent the bungai. A blowpipe is erected upright with its end at the bottom of the jar. The shaman walks around this apparatus, singing a ritual song (called pelian). In the song, he first summons the mythical shamans, Manang Menyaya and others, who are
supposed to reside in the sky and on the summits of hills, to attend the ceremony. Then the song proceeds to the sections in which the mythical shamans take care of the bungai. First they clear away overgrown weeds around the bungai which would hinder its growth. Thereafter, in the song, the mythical shamans cover or wrap the bungai. In accordance with this, the actual shaman, after having sung this section of the song, covers the plant in the jar with an ikat skirt or fabric. For the bungai, like all plant life, is vulnerable to heat, especially burning sunshine, and therefore should be protected with a cover or wrap. If the bungai is too much exposed to the heat or light (tampak, lit. "bright", a condition which can be detected in a shaman's quartz crystal), the Iban say, the health of the bilek-family members is generally weakened (tabin).

The bungai thus symbolises quite overtly the unity of a bilek-family, as we see in the notion that each bilek has a corresponding bungai, or more precisely, a stem or stalk of the mythical plant (pun bungai). Its supposed location, a fireplace post, suggests the functional aspect of a bilek-family as a household unit. It is significant that in this way the fate of an individual member of a bilek-family is closely related to that of every other member. Each member of the family has a corresponding part of the bungai. This part represents his (her) condition of health and fate, though this individually allocated part has no specific name. According to an informant, the parts corresponding to individuals are like leaves attached to the stem of the bungai. If one becomes seriously ill, the corresponding leaf is withered (layu') and may eventually fall (gugur), which means that the person dies. In the text of a death dirge, this individual's part is metaphorically described as a branch of the mythical plant, and the corresponding branch of the deceased member is found to be pitifully
broken (see p.183). Usually it is supposed that the eldest member of the *bilek*-family has his (her) allocated part of the *bungai* in its lowest part, while the parts of the younger members are located in successively higher sections. This allocation of parts is quite consistent with the growing process of actual plants.

Membership of the Iban *bilek*-family, as systematically studied by Freeman (1970:14-28), is acquired either through birth in the *bilek*-family or through marriage, adoption or, in rare cases, through incorporation (by which Freeman means membership acquired by a child of a remarried parent). Regardless of the way in which an individual acquired membership in the *bilek*-family, he or she is treated in all religious activities, including shamanic ceremonies and mortuary rituals, as a full member of the *bilek*-family. At minor healing ceremonies, which are frequently held at a transition in agricultural activities or for dealing with bad dreams, all members of a *bilek*-family should attend and be treated collectively by a shaman. This is based on the idea that each *bilek*-family has a single stem of *bungai*, shared by all its members.

It is curious, however, that while the symbolic connection of the *bungai* with the unity of the *bilek*-family is so obvious, no special attention is paid by the Iban to the exact relationship between individual membership of a *bilek*-family and the processes by which sharing of the *bungai* is achieved.\(^1\) An informant once said that he supposed a new young leaf might grow out from the stem of the *bungai* when a baby is born in the *bilek*-family. But he confessed his ignorance as to what would happen in the case of marriage or adoption. Another informant admitted inconsistency and came to regard the riddle I had raised as good evidence that shamans told lies about the *bungai* and related matters.
Even the knowledge of shamans is ambiguous in this respect. One shaman was somewhat embarrassed by the question and admitted that he was not certain about it. He said that the bungai was actually a cluster of the semengat of the members of the bilek-family, gathered at the foot of a fireplace post and attached to the stem of a plant-like object. This testimony is significant because, as often as not, shamans trying to diagnose through the crystal do not clearly distinguish the search for an errant semengat from the examination of the bungai of the bilek.

The equation of semengat with bungai (or its constituent parts) is also not uncommon among ordinary people. It suggests two important points. One is that the semengat is thought here, though metaphorically, to be a part of a plant. This, in turn, hints at a certain relationship between human life and plant life in the Iban conception of life. The other is that semengat is thought to exist outside the human body.

Contrary to the general belief, the shaman mentioned above firmly stated that "the semengat is not inside the head". This idea expresses symbolically and rather extremely the nature of semengat as being free from bodily existence, which is a characteristically Iban notion of "soul".

Ambiguity concerning the image of the bungai is thus abundant. It may be misleading to demand a strict logical and representational consistency in this sort of an imaginary object. People's preoccupation projected into the image is with the welfare of the bilek-family at a given time, and as such it is not necessary for the whole process of membership acquisition to be reflected in the image. Bungai, after all, is poised on the line between metaphor and concrete entity in the belief of the Iban. It does not reflect social reality in any kind of complete detail. It reflects, in contrast, the most central preoccupations of the Iban. Among them we count the ideology of the unity of the.
bilek-family, and, as we shall see later, the concern with the death of one of its members (see Chapter 4).

Ayu

The concept of ayu, as it is held among the Layar-Skrang Iban, is rather vaguely defined as one's "life". Often it is equated with a person's life span (umor). A cognate term gayu ("a long life") is frequently mentioned in prayers (sampi) and thus points to the bliss for which the Iban implore various deities.

The idiomatic phrase enggai ka alah ayu ("lest ayu should be defeated") is a frequently given rationale for certain customs among the Layar-Skrang Iban. In the past, on the way home from a successful headhunting expedition, the expedition party would emit a series of war cries (panjong) lest their ayu should be defeated. In connection with the mortuary ritual as well, war cries are sometimes made as a measure against the danger of ayu being defeated. Defeat of ayu means in these cases that the living party would succumb to the same fate as that of the enemies killed in the expedition or of the deceased for whom the funeral is carried out.

In shamanic ceremonies, ayu appears as something that can be taken care of by the mythical shamans. If a child has a weak constitution or its growth is not satisfactory, a ceremony called bumbu' ayu ("covering the ayu") or nupi' ayu ("fostering the ayu") may be held. Although I had no chance to observe this ceremony, the procedure and the major apparatus of this ceremony are said to be almost the same as that of the ceremony of caring for the bungai. One difference is that an ayu-caring ceremony is held in the bilek. A rush or a banana-plant is put in a jar, in this case, together with hair of the child and of his father and mother, and with a variety of ornamental objects like beads, bells
and cowries. The mother, having her child on her lap, sits by the side of the jar. A shaman, singing a song to summon the mythical shamans, walks around this ritual apparatus and the mother and child. 

Next morning, the stem of the rush or banana-plant used in the ceremony is planted in the open space (tengah laman) near the longhouse; whereas, in the case of the bungai-caring ceremony, the plant is disposed of. A fence is made around this plant to show that it was used in the ceremony and that it should be allowed to grow (nguan menoa) without disturbance. According to one shaman, a buloh-bamboo shoot is used for this purpose. It is said to be forbidden to cut this bamboo until it becomes big enough for cooking rice in. When it is cut for the first time and sections of its stem are used as cooking containers for glutinous rice, a portion of the cooked rice is given as part of an offering (piring) to various deities.

In this perspective, the similarity of ayu and bungai is obvious. Both are concerned with the life and fate of a person and, significantly, have certain connections with the vegetable form of life. But there are differences between them. In the case of bungai, as its name already shows, it is often imagined to be an entity which has the form of a plant. In contrast, the connection of ayu with plants is indirect, suggested only by the symbolic use of a plant in the shamanic ceremony. Ayu itself is not conceived as any sort of entity or as having an image. As a shaman testified, ayu can not be seen even by shaman's sight. Another difference is that the ritual of caring for the ayu is confined to children, while the ritual of caring for the bungai is held for persons of any age. In sum, ayu, in the Layar-Skrang Iban context, is rather an abstract concept which refers vaguely to a person's state of life, and it is thought to be specially vulnerable when he is still at the infantile stage of growth, or when he faces a danger of contamination from another person's death.
We have no further reference to the concept of *ayu* among the Layar-Skrang Iban. In order to make a further inquiry into its meaning, we should look at the literature on the Iban of other regions, in which the concept of *ayu* appears somewhat different. Howell and Bailey explained *ayu* as "the soul, the representative or kindred soul in Hades (according to Dyak belief every person in this world has a kindred soul in Hades, if that soul sickens then the person in this world gets ill)" (1900:10). Here *ayu* is regarded as an entity whose states affect the health of a person in the same way as the *bungai* does, but no mention is made about what kind of image people have of *ayu*.

A more concrete image of *ayu* is found among the Baleh Iban studied by Freeman. *Ayu*, which Freeman glosses as "secondary soul" or "soul-substitute", "takes the form of a kind of plant", usually likened to the bamboo, and "is believed to grow on a far off mountain”. "The *ayu* of each *bilek*-family are conceived as growing in a separate clump, and when a child is born a new shoot appears at the base of the clump, just as it does with the bamboo plant itself" (1970:21). The health of a person is controlled by the state of growth of his *ayu*, which can be cared for by a shaman. In the case of adoption, a ritual called *nusop ayu* is held in order to transplant the child's *ayu* from the clump of his natal family to that of his adoptive family.

In this view it is evident that the *bungai* concept of the Layar-Skrang Iban and the *ayu* concept of the Baleh Iban are almost identical. Apart from the names given to them, differences between the two are the locations where these mythical plants are supposed to grow and the forms they are imagined to take. The basic idea of correlation (or "symbiosis" as Freeman puts it) between the state of growth of the plant and the health of persons is the same. We can conclude that the single concept
of *ayu* as held by the Baleh Iban is differentiated into two similar but separate concepts among the Layar-Skrang Iban. Among the latter, the concept of *ayu* lacks a visual image and becomes only vaguely conceived of as something that may be called an individual's "life", whereas the representational plant image is retained by another concept, which is *bungai*. It is not a mere coincidence in this connection that the *bungai* concept has a lesser degree of association with individuality than the Baleh Iban concept of *ayu* has.2

Finally, with regard to the location of the mythical plants (which I propose to call "life-image"), Howell and Bailey's account presents most interesting information which is relevant to my theme. It is that *ayu* is described as being in "Hades". Jensen has referred to *ayu* as "another world spirit image of living Iban" (1974:115). As a matter of fact, it is hard to sustain the supposition that the majority of the Iban have a notion of this life-image as existing in "Hades" or, more properly, the Land of the Dead. I met only one person who said that *bungai* were growing in the Land of the Dead. There is no evidence in any religious text, shaman's chant or death dirge, which suggests that it is a prevalent idea of the Iban that "Hades" is the location of these mythical plants. But we cannot dismiss the fact that at least a few people hold this idea. The life-image is, by nature, deeply concerned with the ultimate phase of life, which is death. The separation of the deceased from the living is ritually expressed as a separation between life-images. It is quite understandable in view of the prominence of the separation ritual within the whole context of mortuary practices that some people have come to associate the life-image directly with the "other world", for a life-image is invisible and therefore somewhat "unworldly".
Botanical Analogy of Human Life

The notion that there is a close relation between mankind and plants, in one way or another, is found widely among various peoples in the Indonesian Archipelago. Kruyt's study on the animism of the peoples in this area includes a chapter on this topic, in which he gives a great number of isolated examples from the viewpoint of his "soul-substance" theory (1906, Chapter V). His theory points to the alleged popular belief in the existence of "soul-substance" in actual plants. He sees thus the relationship between humans and plants as interactions between their "soul-substances". In the context of the Iban belief system, however, it is rather as an analogy or a metaphor that plant life is relevant to human life.

The environmental setting in which the Iban live is conducive to the comparison of human life with that of plants. The Iban world is surrounded by a vigorous and thriving plant kingdom. The fast growth of plants is impressively visible. Thus, a plant as a living entity is a convenient symbol of life itself — including human life.

The plant used in the ceremony of caring for ayu is planted in order that it should take root in the world. We see here, without doubt, the aspiration for the life of the child to be linked with the undisturbed growth of this plant. Like the plant which is to be settled in the world, the child, it is hoped, will inhabit the world. The phrase nguan mehoa used in relation to the plant normally means to inhabit or dominate a certain territory, or, more simply, to live in this world. It is thus true that the life of the child is symbolised by the plant. But the very term "life" is an ambiguous one. The problem we face here is that of what aspect of life the Iban attempt to express in this symbolic identification.

To the Iban, a plant is a living thing in the same sense as humans or other animals are living. The words applied to the life of animals
and humans are also applicable to plants. A plant is alive (idup) and will die (mati or parai). A dead plant is often called by the term bangkai, which is also used to designate a corpse of a man or a carcass of an animal. But because a plant, unlike an animal, is not thought to have breath, the criterion for judging death in a plant is different from that for an animal. The Iban assume a plant is dead if, for example, some uprooted grass is already dry or if the trunk of a tree appears incapable of producing a new branch or shoot.

The mortal nature of the plant is specially pertinent to the Iban metaphor and analogy between human life and botanical life. The various words designating the dead state of plants (Iban has a rich vocabulary for it) are used recurrently in religious language as metaphors for dead persons. The image of a dead tree (punggu') is especially prominent in this respect. In the text of a death dirge I collected, the party of the dead are addressed with this word. Moreover, the metaphor is not confined to ritual language, as the following example shows. I once arranged for a youth to write a diary when I was not in the longhouse. On the day a man in his mid-fifties vomited a great deal of blood and his death was thought to be approaching, he wrote, "In my personal belief, when put in a situation like his, we are like a dead tree and a leaf. I compare us to a dead tree, for if it becomes rotten, it will surely fall down. The same is true for a leaf. When it becomes red or mature (mansau), it will fall as does the dead tree."

This kind of comparison between human death and the condition of a plant is, as already shown, one of the most conspicuous features of the bungai image. The individual part of a bungai, often equated with a leaf of the mythical plant, will be withered when a man dies. The health of surviving members of the bilek-family and the continuity of the bilek-family should be assured by a shamanic ceremony, in which the
remaining parts of the bungai are cared for in detail. On such an occasion, a bungai is felt to be in danger in its entirety. The bungai, as its usual meaning of "flower" suggests, has a vulnerable nature.

Incidentally, when a person suffers a long wasting illness and becomes pale or yellowish (kuning-kuning), he or she is said to be "withered". This symptom, the Iban say, may be a result of the person's audacious attempt to make some traditional objects or designs (e.g., making a new pattern of ikat fabric or forging a battle-knife with special reliefs) beyond his or her publicly recognised skill. The person has been punished supernaturally (tulah) because of his (her) boldness (sunibong).

It can be said, then, that the Iban tend to see in botanical life its vulnerability, fragility and mortality in addition to the ostensible strength of its growth and life. These qualities, according to the Iban view of life, are common to human beings. Or, to put it another way, insight into the nature of human existence makes the Iban seek suitable metaphors for these qualities in other types of life, including many quite remote from their own mode of existence. The plant symbolises life. But the life symbolised here is the mortal life, the life as it is in this world.

The vulnerability of plants, in the equatorial climate, is most evident when they are exposed to scorching heat. They become faded, withered and dried by the tropical sun. By contrast, coolness, particularly that brought about by rain, is thought to be essential to the growth of plants. This nature of plant life pertains, in the Iban context, to the dichotomy of "hot" and "cool" conditions, which is widespread among various peoples in Southeast Asia.
Generally, a "hot" \((\text{angat})\) condition denotes a disturbing, ominous or disastrous state, while "coolness" \((\text{chelap})\) indicates a healthy and quiet condition. These two notions are applied to the longhouse community as a whole or, more widely, a region of land \((\text{menoa})\) or a certain specific space such as a graveyard. As a set of symbolic notions, they are not applied to the condition of an individual person. In other words, the idiom of the "hot"-"cool" dichotomy is concerned with socio-spatial settings. But the effects of these symbolically defined conditions do have some connection with the individual person's health. A rush and a banana-plant are preferred as plants for representing the \(\text{bungai}\) or \(\text{ayu}\) in shamanic ceremonies because, the Iban say, they grow in cool or wet ground. Such plants are thought to bring about "coolness". The covering or wrapping of the life-image plants in the ceremonies is intended to protect them from excessive heat and to put them under shade \((\text{Ibndong})\). Thus, an individual's state of life is conceived within the overall frame of the botanical analogy and the "hot"-"cool" dichotomy.

The analogy of human life with plant life graphically shows the Iban conception of vulnerability and mortality of human beings put in this world. The problem arising now is how the Iban view the destiny of humans after their inescapable death, which seems to be accepted by the Iban in a fatalistic spirit.

**DEATH AND SEMENGAT**

Death is essentially a corporeal fact to the Iban. The sharp distinction made by them between the state of being alive \((\text{idup})\) and the state of being dead \((\text{mati} \text{ or } \text{parai})\) is based upon the condition of the body. The only criterion recognised and practised by the Iban for judging a person's death is the cessation of breathing \((\text{apus seput})\). I never
heard of any other criterion being applied to judgments about death among the Iban.

Sometimes people may talk about a prolonged condition of unconsciousness (jingap-jingap) as a beginning phase of death, but even in this case the critical moment of death is finally judged by the cessation of breathing. I see no evidence that the Iban have any difficulty in distinguishing a prolonged coma from death as Perham suggested (1885: 288). Falling into an acute coma (luput, which also refers to a shaman's trance) or a prolonged coma is not confused with death, though these may be taken as foreshadowing death. Of course, there must have been occasional cases of premature judgment of death. Stories are often told among the Iban of the revival (idap baru) of persons who were thought to have died. However, this does not alter the fact that in the Iban cultural context death is a physically well-defined phenomenon.

According to Iban theory, when a person dies, his semengat somehow leaves its bodily counterpart forever. However, they have no specific concern with the way in which the semengat departs from its usual location, most commonly regarded as inside the head; nor do they give any detailed explanation about the moment of this imagined separation of the semengat from the body. This indifference is perhaps cognate with their firm belief in the separability of the semengat even while the person is still alive (during dreaming and serious illnesses). Since the semengat is supposed to be always ready to separate from the body, its departure at the specific moment of death does not raise a new problem for the Iban.

Dreams, the trances of shamans, serious sickness and death are thus homologous in terms of the condition of the semengat. The only distinction made by the Iban is that the separation is only temporary for the first three instances, whereas it is permanent in the case of death. In fact, there is a certain subtle continuity between these
two categories of separation of the semengat. If a semengat wanders too far away in a dream so it is unable to readily return to its normal abode, the owner of the semengat is said to be in serious peril of eventual death. In this connection a shaman often speaks in healing ceremonies about the place he has found and caught a lost semengat. It may wander far away from or remain close to its normal abode. Similarly, some shamans say, their own ability to pursue a lost semengat is not unlimited. If it has already advanced on the way to the Land of the Dead beyond a certain point, the shaman's semengat cannot follow it without risking the possibility of his own semengat being unable to return as well.

Temporary separations of the semengat from the body, particularly when the semengat is imagined to make a journey to the Land of the Dead, cannot be distinguished solely by their content from the process of an actual death. This is an inconsistency which is inherent in the Iban theory of the departure of semengat after death. As far as the state of the semengat is concerned, the distinction between dreams or sickness on the one hand and death on the other is puzzlingly unclear. One may argue that this inconsistency is a result or, at least, a correlate of the fact that the Iban have only one human soul concept (semengat), without distinguishing a personal soul and what may be called a "life-giving principle" (cf. von Furer-Haimendorf, 1953:40, for this distinction). Also, arguably, the states of bungai or ayu may reflect the difference between death and other types of separation of the semengat from the body. But this is not positively propounded by the Iban either. As a matter of fact, the inconsistency is not recognised by the Iban. For, to them, the distinction is based on the physical signs of death, which take precedence over any argument about the state of the semengat.
The Iban have an unshakeable belief in the survival of the disembodied *semengat* after the physical death of its owner. The basis of their insistence on this survival of the *semengat* is, again, the experience of dreaming. Seeing deceased relatives and friends in dreams is common among the Iban, and this constitutes a special category in the Iban classification of dreams. In accordance with their theory of dreams, these dreams lead to the conviction that the *semengat* of the deceased must still exist in some sphere and that it has not been extinguished at the moment of its owner's death. Certainly, in this respect, the Iban theory fits the Tylorian model of the animistic belief in the survival of souls (see Tylor, 1929: ii, i) and the Frazerian model of the belief in immortality (Frazer, 1913: i, 27).

I emphasised at the beginning of this chapter the independent nature of the *semengat*, but also noted that a person's *semengat* is definitely a personal entity. I meant by this that the *semengat* is not an impersonal life-force or ethereal energy, but an agent which can act in the sphere of psychic experience where dreams take place. This personal quality of the *semengat* becomes the basis of the Iban belief in the continuity of "life" after death. This is because, as a personal entity, it comes to represent the personality of its owner after death. The primary antithesis between the *semengat* and bodily existence is transformed by the death of a person. The physical representation of the total personality disappears at death. A common Iban word *nadai*, the term for negation of existence, is idiomatically used to designate the fact that a person has died. This usage indicates the Iban equation of death with the extinction of a living personality, at least, in terms of its worldly representation, which is the bodily aspect of a human. Thus, at death the situation changes drastically. The *semengat*, as the supersensory aspect of a human being, thus becomes the only entity which
can represent the deceased person. The total personality which was visible and active in this world is shifted into the sphere of spiritual entities, and in this sphere retains the status of a personality as a surviving semengat. In other words, after death, the semengat, which was responsible only for a part of human experience during lifetime, takes the place of the physical component as the representation of personality.

The notion of the survival of the semengat can thus be regarded as an attempt to give an answer to the puzzle raised by the contradiction between the continuity of the living's memory of the deceased — particularly as revealed in dreams — and the undeniable fact of personal extinction. It is the cultural theory formulating the post-mortem continuity of the personality, which is carried over to the disembodied semengat.

But this theoretical transition of personality from the physical being to the spiritual entity sometimes does not work well in individual cases. There exists in actual situations a certain gap between the cultural theory and the persisting memory of the deceased as a living corporeal person. The following seemingly trivial example shows this gap through a verbal mistake made by a shaman.

Shaman Jimbat's semengat was thought to have become an evil spirit of the kind called antu gerasi, and to hunt the semengat of other people while he was sleeping. The death of an infant several years ago in a neighbouring longhouse was actually thought to have been a result of this hunting of his semengat. After Jimbat's death, two women in his longhouse had dreams in which they encountered him. One of the dreams, which was dreamt on the night before the ritual of the "separation" (serara' bungat, see Chapter 4), was particularly ominous. In this dream the dreamer was in a forest not far from the longhouse, where she came across the shaman who came down from the opposite direction. The shaman was accompanied by two dogs and had a spear in his left hand. She was afraid at his sudden appearance and asked what he was doing there. Jimbat answered he was hunting. Having heard this, the dreamer was really scared and shouted, "Don't, Uncle, don't attack me! We are all kin."

This dream was taken by many as demonstrating that the deceased shaman's semengat was haunting the area to hunt the living's semengat.
On that night one of the women who gathered to attend the ritual asked the shaman officiating at the ritual to enact a countermeasure against the haunting. The shaman declined to do so, saying that such countermeasures were not efficacious without continuous reinforcement by a shaman, and that one did not exist any longer in the longhouse in question. Finally, the shaman concluded by saying that it was the semengat, but not (the deceased shaman Jimbat) himself, that was bad.

This last statement made by the officiating shaman was evidently intended to defend the deceased from any charge of evil-doing by attributing it to an independent spiritual entity, that is his semengat. And, it is true the shaman's response was effective in appeasing the anxiety of people by resort to this standardised theory of evil semengat. But this statement was obviously irrelevant in this situation. The shaman alleged to have an evil semengat was dead, so there was no room for contraposing his semengat and his conscious personality. And yet this semantically inconsistent statement was made by the shaman and was accepted by those who attended the ritual. It was necessitated by the fact that the shaman wanted to avoid taking any measure against the supposed haunting. And in doing so, he fell into a semantic mistake by speaking as if the dead shaman were still alive. It would therefore be misleading to take this verbal mistake literally and to think that they conceive of something other than the semengat as preserving the personality after death. What is clear here is that the theory imposed by culture does not fully succeed in moulding the whole range of personal sentiment and memory into single consistent pattern. People may feel that the semengat is still something exterior to the concrete personality even after a person's death.

SUPERHUMAN BEINGS

So far I have used the term "spiritual" or "supernatural" beings without qualification in the context of Iban culture. To conclude this chapter I give a brief view of the ontological status of these beings in the Iban belief system for reference in subsequent discussion.
The generic Iban term for superhuman beings is antu. The world in which the Iban live is also inhabited, it is said, by various antu which are encountered in forests, at the riverside and even in the longhouse. The Iban believe that antu are real just as are the natural objects of the world, animate or inanimate. The belief in the existence of these beings is constantly reinforced by what are thought to be first-hand and second-hand experiences of encounters with them. They are also frequently seen in dreams. Unidentified persons seen in dreams are usually regarded by the Iban as antu, which more often than not remain anonymous.

We can distinguish a number of categories of superhuman beings. First, I should mention various kinds of malevolent and harmful spirits such as incubi (antu buyu'), spirits haunting forests (antu kamba' and others), spirits of women who died in childbirth (antu koklir) and giant spectre-hunters (antu gerasi) who hunt human beings with their dogs (called pasun or ukoi antu "antu's dog"). These primarily evil spirits are protean or inconstant in nature. Although they are thought to take human-like shapes when they intervene in human affairs, various kinds of wild animals are believed to have the ability to transform themselves into these anthropomorphic antu. The typical Iban phrase to designate this transformation is bebali' nyadi, which is a composition of two verbs, to "turn" or "change" (bebali') and to "become" (nyadi). The pigtailed monkey (nyumboh), among others, is thus thought to become an incubus and sometimes an antu gerasi. Even antu koklir, for all its relation to human ghosts, is often thought to be a metamorphosis of a porcupine (landak), a bearcat (enturn) or a giant ant (serganjang).

This belief in animal metamorphosis gives the ground of physical reality to these beings. As a transformation of the real body of an animal, an antu is a visible and substantive entity rooted in this world.
But the physical nature of *antu* is somewhat different from that of humans. With regard to *antu*, the Iban do not make a distinction between body and soul. They do not speak of the *semengat* of *antu*. Thus, when an *antu* is seen in dreams, it is thought to be present in its totality. Putative experience of an encounter with an *antu*, say, in the forest, and that which is experienced in dreams are, at least on the psychic level, experiences of a directly comparable kind.

The *semengat* theory explains the human experience of dreaming, providing both the subjects of dreaming and objects in dreams. Similar to the latter aspect of the *semengat*, an *antu* is thought to be an object seen in dreams. In this sense, *antu* is at the same cognitive level as *semengat*. But *semengat* is always thought of in relation to the complementary component, that is the body, and when it is taken as active, it is regarded as an entity which is temporarily dissociated from its bodily counterpart (cf. Endicott, 1970:53). By contrast, *antu* is not a "disembodied" entity. It is both "spiritual" and "physical" to the same degree. So it would be reasonable to say that the ontological status of *antu* transcends the dichotomy of body and soul. *Antu* thus constitutes a separate category of entity in the experiential world of the Iban. As such, *antu* can permeate freely through the border of two realms of experience, physical and spiritual, while, in the case of humans, these realms are separated and are attributed to different active components of the total personality. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the Iban belief system both physical entities (*tuboh*) and spiritual entities (*semengat*) of ordinary beings are thought to be able to become *antu*. The *semengat* of some persons can become *antu gerasi* in much the same fashion as animals can transform their bodies into various kinds of *antu*. 
Not all anthropomorphic antu are regarded as evil or harmful. Even antu gerasi, much feared by the Iban, are thought to be sometimes helpful (tau' nulong), particularly in inspiring a person with shamanic ability. On the other hand, superhuman beings of a special category, which are called petara (or betara), are thought to be definitely benevolent beings. They deserve to be called gods or deities in the usual sense of these words. As I shall take up this topic in Chapter 8, it is sufficient to note here that petara are included in the general category of antu and have most characteristics in common with the other antu mentioned above. The Iban mythical heroes, collectively known as the "people of Panggau" (Orang Panggau), make up another category of antu. The fabulous feats of Keling, Bungai Nuing, Laja and others are extensively described in sagas (ensera) and provide the Iban with ideal images of life in traditional settings. These heroes are usually thought to be benevolent and sometimes become the helpful familiars of individuals through revelation in dreams.

Finally, in relation to our present theme, the most relevant category of antu is that of ghosts; that is, the surviving semengat of dead humans. They are called collectively antu sebayan. The disembodied semengat which is released immediately after the death of a person is thought to have become an antu. However, while the initial phase of the funeral (the "wake") is still proceeding, this term usually refers to the ghosts of the previously dead, who are believed to come to the longhouse in order to guide the semengat of the newly dead person to Sebayan, the Land of the Dead. The characteristics of the ghosts as antu will be illustrated in detail in the subsequent chapters. Suffice it to say here that, by becoming antu, the surviving semengat acquire the degree of ontological concreteness which superhuman beings in general assume within the Iban belief system.
It should be mentioned, however, that the term antu also refers to a corpse in the process of a funeral. We are perhaps concerned here with a conceptual ambiguity which the bodily nature of a person engenders after his death. We may argue that although the personality is transferred from the bodily existence to the semengat at death, this shift is not yet fully completed as long as the body is present before the living. In theory, the semengat has already separated from the body. It is none the less undeniable that the personal body is still there. Then the corpse, as a personal entity, is an antu of the same status as the disembodied semengat, at least when it still retains its concreteness. That is, of course, not to say that there are two separate antu, of body and of "soul". Rather they are felt to be a unified set, somewhat contradicting the theory that the body and soul become fully separate at death. In this connection, for instance, the Iban speak of a funeral procession as nganjong antu, "carrying the corpse (antu) to the graveyard".

Sometimes the departed spirits are thought to have become other kinds of antu. So when people speak about the rumour that so and so became an antu after death, it commonly means that the semengat of the deceased became a particular kind of antu other than an ordinary ghost (antu sebayan). For instance, the semengat of the shaman Jimbat mentioned before was thought to have become an antu gerasi, just as it had occasionally become this antu when he was still alive. The antu koklir is another antu which is supposed to have its origin in a human ghost or a corpse. Some deceased people's semengat are believed to have become petara, that is, gods. I will take up these topics in fuller detail in later chapters.
NOTES

1. Among the Layar-Skrang Iban, transfer of membership from one bilek to another, through marriage or adoption, is not accompanied by any ritual which would symbolise the participation of the new member in the bungai of the new bilek.

2. It is worthy of noting that the image involved in the ayu concept of the Baleh Iban is more consistent in relation to social processes. Because an individual's ayu is thought to grow as an individual plant in a clump, this image can represent the unity of the bilek-family and the individuality of its members at the same time. The ritual accompanying adoption, transplantation of the ayu of the adopted person, is based on the notion that the ayu of a bilek-family is composed of relatively independent components corresponding to the members of the family. By contrast, there is no equivalent ritual among the Layar-Skrang Iban, whose notion of bungai does not include clear independent components; the fate of the individual members being represented by different leaves or branches on a single stem.

3. Both mati and parai can be traced back to a Proto-Austronesian reconstruction (see, Wurm and Wilson, 1975:56). These two words probably derived from different linguistic stocks. It cannot be determined whether mati is a borrowed word from another ethno-linguistic group (e.g. Malay) or parai was adopted at a certain stage from an unknown language. Both words alike denote the actual dying process as well as the state of being dead. A difference is the mati is used in various applied expressions as "stopping" of a clock, "boiled" water, and "standing" knot and so on; whereas the usage of parai is confined to factual death.

4. When "hot" and "cool" are applied directly to an individual's condition, they refer to his physical feelings. Both conditions are therefore apt to be symptomatic of various maladies.

5. In connection with this convergence of semengat and antu, the two concepts are sometimes used interchangeably. As I mentioned, a rice plant is supposed to have semengat, which is reasonably defined in this context as the spiritual essence involved in this important plant. Antu padi is also commonly used to denote this spiritual
essence, probably for emphasising its substantive and acting aspect. Similarly, certain natural phenomena such as wind (*ribut*) are mentioned in religious texts as *antu*. For instance, *Antu Ribut* ("Spirit of Wind") is supposed to be a messenger to the spiritual spheres such as the abodes of gods and, in some cases, the Land of the Dead.
In the last chapter I presented a general view of the Iban concepts of personality (comprising the *semengat* and the body) and their metaphors of life and death. Against this background it becomes possible now to turn to the mortuary rituals and related customs. In this and the two subsequent chapters the Iban mortuary rituals are described in accordance with their temporal sequences, that is, (1) the funeral and the mourning, (2) the rituals of separation and the end of mourning and (3) the final commemoration festival for the dead. The rituals described are mainly for persons who have died in "natural" ways. The different or additional ritual procedures which may be applied for those who died in various unusual ways will be described in Chapter 7, where I will deal with the Iban notion of divergent types of death.

DEATH

Attendance at Death and Funeral

Death may or may not be a sudden happening, depending on the particular circumstances of the death. Usually the death of a person is expected with some variable degree of certainty by members of the family, the longhouse and the wider local community. News that someone is seriously ill is generally communicated along with other local news by visitors from one longhouse to another. If there are close relatives such as parents, children and siblings in a distant longhouse, they may be asked
to come to see a patient by messengers who visit them for this specific purpose.

When death seems really imminent, relatives and friends in neighbouring longhouses may be informed. Exactly what category of relations should be informed is not prescribed. In any case, when such a message is brought to a longhouse, the news spreads almost immediately throughout the longhouse, and in principle anyone who is so inclined can go to see the person. But, in fact, those who do so are limited in number. An obvious reason is that most of a person's close friends and kin are concentrated within his own longhouse community, with only a few out-married former family members in other longhouses. Another factor is more directly connected with the Iban attitudes toward death. People are cautious about visiting a dying person because, if the person dies, the visitors present are required by the moral code to participate at least in the wake or night vigil which follows the death; the Iban are rather reluctant to impose this unnecessary observance on themselves. On a more general plane, it may be said, the death of a person is a psychological burden to those present, a feeling expressed in Iban as being "uncomfortable" or "uneasy" (enda' nyamai).

Reflecting this attitude toward death, the funeral rituals among the Upper Skrang (and other traditional Iban) are usually carried out with few if any attendants from other longhouses. Once death occurs in a longhouse, no formal announcement of it is normally sent to other longhouses, sometimes not even to a neighbouring longhouse in which the deceased's close relatives (say, a child) live. Relatives who attend the death and the ensuing rituals are almost confined to those who happen to have been present before the actual death occurred. They take rather matter-of-fact attitudes toward a relative's death in another longhouse. They may be willing to see a person who is expected
to die soon; after death occurs, they are certainly not.

During my stay at an Upper Skrang longhouse the only case of a funeral in the area which was attended by a large number of people who came from other longhouses after the death was that of the government appointed regional headman (*penghulu*) of the area. He died in the hospital of the Divisional town, and his encoffined remains were carried back to his longhouse on the middle Skrang by boat the next day. As the boat passed the longhouses which were on the way home, people of those longhouses were naturally informed of the *penghulu*'s death, and many followed to attend the funeral. Further, the news of his death was brought to the longhouses located upriver from his longhouse by the messengers who were going to call for a death dirge singer, a woman who lived at the furthest upriver longhouse. Thus the attendance of people from other longhouses certainly depends upon the deceased person's prominence in local affairs, though this factor is not strongly emphasised by those Iban.

In principle there is no regulation to exclude people of other longhouses from a funeral; nor is it the norm, conversely, to invite a large number of people to attend the funeral. But there are tendencies which are manifested in actual situations. In the Upper Skrang the marked tendency is for each longhouse community to carry out its members' funerals in relative isolation.

Local people call the type of funeral with few participants from other longhouses an "old style" or traditional (*adat lama*) one as against the feast-like funeral with a large number of "guests" invited from neighbouring longhouses, which is now common among the Saribas-Krian Iban and is recognised as the "new style".¹ The clinging to the traditional style of funeral is attributed by the local Iban to the economic backwardness of their communities, their lack of wealth for festivities and the
relative difficulty of travelling between longhouses. If conditions allowed, they contend, funerals in these remoter areas would be more festive.

There are, however, important differences in psychological expression between the two types of funeral. In the old style funeral, the principal emphasis is put on the expression of the bereavement of family members and, to a lesser extent, of other members of the longhouse community. At the same time the obnoxious aspect of death is stressed in this type of funeral. Death should be coped with within the longhouse community, which is a ritual unit *par excellence*. By contrast, in the festive funeral, additional emphasis is given to the expression of the social importance of the deceased. The new style funeral can perhaps be regarded as a popularisation of the type of funeral which is seen also in the region where the old style funeral is predominant but which is reserved for socially important persons. The contrast is shown by the native interpretation of the differences between the two types of custom. An ex-*pengulu* of the Upper Batang Ai, where the custom is "old style" as in the Upper Skrang, spoke ill of the custom of the Saribas-Krian Iban, saying: "They celebrate a man's death like holding a festival; they are happy if a fellow member dies. That's why they were always defeated by us in headhunting." From the Saribas point of view, their seeming festivity is the means for expressing respect or homage (*basā*) for the deceased person, which is lacking, they say, among the people who follow the old custom.

What has been said so far constitutes the background of the following description of the funeral rituals I observed at an Upper Skrang longhouse, called Sungai Paya after its place name. Certainly, traditional Iban attitudes toward death and funeral are not favourable to the making of direct observations. The opportunity for direct
observation depends largely on chance. I was able to make personal observations of actual deaths and of the rituals immediately following death on two occasions only. The following accounts therefore mostly derive from these two cases.

Reactions to the Imminence of Death

The death of a person is judged by the cessation of breathing. Before this final moment there is a struggle to maintain his life, and at the same time preparations are made to fulfil the ritual and other requirements in the event of the expected death. People awaiting an expected death respond in diverse ways. It depends, of course, on how the dying person comes to the critical stage and the relation between the person dying and the person responding. This is too complex a matter to deal with without full information on individual cases. Here I will give a straightforward description of a case which illustrates how some Iban react to the expected death of a person.

Sta had a gastric problem for a long time, which caused general deterioration of his health. People assumed he would not live much longer. When he fainted suddenly at the neighbouring longhouse (it was the longhouse in which his half-brother and one of his sons lived), many believed his death was approaching. He was taken back to his own longhouse.

Within a week after his return to the longhouse, Sta twice vomited a quantity of blood, and people's conviction of his imminent death became stronger. Sati, Sta's wife, arranged a healing ceremony, but the shaman Gima, the headman of a neighbouring longhouse, declined to come, giving a dubious excuse. The ceremony was postponed for two days, when the shaman finally accepted the summons.

The healing ceremony combined a shamanic search (pelian) for the patient's semengat by Gima and a ceremony called bedara' for calling the mythical shamans by ritual song incantation, which was performed by a party of lemembang led by Anggok, a member of the longhouse. The shamanic ceremony was simple and held in the bilek, and Gima claimed to have caught Sta's errant semengat. Then Sta was carried to the gallery, where he lay covered with a ceremonial ikat fabric. The bedara' continued the whole night, and early in the morning, after the "arrival" of the mythical shamans, a piglet was killed and its liver was examined. The liver was found to be in exceptionally good condition without any marked stain on the surface. Those who examined it invariably thought it boded well. Sta got up temporarily and smoked. He said in a peaceful tone that he did not feel he was dying and added, "It's just an attack of chronic illness."
That day was to be a rest day for the whole longhouse as a result of the ritual performance of the previous night which involved the whole community. A majority of the longhouse members therefore worked at repairing the fish pool adjacent to the longhouse. The shaman and an elder from the same longhouse carried out a minor ritual for terminating the prohibition on remarriage for an old man whose wife had died a half year before. The overall atmosphere in the morning was one of relaxation. Later, I talked with the shaman in my hut.

Suddenly, at about noon, screaming shouts of "P'Manggat! P'Manggat! (a teknonym for Sta)" arose from the gallery where Sta was lying, and I heard several people running on the gallery.

When I arrived at the spot, I saw Sati and Miai (Sta's daughter) with women of adjacent bileks stooping around Sta, whose limbs were sticking out stiffly. Two old women there were shouting loudly, "Pulai ('come back')! P'Manggat, pulai!", while Sati held Sta's shoulders and whispering into his ear gently, "Come back, you, come back." They told me that Sta had fainted when he was getting up to defecate.

Two young married brothers brought small bamboo pipes, heated them over the fire on the gallery, and blew hot air several times into Sta's ears in order to bring him out of the coma. Later they were sent to the neighbouring longhouse to inform Sta's kin of his imminent death.

About ten minutes later Sta was taken into the bilek. There he lay surrounded by his wife and children and women of the longhouse. They massaged Sta's abdomen and occasionally examined his state of consciousness by calling his name and asking if he could recognise the voice of the speakers.

Minutes later, Ngelambong, the longhouse headman, entered the bilek and asked if wood planks for making an improvised coffin were available. Having seen there was no suitable plank, he decided to send people to cut wood in the forest. Thirteen men, including Sta's son Tangu, left for the forest. A simple purification ceremony of smearing a bush-knife with the white of an egg was performed in the bilek before they left. Sati, so absorbed in caring for Sta, had not made any preparation for the purification. A woman of another bilek carried it out.

Meanwhile, the shaman Gima and his fellow longhouse member left to return to their longhouse. After Sta first fainted, Gima lodged his small bag containing various charms used in shamanic practices in my hut. The reason given was that he wanted to protect the charms against the effects of the death, and if there had been no suitable place such as my hut available, it would have been put on the ground. Gima told Ngelambong that he wanted to leave, and Ngelambong assented, saying, "Sure, you can leave. There is no more business for you here."

Women of the longhouse came to Sta's bilek to see how things were going there. Most of them stayed there only briefly and then went back to their own part of the gallery. One of them went close to Sta's head and stood there, just looking down at him. When Sta rolled over and stretched his arm toward her foot, she was so frightened that she jumped backward and left the bilek immediately. Those who stayed in the bilek and took care of Sta were an old childless widow living in the bilek next to Sta's; two middle aged women, who, though not closely related to Sta, were sympathetic in personality and, incidentally, rather good at expressing grief in ritualised wailing;
and Chelenga, the wife of Anggok and the elder sister of Sati. Sati, Miai and Sta's son Bungkong were continuously in the bilek.

Only a few men visited the bilek. Most of those who remained at the longhouse were sitting on their own parts of the gallery. Some children came at the earlier stage, but later they largely played on the gallery as they usually did. About two o'clock a woman on the gallery entered her bilek to fetch a bundle of grass fibre string (lernbat), and she then tied a string around each ankle of her son and the other children who were under about ten years of age. This is for the protection of the semengat of the young children, which are thought to be particularly vulnerable when a person dies and during the night that follows the death.

In the meantime, people went down to the river to bathe and fetch water in case there was insufficient time after the death had actually occurred.

This is what happened immediately before the actual death of Sta. The general atmosphere of the whole community changed drastically after Sta fainted and entered a coma (luput). A mood of relaxation had been dominant before it, perhaps simply because the night-long curing session was finished or more specifically because there was no sign that death would occur within a day or so. As a woman testified later, they did not expect the death on that day when the ceremony had just been completed in the morning. After Sta fainted, the atmosphere changed to one of tension and restlessness. This sudden change of atmosphere was clearly due to a realisation of the imminence of Sta's death, after a long period of suspense. Without doubt there is a wide psychological gap between the mere expectation of an approaching death and the certain realisation that the death will take place soon. This was manifested in this particular case by the fact that all the actual preparations for the funerary rituals were done in haste after Sta had fainted.

Generally speaking, however, a long period of expectation of a death allows people to make certain preparations, procedural and psychological. When an old woman, named Rimbu, died a year previously at Sungai Paya, a coffin had been ready for about a week. People did not even mildly panic when she fell into a final coma. Only at the final minutes immediately
before her death I heard women's loud shouts of "Come back! Come back!", which called on her semengat to return.

The behaviours of individuals in the above account were various, some of which were associated with role expectations, while others were not. The ascription of roles in such situations is not rigid among the Iban. Obviously the task of going to the forest to cut wood for a coffin falls to the males, but participation in it is determined completely by personal choice. On the other hand, taking care of or simply coming to watch the dying person is virtually confined to older female members of the longhouse, though there is again no strict rule as to who should do this.

However, there were clear differences in the reactions to the imminence of Sta's death between the bilek-family members, other members of the longhouse and the visitors from another longhouse. Sati was completely involved in nursing Sta, not thinking of any preparation for the funeral. Her sister told me after Sta's death that she advised Sati to choose a jar which would be taken to the grave, but that Sati would not follow her advice, protesting strongly that Sta had not yet died. This was evidently a refusal to recognise what was happening to Sta. Sta's children, Miai and Bungkong, with tears in their eyes, behaved rather absent-mindedly, massaging Sta's body and sometimes sitting silently in the corner of the bilek. The reaction of other members of the longhouse, in contrast, was predominantly acceptance of the imminence of Sta's death, as is evident from their engaging in preparation for what would happen after his death. And finally the departure, almost in flight, of the visitors, one of whom was the shaman, was an escape from a situation which could yield no benefits for them and could even do harm to the spiritual power of the shaman through damage to his charms.
Death and Wake

Among the traditional Iban the rituals which immediately follow the death of a person are simple. They mainly concentrate on the removal of the corpse and the protection of the living community against the polluting effects of death. A corpse is regarded as a source of death pollution. So contact with it is kept to a minimum. A pregnant woman must not touch it; otherwise it would cause deformity (menawa') of her future baby. However, apart from exceptional cases in which deaths occur in some violent fashion or when the corpses are horrifying in appearance, a corpse as such is usually not feared. Being the remains of an intimately known person, it is still addressed as the person him-or her-self so long as it is present in the longhouse or until it is finally buried. Grief which is openly expressed over the passing of the person is thus directed to the corpse. Iban attitudes toward a corpse and handling of it derive from these two sometimes conflicting aspects of a corpse; (1) as an impersonal object, it is polluting and therefore should be removed with meticulous care, and (2) as a personal entity, it should be treated with affectionate concern.

Death causes a certain degree of anxiety to survivors. It reveals the reality of human existence: the vulnerability of human life and the mortal nature of humans. This anxiety is manifested during the night which follows the death of a person as fear of ghosts which are believed to have arrived from the Land of the Dead (Sebayan) to fetch the semengat of the newly deceased person. Those ghosts surround the longhouse as they wait for the newly departed spirit to join them. Measures should be taken to prevent those ghosts from entering the longhouse and taking the semengat of the still living. This makes up another motif (in addition to the handling of the corpse) of the rituals immediately following the death.
These brief considerations may help to clarify the ideas underlying the practices described below.

I was never present at the very moment of a death. For both of the deaths I encountered at Sungai Paya, my direct observations began when the corpse was being taken out from the bilek to the gallery.

After the cessation of breathing, the body cannot remain in the bilek for long. People say that the remains must be taken out (tanggong) as soon as possible simply because "the bilek is not a proper place for a corpse"; that is, the bilek should be the place for the living members. Accordingly, the initial treatment of the body is simple. As far as I could find out, the only thing which must be done is to close (mejam) the deceased's eyes by wiping any kind of oil on the lids. This practice is indispensable, so the phrase "closing so-and-so's eyes" can be metonymically used to designate looking after a person at his or her death bed. It is still remembered and recounted by the local people with a degree of horror that a woman who died from mammary cancer did not receive this necessary treatment, because her body gave off a bad smell and no one dared to touch her flesh. People tacitly reproach her husband, who is the only survivor of the bilek, when they talk about that incident. Probably the eyes must be closed in order that the deceased should not see the living, which is a recurrent motif in Iban mortuary practices (see p.98 and p.241).

If the surviving members of the family want to "dress up" the corpse, it should be done in the bilek. I heard of a number of cases in which the corpses were dressed in fine trousers, shirts and even leather shoes. They are supposed to be used by the deceased in the Land of the Dead, as St. John writes:

They are often very particular about the dress in which they are to be buried. Many of the old Sakarang (sic) women have asked Mr. Johnson for handsome jackets to be used after their death for this
purpose, saying that when they arrived in the other world, they would mention his name with respect and gratitude on the account of kindness shown to them in this. (1863, i, 59).

As a matter of fact the dressing up of the corpse depends on the possessions of the family of the deceased. In both cases I observed at Sungai Paya, no special "dressing up" was done. When Rimbu died, her body was taken to the gallery almost immediately after the cessation of breathing, while calls for her lost semengat to return were still echoing in the bilek. She was covered with only a cheap cotton cloth which had been used as her skirt on her death bed. Sta was more fortunate in this respect. Although he was not dressed up, his body was wrapped with a blanket which Bungkong had bought during his recent stay in Brunei and which Sta and Sati proudly regarded as evidence of their son's diligence.

The corpse is carried out to the gallery by those present at the moment of death, including members of the deceased's bilek. In passing the bilek door, a pinch of unhusked rice is thrown over the carried corpse. This measure ensures that the family's store of rice may not be consumed by the departed spirit in future.

As a rule the corpse is laid on his or her part of the gallery. A large rattan mat is spread out there. Then a smaller palm leaf mat is placed on it at the centre. The corpse, facing upward, is laid on it with the head in the direction of the open verandah and the feet toward the bilek. A jar is brought from the bilek and placed between the gallery and the tempuan-passage.

In Iban ritual contexts, the gallery proper (ruai) is the place in which ritual paraphernalia are set up and along which, during various festivals, ritual bards (lemembang) walk while singing ritual chants. Transfer of the remains from the bilek to the gallery thus signifies that they become the central object of a ritual which involves the whole long-house community. That is not to say, however, that the community as a
whole accepts responsibility for the funeral ritual. It still remains essentially a bilek-family affair, as is shown by the fact that the body is laid on the part of the gallery which belongs to the bilek of the deceased. The bereaved bilek-family are referred to by the phrase "those who own the death" (empu mati or empu parai) and their involvement remains central throughout the funeral and the mourning period. The placing of a corpse on the gallery is practised, as it were, at a point of contact between the bilek-family and the rest of the longhouse community.

After the corpse is laid on the gallery, women of the longhouse may come to the spot and express their grief. They sit around the corpse and wail. The crying of the women is loud and long, expressing their grief at the passing away of the persons by such conventional phrases as, "Oh, Father ... Father, sad is my heart. You, Father of Audacious Youth, are departing, leaving us behind," interrupted by a series of sobs. Thus the expressed grief is directed to the deceased himself. As far as I could discern, lamentation which referred to the specific circumstances of the death or the specific ideas a wailer has about a particular person's death is rare. Although the terms of address vary, of course, in accordance with kinship relation between the mourner and the deceased, the verbal contents of the lamentation are simple and largely conventional. One rare exception occurred when Menai, in bewailing over the death of her mother, Rimbu, cried out, "Oh, Mother... You left us behind... I can't see you again... In future, I can see you only in dreams."

Not long after the transfer of the corpse to the gallery, the objects required for the funeral are arranged. A gourd containing water and a porcelain bowl which contains a pinch of uncooked rice and salt are placed beside the top of the corpse's head. A jar and other objects which will be taken to the graveyard as the goods to be given to the ghost (see
below, p.67) are placed on the tempuan-passage close to the corpse's feet. The roughly made doors of the entrances at both ends of the tempuan-passage are shut. At each end of the tempuan-passage, inside the closed door, a mortar (lesong) is placed with its bottom up, and beside it a pestle (alu) is set up with one end leaning on the wall separating a bilek apartment from the gallery. This set of objects is thought to form a barrier against the ghosts (antu sebayan) who visit the longhouse to fetch the semengat of the newly deceased. For it is supposed that in the ghosts' eyes pestles appear as snakes (ular) or, when the species is specified, as cobras (tedong), and appear as pigs (babi) or tigers (remaung). Thus, as is vividly depicted in the text of an elaborate death dirge (see Chapter 6), the ghosts' intention to enter the longhouse is thwarted, and they can only wait for the newly deceased's semengat to descend the longhouse entrance ladder and join them on the ground in the open space surrounding the longhouse. Over the entrance from the open verandah to the part of the gallery on which the corpse is laid a sheet of ceremonial ikat fabric is hung. This fabric is called baia' pandang ("the displayed or exposed gift to the deceased") or dinding hari ("the wall against the sun"), presumably because it is supposed to protect the deceased's semengat and/or the living community from the damaging heat of sunshine and the "hot" condition it might produce. It is also said that the ceremonial fabric appears to the ghosts as a "stone fort" (kuta batu) and thus forms another barrier against the spirits of the dead.7 By these means, as we may say, the whole longhouse is put in a state of symbolic seclusion from the outer world.

Wailing continues at sporadic intervals from the time the corpse is first placed on the gallery until it is encoffined and taken out of the longhouse to the graveyard. Among the Skrang Iban and probably other
sub-groups of the Iban who practise the "old style" of funerals, the norm is that a corpse should be taken to the graveyard "as soon as possible" after the minimal ritual requirements have been fulfilled. As a rule this involves one whole night of wake.

On the night of the wake it is strictly prohibited for any member of the longhouse to sleep in the bilek apartments. People should either keep vigil over the corpse or at least sleep on the resting places in the gallery. Normally sleeping on the gallery is confined to unmarried young men and some retired old men of the longhouse along with any male visitors. As far as I know, it is only on the night of a wake that the entire community, from infants to the elderly of both sexes, should spend the whole night on the gallery — even at important festivals, infants and women spend long periods of time in the bileks. The rationale given by the Iban for the wake or vigil (senggai' or rabat) on the night following a death is twofold. In the first place, watching over the remains is a way of looking after the deceased (ngintu antu). As a woman once said, through this care-taking "the survivors can remember the deceased and the deceased can remember the living". It is, then, an expression of homage or affection toward the deceased. The second explanation concerns its benefit to the living. That is, the prohibition against sleeping in the bileks is to protect the living against the visiting spirits of the dead. If anyone sleeps in the bileks, the dead would be induced to enter the longhouse and take their semengat back with them when they return to the Land of the Dead, escorting the semengat of the newly deceased. This idea is thus cognate with that of tying children's ankles for protection of their semengat (a custom called ikat semengat). A youth gave an account, which I suspect was his personal interpretation, that on the night of the wake the spirits of the dead go searching for fish on the bottom of the river, lifting stones to catch the fish hiding there;
mosquito nets in the bileks are seen by them as river bed stones and sleepers under the nets as fish — thus they would catch the living.

These two types of explanation for the custom of holding a wake, both of which are commonly held and sometimes given by a single person, well reflect the ambivalent attitude taken by the Iban toward human death: on the one hand their affectionate concern for the deceased and on the other their fear, however it may be explained, of the general or anonymous spirits of the dead. A myth of origin of the mortuary rituals, which I will present in Chapter 7, reveals this dual concern while explaining why it is necessary to fulfil the proper rituals for dead humans. It reveals that paying proper attention to the deceased, by caring for their remains, was the only way in which man was able to cope with a series of deaths which afflicted the primordial community. The living's community could not be protected by mere disposal of the corpses, but only through a properly expressed concern for the dead.

Apart from the explanation made at the ideational level, the wake custom has an important psychological value for the surviving people. The wake is after all a gathering in one place, with all involved being well within one another's sight. This certainly mitigates the anxiety which the death of a person causes the survivors to feel. Even under ordinary conditions, the Iban are fond of being in close, often physical, contact with their friends, and young boys and girls often sleep together with age peers of the same sex. I saw and heard of several women and boys who were inexplicably reluctant to stay in the bilek or sleep for days following the occurrence of a death. For example, a woman who was cooking alone in her bilek fled to the gallery when she heard wailing in a neighbouring bilek during the mourning period. My wife, who was staying during the wake for Sta in our hut attached to the open verandah surprised the community people by her fearlessness.
During the night of a wake it is the womenfolk of the community who predominate in the group around the corpse. There is a constant replacement of wailing women; as one comes, another leaves. Thus almost all the married women come at least once to express their grief, openly and sometimes in a ritualised manner. They cover their heads and faces with plain white cloths or towels if they give prolonged lamentation, presumably to avoid exposing their distorted faces in public. Some women around the corpse hold sticks with which they drive away approaching dogs. For a corpse must not be jumped over by dogs. It is supposed that a corpse would get up, presumably as a spectre, if such an accident should happen.  

In contrast, most male members of the longhouse stay away from the corpse, either sitting on their own parts of the gallery or, if a coffin must still be completed, working on it on the open verandah belonging to the deceased's *bilek*. At the wake for Rimbu no male adult of another *bilek* came to the part where the corpse was lying, except when preparation was being made for encoffining it. Even her sons and brothers remained on other parts of the gallery. At the wake for Sta, his son and brother who had come from the neighbouring longhouse assisted at the spot, sometimes weeping and sobbing. But only a few other males joined them even briefly.

By and large, the wake as it is practised in the Upper Skrang is not a rowdy occasion. Except for the loud wailing around the corpse, the whole longhouse is silent and almost solemn. Neither drink nor food is served during the night. Once the corpse and other objects are laid out on the gallery, no prescribed ritual other than wailing is performed until dawn when the corpse is coffined. The following is a brief sketch of the events that took place at the wake for Sta.
Sta died at about half past three in the afternoon. He was laid on the gallery within five minutes after the death in the bilek. Sati and Miai wailed vehemently at opposite sides of Sta's head. About 4:15 p.m., Sta's relations arrived from their longhouse. Manggat, Sta's son, clung to the lying body and sobbed. The visiting women joined the wailing group of women. Udo, Sta's half-brother, with tears but controlling himself well, gave a ten dollar bill to Sati who was sitting next to him. I do not know the exact reason for this gift but it seemed to be an informal and personal expression of compassion of a relatively well-to-do relative toward the widow. Bungkong, another son of Sta, set about preparing rattan ropes for tying the coffin.

About six o'clock the party that went to cut a tree for the coffin came back. A man of the party asked whether they could enter the longhouse from a ladder leading to the open verandah. A woman answered simply, "I don't know." Soon they came up at one of the main entrances of the longhouse at which a mortar and a pestle were placed. After entering the longhouse, they walked along the tempuan-passage; some went back directly to their own galleries, and some went out to the open verandah to complete the coffin which was carried in also through the main entrance. The coffin and people who participated in cutting it were not allowed to trespass upon any parts of the gallery proper other than their own and that of the deceased. From then on a group of men worked on the final refinement of the coffin, for it was still too thick, and the cavity was too shallow. Before the work commenced, a minor purification was done on the coffin and the workers. An egg was placed in the cavity of the coffin. Udo took it, made a small hole in it with a small knife, and smeared egg white on some part of each worker's body, using a twig as an applicator. The party cutting the coffin had not been informed of Sta's death. It was when they could see nobody at the bathing place that they came to know of the death. Tangu, a son of Sta and one of the returning party, sat on the gallery in distress. After having a meal in the bilek, he lay down on the gallery, covering his whole body with a blanket. He did not get up until about four o'clock on the morning when Sta's body was placed in the coffin.

The gallery around the corpse was most crowded around nine o'clock, and as time passed, the number of women gathered there decreased. About 10:30 p.m. the coffin was completed. All the entrances between the open verandah and the gallery had been closed by this time either by doors or by leaf awnings.

By eleven o'clock most of the longhouse members were asleep under the mosquito nets hung over the resting places on the gallery. Tangu, Bungkong and Udo were lying side by side, seemingly asleep, near the head of the corpse. Sati and Miai still continued to wail by the sides of Sta's head.

A few other women were sitting and wailing by Sta's lower body. This situation continued far into the night. About 1:30 a.m., Sati stopped crying and told Miai, who had been lying down for a while, and Manggat and Bungkong, who had woken shortly before, in a low and exhausted voice, "Children, don't quarrel with each other in future... And do cry now. Tomorrow and the day after your father can be no longer seen." Manggat sobbed at hearing the words.

There is no fixed time of carrying the completed coffin into the gallery. At the funeral of Sta is was carried in shortly before the
encoffining and the commencement of the funeral procession. Rimbu's remains were placed in the coffin earlier but the lid was fixed on it immediately before the procession began. In any case, the encoffining must be done before dawn. The palm leaf mat on which the corpse has been lying is rolled around the corpse to cover it completely. Both men and women help to put it in the coffin. The men put the lid on the coffin, fill in the gap between the coffin and the lid with dammar resin and fasten the lid with nails. While the men do this, the women-folk, having gathered again by this time, wail more loudly than before. Finally a single carrying pole, of wood or stout bamboo, is tied longitudinally to the lid with rattan ropes.

At this juncture a woman of the deceased's bilek-family throws some food and water to the ground under the open verandah in order to cater for the departed semengat on the way to the Land of the Dead. At the funeral of Sta, Sati took a gourd water container and a porcelain bowl which contained rice and salt and broke them between the open verandah and the gallery. Then she threw them through a gap between the planks. She was exhausted and did this brusquely.

BURIAL
The Funeral Procession

The burial party starts early in the morning, preferably before dawn. It is led by a torch or two, which have been kindled in the fire that had been kept burning in the fireplace on the gallery near the corpse throughout the night. The coffin, covered with the ceremonial fabric which had been hung as the baia' pandang during the night, is carried by four men. The members of the party bring tools for digging the grave, rice for a meal after the burial, cooking utensils for preparing the meal, the goods which are to be placed on the grave for the deceased's use in his after life (collectively called baia') and a fowl. No
married women of the longhouse participate in the funeral procession. But all the adolescent girls of the longhouse take part in it, because, it is said, they are the ones who prepare the meal while the men perform the burial. The reason for the exclusion of the married women of the community is not clear, and some testified that it was not a prescribed custom. It is, however, beyond doubt that there is a strong tendency to exclude them from the burial party as is also reported by earlier writers (Brooke Low cited in Ling Roth, 1896:138; Gomes, 1911:136; Morgan and Beavitt, 1971:292). The informants of Morgan and Beavitt said the reason for this pattern was that women "might get so upset when the coffins went in the ground that they would kill themselves." (1971:292). I myself heard this rationale given in a case in which an unmarried girl was said to have been not allowed to accompany the party for her mother who had died from an unsuccessful abortion. Female emotional susceptibility is thus one explanation. The disposal of a corpse should be done rather dispassionately as one informant put it, "We should not be too sad in the graveyard." He told a story of a man who had been so afflicted by his cousin's death that he had not ceased to wail over the corpse even on the riverbank opposite the graveyard: "The man cried vehemently over the corpse, saying that he wanted to be taken (to the other world) together with the deceased. Suddenly, the corpse sat up on the spot. The afflicted man leaped in joy and gave a roll of tobacco to the corpse which he thought had revived. The others who had carried the corpse fled in terror, having seen the corpse moving. The next morning they returned to the riverbank and found only four eyeballs left there. It is said that the man and the corpse were eaten by a manhunter spirit (antu gerasi)." Excessive expression of grief at the burial may thus harm the survivors. The shift of the dominant role in the funeral from
females to males is at least partly due to the extrovert character of males and their emotional resilience and also to their greater physical strength which is required in digging a grave.

The burial party should go along the tempuan-passage so as not to pollute the gallery belonging to other bilek-families. And it should leave by the ladder at the prescribed end of the longhouse. This end is called ujong ("top" or "end") as against pun ("base" or "beginning"). This designation is derived from the timbers that form the beams of the longhouse, the "top" being the end of the timbers that was toward the top of the original tree. The ujong-end is associated with polluting rituals which are exclusively to do with funeral rituals. The pun-end, by contrast, is associated with benign rituals. For example, at agricultural festivals the invited deities are supposed to enter the longhouse through the entrance at this end. After the procession has left the longhouse a small amount of ash from the fireplace on the gallery is scattered over the route which the party passed, presumably to erase any possible effect of the pollution.

There are a number of prohibitions imposed on the processional party in order to avoid contamination from death pollution. To use an object, say, a boat, belonging to persons other than those closely related to the deceased is prohibited, and if the prohibition is violated, the offender is fined. Also, to take planted vegetables belonging to people other than the deceased's bilek-family for use as a relish in the meal after the burial or to use leaves of planted palms as plates in such a meal is prohibited. Instead, they can be bought usually at a very nominal charge. To enter another longhouse on the way to and from the burial is also prohibited. A similar caution applies to the processional party as well. If one of the carriers of the coffin happens to fall down on the way to the graveyard,
whether or not the coffin itself falls on the ground, the whole party must make a series of war cries. Otherwise, their "life" (ayu) might be defeated and fall into the same fate as the deceased's ayu.

Generally speaking, Iban graveyards (pendam) are accessible either by boat, by walking or by a combination of the two. There is no strict regulation concerning the geographical relation between a longhouse and its communal graveyard. The longhouse community of Sungai Paya shares a graveyard with the neighbouring longhouse of Lepong Kepayang. Whether the coffin is conveyed by boat or carried on the shoulders of men depends on the river conditions and the availability of a boat. In any case, however, the Skrang river must be crossed by boat just before reaching the graveyard, which is on the bank opposite to the shingle bank where the after-burial meal is prepared.

Burial

About a dozen men, including male members of the deceased's bilek-family, participate in the actual work of interment. The rest of the party stay on the shingle on the opposite riverbank. At the landing place on the graveyard side of the river, the head of the fowl (a cock when the deceased is male and a hen when the deceased is female) is chopped off. This must be done by a single stroke of a bush-knife, which contrasts with the sawing procedure used to kill sacrificial fowls in other rituals, which are held at the longhouse. The head is left on the spot. The fowl, or rather its semengat, is supposed to be taken by the deceased to the Land of the Dead (see Chapter 6, p.200). The bow of the boat used for conveying the corpse is smeared with the blood of the fowl for purification. Then the body of the fowl is taken to the opposite bank to be cooked.

By the side of the path leading from the landing place to the graveyard there is a place called tempaya' where the objects used for
carrying the corpse are disposed of. There is a small heap of rotten awnings and mats, which were used for corpses that were conveyed by boat.

After a brief survey of the graveyard in search of a suitable piece of land for a new grave, the digging party begins their business in an apparently nonchalant way. Two or three persons dig with shovels at any one time. Diggers are replaced by others when they get tired. In both cases I observed, the depth of the graves was roughly the height of a man's chest, that is, about four feet. The atmosphere and content of the conversation among those digging were remarkably similar in the two cases. Often they told of funny experiences in Brunei and Sabah where they had spent sometimes years as workers. A story was often followed by laughter and another story. They talked much about death, but death of townsmen in traffic accidents or a murder by a gangster and so on. This apparent merriment may be understood as a deliberate suppression of the stress involved in such a psychologically poignant task as digging a grave for a loved community member (see pp.62-3).

After the grave has reached a sufficient depth, each person who participated in the digging takes a small V-shaped twig from a nearby tree and hangs it on his neck. They enter the grave, and when they climb back out, they murmur, "Pulai semengat" ("Return semengat"). The twig is called the "hook of the semengat" (pengait semengat). The purpose of this custom is to ensure that the participants' semengat are not entrapped in the grave.

In order to put the coffin into the grave, two sturdy logs are laid across the grave, and the coffin is put on them. Then the rattan ropes are untied and the pole used as the carrying bar is removed, but the ropes are left stretched under the bottom of the coffin. Those who
stand on both sides of the grave secure the coffin by holding tightly to the untied ropes which hold the coffin. The transverse logs are then removed, and the coffin is lowered carefully into the grave.

People are careful not to let living leaves fall into the grave. The Iban say that this would cause the deceased to return to trouble or frighten (ngemba) the living in various ways (see Chapter 7). If such a mistake is made, it is supposed the deceased may think he is still alive and will therefore haunt the living's sphere. Generally this belief is firmly held even though an individual's experience may contradict it. Ali, standing near Sta's grave while it was being filled in, contended that it would not matter, saying, "When we buried my father a long time ago, a living leaf was buried. But we were never troubled by his ghost. So when one fell on the bottom of the grave at a subsequent burial, I asked them, 'Why do you throw it away? We've never heard any ghostly sounds.'" Another young man present thereupon objected to Ali's contention and gave an example of ghostly troubles which were believed to have been caused by failure to remove such leaves at a previous burial. Somewhat later another man commented on this matter, saying that this type of death (of Sta) would not bring troubles to the living anyway, presumably referring to the comparatively peaceful nature of his death.

In the graveyard of the Sungai Paya community a coffin is placed in the grave with the head of the corpse toward the west, or, as they say, toward the direction of the sunset. The reason given to me on an earlier occasion was that it was simply a traditional and "natural" custom, obviously by association of death with the sunset. Although the solar system is not commonly mentioned in connection with Iban burial,\textsuperscript{12} this nonetheless points to the possible association of human life with the passage of the sun and may be related to the notion of the underworld.
and the movement of the sun into it every night (see Chapter 7). At the burial of Sta, Manggat remarked, while watching the procedure, "People in the down-river areas set the head in the direction of the sunrise so that the deceased faces and sees the sunset and learns he is really dead. We, in the up-river area, set the head in the direction of the sunset. So the deceased (seeing the sunrise) tends to think he is still alive." This seemed to be Manggat's personal conclusion as to why ghostly troubles are more frequent in the up-river area.

The grave is quickly filled with earth. When the depth of the grave is reduced to about a foot, a dish and a bowl used by the deceased during his lifetime are placed at the middle of the grave, and a jar is set upright above the fore part of the coffin. And then the grave is covered completely with the upper part of the jar protruding above the ground. The plate and the bowl, which are sometimes broken, are supposed to be sent to the Land of the Dead with the deceased. The jar is referred to as the marker of the grave (kelai lubang), being the only durable object placed at the spot.

The ground over the grave is then levelled and packed firmly by trampling. A few logs are placed longitudinally on the grave in order to stabilise the dug-out earth. On the logs the deceased's personal belongings, which are also supposed to serve as his utensils in the afterlife, are placed. These objects are collectively called baia'. Among the contemporary Skrang Iban the items placed as baia' are not numerous. At Sta's burial his baia' consisted of a bamboo tobacco container with some tobacco and nipa-palm leaves for rolling cigarettes in it, a bush knife, a small cutting knife, a worn-out mosquito net (these were put in a medium-sized basket); a bottle of honey and a small fish-trap which had been made by Sta shortly before he died were placed beside the basket. In the case of Rimbu's burial, a kettle, a
bottle of water and a small knife were put in a basket, and a bronze box containing betel leaves, areca nuts, lime and a nut-cutter was placed in the coffin. The ceremonial fabric which is brought with the coffin to the graveyard is also a part of the baia' (with the special name of "displayed baia'"), but this is invariably taken back to the longhouse.

Finally a rough shelter, with palm-leaf awnings as its roof, is set up over the grave. Then each person takes one of the twig hooks they used before, and the burial party leaves the grave, each hanging the "hook" from his neck. These "hooks" are disposed of when the party leaves the graveyard. Some men drive the tip ends of their "hooks" into the ground at the landing place of the graveyard; others throw them away in the river. Traditionally everyone who leaves the graveyard should drive a piece of wood into the ground at the edge of the graveyard (Howell, 1963a:69). As Freeman observed among the Baleh Iban, each of the burial party planted a branch of a tree with its root-end uppermost (kayu' tunsang; "inverted trees"). All these acts represent the putting of a barrier between the world of the living and the Land of the Dead. For the border between the two realms has been dangerously opened by the digging of the grave.

The Return of the Procession

The people waiting on the opposite shore have already cooked the fowl and a sufficient amount of rice by the time the burial party arrives there. Broad leaves taken from nearby trees or palms are used as the receptacles for both rice and relish. At the beginning of the meal, one of the male members of the bereaved family should be served ritually. One of the party makes three small heaps of rice on the blade of a bush-knife and puts a piece of chicken meat on each
heap. The member of the bereaved family should eat them without using his hands. The heaps of rice are called *asti pana* ("the rice of *pana*") and the ritual is called *makai pana* ("eating *pana*"). *Pana* refers to the food offerings to the deceased, which are to be made for a certain period of time after the death (see pp.81-2). The eating of these heaps of *pana* rice by the bereaved family member in this ceremonial meal indicates that the number of days during which the food offerings are made is three.

I could not get any explanation as to why the bereaved should not use his hands. One possible interpretation is that he mimics the ghost doing so; at least, the ghost cannot eat the offerings in the usual way. This interpretation may be supported, though indirectly, by the fact that the place of the meal is called "the shingle for *pedara’" (kerangan pedara’). *Pedara’* is a category of ceremonial offerings (piring) which is usually directed to anonymous deities. No offering is made at this place unless the heaps of *pana* rice are regarded as an offering (in this case, to the deceased as represented by the bereaved). Possibly the meal in the field near the graveyard (generally known as "the meal at the graveyard" (*makai di pendam*); a graveyard is not necessarily located on a riverbank) is a form of acting out by the living of the meal of the departed spirit. If this interpretation is correct, it also explains the custom that, after the meal, the remaining rice should be thoroughly disposed of in the fire and the baskets in which the rice was brought from the longhouse must be abandoned in the nearby bushes. This would be to avoid further contact with the departed spirit.

Usually the return of the procession is a simple matter. One man goes ahead of the rest of the party carrying a bamboo stick which holds a feather from the killed fowl, smeared with its blood. On arriving
at the longhouse, he sets up the bamboo stick at the foot of the entrance ladder by which they took out the coffin earlier in the day. Each member of the burial party should touch the feather, with a foot or a hand, to purify himself from death pollution before entering the longhouse. And then he should walk along the tempuan-passage directly to his own part of the gallery or to his bilek apartment without trespassing on any part of the gallery belonging to others. Bathing before arriving at the longhouse is often reported from other groups of Iban (e.g., Howell, 1963a:69; Morgan and Beavitt, 1971:297), but it is not thought to be necessary among the Upper Skrang Iban.

There are some complications if the processional party hears or sees certain omens on the way to or from the graveyard or at the graveyard during the burial. They are taken seriously, for they are considered a premonition of another death in the community. In order to avoid encountering omen birds, the Iban say, the funeral procession must leave the longhouse early in the morning, and the burial should be done quickly. Virtually all the major omen birds are thought to be inauspicious in this context except the nendak (a white-rumped shama), which is called a "cool bird" and is supposed to have "cooling" effects. Also some animals, such as the barking deer and the sambhur deer, are regarded as bad omens if they cross the path ahead of the procession or if they enter the graveyard.

If any such omen is recognised by the party, inverted V-shaped structures should be made of bamboo on the way back from the burial. A piece of bamboo about seven feet long is cut and its upper half is split open. The ends of the split parts are planted on opposite sides of the path. This is called a "bird (or omen) trap" (peti' burong), and its obvious purpose is to block the inauspicious effects the omen conveys. The whole party must pass through this construction. During
the funeral procession for Sta, three omen birds were heard on the way to the graveyard. They were the pangkas (maroon woodpecker), the bejugu’ (crested jay) and the ketupong (rufous piculet) in that order. The party was much puzzled by the possible meanings and effects of these omens, for, they said, they had never before heard omen birds on the way to the graveyard. They erected three "traps" on the way home to counter these three omens.

A returning burial party which encountered omens cannot enter the longhouse through the usual entrance. Instead, they should enter either the deceased's own bilek apartment or the tempuan-passage in front of it directly from the filthy ground under the longhouse. Which part is chosen as the "emergency" entrance depends on the seriousness they read into the encountered omen. This may be an attempt to prevent the effects of the omen from spreading to the whole longhouse by concentrating them in the deceased's bilek. Or, if a more specific interpretation is made, it may imply the erasing of the total route the procession followed to the graveyard. The spatial shifts of the deceased's body throughout the funeral ritual are a series of advances, from the innermost living space (the bilek) to the gallery and to the outer spaces. By directly entering the bilek or the tempuan-passage the party comes back, as it were, directly to the state preceding the funeral procession. Thus if the omens are thought to be serious, they go back to the bilek, and if they are less serious, they go back to the tempuan-passage.

Reading the significance of omens does not follow strictly defined codes. It is particularly difficult when an omen or a combination of omens is encountered in a new context. The following case illustrates how omens are dealt with.

Sta's burial party arrived back at the longhouse at about noon. The bamboo stick with the blood smeared feather was erected at the
foot of the ladder. A large "trap" was set up over the ladder. Then a long and serious discussion began in the open space at the foot of the ladder. The participants in the procession were joined by Anggok (a lemembang), Ngelambong (the longhouse headman) and Kemat (a man of ability in dealing with omens). They were all perplexed by the news of the omens. One participant said he had never heard omens on the way to the graveyard and complained that the departure of the procession had been unusually late. Anggok commented that the omens on the way back would not be serious because they might be "vacant" (meaningless), but that such omens on the way to the graveyard would still have "contents" (significance) and must be taken seriously. A young participant objected to this, though not contentiously, saying that omens on the way to the graveyard would not matter because they had been "thrown away" in the graveyard. In this way almost all the people there expressed their personal opinions, and the discussion was much confused. Kemat, at last, said that he did not know how to proceed and went back to the longhouse.

The party waited more than an hour at the place. Many got weary of the prolonged discussion and preparations taking place in the longhouse. Some mocked children with obscene jokes. Bungkong and Tangu, the deceased's sons, did not join the conversation; they just sat on the edge of the circle of people with their eyes swollen by tears.

Finally the party was told to go back to a place about thirty metres downriver from the longhouse. The party took a detour in going back there, obviously in order to invalidate the previous approach to the longhouse. Kemat had already gone there and was making a frame from which the offerings for the omens were to be hung. The party then passed under the offering frame and each of them was smeared by Kemat on the forehead, chest and shoulders with special water in which various charms had been dipped. The party then approached the longhouse again. Kemat had decided that the party must enter the deceased's bilek through a hole made by removing the floor planks under the gourd storing spot (tempuan labu').

Crawling under the longhouse was a dirty task. The ground was extremely muddy and was mingled with garbage and excrement of pigs, fowls and humans. The girls jokingly said, "We have become the spirits of the dead", referring to the belief that ghosts gather under the longhouse during the wake and the subsequent ritual of separation.

In the bilek Kemat waited and splashed the charmed water on each member of the party as he appeared from the hole in the floor. Afterwards they went back to the riverside to bathe.

**SOME NOTES ON WAKE AND BURIAL**

**Coffins**

Traditionally it was prohibited to bring a coffin into the longhouse. Earlier writers invariably reported that a corpse was placed in the coffin after it had been taken out of the longhouse (Perham, 1885:291;
Howell, 1963a:74; Gomes, 1911:133). This custom is still followed by the Baleh Iban (Freeman, Fieldnotes, 1950) and the Balau Iban.

Usually a coffin (*sentubong*) is made of a single hollowed-out log of a durable sort of tree (iron-wood is preferred if available). The log is split longitudinally into two parts, one being slightly thicker than the other. The thicker part is used as the coffin, and the thinner one as the lid. The cavity of a coffin must not be too big, preferably leaving no extra space around the corpse wrapped in its mat. Although no particular decoration is made on the surface of an ordinary coffin, it is often referred to as a boat (*perau*'). In the text of an elaborate death dirge an allusion is made to the departed spirit taking this coffin-boat to go down the river in the Land of the Dead (see Chapter 6).

Some of the Upper Layar and Skrang Iban have a prohibition against using this type of coffin. They either make a lidless box of wooden planks or merely place the corpse, wrapped in a roll of matting, on the sitting deck (*lantai*) of a boat and bury the corpse and the deck together. An old man told of the origin of this prohibition. "Long ago one of our forefathers had a dream in which a dead person appeared and said to the dreamer, 'My boat is large enough. It has room for you.'" Making a coffin-boat thus was taken as an inauspicious practice, which induces another death in the community. From then on this group forbade the making of boat-like coffins. The prohibition is inherited, like other taboos (e.g., on foods), from father to son or from mother to daughter. However, again like other taboos, the prohibition can be abolished by shamanic treatment or simply by the passage of time if it is not reinforced, for example, by spiritual instructions in dreams. Moreover, some people have a certain aversion to the practice of burial without a coffin. A man admitted once that he shared this prohibition which he inherited from his father. But he claimed that the prohibition was nonsensical, and he
even expressed his hope to be placed in a well-made coffin. It was a pity, he said, to bury a corpse without any coffin.

The rationale for the prohibition on making a coffin is presumably cognate with an idea which underlies the prohibition on bringing a coffin into the longhouse and that on the making of a coffin so as not to leave extra space around the corpse. We can see here ambivalent attitudes toward the coffin as a cultural object. On the one hand, it is made for temporary protection of the corpse against the decaying process, which will eventually lead to its disappearance, its melting into the earth (see Chapter 7). Thus the coffin is thought to be necessary for the sake of the deceased in terms of his bodily preservation as well as, on one level of imagination, his spiritual journey to the Land of the Dead. On the other hand, it is felt to be slightly dangerous to the living or the surviving, who may project their death anxiety onto the container of a dead body.

Death Dirges
The loud wailing beside the deceased's remains is a ritualised expression of grief which is performed by the womenfolk of the longhouse community. This wailing — weeping, sobbing and crying — is generally called sabak, the ordinary word for "cry". The same term is applied to elaborate death dirges which describe the journey of the departed spirit to the Land of the Dead. The expert singers (lemembang sabak or simply "those who know sabak") of the death dirge are exclusively women among the Layar-Skrang Iban. A dirge may be sung on the night of the wake, and on as many as three successive nights (particularly in the Saribas "new style" funerals). The singer adjusts the length of the dirge by omitting or adding verses so as to complete the description of the journey just before the burial party departs for the graveyard.
As I present an outline of this type of death dirge in Chapter 6, it is sufficient here to note only one point. It concerns the necessity of singing this special chant on the night of the wake. In fact, although such an elaborate dirge is much appreciated by the Iban as a way of paying tribute to the deceased person, it is by no means an indispensable part of the wake practices. If there is no expert available in the deceased's longhouse or in one nearby, it is common to dispense with it. Instead, relatively knowledgeable women of the community may merely extend their lamentation among the group of wailing women, as happened in the two cases I observed at the Sungai Paya longhouse.

Logically, the completion of the journey and the establishment of the departed spirit in the Land of the Dead, as are sung about in the chant, contradict a widely held notion that the ghost hovers in the sphere of the living for some while even after the burial. It is highly probable that this inconsistency has arisen from the fact that this type of dirge was relatively recently developed among the Layar-Saribas Iban, probably following a general model of death dirges used among other Iban groups. Howell writes much about "professional wailers", that is, expert dirge singers among the Balau Iban (e.g., 1911:5-6; 18-19). According to him, a dirge which depicts the journey of the departed spirit "is not used ... until the corpse has been buried" (ibid.:18) and during the night of the wake a mere poetic lamentation is sung instead (ibid.:6). This seems more consistent with the general Iban idea of the journey of the departed spirit. As for the possible recent origin of the Layar-Skrang death dirge, it is even more informative that Howell did not find "professional wailers" among the Saribas Iban in his days. He writes:

With the Saribas and other tribes [subgroups] who do not engage a professional wailer when death takes place, all the women in the house and friends from far and near nyuran [lament] over the corpse. (Ibid.:6)
If his observation is correct, as I believe it is, it is as late as this century that the Saribas or the Layar-Skrang Iban came to use elaborate death dirges on the night of the wake.

Funeral in Absence of Corpse

When a person's death is certain and yet the corpse is not available for proper burial, a substitute ritual called *ngerapoh* is carried out in order to secure the establishment of the departed spirit in the Land of the Dead. Death during travel to other countries and during war expeditions are typical cases, but certain kinds of accidents, such as drowning, may also lead to this ritual.

In such cases the deceased's personal clothing is regarded as the proper substitute for the corpse. It is placed on the gallery with other objects which serve as the deceased's other-worldly equipment, and people observe the night vigil and lamentation as if the corpse were present. It is asserted by some that the deceased's *semengat* as well as some elements of his body would return to the longhouse during the night of the wake. Though it is invisible, they say, it is to be perceived by the smell of the corpse. Next morning all the objects displayed on the gallery — the corpse-substitute and the goods for the ghost — which are termed *rapoh*, are taken to the graveyard, where they are placed in a heap under a shelter. All the subsequent rituals and the mourning regulations are observed with this substitute burial in the same way as they are for normal deaths.

MOURNING

After the death of one of its members, the whole longhouse community goes into a state of mourning. The mourning consists of two stages. They are characterised by different degrees of intensity of the regulations and prohibitions imposed on all the community members as well as
on the bereaved bilek-family. The first stage is marked by continuous
attention being paid to the departed spirit and by ritual seclusion
expressed at both longhouse and bilek levels. The second stage, which
is much longer than the first, is the period during which the community
members should restrain certain mundane behaviours within the longhouse.

Diau and Pana: The Seclusion

The first, intense, stage of mourning is known as the period of diau,
which means staying within or in the vicinity of the longhouse and, more
specifically, not going to the rice fields to work. The term diau is
also applicable to any sort of rest-taking, either of a religious nature
(after holding various ceremonies and as a consequence of personal dreams)
or for secular reasons such as simply being tired. The specific rationale
for the diau after a person's death is that working on rice plants
immediately after the death would cripple or deform (menawa') the growing
plants and eventually bring a bad harvest (cf. p.52).

This period usually lasts three days, including the day of burial,
among the contemporary Skrang Iban. Traditionally it would last longer,
imposing five or seven days of rest-taking on the whole community, which
was thought to be proper particularly when the deceased was a person
who was prominent in some respect or other. On the other hand, as
happened after Rimbu's death, when the death occurs during the rice
sowing season, diau may be shortened to only a day; that is, the day
of burial is the only rest day. Sowing (or "dibbling" as the Iban say)
is the most critical stage of rice farming according to the Iban view.
During this season more people tend to stay in their farm huts, away
from the longhouse, than during other agricultural seasons. Given the
importance the Iban attribute to the sowing, then, the reason for the
shortening of the diau period seems to be of a practical nature.
However, an informant gave an explanation which connected it with the final destiny of human souls. As he put it, "The souls of the dead will return to this world to become rice plants. So we don't take long rests after a death during the sowing season" (see Chapter 7). Apparently this is a short-cut type of logic, lacking any theory about the possible relationship between the recent death and the return of souls. What is noteworthy here is only that there is a tendency for certain individuals to speculate about the custom in eschatological terms.

Traditionally a strict seclusion was imposed upon the bereaved bilek-family during the first stage of the mourning period. The members of the bilek-family were confined to the bilek-apartment and not permitted to go on to the gallery or communicate with other people. The apartment should be darkened by closing down the adjustable roof edge (telenga' atap) which is normally the only opening which can admit daylight into the room. Some earlier reports say that the bereaved family observed a certain degree of "fasting" throughout the period of seclusion (Perham, 1885:293; Nyuak, 1906:170). This was probably the case in the old days. For, even today, cooking or lighting a fire in the fireplace in the deceased's bilek-apartment is prohibited until a ritual lifts this ban. Before the lifting of the ban, food must be brought from other bileks if the bereaved wanted to eat at all. In the traditional context this ritual marked the end of the period of strict seclusion. Today the ritual is performed in the evening of the day of burial, and thus neither the institutionalised seclusion nor the "fasting" is observed with the traditional rigidity.

The ritual for lifting the ban on cooking in the deceased's bilek and freeing the bereaved family from its seclusion is in fact a repetition of the one which was performed at the beginning of the ceremonial meal
following the burial. Like that earlier ritual, it is called makai pana ("eating pana"). The ritual performed in the evening of the day of burial consists of two parts. In the first part a member of the bereaved family, usually a female member who did not accompany the funeral procession, eats heaps (usually three) of rice and chicken meat put on the blade of a bush knife, also without using her hands. This lifts the ban on cooking and eating in the deceased's bilek-apartment. Then a sort of purification is performed by one of the women. She inserts a twig into a raw egg through a small hole made in the shell and smears egg white on the foreheads of everyone present in the bilek. The use of egg white is a weaker form of purification than the use of fowl's blood. But in this ritual an additional meaning is given to it. Making a hole in the egg shell signifies the opening of the edge of the roof, thus lifting the ban on admitting sunlight to the bilek-apartment of the bereaved. After these rituals, those who are present in the bilek begin to eat rice and relish, all of which have been brought from bileks other than the deceased's. As a rule, the contribution of food to this meal should be made by the bilek-families which "have an antu", that is to say, which have a dead member yet to be commemorated at a gawai antu, the final ceremony held for the dead (see Chapter 5).

The second part of the ritual concerns specifically the care to be taken of the departed spirit(s). After the meal the women gather the remaining rice and relish and wrap them in leaves. A female member of the bereaved family lights a torch at the fireplace, for the ban on lighting fires has now been lifted. She takes the torch and the food to a wooden rack which has been set up beside the path leading to the bathing place. She is accompanied by two women, both members of the bilek-family in which the most recent previous death had occurred. The two accompanying women bring small baskets containing various kinds of
foodstuff, chewing nuts and tobacco as well as water-containing gourds. They follow the same path that should be followed by a funeral cortege; along the tempuan-passage and down the ladder at the ujong-end of the longhouse. The women who remain in the bilek begin to wail at their departure. The rack on which the food is placed and under which the torch is put is called para' sebayan ("the fireplace rack for ghosts"). It is an improvised miniature of the fireplace rack in the bilek apartment. The purpose of this custom to satisfy the daily needs of the departed spirits, that is, the newly deceased and the long dead who have visited the world of the living to fetch him. By setting up a separate fireplace rack for the dead outside the longhouse, the living establish a symbolic border between themselves and the dead. The Iban say that the ghosts are prevented by this means from entering the longhouse and the bilek-apartment to seek food and fire. Further, its significance as symbolic separation becomes even clearer if we take into account the importance of the fireplace as a symbol of the economic and spiritual unity of the family (see Chapter 2). The ghosts are thus not allowed to share the bilek fireplace with the living.

The offering of food and fire on the para' sebayan is made every evening during the diau period, though on the second and third evening it is done by a female member of the bereaved family alone. Presumably the ghosts, new and old, are supposed to be still haunting the places surrounding the longhouse during this time. A danger to the living still exists. The prohibition on the making of baskets during this period indicates this danger. Making baskets would signify the intention of the maker to make a trip or particularly to migrate to another land. The ghosts might see it and think that the maker would like to accompany them to the Land of the Dead. By contrast, making or repairing the longhouse is preferred work. For the ghosts then come to see that the
people living there want to go on residing in their longhouse and to continue to live in this world.

We can reasonably say that the comparative seclusion during the *diau* period is also a protective measure against the danger caused by the haunting ghosts. In fact, this danger is a projection of people's anxiety onto the imaginary plane. Psychologically, this period is a direct extension of the feelings people had immediately following the death. People fear the death, and this fear is manifested in the various measures taken against ghosts on the night of the wake. The symbolic barriers set up in the longhouse and the gathering on the gallery are exemplary in this respect. In exactly the same way, staying at or in the vicinity of the longhouse mitigates the still intense anxiety which people have during the days immediately after the death. Interestingly, an earlier report says that "during the mourning [*diau*] none of the community members other than the immediate relatives of the deceased sleep in their *bileks*, but in the open verandah [probably actually the gallery]" (Crossland cited in Ling Roth, 1896:156). This evinces clearly that the *diau* period is a continuation of the night of the wake. Probably, the only difference, though an important one, is that the ghost of the newly deceased has now joined the ghosts from Sebayan, and, like them, has become an object of people's fear.

Now I shall turn to the question of the lexical meanings of the term *pana*, for there is some semantic confusion concerning this term. Among the Iban of the Upper Skrang at the present time, the term refers only to the heaps of rice which are eaten by members of the deceased's *bilek*-family. Concerning the custom of the Paku Iban, Sandin notes that the initial period of seclusion, that is the *diau* period, is also called *pana* and that the length of this period is represented by the number of heaps of rice eaten by the bereaved (Sandin, 1966a:60). Among the
earlier writers, Howell refers to the seclusion period as bepana ("doing pana"), and mentions the pana as an "allowance (of food) given to a bereaved person by friends" (Howell, 1963a:69; Howell and Bailey, 1900:114). Other early writers, in contrast, refer to the pana as the food given to the spirits of the dead (Perham, 1885:293; Nyuak, 1906:170), and mention that this offering marks the end of the seclusion period.

As far as I know, the practices of the Balau Iban confirm this meaning of the term pana. Among them, a few days after the burial, an offering called pana, comprising various kinds of food and drink, is thrown through the floor opening at the back of the bilek on to the ground. The spiritual essence of this offering is supposed to be sent to the Land of the Dead by an Undan bird (a Wreathed Hornbill). The journey of this bird to the Land of the Dead is described in a special song called sabak nganjong pana ("the dirge for conveying pana"). The bird is also mentioned as the sender of pana in the death dirge whose outline will be presented in Chapter 6 and which certainly belongs to the Layar (Saribas) tradition.

All these semantic differences can be traced to a basic ambiguity in the meaning of the word pana: it means the food given to the bereaved and the food given to the ghost at the same time. As I have suggested earlier in connection with the post-burial meal, this ambiguity perhaps indicates that the bereaved play the part of the deceased as against the rest of the community members. If this interpretation is correct, the seclusion of the bereaved in their bilek can also be regarded as a sort of confinement of the persons who represent the ghost. Then we can define the nature of the initial intense period of mourning as follows. The longhouse community as a whole enters upon a relative seclusion so as to mitigate the people's anxiety caused by the death. And within the longhouse itself, the bereaved, being representative of the death,
observe an even stricter seclusion inside their bilek to secure the rest of the community against the death.

After the three days of diau, the people in the longhouse go back to their routine work without any special ritual.

Ulüt: Prolonged Mourning

The second stage of mourning is called ulüt. More often than not this term is extended to refer to the whole period of mourning, including the initial diau period. During this period it is prohibited, within the vicinity of the longhouse, to make any sound which is regarded as a sign of joy or amusement. It is considered offensive to the bereaved for others to behave in an unconcerned manner. Thus singing any kind of song, whether traditional or modern, holding a ritual or feast, beating a drum or a gong, making war cries, and playing a radio are strictly prohibited. If the longhouse is situated along a main river, white banners are erected up-river and down-river from the longhouse to let passers-by know that the longhouse is in a state of mourning. The people of the longhouse community must not have their hair cut during an ulüt. Strictly speaking, people should also not wear fine clothes or personal accessories such as gold finger rings and ear rings, which are generally classified as "good" or luxurious objects. Today, the introduction of western style clothes, particularly among young males, has blurred the distinction between fine and conventional clothes so that the wearing of new trousers and shirts by these youngsters is commonly tolerated. Married women wear blackened rattan waist-rings (bentai or tina) as a sign of mourning; some wear them continuously throughout the mourning period while others do so only occasionally.

This period of prolonged mourning is symbolically represented by a bundle containing some of the small personal belongings of the deceased.
It is called the "bundle of mourning" (bungkus ultit), and among the Upper Skrang Iban it is hung immediately after the departure of the funeral procession on a post at the corner of the deceased's bilek just behind the door. In the case of Sta (male), it was made up of a rusty blade of a small carving knife (lungga), a bronze bracelet (sagin) and a sarong (tajong), while in the case of Rimbu (female), the bundle consisted of nut-cutting scissors (kaohit), a woman's ikat skirt (kain kebat), a dried nipa-palm leaf for rolling tobacco and a piece of wire as a substitute for a personal ornament. The symbolic meaning of these objects is clear. The personal accessories and fine clothes of the deceased are included to indicate the prohibition against such objects being worn by the living until after the bundle has been opened at the end of the period of mourning. The blade and the scissors signify the action of "cutting" or terminating the mourning period.

In principle, the duration of mourning depends on the decision of the bereaved family. For the main rationale for the mourning observance is that the rest of the community members should express their basa (attitudes which can be glossed as "compassion, respect or concern") toward the bereaved through restraining themselves from enjoying their usual amusements. Traditionally, it is said, the duration might be well over a year. But repeated governmental recommendations have reduced the length of the period, and among the Skrang Iban (and possibly among most other sub-groups) approximately one month is now recognised as a proper duration. The fixing of the exact date of termination, however, should be done by the bereaved family in consultation with other close relatives (see Chapter 4). In five cases for which I have exact data, the period of mourning ranged from nineteen to thirty-five days.

Although the prohibitions are customarily defined by the local tradition of a longhouse, the bereaved may seek a revision of these
regulations. After the death of a government appointed headman, for example, his son asked at the community meeting to extend the period of the prohibition on playing radios in the vicinity of the longhouse until he and his company returned from a hunting expedition. This proposal was accepted out of respect for the deceased penghulu. Although only a minor change, it was evident that it caused dissatisfaction among the young boys and girls of the longhouse, for I heard a group of them speaking bitterly of this "new" adat ("regulation") imposed because of a "big man".

During the mourning period, disturbing behaviours such as open quarrels within the longhouse are regarded as being especially improper and offensive to the bereaved, that is, the immediate relatives of the deceased. People involved in a quarrel are fined. The fine must be paid in cash, though the amount of money is expressed in terms of the value of a traditional jar, the different named types indicating different sized fines. In principle, such a fine is divided, one part of it being received by the longhouse headman and the other by the bereaved. But the recognised purpose of such fines is always to soothe the supposedly offended feelings of the bereaved. In a case I witnessed during the mourning for Sta, the longhouse headman sent his share of a fine to Sta's son and half-brother who lived in a neighbouring longhouse. As I was told later, the headman was anxious about the possible bad reputation which he and his longhouse might have as a result of the disrespectful behaviours of some of its members during the mourning period.

In view of what I have said so far, it is quite reasonable to argue that while the longhouse community as a ritual unit is involved in the mourning, the main focus of concern is the bereaved family. The Iban do not tend to give verbal consolation to the bereaved. Too frequent
reference to the deceased's name is regarded as bad manners, and a visitor who behaves in this way is liable to be fined. Thus many people show hesitation or nervousness in referring to the deceased. The way in which the Iban express their compassion for the bereaved is to refrain voluntarily from pleasurable occupations and thus, through empathy, to assimilate themselves to the bereaved. During mourning, longhouse members go to sleep unusually early because of the prohibition in force. Young boys and girls are often reprimanded by their elders when they make unrestrained laughter and mirth near the bereaved's bilek.

To say that the inconvenience caused by the mourning regulations is the only stress imposed upon the community as a whole would be misleading. Grief is definitely a persistent emotion among relatives and friends who do not belong to the deceased's bilek. In fact, an Iban longhouse community is usually made up of closely related kin. And this single fact often blurs, at least in terms of psychological states, the distinction between "the bereaved" (orang empu mati) and the rest of the community. However, the expression of personal grief is not a matter for the community as a whole. Although the mourning regulations and prohibitions provide channels for expressing personal grief, it is ultimately individuals who express their grief in various but subtly defined ways.

For example, ritual bards and shamans can express their grief and personal mourning for a relative or a friend by restraining themselves from performing rituals even when they are invited to do it by another longhouse. Sometimes such a ritual expert simply turns down the invitation. Or he can demand a special fee for "opening his voice" (nelenga' nyawa) before his performance. This fee consists of coins gathered from the members of the host community and put in a plate. It
is to indicate that the community would share his grief or to express compassion, as it is also called "making a pile of tears" (nambun ai' mata).

The best illustration of an individual's expression of grief independent of the community regulations is "personal mourning" or ngulit kediri' as the Iban call it. When news of a close relative's death at another longhouse is received, an individual will undertake personal or self-imposed mourning. The community as a whole may take a rest for a day (diau) but does not go into prolonged mourning. A woman may wear a mourning waist-ring and sometimes secludes herself in the bilek. There are no precise customs for this type of personal mourning or, using a more appropriate term, "bereavement". Sometimes, as I once observed, a period of personal mourning extends far beyond the usual period of a communal mourning. It is noticeable because even during communal mourning the bereaved often impose more severe seclusion on themselves than the regulations prescribe. Thus throughout the mourning period for Sta, Sati virtually secluded herself in the bilek when she stayed in the longhouse. She did not converse with other community members on the gallery and was said to have rejected the advice of her sister that she should show herself on the gallery, as she had been in seclusion long enough.

Mourning and the Ghost

So far I have presented the customs of prolonged mourning only in terms of the institutionalised expressions of bereavement. Now we should turn to another aspect of the period which follows a man's death, that is, the aspect concerned with the ontological status of the deceased or the ghost.

There are several different notions held by the Iban concerning when the semengat of the deceased finally leaves the world of the
living and becomes established in the Land of the Dead. Some say that
the semengat reaches the other world on the day of burial; some say
it is only after the initial seclusion (diau) observed by the living;
and still others express the opinion that it does not settle there
until the time of the gawai antu, the final ceremony for the dead. But
the most commonly expressed view is that the semengat of the deceased
and the spirits of the dead who come to fetch it are likely to linger
until a ritual called serara' bungai ("separation of the flower") has
been performed. As this ritual is usually held shortly before the end
of the mourning period, we can reasonably say that during the mourning
period the presence of the ghosts, new and old, in the surrounding area
is tacitly assumed or felt by the Iban. Or psychologically viewed, the
impressions given by a recent death are still intense during the mourn­
ing period, and its regulations and prohibitions reinforce rather than
diminish those traumatic impressions.

In view of the emotional states the surviving people undergo during
mourning, it is not surprising that they experience various types of
ghostly apparitions during this period. After Sta's death an adolescent
boy showed a grave fear which he could not himself explain. He reported
that he felt fear when he bathed alone. At night he stopped sleeping
alone and joined a friend in his mosquito net. Although he denied my
suggestion, it was clear to me that at the time his fear had been
prompted by Sta's death. My assumption is that such fear or anxiety
might result in ghostly apparitions, which are, scientifically viewed,
visual or auditory hallucinations.

This assumption is supported by the fact that these apparitions are
especially frequent after the death of a person who died in a terrifying
way. Bangi died of mammary cancer in the year previous to my arrival
in the Sungai Paya community. Her breasts had become rotten and were
infested with maggots. The smell and ugliness drove people away so that nobody dared to shut her eyes after her death. During the mourning period people heard inexplicable groaning sounds around the longhouse. A man asserted that he had heard roaring sounds when he was fishing one night. The people of the community said it was the only case in which ghostly apparitions had occurred to such a degree. It is perhaps worth mentioning that some people recognise this correlation between ghostly apparitions and the manner of death. As already mentioned, a man claimed that a peaceful death such as Sta's would not cause any disturbance or ghostly interference.

Dreams about a deceased person are also common during the mourning period. I am not certain, however, whether such dreams occur more frequently during this period than at a later stage or if the manifest content of dreams is markedly different at different stages. What can be said is that dreams about the deceased during the mourning period are especially important to the Iban. Generally they are taken as evidence of the presence of the deceased's semengat in the vicinity of the living. A single dream is not so much feared as a ghostly apparition is. If dreams about the deceased are too frequently reported, the serara' bungai ritual will be performed promptly in order to enhance the separation between the deceased and the living.

A typical dream was related by Manggat at the serara' bungai ritual for his father Sta. He had the dream about a week after Sta's death. He saw in the dream his deceased father talking in a normal way with his community members on the longhouse gallery. Sta complained in the conversation that all the plates and bowls he had received were broken and that none of them could be used. Those present did not pay much attention to this dream. Only Kemat, who was supposed to converse with Sta in Manggat's dream, commented that Sta surely knew about his own
death, for he had referred to the broken things which had been given to him. Such a dream appearing to a member of the bereaved family shortly after a death can be understood as a consequence of the continuing memory of the deceased as a living person. The Iban themselves take such a dream as natural and do not draw too much significance from it.

However, a dream with a more unusual content may be interpreted by the Iban as being more specific in meaning and thus is treated differently. The ways in which people react to such a dream may reflect various attitudes toward a particular deceased person. The reactions range widely, from genuine fear, such as resulted from the dreams about shaman Jimbat hunting near the longhouse (see p.36), to what can be called an "affectionate feeling" toward the deceased. This latter type of sentiment is exemplified in dreams which are taken as signs of the deceased's becoming a deity (petara), a process which will be discussed in Chapter 8. Here I will give an example of a dream about a deceased person during the mourning period and examine how Iban react to a possibly meaningful dream.

Ten days after Sta's death a woman, named Beremas, had a dream in her farm hut in which her family had stayed for some days. She told her dream to her husband Lidom and then went back to the longhouse to make offerings. Ngelambong, Lidom's father, was called to officiate at the offering ceremony. In the bilek Beremas explained the purpose of the offering by relating a short account of the dream. She said: "Two days ago I had a dream of P'Manggat (Sta). He came from his part of the gallery to our bilek and asked for rice. 'The rice there is infested with maggots. They don't take care of it,' he said. He looked fat without any trace of death. Therefore we will make offerings now. Anyway, it's not hard to prepare them."

Ngelambong took a hen and recited a brief prayer, waving the hen over the offerings. In this prayer he summoned various spirits to come to eat the offerings and asked them to drive evil things away from the rice fields. Lidom killed the hen, and Ngelambong purified the offerings with its blood. Three sets of offerings were made: one to be hung above the gallery, one to be hung in the bilek and one to be put on a rice storage jar.

During the ceremony the members of two neighbouring bileks joined in. They contributed cooked rice for the offerings. One
of them expressed his worry about making offerings in his own bilek, which was next door to the bereaved's bilek. He said that making offerings without the consent of the bereaved might offend their feelings. But his worry was rejected by his brother, who contended that offerings could be made freely.

Although Ngelambong did not refer to Sta in his prayer, the offerings were specifically made for the deceased's sake. Usually such a dream as Beremas had is interpreted as the ghost's coveting food, particularly rice. In that sense the dream is taken as embarrassing or, at least, inconvenient to the dreamer. This explains why a man of a neighbouring bilek expressed his hesitation making offerings in his bilek. To speak of the ghost's covetousness would not please the bereaved. Probably this hesitation was shared by Lidom. For he commented afterwards, rather apologetically, "Whenever one (the deceased) asks for food, we are ready to make offerings. If the deceased happens to become a god (petara), he is satisfied with the offerings and will satisfy us in future. If we won't give him food, we will suffer hardship." Sta is regarded in this comment as potentially becoming a god. But whether he will really become a god or not is not particularly relevant to the attitudes which the dreamer and her husband took toward the dream. For it is obviously an anxiety-laden wish for agricultural success that is projected onto the imaginary relation with the deceased. And what is important here is that the Iban are compelled to cope with a ghost's demand as expressed in a dream, regardless of whether he is a god or not.
NOTES

1. The "new style" funeral often involves prolonged wakes (up to three successive nights). Each bilek-family of the longhouse community takes a share in the expenses of entertaining the guests. See Morgan and Beavitt's (1971) descriptive account of this type of funeral.

2. This practice is called ngeresu'. It is intended presumably to stimulate the patient's semengat, which is located in his head. Incidentally, ear wax is called by the Iban "excrement of the semengat".

3. This woman's behaviour may be explained by the fact that she had a dumb daughter, whose birth was said to have been affected by her touching her father-in-law's corpse during the pregnancy.

4. Howell writes that things given to a deceased person at burial must be prepared whilst the person is breathing his last, and that it becomes "tabooed" to do so as soon as life is extinct (1963a:67). This is not a rigid custom among the present-day Skrang Iban.

5. Sandin reports the initial treatment of a corpse which is practised among the Saribas Iban (1966a:56): a corpse is cleansed and touched with three smears of turmeric (kunyit) on his forehead; his feet are tied with red cotton threads. None of this is practised among the Upper Skrang Iban.

6. Among the common terms which recur in such simple lamentations as the expression of spontaneous grief are: sinu' ("sad"), sayau ("regret" or "grudge"), kesal ("anxious" or "repentant") in combination with the term ati, the faculty or the organ of emotion. For designating the death, a certain number of euphemisms are repeatedly used in addition to the explicit terms (mati and parai); these include, for example, ninggal ("leave"), lenyau ("lost"), bebadi' ("sudden accident"), midang ("wander"), sulai ("quivering of leaves by wind") as well as some other words of uncertain etymology.

7. Among the Saribas Iban a number of ikat fabrics are hung around the corpse, forming a partition (sapat) which separates the part of the gallery on which the corpse is laid from the rest of the gallery. The idea underlying this practice is identical with that of Skrang practice.
8. The Malay have a similar prohibition relating to cats, which should be driven out of the house before the funeral ceremonies commence (Skeat, 1900:398).

9. This arrangement of timbers is decided when a longhouse is first built. In the Upper Skrang region the direction in which the timbers are arranged is related to the solar movement, if a longhouse is built on the east-west axis. The base (pun) end is to the west while the top end (ujong) is to the east. In some other regions the arrangement is related to the river's direction; the base is identified with upriver and the top with downriver. In accordance with this arrangement, a longhouse is often referred to as a tree (sekayu') which is a metaphor to denote the longhouse community as a corporate group.

10. Fowls are common gifts to the deceased among various peoples in Borneo. Geddes reports that a fighting cock is released at the grave-side regardless of the deceased person's sex (1954:45). Among the Melanau, in case the deceased is an important person, formal cockfighting takes place on the third night after the burial in order to send cocks to the Land of the Dead (Morris, 1953:149). The Iban idea of killing a fowl is identical with these examples, but puts an emphasis on sex distinction.

11. Traditionally the depth of a grave was limited to an arm's length, for "[The Iban] dare not get into the grave to make it deeper, but they kneel to it, and lie on the brink... This they do from a superstitious belief that any person stepping into an open grave will die a violent death." (Holland cited in Ling Roth, 1896:139)

12. Sandin (1968:12) mentions that a corpse is buried with his head directed downriver (a shaman's corpse is directed upriver). Probably this is the most common practice of placing a corpse among the Iban.

13. Among the Balau Iban there are a number of male dirge experts. Howell thus refers to a professional wailer "as a woman in some of the text, as a man in other parts of the text" (1963a:71, editor's note).
Chapter 4 RITUALS OF SEPARATION AND RESTITUTION

After a certain period of mourning the living may return to their normal way of life. In order to terminate the mourning period, however, two important rituals need to be performed. One is the ritual called serara' bungai, the purpose of which is to conclude the separation between the deceased and the living members of his bilek-family. The other is ngetas ulit which puts an end formally to the mourning regulations imposed on a longhouse community as a whole. After the termination of the general mourning only widows and widowers remain in mourning; they continue to abide by certain prohibitions which are specifically related to their marital status. It is not until the ritual called ngambi' tebalu that a widow or a widower is fully freed from the imposed chastity. In this chapter I will present a descriptive account of each ritual.

SERARA' BUNGAI

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, each bilek-family is supposed to have a life-image known as bungai ("flower"), the condition of which corresponds to the condition of health of the bilek-family members. If one of the members has died, the part which is vaguely supposed to correspond to the deceased also dies, or, applying plant metaphors, it withers or droops. The death of the part may spread to the whole bungai of the bilek. Or the drooping part may contaminate the other
healthy parts by accidental contact. In any case the existence of the dead part of bungai endangers the life of the surviving members of the bilek-family. In order to eliminate this danger the dead part must be deliberately cut off from the stalk of the bungai. This act of severing or separating (serara') the dead part constitutes the main purpose of the serara' bungai ritual.

As the semengat and the bungai are often equated with each other, the severing of the dead part of the bungai amounts to a separation between the deceased and the living which, in more personal terms, is a separation between their semengat. Thus until the time at which the serara' bungai ritual is performed, the semengat of the deceased is supposed to be together (begulai) with those of the living. Or, as the Iban often express it, the ghost does not fully recognise the fact that it is already dead. If the ritual is not performed, the Iban say, the ghost will claim his share of rice harvests and consume unharvested rice in the fields.

Regardless of whether it is the personal semengat or the rather figurative (impersonal) part of the bungai that is the focus here, the common and essential theme is that the bereaved are in constant danger due to the incomplete separation between them and the deceased. Therefore, if ghostly apparitions or dreams about the deceased are too frequent, the serara' bungai ritual needs to be performed as soon as practically possible. There is, however, some ambiguity or even ambivalence in the bereaved's attitudes toward the ritual. If the deceased is a young member of the bilek-family, the ritual tends to be postponed for as long as the usual length of the mourning period permits. For such a young ghost is supposed to be especially unwilling to leave this world, and the bereaved and the rest of the community acknowledge his
or her sorrow about having to leave the land of the living. Affection toward the deceased thus outweighs the supposed danger.

A shaman officiates at the serara' bungai ritual. It is performed from two to four weeks after the death, depending upon the above-mentioned factors as well as the availability of a shaman. In principle it should be held before the community is freed from the restraint of mourning. If it is held after the termination of mourning, a shaman can demand a slightly bigger reward (upah) than he usually receives for a ritual done at the proper time. Officiating at a belated ritual is considered a heavier task (besai pengawa') for the shaman, presumably because he has to carry out the ritual without the spiritual support of the members of the host bilek and the longhouse.

The ritual procedure of serara' bungai is well established. I observed six serara' bungai rituals performed by four different shamans. Except for the one held upon the death of a regional headman, which was simplified, the main procedures were almost identical. The whole process can be divided into three stages; (1) the preparation of ritual objects in the bereaved's bilek, (2) the ritual on the gallery and (3) the health ensuring measures taken for the bereaved in the bilek.

Preparation in the Bilek

Like other shamanic rituals, the serara' bungai begins after the evening meal. The shaman enters the bilek of the bereaved family and begins to arrange the objects required for the ritual. He sits at the centre of the bilek and ascertains that all the necessary items are there. Various foods such as cooked glutinous rice wrapped in leaves, sugar cane, tapioca roots, taro roots, egg-plant fruits, ears of maize and uncooked rice as well as tobacco, betel leaves and a bottle of water are piled in a large shallow basket. They make up the offering for the
departed spirit and are collectively called "the ghost's goods" (utai sebayan). Some shamans add to these daily provisions some empty containers such as the sheath of a bush-knife and a rattan frame for suspending a large plate. Empty containers are regarded as proper objects to be given to the ghost, whereas the really useful parts — the knife and the plate — are retained by the living. This division is apparently based on utilitarian motives.

An old woman of a different bilek from the bereaved's cuts an areca nut into ten pieces, which are divided into two sets of five. One set is put in a porcelain bowl together with a small amount of cooked rice. The other set is wrapped in a leaf and put in the basket containing the "ghost's goods". The set put in the bowl is called dekoh (etymology unknown) and represents, in all shamanic rituals, the people's health which the shaman ensures through his performance. Thus, in the context of serara' bungai, it stands for the health of the living, whereas the other set of areca nut pieces represents the deceased's fate. Here again the motif of separation is clear.

Meanwhile the shaman himself makes some preparations for his shamanic performance. First he puts a pinch of uncooked rice in a plate. Uncooked rice is needed, for, at a later stage of the ritual the shaman may have to seek the errant semengat of a living person, and his semengat is supposed to fly to remote areas following the thrown rice grains. When a shaman performs a serara' bungai ritual for a deceased person who has left a spouse behind, a metal object such as a coin should be put in the plate in addition to the uncooked rice. This represents a fingerring and signifies the widow's or widower's intention to divorce the deceased. The shaman also puts in the plate other ritual items such as small bundles of creeper-fibre and cotton thread.
Finally the shaman checks to see that all other required objects are present: a small jar, a bamboo-shoot (of the buloh species), an *ikat* skirt, a sheet of black calico and a bush-knife. Having made sure all the items are present, the shaman smears the chests of the members of the bereaved *bilek*-family with white lime paste to make them invisible to ghosts during the shamanic session held on the gallery.

Then all those who have been present in the *bilek* go out to the gallery. The ritual objects are taken by the shaman and a few women. Only the "ghost's goods" are left in the *bilek*, positioned on the floor where the water storing gourds (*tempuan labu*) are normally placed.

It is prohibited for those who are going out to the gallery to look back towards the *bilek*. Otherwise the intended separation between the deceased and the bereaved will be ineffective. Thus the symbolic division is made between the gallery and the *bilek* in exactly the same way as on the night of the wake. But, in contrast to the wake, the *bileks* other than that of the bereaved are not affected by any injunction or prohibition during the *serara' bungai* ritual.

The Ritual on the Gallery

Various longhouse members then gather on the gallery in front of the bereaved's *bilek* to watch the ritual. In all of the cases I observed, women predominated in the crowd of onlookers. However, it is only the men present who can assist the shaman in setting up the ritual apparatus on the gallery. Perhaps the overall cultural association of the gallery with the male sex explains this custom; conversely, women, whose role is associated with the *bilek* apartments, are expected to assist the shaman in the *bilek*. Thus one of the male onlookers lays a pole across the gallery about six feet above the floor. He puts the small jar under the pole, at the centre of the gallery. A blowpipe is erected with its
mouthpiece on the bottom of the jar and with its upper part supported by the cross pole.

Completing the apparatus is the shaman's job. The shaman puts the bamboo-shoot upright in the jar and ties it to the blowpipe with white threads and a bracelet. He then ties the upper part of the blowpipe to the cross pole with creeper-fibre and hangs the *ikat* skirt and a bundle of white cotton threads on the pole. A small basket containing the bowl in which the *dekoḥ* (a set of areca nut pieces) was put is placed by the side of the jar. The carrying belt of the basket is tied to the blowpipe and the bamboo shoot with grass fibres. The shaman then covers the jar and the bamboo shoot with the black calico whose edge is tied to the blowpipe at a point about two feet above the mouthpiece.

This shamanic apparatus is called *pagar api* ("the fence of or against fire"). No informant could explain the derivation of this name. An inference is that it signifies the protection of the *bilek*'s *bungai* which is represented as a plant which would be damaged by heat. This inference is supported by the fact that the supposed location of the *bungai* is the foot of the fireplace post and, therefore, it is dangerously near the fire.

The symbolism of each component of the *pagar api*, as explained by a number of shamans, is as follows. The blowpipe or its bore, in particular, stands for the path along which the shaman's *semengat* ascends to the higher parts of the universe or the sky. The bundle of white threads hanging on the cross pole represents the ladder by which the shaman's *semengat* can continue its upward journey, whereas the *ikat* skirt hanging next to it provides a protective covering for his *semengat*. On the gallery floor around the *pagar api*, are placed the plate containing uncooked rice and a sheathless bush-knife. They represent respectively
the boat and the paddle by which the shaman's *semengat* makes a riverine journey. A bundle of grass fibres put on the plate stands for the rope tying the boat. The bowl containing the *dekôh* is supposed to be a bailer. Thus the apparatus as a whole symbolises the ability of the shaman's *semengat* to travel in all directions, horizontal as well as vertical. It should be noted, however, that the directions represented here do not signify any particular destination of the shaman's *semengat*. Rather they express the general idea of the shaman's ability to send his soul in any direction.

The shamanic performance on the gallery begins with the "fight of the effigies" (*nyabong pentik*). The shaman, sitting at the side of the *pagar api*, casts two small improvised wooden effigies in front of him. One effigy represents the living and the other, which is marked by charcoal, represents the deceased. The casting of the effigies is generally repeated until the living's effigy lies on its back and that of the deceased lies on its face; that is to say, until the living's effigy, which faces the sky, has defeated the deceased's effigy, which faces the ground. One shaman gave a different and, indeed, opposite interpretation of the symbolism of the position of the effigies. In his performance he did not mark either of the effigies. Instead, he referred to the effigy which happened to fall on its back as the deceased's one and the other (fallen on its face) as the living's one. Interpreting lying on the back as a sign of death in this context derives from the position of a defeated fighting cock. In both interpretations of the "effigy fight", however, the theme is that the defeat of the deceased is an indispensable step in the process by which a shaman establishes a separation between the living and the deceased.

Once he is satisfied with the result of the "effigy fight", the shaman covers himself with a sheet of *ikat* fabric or with an ordinary
sarong and goes into a brief trance. After a while he stands up and begins to walk counter-clockwise around the *pagar api*. The shaman, while circling around the ritual apparatus, may sing a chant (*leka pelian*) which describes the ritual scene on the gallery and part of the ritual procedure, and in which he summons various mythical shamans to the spot. He then goes into trances several more times to get a vision of the ghosts who, supposedly, come near the longhouse to receive the "ghosts' goods". The shaman Chundi repeatedly asserted that the arrival of the ghosts, who are invisible to ordinary vision, could occasionally be perceived even by the lay people. For often the pigs on the ground run in panic while the shaman is in a trance, which is, according to him, evidence of a ghostly presence.

If there is nothing unusual about the person's death, it is expected that ghost will come to the ground under the gallery when the shaman has gone into a trance. However, there may be some irregularities if the circumstances in which a person died are abnormal in one way or another. This is well illustrated by the *serara' bungai* ritual which was performed for a woman who disappeared on the way home from the fields. People thought she had been drowned in the flooded Layar river and searched extensively for her body along the river. Her funeral was performed without her corpse, that is, as a *ngerapoh* ritual (see Chapter 3, p.76). Her body had not yet been found on the day of the ritual of *serara' bungai*. The rumour spread among neighbouring communities that she had been killed by her son-in-law, a member of the same *bilek*-family, and had been buried at an unknown place. Some suspected that the woman had been abducted by spirits (*antu*) and was still alive in detention.

The shaman, a brother of the woman's suspected son-in-law, was therefore expected at the ritual to search for the woman's *semengat* and to ascertain whether she was dead, not merely to create a separation between
the living and the ghost as is usually expected. Furthermore, he was expected to give a reason, if possible, for their inability to find her corpse. For this was the main concern of the people of the community and the basis for the suspicion of murder. The shaman apparently tried hard, staying in a trance for nearly three minutes after his initial attempts, in shorter trances, had failed to find the lost semengat. Finally, he gave an account of what he had "seen" while in the trance. "I arrived," he said, "at the foot of the longhouse ladder. I can't tell where the longhouse was, but certainly it was not far away from here. I couldn't get into the longhouse. A man appeared on the open verandah. He refused to show her (the lost woman's) semengat, which he was keeping in a jar in his bilek. She had already married him." The shaman explained that unless her "husband" released her semengat from the jar, her corpse could not be found. This explanation fully satisfied the wish of the community members to be relieved from the "unfounded" suspicion of murder. At the same time the shaman ascertained that the woman was dead, arguing that for the semengat to be confined thus amounted to death. On that basis the shaman proceeded to make offerings to the ghost. However, it is interesting to note that a week later in another longhouse he reported that at the missing woman's serara' bungai "the ghosts from the graveyard" (sebayan pendam) — that is, the ordinary ghosts — had not come to receive the "ghost's goods", but that only some unidentified spirits had come instead.

According to some shamans, the ghost for whom the ritual is held also does not come to the longhouse if the deceased has become a god (petara). In such a case the "ghost's goods" are not given. Instead, formal sets of offerings (piring) which are usually dedicated to deities are made and hung on the gallery. But, as we shall see later (Chapter 8), the actual recognition that the deceased has become a god is dependent
upon people's dreams and certain mystical phenomena rather than upon the shaman's visions at the serara' bungai ritual. What a shaman may give is an endorsement to the people's recognition by ensuring that the ghost did not arrive at the ritual.

Let us now return to a normal case. On the supposed arrival of the ghosts, the shaman proceeds to the crucial stage of the separation ritual. He removes the black calico which has been covering the jar and takes the bamboo shoot out of it. He spreads a wide leaf (of any variety) on the gallery floor. The shaman puts the bamboo shoot on the leaf, and then he cuts off a small piece of the skin (kerupai) of the shoot. He removes it carefully with a small carving knife so he will not hurt the bamboo shoot itself — damage to the shoot may harm the health of the living. The removed piece of skin represents the deceased's part of the bungai, which itself is represented by the bamboo shoot as a whole. If the deceased is the eldest member of the bilek-family, the skin is cut from the lowest part of the shoot; if he or she is a younger member, a piece of skin is removed from an upper part (see p.23). The shaman wraps the cut-off skin and the effigy representing the deceased in the leaf.²

After wrapping the skin and effigy in the leaf, the shaman orders the "ghost's goods" and a fowl — a cock or a hen in accordance with the deceased's sex — to be brought to the gallery. He then removes a few planks from the floor of the tempuan-passage so as to make a hole. The fowl is killed above the hole, and its head drops to the ground. At this a number of women, including those of the bereaved bilek-family, burst into loud wailing in the bilek. The shaman throws the leaf parcel containing the cut-off skin of the bamboo shoot and the deceased's effigy through the hole. Then he throws some burning fire brands, a water-containing gourd and the pile of "ghost's goods" through the hole in quick succession. All these things are received by the ghost of
the newly deceased who has been waiting on the ground. The shaman puts some leaves of lemayong palm (*Salacca* sp.) over the hole, which is then closed again with the floor planks.

The shaman returns to the *pagar api*, puts the bamboo shoot in the jar and covers it again with the calico. Then he ties a knot in the bundle of white threads ("the ladder of *semengat*") which has until now been hanging loosely from the cross pole. This is a symbolic action to fasten the *semengat* of the surviving members of the bilek-family and thus to ensure their security.

There is usually a leisurely interval between the concluding act of separation and the night meal (specifically called *salau* in the context of a shamanic ritual) at which the meat of the killed fowl is served. People on the gallery talk about their dreams, especially dreams related to the deceased. The shaman's role is sometimes that of a consultant and sometimes is merely that of a catalyst of conversations. As a consultant he answers questions which people pose to him about the meanings of their dreams. An example was given in Chapter 2 (p.36), in which the shaman tried to mitigate a dreamer's fear of a "ghostly hunter", though in an awkward and obscure way. Usually, however, the shaman can relieve the anxiety of someone who has been bothered by frequent dreams about a ghost in more direct and simpler ways. Thus, to a dreamer's question, "Weren't we, the living, among them (the visiting ghosts)?" he may simply give a negative reply.

The Closing Ritual in the *Bilek*

After the night meal on the gallery the shaman and the bereaved family (and some others) enter the *bilek*. There a simple ritual is performed to secure the *semengat* of the living members.
Following the usual procedure of minor shamanic healing ceremonies, the shaman dips various charms in water which is in a plate, smears the chests of the bereaved with the water and looks into a quartz crystal. He then goes into a brief trance after having thrown a pinch of uncooked rice to prepare the way of his liberated semengat. After this rather routine prelude, the shaman stands up and walks around the sitting bereaved family members, occasionally brushing their shoulders with an ikat fabric. This act symbolises purification in the sense that it is intended to get rid of the pollution related to death, as it is called "sweeping" (nepas). Then the shaman goes out to the gallery to "fetch" their semengat which have already been secured by tying a knot in the threads. He re-enters the bilek, gesticulating as if he were carrying the semengat between his hands. He puts an invisible semengat and an uncooked rice grain (possibly symbolising the semengat) on the top of the head of each member of the bilek-family. The shaman ties each person's wrists with creeper fibres to ensure the setting of the semengat in the body — this is another form of ikat semengat (see p.57).

To conclude the whole ceremony the shaman takes some fronds of lemayong palm and attaches one leaf each to the door, a fireplace post, the innermost part of the fireplace, and a back corner of the bilek. The lemayong palm is a symbol of the border between this world and the Land of the Dead or between the living and the dead. The leaves are supposed to be an efficacious barrier (pelepa') against ghosts, making the living invisible to them. (For a myth relating the origin of the symbolic use of this palm see Chapter 7). This concludes the separation ritual.

Afterwards there may be some conversation between the shaman and the bereaved in the bilek. The following account of part of the conversation which followed the serara' bungai ritual for Sta illustrates
well the psychological tone of the ritual and the concerns of the bereaved.

After shaman Chundi had attached all the palm leaf pelepa', Tangu, the deceased's son, went out to the gallery. In the bilek three women (Sati, Sta's wife; Miai, his daughter; Chelenga, Sati's sister) remained and talked with Chundi. Miai timidly asked the shaman whether they (the ghosts) had come and if he could identify them personally. Chundi replied to her in a gentle affectionate tone. He said that they had really come but not in an enormous crowd; that was the reason the pigs had not squealed loudly. He added "He (Sta) came to receive the things (under the gallery), accompanied by two people. I couldn't identify those two. Other ghosts such as Ibu Sa (the woman who died of breast cancer — see Chapter 3, p.41) stopped at the foot of the entrance ladder. They dared not come further because they were afraid of me." Chelenga repeated the shaman's words, smiling to Miai. She smiled back and said, "We were waiting here, and he came."

It is not difficult to see in Miai's last words her filial affection, undisturbed by the fact of her father's death. She seemed to have shifted the object of her affection from the live father to his ghost or spirit. No fear or terror was involved in her anticipation of the ghost's arrival. At least to Miai, the serara' bungai ritual was the occasion on which she could have a contact, though indirectly, with her dead father, rather than the occasion to sever the spiritual tie with the ghost.

As has become clear from the description above, the serara' bungai ritual is essentially concerned with the bilek-family to which the deceased belonged. Other members of the longhouse have no obligation to attend it. Even immediate relatives of the deceased (e.g., a child or a sibling) who do not belong to the bilek-family at the time of the death of one of its members are not included in the category of the bereaved in the ritual. There is no obligation for them to attend it, and if they do, they are no more than onlookers like other members of the longhouse. We can see in the serara' bungai ritual the clearest manifestation of the Iban idea of bilek-family solidarity and continuity. The bilek-family and its symbolic bungai continue to exist into the
future, transcending, so to speak, the death of its individual members.

**NGETAS ULIT: THE END OF COMMUNITY MOURNING**

Usually, and preferably, the community mourning (*ulit*) is not terminated before the *serara' bungai* ritual. That is presumably because separation between the living and the deceased is a desirable, if not indispensable, precondition for the living to release themselves from the cumbersome mourning restrictions. As the Iban put it, "Once the separation has been made, we may freely end the mourning."

We should distinguish two stages in the ritual to terminate the community mourning. The first is the stage in which people make themselves ready or "entitled" to put an end to the mourning. People need an agent who can carry out the task successfully, and more often than not they take action themselves to become or obtain that agent. As I will discuss in the next section, there are alternative ways of choosing to do this. The second stage is the mourning termination ritual proper, which does not seem to vary substantially from case to case.

The way chosen for performing the first stage is largely dependent upon the local longhouse tradition. Customarily, the Sungai Paya community sends a hunting party to the forest so that the party will become the "entitled" agent for the mourning termination on its return to the longhouse. The exact date of the departure of the party should be proposed by the bereaved family, though in consultation with others of the community. There is no rigid prescription concerning who participates in the hunting expedition. Anyone, male or female, can participate if he or she so wishes. No particular individual is obliged to take part in it. However, each constituent *bilek*-family of the community tends to send one of its members to join the party, provided it can spare one.

The expedition, usually called "going to the forest" (*numun ka babas*), is a hunting expedition par excellence. The Iban say, therefore, that
if people are confident that they have good prospects of getting game, the number of participants increases. The length of time the party stays in the forest depends on how much game they get as well as on the prospects for getting more. The more successful the hunting is, the longer the party tends to stay in the forest. However, as far as the ritual purpose is concerned, a prolonged stay is not required. A day's trip to the forest is sufficient to "entitle" them to carry out the subsequent ritual of mourning termination.

At one stage during the hunting expedition the participants go up to the summit of a hill and release themselves from mourning. They face the direction of the sunrise and "sweep" (*nepas*) each other's shoulders with a bundle of wild palm leaves, murmuring a simple prayer to the effect that they are now "comfortable" (*nyamai*) enough to terminate the mourning restrictions. The bundle of leaves — two kinds of palm, *gerenis* and *pelat* (both unidentified) are used among the Skrang Iban — is to be taken back to the longhouse. This ritual release from mourning, not the actual hunting, constitutes the central purpose for "going to the forest". Sometimes women from other longhouses who are not related to the deceased in question participate in the expedition. They are in personal mourning (*ngulit kediri*) for their own relatives, and they accompany the party in order to participate in the hilltop ceremony that will enable them to "get themselves comfortable" (*ngambi' diri' nyamai*).

Presumably, in an Iban context, going to the forest or, more particularly, to the summit of a hill in the forest brings about a psychological emancipation from the "discomfort" which prevails in the space within and in the vicinity of the longhouse. As we shall see later (Chapter 8), the summit of a hill is closely associated with various benevolent spirits and deities and, for this very reason, provides a more suitable
place to "seek release" than any other place. It is in association with this practice that the expedition for mourning termination is often called ngukit, a term used only in this context and obviously a derivation from the noun bukit (a hill or a mountain).

On the way back the hunting party occasionally makes long war cries, apparently pretending to be a successful headhunting party returning home. The party cannot enter the longhouse during the daytime, that is, between sunrise and the sunset. Otherwise, it would put the longhouse in a "hot" (dangerous or unlucky) condition. When they hear the war cries made by the returning party as it crosses the last ridge before the village, those who have remained in the longhouse prepare for its arrival. Mats are spread and ceremonial ikat fabrics are hung on the parts of the gallery belonging to the bilek-families which have participants in the party. Gongs are beaten for the first time since the death occurred. The party enters the longhouse by the entrance ladder at the pun-end ("the base") of the longhouse. The pun-end, as opposed to the ujong-end ("the tip") from which a corpse is taken out, is supposed to be the entrance for various deities who visit the longhouse to attend religious festivals. In general, as the Skrang Iban say, "all the good things come up from this entrance." The way in which the returning party is welcomed thus approximates the welcome given to the deities in the festivals. Each member of the party returns to his own bilek, walking along the main gallery, which makes a sharp contrast with the funeral procession party whose members must not trespass upon the main gallery.

Supposedly, the hunting party returns to the longhouse with something like the "blessing power" which visiting deities bring. It is a symbolic "power" at an abstract level, for the Iban certainly do not
conceptualise it beyond referring to "the good things". It is welcomed because it brings about the formal termination of bereavement. The women gathering in the bereaved's bilek burst into wailing when the party enters the longhouse, as if the mourning were forcibly broken off by its arrival.

The ritual of ngetas ulit proper, which I mentioned as the second stage of the whole process, is carried out in the bereaved family's bilek after the return of the hunting party, often early the next morning.

One of the participants in the hunting expedition takes charge of the ritual. An older man is preferred as the officiant, though any adult male participant can assume the role. He enters the bereaved's bilek with a bush-knife and the bundle of leaves brought from the forest. The bundle of palm leaves, once it is taken to the longhouse, is referred to by the special names daun silak ("the opened leaves") or isang. Although the etymology of these terms is obscure, they suggest a connection with the custom of headhunting. (This will be discussed further in the next section.)

In the bilek women and children have gathered. The officiating man opens the bundle of ulit, the deceased's personal belongings which symbolise the mourning restrictions. Gongs are beaten on the gallery. A gourd is split into two by a woman of the bereaved family. The lower half of the gourd is purified with a fowl's blood or egg white. The man then "sweeps" the chief female mourner's back with the bundle of leaves, uses a blood stained fowl-feather to touch her chest, and cuts (ngetas) the black waist-ring she wears with the bush-knife. The cut-off waist-ring is coiled and put in the split gourd. Other women of the community are treated in turn in much the same way. Children, young girls, and some older women who are not wearing waist-rings have some tips of their hair cut, and these are also put in the half gourd container. Male
members of the community who did not participate in the expedition may also ask to be treated in a similar way, either through having tips of their hair cut or merely through being "swept" with the bundle of leaves. However, the male members are certainly not the focus of the ritual. For, as the Iban say, they can go to the forest at any time and at their own volition to release themselves from the "discomfort" of mourning.

To conclude the ritual, the man in charge throws the split halves of the gourd which contain the cut waist-rings, the tips of hair, the bloodied feather and the cloth wrapper of the ulit to the ground at the back of the bilek apartment. Understandably this marks the end of the community mourning which is represented by these objects. It is said that the semengat of these thrown objects will reach the Land of the Dead and inform the ghost of the termination of mourning. The community returns to a fully normal way of life. Noisy radios are heard on the gallery. Women no longer wear black waist-rings. A number of men have their hair cut on the open verandah.

Although the ritual of ngetas ulit puts an end to the mourning restrictions imposed on the community as a whole, individuals may continue their personal mourning as long as they desire. Thus after the ngetas ulit, Sati was formally released from mourning for her dead husband Sta. Next day, however, she was seen again wearing a blackened waist-ring. Certainly, she had been gradually recovering from her distress even before the ngetas ulit, as she was seen increasingly often on the gallery during the evening hours. And after the ritual she spent most of the evening time on the gallery. But she wore the waist-ring continuously so as to show her bereavement which had not been completely alleviated by the culturally standardised ritual (see Chapter 3, pp.44-5).

It is difficult to determine the extent to which observance of personal mourning correlates with the socially defined relationship
between the deceased and the mourner. Personal mourning which extends beyond the termination of communal mourning is not a sanctioned obligation. We can reasonably say, however, that a bereaved spouse tends to observe his or her personal mourning far longer than any other relative does. For the surviving spouse is put in the state called balu (roughly glossed as "being a widow or a widower") for a certain period even after the termination of communal mourning. Conceptually, this institution of balu state is distinguished from personal mourning (ngulit kediri'), which depends on an individual's own choice. In practice, however, prohibitions related to the balu status overlap those of self-imposed mourning.

HEADHUNTING AND MOURNING TERMINATION

There is ample ethnographic literature, both specifically on the Iban and on various hill peoples in Southeast Asia who were reputed to be "headhunters", which touch upon the close connection between the custom of headhunting and mortuary customs — especially in relation to rituals for terminating the period of mourning and final festivals for the dead (on the Iban, e.g., St. John, 1863, i, 82; Perham, 1885:299; Wagner, 1972:138-41; more generally, e.g., Heine-Geldern, 1917:20). In his comparative and fairly comprehensive study on "headhunting in Indonesia", Meinhart Schuster enumerates concrete and manifest motivations for headhunting. It is significant that he counts as the first instance the necessity to take a human head on the occasion of the death of a relative, a finding based mainly on material from the native peoples of Borneo, including the Iban (Schuster, 1956:60-70).

In this section I will present some relevant data which broadly concern the above mentioned thesis. They will also elucidate one aspect of the meaning headhunting had to a people who were practising it ardently until quite recently.
As I have already mentioned, there are alternative ways in which the initial stage of the mourning termination ritual may be carried out by the present-day Iban. The first is "going to the forest" or *ngukit*. In this case the party which has returned from the expedition is "entitled" to provide the agent who can put an end to the communal mourning. Another alternative makes use of an old trophy head which was taken a long time ago and is hung, blackened with soot, on the gallery. This is the most common way of terminating the mourning period among the contemporary Layar and Skrang Iban. On the occasion which I observed, the shaman, who had officiated at the *serara' bungai* ritual one night, performed the termination ritual the following day. He first asked for an old trophy head and a bundle of palm leaves. A head was borrowed from the longhouse headman, who was not a particularly close relative of the deceased in question. A bundle of leaves was borrowed from a man who had brought them home from the forest where he had been hunting not long before. The shaman went down to a spot not far from the longhouse, taking the head and the bundle of leaves. A number of boys accompanied him. After a while, the group came marching back to the longhouse led by the shaman. At the foot of the entrance ladder they gave a series of war cries and then entered the longhouse. The shaman put the head in a winnowing basket placed on the gallery in front of the bereaved's *bilek*. The shaman then entered the *bilek* and carried out the ritual of *ngetas ulit* in much the same way as was described in the previous section. After the ritual was over, the head was given a simple offering of tobacco leaves and replaced in its original hanging rack.

It is not just shamans who can make use of old trophy heads in performing the *ngetas ulit*. There is virtually no rule for choosing
the person to carry it out. Any adult male of the community of the deceased or from another community is eligible.

The third alternative (and as far as I know the last) is to ask a man who recently returned from a prolonged journey or stay in distant countries to carry out the task of "cutting" the mourning. A man who is reputed to have killed a person, by any means, is most preferred. This method of choosing an agent for *ngetas ulit* was reported as early as the beginning of the century (Nyuak, 1906:171). Recently, in a descriptive account of mortuary practices in the Krian region, Morgan and Beavitt report that a man "who had been in a relatively informal killing during the Brunei Rebellion of 1962" was chosen to carry out the ritual (Morgan and Beavitt, 1971:303). The man, with a sword in his belt and holding a bunch of *isang* leaves, approached the longhouse, accompanied by a gang of small boys. They made war cries while marching to the longhouse. In the longhouse the man sat on a gong placed on the gallery and cut the waist-rings and locks of hair of the mourning people (ibid.:309-10).

The characteristics of the three alternative ways in which the present-day Iban choose an officiating agent for the termination of the mourning period suggest that they are all acts which simulate a headhunting expedition. The Iban themselves often assert that in former days they would go headhunting for the purpose of terminating the period of mourning and that the present customs are substitutes for the now suppressed old custom. There remains no doubt that headhunting once had some connection with the termination of mourning among the Iban. However, it still remains problematic whether it was necessary to take a fresh head on such an occasion and, if that was the case, who had to acquire a head or participate in a headhunting expedition. There is an even more difficult question too, that is, what is the
nature of the relationship between headhunting and the termination of mourning?

Disappointingly, it is impossible today to obtain solid factual data on how often headhunting expeditions were carried out in the past for this specific purpose. I can only offer some fragmentary information and conjecture.

To begin with, it must be pointed out that headhunting as practised among the Iban was primarily concerned with their male cult. Success in killing a human being and taking a head constituted the greatest feat a man could accomplish by his own prowess. In that sense it was esteemed essentially as a matter of individual prestige. However, in view of the overwhelming importance of headhunting within the Iban value system, it is quite understandable that the practice of headhunting came to permeate virtually all aspects of Iban culture. This multifarious association with various aspects of culture makes headhunting an exceedingly complex phenomenon. One can talk about headhunting and the symbolism of taken heads in relation to agricultural rituals, marriage customs and mortuary rituals.

According to a knowledgeable informant, people in olden days were simply brave and always willing to go headhunting on any occasion. Nobody would decline if an expedition was proposed for terminating the communal mourning. However, according to him, the success or failure of the expedition, that is whether a head was acquired or not, would not matter. For "going to the summit of a hill" (ngukit) alone would be sufficient for the purpose even in former days. I am inclined to accept this view as portraying the general framework within which the Iban in the past conducted headhunting, or would-be headhunting, on such an occasion. I am not saying, however, that headhunting was a customary
norm or culturally imposed condition for terminating the period of mourning. There is no evidence to support the existence of such a prescription.

It is more unlikely that taking a fresh head was an indispensable prerequisite for terminating the period of mourning every time a person died. However, I admit, a decision to postpone the mourning termination until a head was acquired may have been acceptable in former days, depending upon the particular circumstances in which the death had occurred, upon the deceased's status and upon the emotional intensity of the survivors' bereavement. This might apply both on the communal level of mourning (*ulit*) and on the level of personal mourning. If a bereaved person felt that an easier way of mourning termination was not good enough to express his bereavement, he could propose a head-hunting expedition or the acquisition of an actual head as the necessary precondition for the rite. Undoubtedly, one dared not make such a proposal unless the deceased person was a prominent figure in some respect or other. In the previous chapter I mentioned "the new regulation" which banned radio listening during the mourning for the government appointed regional headman. This was proposed by his son. Interestingly, the proposal extended the period of the ban until a hunting expedition went into the forest and returned to the longhouse; that is to say, the ban was not lifted even after the *ngetas ulit*, which had been carried out by using an old skull, following the usual custom of the community. I know another case in which an alteration of a community custom was proposed. It was to terminate mourning for a woman who had died by suicide. The people of the community felt that a more committed procedure than the usual one should be adopted to terminate the mourning for the woman who had died such an unusual type
of death. They thus "went to the forest" (ngukit) instead of the simpler use of an old skull. For, according to them, the ngukit is a more traditional custom and is more suitable for dealing with that type of death. Significantly, most of the adult male members of the longhouse participated in this "hunting expedition". This indicates clearly that adopting an alternative method is an expression of the people's concern with the circumstances in which the death occurs. I think that such a feeling that something more than the ordinary observances was needed in a certain case would have, in former days, been sufficient to motivate the launching of a headhunting expedition.

As for personal mourning, I believe some individuals (but only males) imposed on themselves the difficult task of taking heads in order to terminate their bereavement, though there is hardly any evidence. A story is told of a man who had lost his wife and went headhunting by himself — no specific rationale was given by the story teller. Possibly a peculiar psychological factor is involved here. Going headhunting or wandering (bejalai or belelang) in strange lands may bring about a cathartic effect for those who had an "uncomfortable" condition of bereavement. In other words, the emotional depression caused by loss may be overwhelmed and eliminated by the excitement and danger of a headhunting expedition.

What I have said above is merely conjecture as to situations in which the intention to terminate mourning may have motivated headhunting, but there is another aspect of the relationship between mourning termination and headhunting which is contingent rather than causal. The return of a successful headhunting party, which had been organised independently of a person's death, would automatically terminate the mourning for any
person who had died during the party's absence. Ngelambong, the head­man of the Sungai Paya longhouse, told of such a case from his own experience. He participated in a pro-Government expedition in pursuit of rebels led by Asun in the early 1930s. On the upper Katibas river the party met up with the rebels and killed one, whose head was taken. When they came back to their longhouse in the vicinity of the town of Sibu (Ngelambong was staying there as a rubber worker and was married to a girl of the longhouse), the community was in mourning for a woman who had died several days before. Although the participants from that longhouse did not bring the enemy's head (which had been taken to the expedition leader's longhouse), they were equipped with bunches of palm leaves (isang, daun silak) attached to the sheaths of their bush-knives as the symbol of successful headhunting. The mourning ended on their return. Thus, the return of a headhunting party, preferably with a taken head, would offer an incomparable opportunity for a community to be freed from mourning.

Now we may ask a crucial question: why is headhunting associated with mortuary rituals at all? I have already mentioned the possible cathartic effect headhunting may have on individual mourners who participate in it. But its relevance to the termination of communal mourning has yet to be explained.

As I mentioned earlier, at least among the Skrang Iban a hunting party returning to terminate community mourning comes up to the long­house from its pun-end entrance. This custom suggests that something "good" is considered to be entering the longhouse. Presumably this "good thing" has or is a certain kind of "force" which is able to terminate the mourning. If we assume this "force" exists, a further question arises — what is the "force", or more precisely, what is it derived from? Let us suppose here that the hunting expedition is really a ritual re-enactment of headhunting. Then the "force" is a consequence of a
simulated headhunting expedition. One may give an animistic explanation that a taken head contains a certain sort of "life substance" which could bring a death-laden community back to a normal or even blessed state of life. This "substance" is not the semengat of the killed victim. Although the Iban usually say a person's semengat is in his head, they do not have any explicit notion that a taken head conveys this spiritual entity to a given community. The Iban concept of human semengat as the distinctly personal entity is incompatible with the notion of transferable "life substance". The "force" is something symbolic rather than a substantive entity.5

Explanation on another plane points to the fact that successful headhunting, real or simulated, makes a participant "entitled" to put an end to mourning. The focus here is not so much on trophy heads taken in successful headhunting as on the participant's achievement, experience or career in headhunting, preferably a successful one. Headhunting is a risky task both in physical and spiritual terms. Headhunters confront enemies as dangerous as themselves. If they defeat the enemies and take their heads successfully, they are then in spiritual danger. Their life-images (ayu) are endangered, presumably because of their deed of killing. To cope with this danger, which is expressed by the phrase "ayu do not be defeated", they shout war cries. Successful headhunters are therefore those who have overcome a physical and spiritual crisis, and a trophy head is the most excellent symbol of this heroic achievement. By this very fact they can carry out tasks related to death with less danger than others. Indeed, there is always some danger in the tasks connected with death. So, if a person performs the task of cutting the mourning rings for the first time in his life, he is given a piece of ironwork as a "reinforcer of semengat" (kering semengat).
There is a fact which is in agreement with the above explanation. According to more than one informant, a successful headhunting party would be called by a mourning longhouse community as it was passing by on its way home. The community members, eager to seek an appropriate occasion to terminate the mourning, would ask the party to undertake the task. Supposedly the party would not refuse such a solicitation. Otherwise, the party might be fined by the offended community. This traditional custom indicates that headhunters were considered the most appropriate "mourning breakers". It can be further inferred, reasonably I think, that those who are outsiders to the mourning community might have one advantage in undertaking the task of putting an end to the mourning. Terminating the mourning is an attempt by the survivors of the community to abolish their obligatory expression of concern for the deceased. It might thus offend the ghost who is unwilling to be cut off from the living and the world it left behind. Fear of ghosts is not intense among the Iban, but it is undeniably present. It might be safer for the mourning community to leave this potentially dangerous task to outsiders who are not directly involved in the subtle relationship between the dead and the survivors.

If we turn our attention to a mourning community, it is easily understood that welcoming a headhunting party (of their own community members or of other friendly communities) brings about an emotionally heightened atmosphere. It swings back the psychological pendulum from the depressed state of mourning to excitement and elation. We can reasonably assume that this emotional swing helps prepare the community for the return to normal life.

The living's community becomes filled with elation. When this emotional state is projected on to an ideational (eschatological) plane,
the ghosts are imagined to be delighted as well. Perham wrote of an observance called *sumping*, "which is carried out at a varying period after death":

... They take the symbols and trophies of a headhunting raid, and the wailer is supposed to procure the services of the spirit of the winds to convey them to the dead, whose abode, before full of darkness and discomfort, is now, at sight of the trophies, filled with light; for they have the satisfaction of feeling that their relations have revenged upon others their own death; so henceforth they stand more freely upon their own footing. (Perham, 1885:295).

I could not confirm the observance of *sumping*, either among the Skrang-Layar Iban or the Balau Iban (to which Perham seems to refer). Considering that the *sumping* was carried out at some time between the end of the *pana* period (the initial stage of mourning) and the commemoration feast for the dead (*gawai antu*), it is highly probable that it was an equivalent or variant of the *ngetas ulit* which is observed today. The *sumping* might be a ritual of partial lifting of the mourning regulations, while its full termination in traditional contexts was postponed until the commemoration festival for the ghosts (see Chapter 5).

**PERMISSION FOR REMARRIAGE**

The state in which the spouse of the deceased is not allowed to remarry is called *balu*. The restriction on remarriage for a certain period after a spouse's death is applied to both sexes. During this period a widow or a widower should behave in accordance with proper manners as the Iban conceive them — particularly those concerning sex-related matters. If a sperson who is still in the state of *balu* has sexual intercourse, the involved couple is fined by some of the deceased spouse's relatives. Such sexual relations are regarded as adultery (*butang*), obviously because the conjugal tie between the deceased and the widow (widower) is supposed to be still valid. Temporary or occasional affairs (*ngemulu antu*) and supposedly permanent cohabitation
(berangkat antu) are considered to be as offensive to the deceased spouse (referred to as antu in these idioms) as they would be to the living spouse.

There are related prohibitions which a person in the balu-state should observe. They are undoubtedly concerned with demonstrating publicly that he or she is abstaining from any sexual involvement during this period. It is thought to be an improper behaviour for a widow or a widower to be excessively jolly with the opposite sex. Although the general notion of the balu-state concerns both sexes, particular prohibitions are practically applicable to only one sex or the other. Thus a widow cannot use the native soap-substitute made of dried fruit-skin (pau) and turmeric (kunyit) when she bathes. Nor can she apply oil to her hair. Such behaviour would imply that she wants to make herself attractive to men and they are therefore regarded as being improper. As for a widower, the balu restrictions are not so specific, but are concentrated on expressly sexual behaviour such as paying night visits to women.

The basis on which the Iban observe the balu state is the notion that the conjugal relationship does not cease by the mere fact of a spouse's death. As the Iban put it, "The couple have not yet fully divorced." (Sedua iya empai chukup sarak). Death is one thing, but the marital status as socially recognised is quite another. The balu custom is logically entailed in Iban eschatology which assumes the continuation of the deceased's personality as a ghost who maintains the full legal status which he (she) had while still alive. Psychologically, the time factor plays a certain role. It is quite conceivable that a surviving spouse may have a hallucinatory feeling of the deceased spouse's continuing presence. Moreover, among the Iban, communication in dreams with various kinds of antu is common and is taken as experience
of a peculiar type of reality. Arguably, the frequent appearance of deceased spouses in dreams might lead the Iban to the notion of the continuance of the conjugal or sexual tie. The existence of the ghosts of dead spouses is thus a psychic reality, and they are supposed to be eager to maintain their conjugal ties. To the Iban, who are conspicuously monogamous and among whom adultery is taken seriously, the observance of the balu state is of particular importance.

The duration of the balu state is not fixed. In olden days, according to the Iban as well as earlier writers, it tended to be much longer than today and ideally observed until the commemoration festival (gawai antu) for the deceased spouse. If a widow or a widower observes this prolonged balu state until the commemoration festival, her (his) observance is referred to as a "ripe" balu (balu mansau). As gawai antu are held among the present-day Iban of the Second Division only at extremely long intervals in a given longhouse community, such "ripe" balu observance is nowadays most exceptional (I did not witness a single example). Of course in the past, when gawai antu were held more frequently than today, the state of "ripe" balu was more easily achieved. In case, as is common today, the balu state is terminated before the commemoration festival is held, the observance is called an "unripe" balu (balu mata'). The length of an "unripe" balu observance depends on the surviving spouse's will to continue to be a widow (widower) and, more directly, on the degree of sympathy her (his) relatives and friends have toward her (his) frustrating situation. The Iban tend to think that a young widow (or widower) should be liberated from the prohibition of remarriage as early as conditions allow. By contrast, it is given no urgency if the surviving spouse is old. There are thus wide differences in the length of the balu period. I heard of a young widow who had returned to her natal longhouse immediately after the termination of mourning for her husband and had remarried
there within a month. On the other hand, I witnessed a balu termination ceremony for an old woman, about sixty years of age, who had been in a balu state for over two years.

The ceremony for the termination of balu is rather simple among the present-day Skrang Iban. The surviving spouse sits on the gallery, and his or her personal ornaments are put in front of him (her). These might include a bracelet, a silver comb, a bead-necklace, soap-substitute and turmeric for a widow; an anklet and armlet for a widower; and a ceremonial fabric for either. The widow (widower) is smeared on the forehead and chest with egg-white or the blood of a fowl by a male relative of her (his) dead spouse. In addition, turmeric and oil are applied to the widow's hair and chest for the first time since her husband's death. A brief prayer is made by the officiating relative to the effect that the surviving spouse is no longer in the balu state and is now allowed to remarry. There may be some joking about prospects of remarriage and night courting in front of an old woman (man) beyond the age of such possibility.

A nominal fine is charged at the end of the ceremony. This fine is called tebalu and is regarded as a compensatory fine for the "divorce" which is supposedly proposed by the surviving spouse. Thus, when this fining ceremony takes place in a traditional setting at a commemoration festival, there may be a "mock trial" on the matter of "divorce" between a party representing the ghost and a party defending the surviving spouse (see Chapter 5). Male relatives of the deceased spouse are entitled to take the tebalu fine (ngambi' tebalu — the idiom by which the whole ceremony is referred to) on behalf of the deceased spouse, regardless of whether the deceased is male or female. Among the Skrang Iban, the amount of the fine is not rigidly prescribed, but should be determined at the ceremony. It depends, in principle, upon the social
importance of the deceased spouse. For example, a minimal charge of four Malaysian dollars was demanded of an old widower, whose late wife had been by no means distinguished; eight dollars was demanded from an old woman on the basis that her husband had possessed old trophies and an ancient jar, which gave him "high prestige"; and thirty dollars was paid by the widow of the dead government appointed regional headman. Usually, a half of the payment is returned to the surviving spouse as a token of goodwill of the deceased's kin to their affines.

Also, there is no rigid prescription as to what categories of the deceased spouse's relatives attend the ceremony and receive the tebalu fine. Nearer kin are preferable, but virtually any person who is regarded as a deceased's kin can assume the role of an attendant. Exceptions are children of the couple in question and the relatives who belong to the same bilek-family as the surviving spouse at the time of this "divorce" ceremony. Therefore if a surviving spouse remains as a member of his or her deceased spouse's bilek-family (in the case where the surviving spouse had married into it), the tebalu fine will be received by remoter kin of the deceased. In such a case the surviving spouse does not change (or has not yet changed) his or her social status in terms of bilek membership. Yet the "divorce" ceremony is carried out and the fine is taken. There is an obvious gap between the actual social process and the ritual fining. The observance of the balu state and the subsequent ritual of its termination are rather focused upon the dyadic relation of the surviving and the deceased spouses. The fining is a symbolic act for severing the conjugal (especially sexual) tie between a man and a woman as such rather than for compensating for a loss which a given social group suffers by the death of one of its members—in fact, no such group exists among the Iban. It seems to me that the only reason for the deceased spouse's
kin to receive the fine is their suitability to act on behalf of the deceased himself or herself. Thus no specific kin of the deceased has the right to impose the execution of the ceremony and to take the fine. Rather it is their expected role and even a sign of goodwill to terminate the balu state at a proper time. The following episode will show that the Iban take an extended balu state as suffering and expect a prompt initiative to be taken by the deceased spouse's kin.

Some fifty years ago, a woman had been in the balu state for a long period. Although many kin of her deceased husband lived in longhouses not distant from hers, for no obvious reason none of them had taken the initiative to terminate her balu state. Thirteen years after the death of her husband the longhouse community held the commemoration festival (gawai antu) for the dead in the community. Guests were invited from neighbouring communities. A son of the widow made a speech in front of the guests, which included his relatives on the paternal side. He spoke bitterly against them, saying, "Up to now I have never thought we have kin in the world. I have now come to know for the first time that there are a number of you. Mother has been still young, but none of you would come to take her tebalu fine (to terminate her balu state)." The guests could not utter a word.

Some local Iban say that this incident led to an overall shortening of the period of the balu state. It is today tacitly acknowledged among the Skrang (and probably the Layar) Iban that if the ceremony is not carried out within a year after a spouse's death, the surviving spouse is automatically freed from the balu state without paying the tebalu fine.
NOTES

1. Another basis for the suspicion was that the ngerapoh ritual had been performed as early as the second day after the woman's disappearance. People of other communities took this fact as evidence indicating that those of the longhouse community in question had known her definite death before prolonged search for her corpse along the river.

2. In Chapter 2, I mentioned that the usual image of the bungai is a bamboo of the buloh species. To the best of my knowledge, a buloh-bamboo shoot is the only plant used to represent the bungai at the separation ritual among the Upper Skrang-Layar Iban. In other areas, however, different plants can be used. In the Krian area, a bamboo plant (not its shoot) is used (Morgan and Beavitt, 1971:307). Among the Balau Iban, two branches of a rush (bemban) are used. One branch, representing the living, is tied to the upper part of an upright pole and is directed to the east; the other, representing the deceased, is tied to the foot of the pole and is directed to the west. In all cases, however, the underlying intention to create a separation between the living and the deceased does not vary.

3. In Iban mortuary practices, the ground under the longhouse is always associated with the realm of the ghosts. Occasional food offerings to the ghosts are thrown to the ground from the side of the fireplace. In shamanic visions the space within the longhouse is symbolically equated with the sphere of the living, whereas the outer space is equated with the Land of the Dead (see Chapter 6).

4. St. John writes, "I once met the Orang Kaya Pemancha of Seribas, the most influential chief in the country. He was dressed in nothing but a dirty rag round his loins, and thus he intended to remain until the mourning for his wife ceased by securing a head." (1863:i, 71). It is unlikely that this "chief" intended to observe the mourning until he himself gained a head. It seems, however, very likely that he imposed such strict mourning observances on himself from his deep bereavement.

5. Freeman's analysis of the trophy head symbolism in headhunting festivals deals with this problem in depth. Heads, as described in the ritual chant (timang), contain not semengat, but seeds (benih) of rice. Thus a trophy head can be regarded as a phallic symbol with germinating power. So, "the taking of trophy heads was
regarded as so enormously enhancing of masculine prowess, and as contributing to the well-being and fertility of the longhouse community as a whole." (1975b)

6. A remarkable concept found in Perham's information is that of the motif of revenge. Within the traditional Iban context fully imbued with headhunting, which caused not a few losses in any given community, it is easily conceivable that killing of an enemy was given such a rationale expressed in rather general terms; that is, as generalised revenge for all deaths in the community, not only for those of headhunting victims. (For the burial of the killed, see Chapter 7.)
Chapter 5 THE FESTIVAL FOR THE GHOSTS

INTRODUCTION: PERANTU

Perantu is a verbal derivative of the term antu, the generic term for superhuman beings. In its verbal form, however, it refers exclusively to a specific category of antu, the ghosts. Perantu (or its definitive form, berantu) is to commemorate deceased persons by holding a festival for them. This festival for the ghosts is known under various names among different sub-groups of the Iban: such as, gawai antu (in the Second Division in general), gawai nyungkup (among some of the Saribas Iban), gawai rugan (also among the Saribas) and gawai lumbong (among the Baleh Iban). I use here the term "commemorate" for perantu chiefly because the term is semantically more neutral than "blessing", "celebrate", "homage" and the like. At the festival the dead members of bilek-families and the longhouse community are recalled in the living members' minds. They are entertained at a special feast, and at the end of this feast are given provisions and facilities for life in the Land of the Dead.

Perantu is the final obligation to be observed by the surviving in the whole series of mortuary rituals. Before the festival — that is, while a particular deceased person has not yet been commemorated — the deceased's family occasionally give a small amount of cooked rice and other foods to the ghost. This is usually done by throwing a portion of the food remaining after an evening meal from the fireplace to the ground beneath. Despite the ritual establishment of separation and the termination of mourning, which were described in the last chapter,
the obligations of the living continue at this low level until the festival is held.

To be commemorated in the festival after one's death has a particular importance in the Iban value system. To the Iban, having no offspring or adopted children is an object of grave shame and distress. It means that nobody carries on his or her bilek-family, the continuation of which is of utmost importance in Iban social values. The existence of the succeeding generation in the bilek-family alleviates not only their understandable worry about their difficult later years, but also their anxiety about the future life. Succession within the bilek-family and the expectation of commemoration go together. As one informant put it, "If we have no inheritor of the family, that is 'barren' (punas); we cannot be commemorated after our death." It is a tragedy if one is not commemorated, for "one's property would be scattered among a horde of remoter kin who might claim their share." If an individual's bilek is continued and he is commemorated by the recognised inheritor, his property remains together in its totality.

The underlying ideology is then that an individual's personal integrity after death can be ensured by commemoration, which maintains his bilek and property as he leaves them in this world; thus he still continues to be something in the world he has left. It could be said that the continuation of the bilek-family and property is the worldly extension of his life and existence, the symbol in this world of his "immortal" social personality.

For the living people who commemorate the dead, to hold a festival is also to claim the deceased's property or a portion of it. As a matter of fact, disputes concerning the estate seldom arise if the deceased has recognised inheritors in the bilek-family. Even if the inheritors do not actually hold a festival for the deceased very soon,
the expectation of fulfilling this obligation in the future is sufficient to ensure the inheritance of the deceased's property. The festival, as we see among the present-day Second Division Iban, often takes place too long after the death to be practically effective as a tool for arrangement of property inheritance. As a consequence of this delay in the holding of the festival, it functions usually as a confirmation of the already accomplished claim. A problem might arise when the deceased is "barren" or has no indisputable heir. According to Iban custom, any kin who had some actual interactions with the deceased during his or her lifetime — particularly, if the person gave some economic assistance to him or her — can claim a share of the property if he or she dies without a recognised inheritor. Such a claim may be too weak to overcome a contending claim from other kin of the deceased. Disputes can be settled in various ways. But the most decisive way in which one can support one's claim is by contributing to the festival for the commemoration of the deceased person in question. As an informant in the Sungai Paya community once said, his claim to a certain old rice field site *(temuđa')* had been confirmed by his small contribution to the expenditure for the festival for a "barren" woman, his wife's father's sister, who had been entitled to that piece of land. He expressed this in strong terms, saying, "Who can defeat us? For we helped in her commemoration."

Yet matters concerning property inheritance are only one part of the complex motivation for holding a festival for the ghosts. The festival requires great financial cost. The money consuming aspects of this festival — *gawai antu* as it is called — have reached the highest level among the Iban in the Saribas-Krian regions. Among them it has come to be the biggest festival still held, as other traditional rituals, such as those connected with headhunting, have declined in importance. An Iban longhouse is the ritual community and a festival
(gawai) is more often than not a community festival, as the Iban say that such and such longhouse holds a gawai. The gawai antu as practised among the Saribas-Krian Iban shows strongly this communal aspect, though the dead are commemorated by their individual bilek-families. As a result, it tends not to be held until most, if not all, of the constituent bilek-families have at least one dead member to be commemorated in the festival so that all will consent to the holding of it. This communal nature, combined with its status as the major festival to be held, leads among the Saribas-Krian Iban to an intense competition between longhouse communities in the holding of gawai antu. As we shall see later, the competitive feeling, particularly between the longhouses which are close enough together to invite each other to the festivals, is an important factor which motivates the holding of gawai antu.

But this feeling of competition, which is a social motivation, seems not so strong among the Iban of other regions. Although the gawai antu is also the biggest festival of the present-day Skrang Iban, as it is for the Saribas-Krian Iban, they often say that their gawai antu is not socially motivated or oriented to the degree that it is in the Saribas-Krian area. The period for preparing the festival is much shorter than that needed for the gawai antu among the Saribas-Krian Iban, who tend to spend a number of years on accumulating disposable wealth. The Skrang Iban say that the proposal for preparing the festival may be made after a single good harvest, which can provide the quantity of rice needed for the feast to be held that year. The basic motivation to hold a gawai antu among these Iban is the psychological stress caused by the accumulation of the deceased members of the group who have not yet been commemorated within a longhouse community. To put it in an Iban idiom, the larger the number of antu
"uncommemorated ghosts") in the community, the "hotter" is the longhouse. A *gawai antu* is held in order to bring back the community to a healthy "cool" condition. As a consequence, a festival for the ghosts tends to be held among the Skrang Iban shortly after the construction of a new longhouse, which has replaced the old "hot" longhouse.

It is important to note that this state of anxiety caused by the accumulation of uncommemorated ghosts is often expressed by the same phrase that is used for designating the conditions of mourning (*ulit*) and the *balu* state; that is "discomfort" or "uneasiness" (*enda' nyamai*). *Gawai antu*, in this respect, has essentially the same psychological basis as the termination rituals of mourning and *balu* periods.

In fact, there is ample evidence to indicate that traditionally a *gawai antu* had more direct bearing on the actual termination of mourning as well as of *balu* state. The *gawai antu* as it is practised among the present-day Second Division Iban (the Saribas-Krian, the Skrang and the Balau) has only a slight connection with that aspect of the commemoration festival. The termination of a "ripe" *balu* state on the occasion of the festival — though it is rare — is the only detectable sign of that connection. The mourning (*ulit*) is terminated long before a *gawai antu* is held. This must be so because *gawai antu* are now held only at infrequent intervals by each longhouse community. Now if, as earlier writers mention (Gomes, 1911:142; Perham, 1885:295; Nyuak, 1906:171), *gawai antu* used to be held more frequently, say, every few years, it is highly probable and understandable that a *gawai antu* was originally the occasion on which the mourning period and *balu* state were ritually terminated.
The festival for the ghosts in its traditional form, then, must have been a highly complex ritual, having the dual intention of inviting the departed spirits to the world of the living and, at the same time, of releasing the living from continuing mourning for the deceased. The *gawai antu* as practised among the Second Division Iban in the mid 1970s has weakened the latter intention to a large degree. Moreover, the festival as held by the Saribas-Krian Iban has undergone considerable modification or alteration throughout their long history of contact with the Brooke Government, which suppressed the very core of the Iban value system, that is, headhunting. The suppression of headhunting had significant effects on the central themes of the *gawai antu* among these Iban. I will take up this topic later in this chapter.

In order to understand the importance of the festival for the ghosts as being fully integrated in the temporal sequences of mortuary rituals, therefore, we must have recourse to reports of earlier writers. Perham (1885), Howell (1963b), and Howell and Bailey (1900) give valuable data as to what the traditional *gawai antu* of the Second Division Iban was like at the end of the last century. More fortunately, the festival for the ghosts as practised among the Baleh Iban at the time of Freeman's research (1949-50) seems to retain the most essential features of the traditional festival. The *gawai lumbong*, as the Baleh Iban call it, is held relatively soon after a person's death, that is, within a year or two, which would suggest that they preserve more than do other Iban subgroups the traditional cycle of the commemoration festival in relation to the whole series of mortuary rituals. In the following presentation of the festival for the ghosts I will first give an outline of these traditional forms (largely relying on Freeman's unpublished fieldnotes) and then proceed to describe a *gawai antu* I observed among the present-day Saribas-Krian Iban. This will enable us to compare the festival as
practised in modern settings with the traditional ritual, and through this comparison we can grasp in historical depth the incomparably important position which this festival occupies in the whole of Iban mortuary practices and eschatology. Thus in the final section of this chapter I will discuss cultural change and some of the ethnographic problems concerning this festival.

OUTLINE OF TRADITIONAL FESTIVAL

As was mentioned above, the traditional cycle of mortuary observances was concluded by the holding of a festival for the deceased, which took place not more than a few years after the death. The actual length of the period between the death and the festival seems to have varied, depending upon the season in which a particular person died, the conditions of the subsistence economy which would afford a sufficient amount of surplus of rice to hold a feast and possibly upon the intensity of a psychological urge to conclude mortuary observances. An Iban festival of any type would usually be held after the rice harvest and before the beginning of the next agricultural cycle. If the harvest happened to be good enough, therefore, a person who died during the previous agricultural cycle might be commemorated within a year. If the harvest was unfavourable, the holding of the festival might be postponed for another one year or more. At a festival for the ghosts all those who had died since the last festival held in the longhouse community would be commemorated at the same time (Gomes, 1911:142). This indicates that lengths of the period between the death and the final commemoration must have differed from case to case.

According to Iban notions, the semengat of a deceased person "migrates" to the Land of the Dead relatively soon after death and joins there the relatives and friends who have previously died. This separation between the deceased and the surviving is marked by the shamanic ceremony.
The purpose of holding a festival for ghosts is, therefore, not to send the departed spirits to the other world and to establish them there for the first time. At this point the Iban mortuary festival had and has an intention different from what one may find in similar festivals among the peoples (the Ngaju in Southern Borneo, in particular) whose practices and eschatological ideas led Hertz to a famous postulation of the parallelism between the states of a corpse, the conditions of the soul and the mourning observed by the living (Hertz, 1960). The Ngaju hold a notion that a departed spirit is admitted to the Land of the Dead for the first time when the survivors hold a great festival for the deceased. The decomposed remains of the corpse are cleaned and the bones are replaced from a temporary shelter to a semi-permanent house-like structure. At this festival the bereaved relatives are freed from prolonged mourning (*ibid.*:53-63). In contrast with the Ngaju, the rationale of the Iban about holding a festival for the ghosts is to invite them from the Land of the Dead to the living's community as guests (*ngambi*’ *sebayan ngabang*). It may be argued, although I will not insist on this point, that the difference between the Ngaju and the Iban notions is congruent with the difference between the burial practices of the two peoples. The Iban do not usually practise secondary burials as the Ngaju do. There is nothing to do with corpses *per se* at the Iban festival for the ghosts. In spite of these apparent differences, however, the Iban festival for the ghosts in its traditional form has a most essential feature in common with that which Hertz calls "the final ceremony". The Iban hold the festival with the intention of liberating the bereaved from mourning observances as well as of ensuring the final well-being of the dead in the other world. The welfare of the living thus goes together with the welfare of the ghosts. Accordingly, we can discern two ritual
stages in the traditional festival: (1) the festival proper or, as we may call it, the feast, at which the ghosts are entertained, and (2) the rituals for severing ties between the deceased and the survivors.

Before proceeding to details of the ritual procedures some words are necessary about the prolonged mourning which is concluded at the festival. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the communal mourning (ulit), which imposes a set of restrictions on the longhouse community, is terminated by the ngetas ulit ritual. After the termination of the communal mourning only immediate relatives of the deceased, especially the members of the deceased's bilek-family, continue personal mourning (ulit kediri'). This latter type of mourning must once have been more institutionalised than it is today. Thus early writers invariably note that prolonged mourning is confined to the immediate relatives or the bilek-family (e.g., Brooke Low in Ling Roth, 1896:155; Gomes, 1911:139). It is this family mourning as well as the restriction on remarriage of the bereaved spouse that is terminated at the traditional festival.

Inviting the Ghosts to the Festival: Sabak

It is characteristic of Iban thinking that when they hold a religious festival (gawai), the superhuman beings who will be invited to the festival must be informed of it by the singing of an invocatory chant specific to the particular type of festival being performed. For invoking various deities to attend a festival, whether concerned with agriculture or headhunting, a party of ritual bards performs a chant which is, generically, known as timang or pengap. In such an invocatory chant a message of invitation is conveyed by a messenger, also specific to a particular type of festival, toward the mythical realm in which the spiritual guests live. Having been informed of the festival, the guests set out for a journey to attend the festival. A chant describes
the route (jalai) of their journey, their arrival at the celebrating longhouse and their communication with the people holding the festival. The singing bards' semengat are supposed to follow the itinerary of this spiritual journey, accompanying the messenger from this world to the spiritual sphere and then accompanying the guests back to this world. Thus the content of ritual chants provides essential clues for understanding Iban views of the spiritual worlds.

At a festival for ghosts a special type of death dirge (sabak) is sung for the purpose of inviting the ghosts. Unlike a dirge sung at the side of a corpse on the night of the wake, this dirge falls into the same category as other invocatory chants. Although, as usual with all types of Iban ritual chants, details of such dirges vary from one region to another and from one expert to another, their basic structure remains constant. Thus a festival dirge consists of four main parts: (1) the dispatching of a message to the Land of the Dead, (2) the ghosts' receiving of the message and their preparation for the journey, (3) their journey to the world of the living and (4) their attendance at the festival and communication with the living.

Usually a dirge expert (and sometimes more than one) begins to sing the chant a few days before the day of the main festival. This is to inform the ghosts of the approaching festival. Among the Balau Iban the messenger to the Land of the Dead is supposed to be the Spirit Wind (Antu Ribut). He carries a boat (lumpang) to the other world so that the ghosts may use it on the journey to the festival. As a ritual procedure a piece of wood with some cooked rice on it is thrown to the ground beneath the longhouse at the beginning of the chant. On arrival in the Land of the Dead the Wind blows fiercely over rice fields and longhouses. The ghosts are surprised and fall into panic (sebayan begau), taking the storm as a token of supernatural retribution (kudir').
In a very elaborate dirge collected by Freeman from a Baleh Iban expert, the signal is the beating of a drum (*tutong*). Being personified in the text, Tutong enters the realm of the dead in a quick motion and alarms the ghosts in much the same way as the Wind does in the Balau version (Freeman, fieldnotes, 1950).

Being alarmed by the storm or the sounds of the drum, the ghosts gather and hold a meeting (*sebayan baum*) to discuss the cause of the alarm. Soon they are informed that the living are preparing a festival for them and that the alarm is really an invitation to it. They then prepare to set out to attend the festival. Judging from the dirge texts, it is not only the uncommemorated ghosts for whom the festival is planned but also a crowd of anonymous ghosts that visit the world of the living on this occasion. They are called the troop of ghosts (*bala sebayan*), and are led by elders or mythical figures. The ghosts take various kinds of magical charms (*pengaroh*) in order to exchange them for food offerings made at the festival. They also bring fighting cocks. For cockfighting between the dead and the living is the only visible (mimetic) form of mutual interaction between the two parties in the course of the festival. In the Baleh version of the dirge male ghosts go on an expedition to the oceanic sphere (*tasik*) in search of cocks and charms before they actually set out for the journey to the world of the living. This reminds us of the theme, recurrent in chants and sagas, of headhunting expeditions undertaken by gods and heroes against their mythical opponents represented by Ribai, who resides abroad. Thus in the imagery expressed in the dirge ghosts are supposed to have characteristics similar to those of gods and heroes. The ontological status of ghosts in the Land of the Dead is comparable to that of gods and heroes in their own mythical realms (see Chapter 8 for further discussion of this).
The journey of the invited ghosts (*sebayan mansang ngabang*) is described in the part of the dirge sung on the night of the main festival. The ghosts, accompanied by the singer's *semengat*, traverse the whole sphere of the Land of the Dead. They pass the abodes of those who died in various abnormal ways, these being separated from the abode of those who died in natural ways. The invited ghosts call these individuals to join them in attending the festival but they decline to do so, saying that they are busy with their own concerns. The itinerary of the journey followed by the ghosts is essentially the same as that depicted in the death dirge sung on the night of the wake. As I present the contents of the latter type of dirge in some detail in Chapter 6, I will not discuss the itinerary further here. The direction of the journey on the two occasions of course differ.

The importance of the *sabak* at the festival for ghosts in its traditional forms is most clearly seen in the co-ordination of the chanting and the ritual procedures. At the festival of *gawai lumpong* among the Baleh Iban, as Freeman reports (fieldnotes, 1950), a gong is beaten on the gallery when the sounds of the drum (*tutong*) are reported in the chant to have reached the Land of the Dead. The gong beating is said to simulate the latter. While, in the song, the ghosts are going abroad to seek cocks and charms and afterwards go on the journey to this world, a number of men and women make, or prepare, ritual objects on the open verandah, that is, beside the singer. These ritual objects, which will be described shortly, are the gifts to the ghosts who are commemorated at the festival. They should be completed by the time of the arrival of the ghosts. Thus the preparations of both parties, of the ghosts and the living, go together. Meanwhile, guests from other longhouses are entertained on the gallery, being served with rice wine and specially prepared food.
The Arrival of the Ghosts: Cockfighting

At dawn the ghosts arrive at the celebrating longhouse after the night long recital of the sabak. Some of the invited guests, who left for their own longhouse to fetch their fighting cocks in the dark of night, come back to the festival simultaneously with the ghosts' "arrival".

Formal food offerings (piring) are laid out on the gallery to welcome the ghosts (ngalu sebayan). Some able men and women sing songs (berenong) which take the form of conversations between the dead and the living; the ghosts ask the living for food in exchange for magical charms, and so on. The living guests are served with rice wine by singing women presumably pretending to serve the invited ghosts. The presence of the ghosts is thus indicated by the welcoming activity on the gallery.

The cockfighting between the visitors' cocks and the hosts' cocks takes place on the open verandah shortly after the welcoming of the ghosts. This cockfighting represents a contest between the ghosts and the living (nyabong sebayan). Local customs vary as to which side, the visiting guests or the festival hosts, assumes the role of the "cocks of the dead". As I heard among the Saribas-Krian and the Balau Iban, the visitors' cocks would represent the ghosts' side at the traditional festival. Among the Baleh Iban, as Freeman observed, different longhouses seem to have different customs and interpretations. At the gawai lumbong of one longhouse arrangement was made for the cocks belonging to members of the host community, which represented the "cocks of the living", to be handicapped by wearing only one spur against two spurs worn by the visitors' cocks which represented the "cocks of the dead". Thus the victory of the latter was artificially pre-arranged. At the
*gawai lumbong* of another longhouse the role assignment was contrary; the hosts’ cocks represented the "cocks of the living" and the visitors’ cocks represented the "cocks of the dead", without artificial pre-arrangement.

Perhaps the actual performance of cockfighting is subject to various interpretations in accordance with local traditions and even due to individual extrapolations. It is often argued by the Iban that the ghosts see things in a perverse way. Their language is contrary to ordinary Iban (*jakot sebayan tunsang*). So, to the ghosts’ vision, victory is defeat and defeat is victory. This belief in the cognitive perverseness of ghosts makes various native interpretations possible about outcomes of the cockfighting. Nobody can decide whether the "cocks of the dead" are what are seen through the ghosts' eyes or the living's eyes. By contrast, what is sought in the ritual cockfighting is clearly stated in texts of *sabak* chanted at the festivals for ghosts. Both in the Balau *sabak* and in the Baleh *sabak*, the defeat invariably befalls the ghosts' cocks. This idea is only too understandable. For the festival is held in order to set final separation between the living and the dead. The living have to continue to live without succumbing to the same fate as did the dead. As a Balau expert singer of *sabak* once remarked, "Why do they (the dead) defeat us? They are dead."

Thus ignominiously beaten in cockfighting, the ghosts have to be content with the food offerings. They eat the food and give the living various charms brought from the Land of the Dead in exchange. And they quickly leave.

The Return of the Ghosts: Grave Goods

Soon after the cockfighting is over, a group of men leave the longhouse to take various grave goods to the burial ground. During the night of *sabak* recitation these have been placed on the open verandah. In fact,
some of them have been prepared throughout the night. The things that make up the grave goods vary from case to case. But, in principle, all conceivable sorts of foodstuff must be included: cooked rice, rice cake, various fruits, wine, sugar and so forth. Model wickerworks (baskets for various purposes) and clothes are usually added. These things are put in a specially made carrying basket, which is known as sengkalang sedang among the Baleh Iban. Obviously they are the gift or, in a more proper term, the souvenir for the ghost who has been commemorated at the festival. The Balau Iban call a container basket ma' sebayan ("the ghost's shoulder load"), and these things (or their spiritual counterparts are believed to be taken by the ghosts to the Land of the Dead.

In some cases more durable monumental structures are set up in the graveyard or even over the graves. As we shall see later, among the Saribas-Krian and the Skrang Iban model wooden houses (sungkup) are taken to the graveyard after the festival. Moreover, among the Skrang Iban, a wooden post, called balang tunsang (literally "inverted bottle" and probably symbolising a human head), is erected over each grave which is not provided with a model house. This post is supposed to be a toy for a ghost (ayam sebayan), who might be amused by the sight of it (see Chapter 4, p.121 about the significance of a human head for ghosts). Among the Baleh Iban, as Freeman witnessed on one occasion, a carved bird effigy (burong berangau "crying bird"?) may be carried to the graveyard and set up there. This is said to be a hornbill effigy for the ghost (kenyalang sebayan) for whose honour it is specially made. It is an optional gift to a person who had high reputation as a brave warrior or war-leader. Presumably his reputation is expected to be preserved even in the Land of the Dead and thus should be marked by a hornbill effigy, the outstanding symbol of successful head-taking (cf. Freeman, 1960b:99-102).
The purpose of placing these goods above graves is exactly the same as that of burial gifts (baia') which are made on the very day of burial. If there is difference between these two sorts of gift-giving at all, it is that the festival grave goods are more fully assorted and more meticulously prepared than the burial-day gifts. Wooden monumental structures, often beautifully carved and painted, are made only as a part of the festival grave goods. Death comes rather suddenly and the principle of the "old style" funeral is to dispose of a corpse as soon as possible after minimal ritual. Provisions given to the newly departed spirit may be incomplete because of the unpreparedness of the living for the actual death. By contrast, the festival for ghosts is performed at the survivors' own intention and with full preparations. The date for the festival is set at the discretion of the living; the ghosts are invited to the world of the living and made to return to the Land of the Dead on the initiative of the living. Behind the striking similarity between the burial-day gifts and the festival grave goods lies the sharp contrast in degrees of preparedness on the part of the living. By the very fact that they are cautiously prepared, the festival grave goods may symbolise the survivors' determined intention to effect a final separation between themselves and the deceased. After the provision of these final gifts the ghosts are supposed to earn their own living in the Land of the Dead. Occasional throwing of food beneath the longhouse for their sake thus ends forever with the final festival.

The End of the Festival; Releasing the Living

The final rituals for releasing the living from a continuing tie with the deceased are held after the party has left the longhouse to carry the grave goods to the graveyard. As I mentioned earlier, in the traditional cycle of mortuary customs, the ceremony for permitting a
widow or a widower to remarry at his or her discretion takes place at
this stage. The ceremonial procedure of terminating such "ripe" balu
states is essentially the same as that of terminating "unripe" balu
states, which was discussed in the last chapter. Some male guests who
are related to the deceased spouse act as agents of the ghosts. Some-
times sophisticated verbal play is performed between those guests who
represent the ghosts and members of the host community who speak for
the surviving spouse. Discussion is conducted as if it were a trial
over a divorce case. The ghost's side talks about sexual chastity
which should be observed by the bereaved partner; the living's side
asks the ghost for pardon in establishing the divorce rather against
the ghost's will. Discussion ends with setting a divorce fine in much
the same way as in the ceremony for terminating "unripe" balu states.

At the same time as the balu terminating ceremony the formal ending
of the family mourning is acted out. Basically the same ritual as we
saw in ngetas ulit ritual is repeated, but at this time it applies
only to the members of the deceased's bilek-family. Black mourning
waist-rings worn by female mourners are cut; they then put on fine ikat
skirts and other ornaments. Male mourners may put on new loincloths
and ornaments as well.

The end of the festival is thus the end of all the obligations
that the living members of the bilek-family have hitherto observed.
In this sense the festival for ghosts has great psychological value for
the Iban. It marks the final transition from uncomfortable states of
mind (enda' nyamai or enda' senang) to the relaxed (lantang) and comfort-
able states (nyamai and senang). Although, in fact, this transition is
gradually attained through the separation and restitution rituals held
at intermediate stages, it is not until the conclusion of the festival
that full emancipation is achieved.
This sense of emancipation is undoubtedly expressed in the horseplay which is encouraged and boisterously sought at the final phase of the festival. The horseplay, which is termed bekusok ("rubbing"), is a sort of disorderly mocking between the sexes and may sometimes involve overtly sensual behaviour. Men and women — the host community members and the guests — smear each other in a ribald atmosphere with lime, soot, mud and the entrails of sacrificed fowls. It is said that this orgiastic merriment entertains the ghosts at their departure to the Land of the Dead. Some say that the ghosts themselves participate in the horseplay; one of my Baleh Iban informants told me that the horseplay was actually the living's acting out of the ghosts' play.

No matter what rationale is given, however, the institutionalised merrymaking provides an incomparably effective channel for those who want to act out the feeling of release. A more significant play in this respect is a mock battle between the men returning from the graveyard and young womenfolk of the longhouse. The girls, waiting in ambush for the party which carried the grave goods, attempt to capsize the boats and to capture and smash the drum (tutong) which was continuously beaten at the graveyard. Presumably, the smashing of the drum symbolises the conclusion of the festival, which began with sending the drum sounds to the Land of the Dead. A psychological aspect of the mock battle between the sexes may become clear if we take it into account that the womenfolk are put in a more strained situation during the festival than the men. The women prepare the offerings, make most of the grave goods and wail intermittently during the festival; whereas the men may enjoy drinking and chatting. The conclusion of the festival therefore brings about much more relaxation to women than to men. This might account for the fact that in this mock battle as well as in the horseplay the instigations are made by the women. Thus the horseplay and the mock
battle exemplify two parallel and even convergent psychological states: the release from the obligations toward the deceased in relation to the whole cycle of the mortuary observances on the one hand and the release from the highly tense festival on the other.\textsuperscript{3}

Summary Remarks

The festival for ghosts as outlined above is a highly coherent ceremony both in terms of its ritual procedure and of its relation to the whole temporal sequences of the mortuary practices. It is at this festival that the practices and the eschatology converge through the detailed depiction of the states of after-life given in an elaborate dirge and the living's acting out of some interactions between themselves and the ghosts. Moreover, as the traditional festival is held for individual deceased persons who died fairly recently, there is a profoundly emotional involvement by the living in what is going on in the ritual processes and, particularly, in the supposed interactions with the ghosts. Grief over the deceased and pleasant release from the mortuary observances are genuinely expressed throughout the festival. These emotions give to the festival both a serious solemnity and exciting vividness.

The festival in its traditional forms is held for a number of uncommemorated ghosts in a longhouse community, that is, for all—with some exceptions discussed in later chapters—the deceased since the previous festival. Yet, this does not mean that the festival "no longer directly concerns the family of a particular dead person, but the village as a whole" (Hertz, 1960:53). On the contrary, the responsibility and sponsorship of the festival remain the bilek-family affair. In a case Freeman observed even the longhouse headman was absent from the festival.
Introduction

The present-day Saribas-Krian Iban is a highly acculturated and modernised sub-group of the Iban. The festival for ghosts (gawai antu) among these Iban has undergone modification and alteration for well over a century, during which they have been in close contact with the Brooke Government. As I remarked earlier, the gawai antu among the Saribas-Krian Iban no longer functions as the occasion on which the living are ritually freed from continuing mourning for the deceased. The ghosts are invited to the festival and, on their return, are provided with various facilities for them to use in the Land of the Dead. But since the festival has gradually lost its association with traditional mourning practices, it has also loosened its temporal connection with the rest of the mortuary rituals. This means that as far as the benefit of the living is concerned, there is no urge to hold the festival. This results in an indefinite postponement of holding the festival after a person's death.

The motivations to hold a festival for ghosts among the present-day Saribas-Krian Iban are a vague sense of obligation towards the uncom­memorated ghosts of a longhouse community (cf. Introduction of this chapter), and a competitive feeling among neighbouring longhouses to accomplish this highly lavish feast. The frequency of gawai antu in a given community is extremely low. To the best of my knowledge, it tends to be held at intervals of twenty to thirty years.4 This leads Benedict Sandin to write (1961:170), "All Dayaks of every generation should celebrate at least once in a life the Gawai Antu".

The high status the contemporary Saribas-Krian Iban attribute to the gawai antu as their major festival is undoubtedly due to the decline
of the value system connected with headhunting and the related rituals, which were traditionally the main channel for acquiring and expressing particularly male prestige. The _gawai antu_ is convenient and even appropriate as the major festival in the present situation. For there is no necessary or prerequisite qualification needed for holding a _gawai antu_, whereas a headhunting festival, for example, would be too presumptuous because of its direct connection with male feats. In the contemporary situation, especially in the area which has a long history of participation in the cash economy both through rubber production and through wage earning and salaried work, one's social prestige is chiefly dependent on one's disposable wealth or one's status, say, in a governmental body. The success of a lavish festival itself may be taken as a source of prestige, but it, in its turn, depends on the existing source of prestige, that is, disposable wealth. It can be said then that a _gawai antu_ as a major festival provides an incomparable chance to show off or display one's accomplishment derived from one's existing wealth.

What I have said so far is the setting in which a _gawai antu_ is held among the contemporary Saribas-Krian Iban. This accounts for the fact that the living's emotional involvement in an actual death has much diminished at the time of the festival and that the festival itself is characterised by intensification of the aspect of social festivity. Moreover, the present-day _gawai antu_ among these Iban is largely formalised and conventional in terms of ritual procedures. Traditional Iban religion is remarkably transformable by virtue of its consistent use of personal psychic experiences such as dreams. Ritual procedures are often changed in accordance with experiences or inspirations an individual has had before the ritual. The formalisation of ritual procedure is then indicative of the overall weakening of religious experience among the contemporary Saribas-Krian Iban.
There are three reasons for my presenting in the following a somewhat detailed description of the Saribas-Krian gawai antu. Firstly, we can see in ritual objects made at the festival some symbolic meanings relevant to the Iban concept of commemoration of the dead and yet not mentioned in the outline of the more archaic Baleh festival. Most of them are due to genuinely regional variation rather than to recent alteration. Secondly, a peculiar feature which the Saribas-Krian gawai antu has developed during its process of alteration illuminates one interesting theme seen in Iban eschatology. To be specific, it is the incorporation of headhunting ideology into the mortuary ritual; that is, the association between some aspects of death and the hero system (cf. Chapter 8). Thirdly, the overall cultural affinity between the Saribas-Krian Iban and the Skrang Iban extends to the gawai antu among both sub-groups of the Iban; this may help to relate this chapter to the previous ones.

The Preparation Festival: Ritual Objects

The main festival of the gawai antu of the Saribas-Krian Iban, like those of other sub-groups of the Iban, lasts one whole night. A week or two before the main festival a special day is set for preparations of ritual objects. The day is called hari nganyam, that is, "day for making wickerworks", which I call here the preparation festival. The ghosts are informed of the living's plan to hold a gawai antu for the first time at the preparation festival. According to some, the ghosts arrive at the longhouse on that day and continue to stay there until the end of the main festival. From a religious point of view the preparation festival is thus not less important than the main festival.

The following is the list of the ritual objects prepared on that day.
(a) *Sungkup*

*A sungkup* is a miniature house which is supposed to be an accommodation for the ghosts in the Land of the Dead. These house models are the most important objects to be made for *gawai antu* among the Saribas-Krian as well as the Skrang Iban. Among those Iban it is widely held that the ghosts who have not been commemorated would suffer from rain and storm in the Land of the Dead, for, lacking proper houses, they must live miserably on the ground. This notion apparently contradicts another common idea that the newly deceased is welcomed to the longhouse and the *bilek* of his dead family members in the other world soon after his death. We cannot decide even the relative authenticity between the two competing notions. All we can say is that the former idea is regionally confined while the latter is more generally held among the Iban.

Symbolically, having or being established in a house (*berumah*) signifies, as shown earlier in relation to the prohibitions during the *diau* period (see pp. 80-81), that a person is content with the present situation and has no intention to migrate to another country. Before being provided with a house, then, the deceased is not yet fully established in the Land of the Dead, and this would imply that his separation from the living's world is not complete. In brief, the providing of a house model marks the final separation between the living and the dead.

There are two types of *sungkup* which are distinguished by different structures. The more traditional type of *sungkup* has a roof, made up of several planks, which stands directly on the ground with no posts supporting it. It usually has big horn-like projections with elaborate ornamental carving on both ends of the roof ridge. The second type, which was used at the *gawai antu* I observed, is much coarser in structure, with a roof made of a single iron-wood log carved into a shield-like
slab, and has four posts at the corners. Being more like an ordinary house than the traditional sungkup, it has a floored space under the roof. This type of sungkup is called sungkup terabai ("shield" sungkup) or lungun ("coffin") after its roof shape. It is preferred wherever iron-wood is available, for it is more durable than the traditional type. There is, however, no distinction in symbolic meaning between the two types.

Prior to the preparation festival, people go to a forest to cut out roof slabs from big iron-wood trees and buy some rafter material (also iron-wood) in town. Sungkup — which are about five feet high, including stilts two feet in length, and which had roofs measuring three feet x two feet — are then roughly constructed on the ground near the longhouse. At the preparation festival each sungkup is ritually brought into the longhouse and placed on its owner's open verandah. The ritual of the carrying of sungkup into the longhouse reminds us of that of the carrying a coffin out of the longhouse. A pig is speared at the foot of the ladder for purification. The sungkup made for the ghost of the most respectable elder person — called tuai antu ("the leader of the ghosts") — must be carried into the longhouse first. Like a coffin to be taken to the graveyard, all the sungkup should be carried along the tempuan-passage until each reaches its owner bilek's gallery. After they are placed on the open verandah, final refinement and ornamental designs, painted or carved, are added to the sungkup by skilled persons.

Only one sungkup is made for each bilek-family regardless of how many deceased family members are to be commemorated at the gawai antu. It is prohibited to make more than one for each bilek at each gawai antu because that would mean the breaking of the unity of the bilek-family in the other world. This emphasis on bilek-family solidarity is already implied by the very fact that the sungkup is made as a detached house
model, not as a miniature of an Iban longhouse. Although some say in a rationalising way that these sungkup will be joined together in the Land of the Dead to form a longhouse, the basic idea involved in the making of sungkup indicates that the task of the commemoration of the deceased is an individual bilek's affair.

(b) Memorial Baskets

As the preparation festival is called "the day for making wickerworks", various kinds of basket-like objects of split bamboo cane, coloured black, red and yellow, are made by skilled women. These objects (or their semengat) are supposed to be taken to the other world by the returning ghosts themselves at the end of the main festival and used there. They include miniatures of utilitarian goods such as fish traps (with smoked fish in them), fowl cages (each containing an egg), carrying baskets, tobacco cases, head caps, warrior's personal sitting mats (for males), cotton containers (for females), balls for kicking games (for youngsters) and so on.

But the most important wickerwork to be made are cylinder-shaped baskets, two to three inches in diameter and ten inches long, which have a number of small projections at the bottom. They are used at the gawai antu as cases for bamboo containers of rice wine. A basket of this kind should be made for each deceased person, with the exception of dead children — presumably, children do not drink rice wine. There are ranked differences among these cylinder baskets, being graded according to the individual's feats during his lifetime. As such the deceased's sex and age are also related to the grades. The lowest grade of basket, called gelayan, is a small short cylinder and is made for a person who died while still young without, therefore, establishing his own bilek or being on the lineal line of the bilek-family. The standard
grade basket, called *garong tunggal* ("single garong"), is slightly bigger and longer than the *gelayan* and is made for a man or a woman who lived long enough to get direct descendants or inheritors who can commemorate him or her at the festival. For an individual who had gained a high degree of prestige through certain feats in his lifetime, a pair of *garong* attached to each other is made. In the olden days when individual prestige, at least that applied to males, was chiefly gained through prowess and leadership shown in warfare or headhunting, the honour of receiving a higher grade of baskets was naturally associated with this value system which was so prominent in the whole of Iban culture. Sandin gives a table of different grades of *garong* up to a ninefold set of baskets as the highest degree of honour for a dead person (Sandin, 1961:177; 1972:9). All grades are derived from an individual's feats as a warrior or war leader, and therefore represent the unmistakeably male-centred value system.

The aspect of commemorating individuals at *gawai antu* manifests itself most clearly in this assessment of individual's feats through differentiated grades of *garong*. At the festival, the dead are not merely given other-worldly accommodation and facilities, but they are recalled to the living's memory as individuals who once lived in this world and achieved something memorable. It is in this perspective that the *gawai antu*, at least that of the Saribas-Krian Iban, really deserves the name of "commemoration" festival, which surpasses, in its connotation, the simple notion of the final ceremony for separating the dead from the world of the living. The person who achieved worthy feats during his lifetime will not sink into anonymity simply by his death. He remains a distinct individual and will be remembered as such through his feats and fame.
The highest grade of baskets made at the gawai antu I observed was the twofold garong. The four dead persons who received this honour were the elder members of the three bilek-families which had originally established the present longhouse and thus formed the central parts. Three of them were the actual heads of those bileks at the time of the establishing of the longhouse, which qualified them to have a higher grade of basket.

For dead children, basket models of fruit bearing trees, such as orange tree (buah limau), wild rambutan (buah melanjan) or sago palm (mulong merangau, "crying sago"), are made instead of cylindrical baskets.

(c) Offerings to the Ghosts

Early in the morning of the preparation festival, a bamboo pole about six feet high is tied to the post between the tempuan-passage and the gallery in front of each bilek's door. The top of this pole is split open to form a receptacle for food offerings (piring) for the arriving spirits of the dead in general and, in particular, for Indai Bilai, a mythical female figure in the Land of the Dead. This offering pole, of a type often used as receptacle for divine offerings in other contexts (e.g., in the rice field), is called rugan in the context of gawai antu.

The reason the offerings are put in front of the bilek-door is to stop the ghosts at this point, that is, to prevent them from entering the bilek. This rationale is also applied to egg-plant fruits (buah terong) which are put in the receptacle of the rugan. According to Sandin (1972:7), the ghosts might disturb the fermentation of rice wine (which is made in the bilek) and make it sour if this fruit is not put with other food offerings. An egg-plant fruit in this context stands
for the division between the ghosts and the living. This is probably related to a metaphor in which the Iban compare the border between the world of the living and the world of the dead to the thin skin of egg-plant fruit (Freeman, 1970:39); the same idea as is found in the protective use of the *lemeyong*-palm in the *serara' bunga* ritual (cf., Chapters 4 and 7).

Thus these offerings reveal the ambivalence inherent in receiving the ghosts to the living's sphere. Perham is correct in writing about the similar practice among the Balau:

... though it is a feast for the dead to which they are invoked and invited, yet they pretend to guard against any unorthodox and premature approach of the departed as full of uncanny influence. When the *tuak* ... has been made, an earthenware potful of it is hung up before the door of the one room which each family of the village house occupies, so as to attract the attention of any casual wanderer from Hades. Such a one is supposed to see the pot, and to go and regale himself from it, and be satisfied without going further: and thus his thoughts are pleasantly diverted from the inner seat of family life; the room — where, if permitted to enter, he might possibly, in revengeful spite carry off some of the living circle. (Perham, 1885:295-6).^6^

A long sugar cane is tied to the same post that the *rugan* is attached to. It had been brought into the longhouse together with the *sungkup* and basket materials. Although I could not obtain confirmation from informants, the sugar cane perhaps represents the favourite food of the pig which is supposed to be squatting across the way from the Land of the Dead to this world. Unless it were driven away by throwing sugar cane, it would hinder the traffic between the two worlds (see Chapter 6). Thus, the sugar cane may well symbolise the trouble-free journey and the due arrival of the spirits of the dead at the longhouse.

By the side of the *rugan* pole, a rope is tied to two posts, and all the completed memorial baskets are hung from it. A number of *ikat* fabrics and clothes, which, ideally, belonged to the deceased during his lifetime, are also hung there as the "displayed goods given to the ghost" (*baia' pandang*).
On the evening of that day, gongs are beaten on the gallery to welcome the ghosts to the approaching gawai antu. At this juncture a small hearth frame is placed at the foot of the rugan and a fire is lit there. From the preparation festival onward the fire should be lit every evening and should be kept burning throughout the night. Many, though not most, of the elder male members of the longhouse sleep on the gallery during this period. The headman of the celebrating longhouse told me that he would watch (nyaga) the offerings for the ghosts by sleeping on the gallery. The similarity of this behaviour to the custom of the wake is unmistakeable. The gallery has become a space in which invisible ghosts crowd, just as a corpse is visibly present on the night of the wake. People should meet the ghosts by sharing the same space with them during the night. The sharing of space is also part of the formalised ritual behaviour of the Iban when they intend to come into communication with spiritual beings — in all categories of festivals and inspiration seeking (cf. Chapter 8).

In a sense sleeping on the gallery is a way in which they express a welcome toward the visiting ghosts. But even here we see ambivalent feelings toward the ghosts. To the Iban, the ghosts in general are bewildering beings rather than wholly benevolent beings. To sleep on the gallery with such beings is therefore inexplicable to some, as a middle-aged daughter of the longhouse headman jocularly said, "That's funny. Father wants to be together with the ghosts."

Among the present-day Saribas-Krian Iban, cockfighting with the ghosts (nyabong sebayan) is played just as a formality to announce the beginning of the preparation festival. As I observed, only a couple of contests were staged on the gallery of the festival headman's bilek, which would commemorate the "leader of the ghosts" at that festival. Cocks did not wear spurs and there was no decisive outcome. Neither side assumed the role of the "cocks of the dead".
The Day of the Main Festival

During the interval between the preparation festival and the main festival, people of the celebrating community are busy preparing foods and drinks, adorning the gallery and bilek with decorations such as paper flowers, finishing the miniature houses, visiting friends and relatives in other longhouses to ask for cocks, and holding longhouse meetings to determine the correct ritual procedures and the proper way to entertain the guests. Relatives constantly come to the longhouse as helpers and stay one or more nights. Throughout this period an atmosphere of festivity predominates.

In the evening two days before the main festival, gongs are beaten to announce the approaching gawai to the ghosts; this is followed by the erection of offering poles (piring sukul for protecting the longhouse against various harmful spirits) on the ground at both ends of the longhouse and at the front and back of the longhouse. That night a rather informal feast is enjoyed by close kinsmen and friends.

The day before the main festival is used for the final preparation of the gawai. The seating space for the guests is delineated by wooden planks. Sungkup are finally erected on the open verandah. Monumental baskets, clothes and ikat fabrics are transferred from the gallery to the floored room of the sungkup. Food offerings are put for the first time inside these ghostly house models, which are then smeared with blood taken from fowls' crests. In the evening, gongs are beaten again to welcome the ghosts.

Receiving the Guests

On the morning of the main festival, the gallery of the whole longhouse is made ready for receiving the guests by spreading new mats and vinyl floor covering and is ritually prepared by throwing dried seeds of Job's
tears (*nyeli') and Indian corn (*jagong) on it. This act is intended to drive off vaguely conceived supernatural dangers, which overshadow the longhouse during the festival as well as its preparation period. Such dangers are not confined to *gawai antu*. In fact, festivals related to headhunting are supposed to be conspicuously subject to supernatural dangers caused by contacts with visiting gods and mythical heroes. Festival attendants, both hosts and guests, often fall into unconsciousness (*luput*), being overwhelmed by some divine presence. In the context of *gawai antu*, such an incident is believed to be caused by some irregularities in the ritual procedures (*salah pengawa'*) . Although direct ghostly retributions are not propounded by the Iban, the fundamental association of *gawai antu* with death is the undoubted basis of the supernatural sanctions.

The guests from the formally invited longhouses — in the case I observed, sixteen longhouses and two governmental offices from the nearby town, numbering well over 1500 people — arrive toward noon. The guests from each longhouse community are received at first in the open space in front of the longhouse by the members of the *bilek*-family which is assigned to entertain them during the festival. The guests are asked about any omen they may have met with on the way to the festival. The most significant omens to be met on the way to a *gawai antu* are various kinds of poisonous snakes, especially a cobra and a cylinder-snake (*kendawang*), which are associated in Iban demonology with the warlike mythical heroes such as Keling, Laja and their folk (see Sandin, 1961:182-3; and Chapters 2 and 8). The leader of the guests who have encountered such a snake are treated in a special way, being served with rice wine while he sits on an inverted rice mortar (*lesong*) on the open verandah. This is because those guests are supposed to have arrived in company with one of the mythical heroes to celebrate the festival.
Having entered the longhouse, the guests are served with great amounts of food and drink; this goes on almost continuously throughout the festival. Soon after the guests take their seats on the gallery assigned to them, a ritual display of food, called *muka' panggang* ("opening the roasted meat"), takes place. A cloth covering a cardboard box or a big tray is removed by the headman of the invited longhouse. Under the covering they may find specially arranged food, say, a roasted half of a pig, big pieces of roasted beef and a number of bottles of whisky and brandy; they express their surprise and joy with applause. As this food display exemplifies, festival hosts are expected to show their hospitality by great amounts of food. "To make guests feel hungry" at a festival, even in a slight degree, is viewed as a harsh criticism, suggesting that they are parsimonious hosts.

The status of guests in the festival is comparable to that of the ghosts who are supposed to visit the longhouse as formally invited guests (*pengabang*). As in cockfighting, the human guests stand for the party of the dead as against the host community who are the living. Although there is no further elaboration of the symbolic equation of the guests with the visiting ghosts, the festivity engaged in by the hosts and the guests is thought by the Iban to be the chief source of entertainment for the ghosts. That the ghosts are pleased to see the festivity and merry-making is thus a rationale for holding the lavish "feast" at the festival. In accordance with this idea, traditionally any stranger (*kampar*), who was not formally invited but just came across a *gawai antu* being held in a longhouse, is welcomed to the festival and asked to join in the festivities.

**Timang Jalong**

In the evening, immediately after sunset, gongs are beaten in the same way as on previous days. Food offerings (*piring*) are placed inside
sungkur on the open verandah and the main meal is served to the guests. After the meal the whole gallery is "cleared" (dirandang) by a number of "distinguished warriors" who are to drink ceremonial rice wine from bamboo containers the next morning. This "clearing of the way" consists of a ritual dance (berayah), moving up and down the gallery, with an accompaniment of the beating of gongs. Then, in the bilek which is to commemorate "the leader of the ghosts" — that is, the bilek of the festival headman (tuai gawai) — a party of ritual bards (lemembang) begins the chant called timang jalong ("Song of the Bowls"). A bowl, filled with rice wine and covered with a cloth, is handed by a female member of that bilek-family to each of four bards.

The timang jalong depicts the journey of the ghosts from their abodes in the Land of the Dead to the world of the living to attend the gawai antu. Among the Saribas-Krian Iban, this performance of timang jalong by ritual bards replaced at a certain historical stage the chanting of a death dirge (sabak). In fact, the route of the ghostly journey depicted in the timang jalong reproduces to a large extent that depicted in death dirges. But its emphasis is remarkably different from that of the dirge sung at the traditional festival. The aspect of invocation to the ghosts weakened. Instead, the emphasis is put on the ghostly nature of the rice wine carried by the bards. The wine carried by them during the night-long recitation of the timang jalong is supposed to have gone through the ghostly journey together with the spirits of the dead. The rice wine then, as supposed by the Iban, may change its quality or even its colour and become highly dangerous to ordinary people. It becomes "dirty" (kamah) and "poisonous" (rachun or bisa). The only persons qualified to drink this rice wine without danger are brave warriors, who, in the olden days, would have been successful headhunters. The rice wine which has been "praised" in a timang comes to have magical
power. This is similar to what happens when a verbal curse or oath
is applied to drinks on other ritual occasions. An instance was
described in which a man falsely claimed to have killed a man and thus
to be entitled to drink the wine at a *gawai antu*. He drank it boldly
but, after having arrived home, he suddenly died.

Rice wine has particular significance in the *gawai antu*; it is
the favourite drink of the ghosts, for whom a *gawai antu* is the greatest
occasion to enjoy it. The monumental baskets, *garong* and *gelayan*, are
made as receptacles for bamboo containers of rice wine which are to be
given to the ghosts. The text of *timang jalong* tells how the ghosts in
the Land of the Dead come to know that the living in this world are
going to hold a festival for them. Maiden slaves in the other world
feel hot and go to the bathing place, where they find the water of the
Mandai River (the river in the Land of the Dead) flooding and muddy
like rice wine during fermentation (allusion to the preparation of wine).
They see wood chips and bamboo skins (allusion to the preparation of
ritual objects) floating on the surface of bubbling water. They go
back to the longhouse to tell the elders what they have seen. The elders
call a meeting, when thunder roars and rain begins to fall. One of the
elders explains that the thunder is in fact the beating of gongs and
that the rain is the tears of the living who are thinking of the loved
ones. And they begin to prepare to make the journey to attend the
festival.

The singing continues the whole night. The party of *lemembang* —
sometimes two or three parties may perform at the same time — walks up
and down the whole gallery, occasionally making turns in a dancing
fashion. After midnight a party of maiden guests, who have been enter-
tained with other female guests inside the *bilek* while the male guests
have been on the gallery, appear to the gallery wearing full traditional
ceremonial costumes. They walk in procession along the gallery led by a woman who carries a set of offerings for welcoming various deities in general and the enshrined (deified) spirits of the dead in particular. 

At dawn, when the song approaches its end, the singing bards cease to walk along the gallery and establish themselves on the gallery in front of the festival headman's bilek to continue the final part of the song. On this part of the gallery the men who will drink the rice wine carried by the bards have already taken their seats, in preparation for this audacious deed. People crowd around these men. Amid the enormous noise of their talking, laughing and shouting, the lemembang sing, in a higher and louder tone than before, about the arrival of the ghosts and the ghostly nature of the rice wine they have carried:

Jaga jaga kita' aya' besarok dudok berintai  
Takut kai kena' sangkut kaki nantai  
Anak bujang lemembang tupai  
Laban sida' iya minching beram ai' ganjai  
Bagi orang ke rugi dulu' parai

You be careful, Uncles, who are sitting closely side by side,  
Not to be kicked by the rising feet  
Of the bards whose guardians are squirrels.  
For they are carrying fermented wine  
Which belongs to those who are lost and dead.

Mongkok jalang tu' ukai bejulok utai bukai  
Bejulok ka selulut ribut nyabong  
Ngambu' diri' mumpong ka jelutong bebandon tujoh

This bowl (of wine) has this very praise name:  
The fighting story wind  
Which claims to have cut down seven wild rubber trees in succession.

Here the praise name of the bowl is associated with successful head-taking (mumpong), which implies that only those who are successful head-hunters can drink the wine from this bowl. As I saw:
One of the men who was to drink the wine showed extreme stress in this heightened atmosphere. With distorted smiles on his face, he continued to hold a bush-knife, continuously and nervously tapped it on his shoulders and bit the back of the knife — this being a ritual act to strengthen the semengat. The crowd around them got very excited. One woman suddenly gave a screaming shout and violently hit the wall with her fist several times. She was — I heard later — the nervous man's wife, and she became infuriated at hearing someone talking about the doubtful nature of her husband's feat of killing — he had been a soldier in the Field Force and claimed to have shot a "communist" during a patrol. The other two drinkers of the rice wine had already had experiences of this ceremonial drinking in past gawai antu, and thus seemed quite at ease.

Those who serve the drinkers with the ghostly wine are women who have reputations for being adept (pandai) in making traditional artifacts such as ikat fabrics, matting and so on, a characteristic valued in a female as equivalent to male bravery. In the case I observed, they were the women who had made the monumental baskets for the dead at the preparation festival (incidentally all being visitors from other longhouses). They are said to represent Indai Bilai and Ini' Inan, the mythical female figures who reside in the Land of the Dead (see Chapter 6). In timang jalong these figures lead the party of the dead to the festival.

The bards encourage the men to drink the wine:

_Irup nuan aya' beram ai' gonja_  
_Tu' ukai enda' asai nuan ke ngirup ai' gula_  
_Ukai ngasoh seput nuan seranyut dulu' nyaya_  
_Ngasoh nuan berasai senang_

_Drink, Uncle, this fermented wine._  
_For you it will taste like sweetened water._  
_It will not make your breath uncertain and disturbed (lit., drifted and spilt)._  
_It will make you feel happy._

With the drinking of the praised wine the festivity of the gawai antu reaches its climax. People cheer loudly. The bards bless the drinkers:
Then you, Uncle, lie on the matting,  
Covered with iKat fabrics of the belulai pattern.  
Now you have a dream in which you see Minggat (a historical war leader).  
He gives you,  
Tusks of a full-grown pig  
And a stone formed from a dried bamboo.  
Use these charms, and you will not feel any exhaustion.

After the drinking the morning meal is served. A majority of the guests leave the longhouse after the meal.

"Drinking the Bamboo"

Soon after the meal is over, the ceremony of the "drinking the bamboo" takes place. The men who are qualified to drink rice wine from bamboo containers gather at one end of the gallery. With an accompaniment of gongs they run through the whole gallery in a dancing fashion, waving bush-knives or swords with their arms stretched out. On the other end of the gallery they take seats on overturned mortars, which indicates that they are extremely renowned warriors and "heroes". For a seat on a mortar symbolises the place reserved for mythical heroes such as Keling and Laja. Actually, however, the men concerned in the case I observed were not themselves distinguished warriors. Their qualification derived from "inheritance" from fathers or paternal grandfathers who had achieved such feats.
Now, the monumental baskets (garong and gelayan) in which bamboo containers filled with rice wine have been placed are taken from the sungkup. The men who drank the praised wine from the bowls earlier in the morning carry the basket-container sets from one end of the gallery to the other where the "renowned warriors" have been waiting. While carrying the sets along the gallery, they must not raise the baskets above knee level; otherwise, they will suffer withering (layu') in their general health. This is because the wine in the bamboo containers is originally dedicated to the ghosts who are going back to the Land of the Dead. Thus a portion of the wine is poured down to the ground from the end of the gallery for the sake of the dead just before the living "heroes" drink the rest.

All the container sets filled with wine should be carried one by one in the same fashion along the gallery. A jar, relatively old or modern, is given as a reward by each bilek-family to the drinker who will drink the wine from the containers made for the dead members of that family. In addition, cash rewards are paid at each drinking (in the observed case the amount was not fixed but was up to the giver, ranging from M$1.00 to M$4.00). After having drunk all the wine from one set of containers, a drinker splits the bamboo container with his knife or sword. It is a long time before the drinking from all the garong and gelayan finishes. The drinkers return to the other end of the gallery in the same dancing fashion as they came to the drinking place. They now begin to cut the ropes which tied the offering poles (rugan) to the posts.

All the ritual objects which are supposed to belong to or be related to the ghosts must be cleared out of the longhouse soon after his ceremonial drinking of wine from the bamboo containers is over. The rugan and the debris of the bamboo containers should be disposed of
by the "distinguished warriors" who have drunk the ghostly wine from the bamboo. This association of the task of disposal with successful headhunting has been found also in the mourning termination ritual. In both cases, a basic idea is that successful headhunters are immune to the danger which is involved in so near a contact with the shades of death. Meanwhile, the members of the host longhouse carry the model houses (sungkup) out of the longhouse. They are placed temporarily by the side of a path leading to graveyards. With this, the main festival ends.

**Carrying the Grave Goods**

Next morning the members of the longhouse and their close kin and friends carry the sungkup, the memorial baskets and other grave goods (mainly food and clothes) to the graveyards. The sungkup of one bilek-family should be erected above the family's most prominent deceased figure commemorated at the festival. In principle, he or she is the oldest dead person who is on the line of inheritance of the bilek. The whole graveyard is cleared and cement covers are made on the graves before the erection of the sungkup. Inside the sungkup the memorial baskets are hung, and clothes and food offerings are put on its floor.

The atmosphere of festivity still continued in the graveyard. People drank a lot. Some mimicked the lemembang's performance of timang galong and presented bowls of wine or arak to others. Amid this playful festivity, however, some women burst out crying squatting by the side of their recently deceased mother's or child's graves. That was a spontaneous expression of grief, not a simulated or ritualised one. This was the first time that any expression of grief was manifested throughout the gawai antu and its preparation I observed. A pair of parents, relatively poor even by their standard, who had lost their infant child in the previous year covered its grave with fine expensive tiles; this was the most beautifully covered grave in this graveyard.

Time is a decisive factor in whether or not grief or affection is displayed. As a gawai antu is to be held only after a long interval, the
survivors' emotional involvement with the dead members of the family will be restricted to those who died only recently.

FESTIVAL FOR GHOSTS IN IBAN ETNOGRAPHY

The significance, both religious and sociological, of the festival for ghosts among the Iban has been made clear enough, I hope, in what has been said in the previous sections. To conclude this chapter, it is appropriate here to evaluate the ethnographical relevance of the festival in relation to the Iban culture as a whole.

Jensen, in his book, *The Iban and Their Religion* (1974), stressed the general cultural uniformity of the Iban throughout their territory and mentioned "the importance they [the Saribas-Krian Iban] attach to the *gawai antu*" as "what differentiates the Saribas-Krian Iban" from other groups of the Iban. He presented "two possible explanations" to this exception to the general uniformity:

1. "The elaborate *gawai antu* and its wider implications were originally part of Iban religion and have for some reason been 'forgotten' or rejected by the Batang Ai, and their spiritual heirs"; and,

2. "elaborate (postponed) burial rites were not part of Iban belief..., and have been grafted into the system by the Saribas-Krian Iban in the process of assimilating the Bornean tribes who lived in the territory before them." (1974:58-59)

Although he did not make a choice between the two at this point, his inclination is unmistakeably toward the second alternative, as we read on the same page, just before the quotations above:

"... when it appears that the Saribas-Krian bloc differs from the remainder not merely in intonation but in one important religious concept, the inference is that this was adopted from another source and is not a part of traditional Iban religion which was arbitrarily discarded elsewhere." (*Ibid.*:58)

The only "important religious concept" mentioned throughout his book on which the Saribas-Krian differ from the other subgroups of the Iban is the *gawai antu* peculiar to this subgroup.
It is my view, however, at variance with Jensen's suggestion, that the *gawai antu* and especially "its wider implication" were originally an integrated part of Iban religion.

The evidence has already been given in the previous sections of this chapter. The elaborate festival in its traditional form was practiced most fervently among the Baleh Iban in 1950; probably the situation is not very different even today.

Among the present-day Balau Iban, whose territory is along the Lower Lupar river (= Batang Ai), the *gawai antu* is held in an extremely elaborate fashion and its importance in their cultural complex is by no means surpassed by its importance among the Saribas-Krian Iban. At a *gawai antu* held in a longhouse located at Kara in Pantu (near Simanggang) in 1975, which I attended, nearly fifty experts sang a lengthy dirge (*sabak*) which depicted the journey of the ghosts into this world. They sang throughout the night of the festival while sitting on swings hung from the rafters on the gallery. At this festival all the longhouse members were ritually freed from mourning for the dead members by cutting their hair or waist-rings and changing ordinary clothes to fine ones (suits and neckties for males and traditional *ikat* skirts for females). In fact, this mourning termination is merely symbolic, for actual mourning regulations are lifted about a month after a person's death, and the *gawai antu* is held only after a long interval. The frequency of holding *gawai antu* among the present-day Balau seems to be comparable to the situation among the Saribas-Krian Iban. Apart from this time aspect, their *gawai antu* preserves, to an admirable degree, the vigour of the traditional festivals described by Perham and Howell who observed them in the last century (Perham, 1885:275-9; Howell, 1963b:77-80; Howell and Bailey, 1900:48).
Gawai an tu is also practised among the Iban of the Undop river, as Jensen concedes (1974:58); among those on the Lemanak and among the Skrang as I discovered, and, in Indonesian Kalimantan, among the Kantu', one of the Ibanic subgroups (Dove, personal communication). Virtually all Iban populations perform gawai an tu or its equivalent. The only exception is the Iban on the Upper Batang Ai.

Thus the situation is exactly opposite to Jensen's argument. What should be explained is the exceptional phenomenon of the absence of the final festival for ghosts among the Upper Batang Ai Iban, but not its importance among the Saribas-Krian Iban. This point becomes even more important because the Baleh Iban, who perform a very elaborate festival for ghosts, are the "spiritual heirs" par excellence to the Ulu Ai Iban (Freeman, 1970:130-142). It is then almost certain that the Ulu Ai (Upper Batang Ai) Iban had the same idea and practised an equivalent ritual in the past and for some reason have ceased to follow the old custom in the course of their history.

The actual process or reason for this "rejection" of the traditional custom cannot be detected with any certainty. But a story which I heard from a knowledgeable ex-penghulu of the Upper Batang Ai seems to have some relevance in this connection. According to him, the gawai an tu which had been practised also among these Iban was abolished as the result of an instruction given in a dream to one of their forefathers. The instruction was that if they continued to practise the festival for the dead, they would suffer perpetual death in the community and defeat in warfare or headhunting. So they followed the instruction and rejected their traditional practice.

To be sure, we do not know if this dream explanation for the abolition of gawai an tu among that particular subgroup is factually true. A change of custom or a difference of custom between subgroups is often
explained by the Iban as a result of spiritual instruction given in a dream. Perhaps it may be a folk theory about cultural change that we are concerned with here. But I am inclined to see a piece of factual truth in the above account in light of the general importance of dream experiences among the Iban. As Freeman has emphasised, a dream experience can create a totally new religious festival which will then be followed for the future, so it has, in this sense, been incorporated into the cultural inventory of the Baleh Iban (Freeman, 1975a:285). Then it is possible, or even probable, that the innovating power of dreaming can also work negatively, that is, to reject an existing custom.

The dream explanation relating the abolition of gawai antu reveals an ambivalent attitude the Iban show toward the gawai antu. It is actually a celebration in which affectionate commemoration is afforded to deceased relatives. The spirits of the dead are treated, so to speak, as the honoured guests. On the other hand, its connection with the dead is felt by the Iban as giving it an inauspicious connotation. I remember a woman in her mid-thirties who would not touch the sungkup of her bilek-family during the festival, saying that it was "dirty" as it belonged to the ghosts. The ex-penghulu of the Upper Batang Ai asserted in a more straightforward way that the gawai antu was meaningless because it was simply to play with the dead. This negative attitude to the dead is also expressed in an account of how one group of the Upper Layar (Saribas) area eliminated the timang jalong from the ritual, following an instruction given in a dream. According to an informant, they stopped performing timang jalong as a part of gawai antu because, in a dream of one of their ancestors, ghosts appeared and said, "Look, they are singing for us. That's fun. Let's take another into death, then we can hear the song more." People thought timang jalong would bring further death to them and since then rejected it, but they still continued to hold the festival for the dead itself.
These ambivalent attitudes toward holding a gawai in order to commemorate the dead are, thus, important factors when we consider how different local forms of gawai antu have developed through the process of innovation and rejection. It is always a mistake to assume a rigid frame of "uniformity" in such a fluid matter as religious phenomena. For each religious phenomenon owes its formation and transformation largely to individuals' "spiritual" experiences, which, in their turn, reveal enormous variability. Local variations must be understood as the results of historical development, which is ultimately rooted in people's reactions to the basic notion of a festival for the dead.

Take for an example the gawai antu as practised among the present-day Saribas-Krian Iban, which shows some ritual procedures which are not shared by other groups. The climax of the gawai antu of these Iban is the performance of the timang jalong song and the drinking of the "praised" wine by the brave "warriors". This is the most conspicuous single feature which differentiates their gawai antu from those practised by the rest of the Iban. Now any cultural product has its origin in the course of history. Sandin attributes the origin of timang jalong to a particular person, named Uyut Bedilang Besi, who was a prominent figure in the Paku river region four generations before the Iban there came under the control of the Brooke Government (Sandin, 1967b:28; 1972:4). Elsewhere, he states that the origin of drinking the wine praised in a timang was after the fall of Sadok in 1861 (Sandin, 1961:171). Whether it was actually Uyut who originated the song or not, it cannot be doubted that it was invented by an individual at a certain stage of history and has been diffused and transmitted with revisions added.

I assume that gawai antu in its traditional form must have been open to this sort of innovation. The notion of playfulness or free festivity (uti') is important in this connection. It is said that the
ghosts are pleased with the festivity displayed by the living during the festival. Cockfighting, as has been mentioned, is played for this purpose. Among the contemporary Saribas-Krian Iban, the channel for this free festivity has almost disappeared. But among the Baleh Iban, as Freeman observed in 1949 and 1950, the commemoration festivals (*gawai lumbong*) were marked by unrestrained play, mock battles between the sexes and seemingly free night courting (Freeman, fieldnotes, 1949, 1950). In this atmosphere, I conclude, innovations to the festivity were possible.

The drinking of the praised wine by warriors who are served by women representing the prominent female figures from the Land of the Dead must be understood as having originated in this free play essential to please the ghosts.

As I repeatedly remarked, a *gawai antu* was, in the past, the occasion on which mourning regulations imposed on the bereaved family were lifted ceremonially. The present prolongation of the period between actual deaths and the festival among the Second Division Iban is probably due to the shortening of the actual mourning period, which has been eagerly promoted by the Government for more than a century. There is no longer practical urge to carry out the festival in order to liberate the living from mourning observances. This, in turn, brought about a further change to the characteristics of *gawai antu*, particularly in the Saribas-Krian region which has been more strongly exposed to governmental control than other regions. It is now often said to be the greatest festival among those Iban. In terms of importance in a given culture complex, it supplanted the once paramount (and now almost suppressed) festivals connected with headhunting and male prestige. In a sense *gawai antu* has successfully incorporated the value system involved in the latter, through the elaboration of the ceremonial drinking of the praised wine and the *garong* wine, in which bravery and
warriorship are manifestly praised. Probably, this peculiar incorporation of the headhunting ideology is the major reason for which the *gawai antu* has attained the position of the greatest festival among the Saribas-Krian Iban today.
NOTES

1. The description of the traditional festival for the ghosts is largely based on Freeman's fieldnotes (1950), unless otherwise. Freeman observed the gawai lumbong at Rumah Nyala, Sungai Sut, a tributary of the Balch river in June, 1950.

2. This journey of the singer's semengat does not mean that the singer goes into a trance during his (or her) performance of chanting. This is somewhat inconsistent with the rationale given to the shamanic ability to go into a trance by releasing his semengat. The semengat theory, however, is an explanatory device of spiritual experiences of any kind, and we are concerned here with what may be called a literary fiction.

3. This mock battle can be considered in a broader perspective. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Iban social life is dominated by male values, particularly in traditional settings in which prestige gained through headhunting and prolonged journeys is the central concern of Iban males. Iban women may have strong antagonism toward this male dominance. It can be said in this context that women take advantage of the cultural custom of mock battle at the festival to express their (usually latent) antagonism toward men.

4. I observed a gawai antu in August 1975 in a longhouse, called Lengain, after the place name, near the Sebetan river, a tributary of the Krian river. The description presented in this section is based on my observation of this festival. Some of its constituent bilek-families held a previous gawai antu in 1953, when they were still part of a now separate neighbouring longhouse. The gawai antu in the latter community prior to the previous one was held around 1930. It was impossible to trace the chronology of the festival further back in the past. Probably, gawai antu used to be held more frequently until the beginning of this century.

5. According to Sandin (1972:9-11), the grades of garong are: (1) gelayan for youngsters, (2) single garong for older people who made prolonged journeys or participated in headhunting expeditions, (3) double garong for those who took a trophy head or two, (4) triple garong for prominent warriors who took a number of heads, (5) fivefold garong for leaders of headhunting expeditions, (6) sevenfold garong for
leaders of large-scale war operations and (7) ninefold garong for those who were commemorated with sevenfold garong at previous festivals and are commemorated once again.

6. Also among the Skrang Iban pots of rice wine are placed in front of bilek doors during a gawai antu. They are thrown from the head of the entrance ladder to the ground at the conclusion of the festival when the visiting ghosts return. Among the present-day Balau Iban, a number of gourds are hung from the upper edge of a bilek door (the number corresponding to the number of ghosts to be commemorated in the bilek-family). They contain rice wine for the ghosts during the festival and are broken at the end of the festival. These gourds are termed idai bilai, referring to the mythical figure in Sebayan.
In the preceding three chapters I described in detail the mortuary rituals from the moment of death to the final commemoration festival. Various aspects of the eschatological ideas have already been touched upon in the course of description. Most parts of the ritual practices concerning death are, so to speak, semantically transparent; that is to say, each practice is intelligible and explicable to the performers themselves in terms of the ideas the Iban hold about the destiny of the dead and the relation between the dead and the living. In this respect we have already grasped the outlines of Iban eschatological beliefs.

In this and the following chapters I will present a comprehensive and more graphic account of the afterlife and of the "journey" of the departed spirits into the realm of the dead. The sources of these views are various, ranging from the most culturally established traditions to personal views, speculations or inferences. These represent different ideational levels of "beliefs" which are often inconsistent or even incompatible with each other. So some attempts will be made to discern those levels.

DEATH DIRGE

Let me begin with the spiritual journey described in an elaborate death dirge. This particular type of ritual song is essentially a compilation of imagery held by the Iban which is otherwise scattered in various myths, folktales and other forms of tradition, and in this respect it
is for us the most comprehensive source of graphic visions of the route of the journey and the Land of the Dead.

Needless to say, there are widely different regional variations. Details of the itinerary differ from one expert's version to another's even within the same cultural region. The geographical order of the points the ghosts pass may be dislocated; the names of the spiritual beings and their "countries" are given in different terms. Even more importantly, as I mentioned earlier (Chapters 3 and 5), there are two kinds of death dirge (sabak). One is a dirge sung by the side of a corpse on the night of the wake or soon after the burial. Its intention is to depict the journey of the newly deceased person's spirit to the Land of the Dead. The other is the chant which is sung at a commemoration festival for ghosts; its intention is to invite the ghosts from the Land of the Dead to the celebrating longhouse. Although their intentions are quite different and the directions of the spiritual journey are opposite, the itinerary of the journey depicted in both kinds of dirges are virtually identical.

It can be reasonably said that a type of death dirge which is to be sung at the commemoration festival might have historically preceded the other type which is sung on the night of the wake. For, as I remarked in Chapter 3, the latter type of dirge can be dispensed with if an expert singer of an elaborate dirge is not available in the deceased's or nearby longhouses. It is particularly the case with the "old style" funeral, for which it is the norm to dispose of the corpse after one night of wake. By contrast, a festival for ghosts has to be prepared long before it is actually held. An expert singer could be sought if not available nearby. Moreover, it is common to all Iban religious festivals that the invocation of spiritual beings is made through the singing of long elaborate chants. Dirge chanting must have originated in this invocatory tradition.
Among the present-day Saribus and Skrang Iban, however, the death dirge is not sung at the commemoration festival, or, if it is sung, it is no more than a reproduction of the dirge of the night of the wake, being sung in the opposite direction. Among those Iban, a dirge (*sabak*) refers exclusively to the one which is sung by the side of a corpse. I am thus much more familiar with this type of dirge.

So, I present below the text collected from Empiang, a woman now living in the Upper Kanowit, to which she migrated from the Upper Spak, a major tributary of the Layar. She learned the text from a woman living on the Middle Layar. This then is a typical Layar version of the death dirge sung on the night of the wake, having much in common with the version collected by Benedict Sandin (1966b:16-80). I will give parts that are especially significant in terms of the Iban view of death and the spiritual journey, and, whenever I reproduce verses, I will make a rather free translation, omitting, for example, words used merely to create a rhyme.

Lamentation

The text of the dirge begins with a long lamentation in which the singer expresses her grief in a rhetorical and metaphorical fashion. For example,

Nyampau nyampau penyinu' di leku' tangkai kamai
Enggi' Indai Kumang ke nyepayang tuboh besai
Ninga serebana tiang medang lamba' lulai
Tak nyau semidak nyabak rengai-rengai
Ka enggai ditanohang ka belembang wi ensuluai
Ka enggai di lempai ka pua' ampong belulai
Bebuah manah mati ngaambi' perambai manok menang

How great is the grief deep in the heart of Indai Kumang [the singer], whose body is handsome and big, Upon hearing the post made of the *medang* tree sobbing
and bursting into tears
For it does not want the rattan rope to be tied to it,
does not want to support the ceremonial fabric called belulai
which has a splendid design of the plumage of a victorious cock.

In these lines the singer's grief is compared to the reluctance of the
pillar of the longhouse gallery to support the ceremonial ikat fabrics
used among the Layar Iban as curtains to encircle the corpse on the
night of the wake. Thus it expresses a sorrowful reluctance to carry
out the funeral ceremony.

Then the singer calls up the women of the longhouse to sit at her
side, and she mentions various charms which protect her from the danger
of such an audacious deed as singing of a journey into the realm of
the dead.

Enda' meh aku busong laya
Aku ngenang sida' ke tumbang mantai nyaya
Kaki berindik segi semilu batu segala
Belakang aku belindong punggang ampang mensuga
Lengan kanan aku betekan pelawan tajau menaga
Jari' kiba' aku nyara' sua' manok banda
Ngeli' aku udah ngetop adi' besi baja
Puchok pala' di tata' lela' minyak melaya
Punjong entap udah ditetap menchelap batu buah semangka
Ulih Gelayang Manang Menyaya...

I would not suffer any deadly retribution (busong)
when I give a thought to those who are dead.
For my feet have already stepped on the corner of charm stones;
My back is shaded under the edge of ceremonial fabrics;
My right arm is pressed on the ancient jar with a dragon pattern;
My left hand received a reddish fowl;
My teeth have already bitten a piece of iron;
The top of my head has been smeared with charm oil;
My forehead touched by a stone of cooling effect
which was brought by Shaman Menyaya...
All these acts, in fact, have the effect of protecting ritual experts when they carry out any religious performance, not just confined to singing funeral dirges.

The singer then asks the deceased why he will not respond to her eager call. The deceased replies and tells of his queer feeling, a much stronger sensation even than what he felt while courting girls at night when he was young.

Oh, it is not that I won't answer you even by a word, Not that I refuse to respond to you. But I have never felt like this before. The feeling is different from that felt when I was a youngster, When the marks of skin disease were still clear. The feeling is different from that felt when I paid visits to girls in their sleeping platforms. It is different from what I felt when I groped for a maiden in the heap of perfumed flowers... At that time I could recognise the blue of the deep sky, But now I cannot recognise the blue of the deep sky, I am afraid I might migrate now, And return to the Country [of the Dead] on the projecting river bank, Which is the field of nibong palms under their bountiful yield of nuts.
The lament then describes a discussion among the community members in which the longhouse headman asks them about their recent dreams and omens. A man reports a bad dream; a dream in which their longhouse was attacked by wild storm and a roof ridge was torn to pieces. Another tells of a bad omen; he saw a python lying over a stump of a chopped down tree when he took whetstones and offerings to the future rice field for the ritual of opening land. The inauspicious dreams and omens mentioned in this part of the dirge would all presage the death of a person in the longhouse community if proper counter-measures were not taken. The lament then says that the mythical shamans were not available to erase the effects of these dreams and omens. And the deceased knows that he is dead. He looks around each part of the longhouse in sorrow: from the corner of the bilek where the roof can be opened for admission of light, to the side wall along which old jars are placed, and to the other parts of the bilek. He opens the door of the bilek and sees the pillars on the gallery. He recalls that the gallery is the place where festivals were held and visitors were entertained. On the open verandah his thought is directed to the glorious headhunting festivals which for the most part take place there. On this spot the lament mentions in poetical metaphors various natural phenomena (rainfall, stormy winds, lightning and so on) and heavenly bodies such as the Pleiades, Orion, the moon and the sun.

Then a god — according to Empiang it is the god of the sky — calls the Morning Star to inspect the life-image (bungai) of the bilek-family of the deceased.

Aram aram tua' repan ka merian bula' ngelaung
Ngetil nyambil belindong ngabas tambak bungai belitong
Udah tembuang Jaban di lenggam tanah nampusong
Peda' urat bedau tetap manang Rechap
Enggau singkap pinggai jebong
Batang bedau besakang enggau semang besi selumpong
Let us joke with each other,
Let us push each other and go to inspect the bungai
Which has been kept by Shaman Jaban in the heaped-up soil,
Look at the root which is still fixed by Shaman Rechap
in the large plate [that is, well maintained by these mythical shamans].
The stem is still under the protection of an iron charm,
Look at the branches at one side,
How greatly are they flourishing!
They are making a melodious tone like a song...
The top of the flower is as beautiful and fluffy as high clouds.
Look at one branch.
Alas, it is strangely broken and points to the lower part
of the Mandai river [the river in the Afterworld].
How deep is my grief.
My tears are spilt and fall in drops...

Having returned from the open verandah to the gallery, the deceased says
that he is feeling unusually overwhelmed by sadness and that tears fall incessantly.

In the meantime, a butterfly enters the longhouse and flies here
and there. The entering of a butterfly foreshadows, according to a
traditional belief, a visitor to the longhouse, and presumably the visitor's purpose is indicated by where the butterfly lands. Some think this butterfly foreshadows a visitor who seeks a fighting cock, but it does not stop on the cord which ties a cock. Some suppose it stands for a visitor who seeks a pig, but it does not light on the rope for carrying
down the feeding trough. At last the butterfly settles on the hood of 
the deceased man (or on the knot of hair if the deceased is a woman).
Then it foreshadows visitors who seek the deceased.

Now, those in the longhouse hear a whirling and uproarious sound 
which suddenly fills and floods the space around the longhouse. They 
are astonished and wonder what it is. A woman is sent to look for the 
thing which causes the sound. But she can find nothing and says it may 
be the wind. People in the longhouse then make the deceased himself 
look for the cause. Frightening to him, an enormous crowd of the dead 
appear in full force in the open space in front of the longhouse. In 
this text of the dirge the dead are represented by the names of their 
prominent leaders (Tuai Sebayan): Kedawa, Niram, Ngerai and Bedalong, 
and a female figure called Dara Rambai Garuda who is the representative 
of dead maidens (Kumang Sebayn). But these names (with the possible 
exception of Dara Rambai Garuda) are used in the text for arranging 
rhymes and multiplying the number of verses so that they vary from one 
version to another. And the Iban do not agree as to the proper names 
of the leaders of the dead.

Now people in the longhouse are surprised at the arrival of the 
troop of the dead in such a large number and ask them the purpose of 
their visit. The dead tell them that they have no harmful intentions; 
that they have come just to see their dear relatives whom they miss.
The leaders of the dead ask if they can enter the longhouse, following 
the traditional custom in which any visitor must ask for permission. The 
ladder of the longhouse entrance replies that they cannot, threatening 
them by saying that the rails of the ladder are cobras and that the 
entrance is blocked by a mythical shaman with ceremonial fabrics which 
have fearful designs of crocodiles and tigers. A conversation then takes 
place between the living, the deceased person and the leaders of the dead,
in which the deceased refuses to go to the Land of the Dead while the leaders of the dead try to persuade him to accompany them.

"What is the purpose of your journey to the land which is under the floating clouds [the world of the living]?

So asks Father of Fierce Youth in the longhouse [i.e., Tuai Rumah].

"Yes, we, the troop of Kedawa, have a specific purpose. We heard news that an areca nut fell on the ground and asks to be picked up. That a bunch of the areca nuts is now loose on the frond and asks to be collected. We received the message from those who are beneath the high clouds That they asked to be taken by us, the dead. The message was brought by the night wind."

"Don't tell a lie. We have never sent a message. We don't want to accompany you on your return to the land by the Waterfall Deeper-than-an-Arm's Reach [the Land of the Dead]."
"Oh, you can't refuse.
You have already eaten the fruit Ila'-Ilu, transparent, red and green, which is the possession of Raja Bedalong who lives near the Pool Covered-with-a-Resounding-Coffin [the Land of the Dead].

In these lines the deceased is compared to fallen or falling areca nuts. This type of obvious metaphor, found abundantly in the text of the dirge, is well matched to the general plant image of human life, mentioned in Chapter 2. The wind mentioned here appears in various religious texts as the usual messenger in the spiritual spheres. The fruit named *ila'-ilu* is supposed to be the fruit of the dead and as such it has different properties from things in this world; for instance, it has various colours at the same time. But, as far as I know, the image of the fruit of the dead is not found outside this text of the dirge.

After this contention, the troop of the dead ask the living to serve them with offerings and rice wine. Seemingly, the newly deceased person has been persuaded to leave the world of the living. So, the deceased and the survivors divide his property between them. The deceased modestly claims the insignificant part of each item. He claims, for example, the sheath of a bush knife, letting the blade itself be the share of the living, and he claims the husks of rice, leaving the grains to the living. This division of things reproduces the practice at the *serara' bungai* ritual (see Chapter 4). The deceased is supposed to bless the living by making humble claims and expressing his expectation that future harvests in this world will be good. Then he prepares himself for the departure. He puts on a traditional jacket, loincloth, various accessories and a bush knife (inconsistently with the above mentioned division of things). He opens the door of his *bilek* and goes along the passage of the longhouse. He reaches the entrance of the longhouse and begins talking with
the ladder. The ladder says that it can prevent him from going out, for the mythical shamans were invoked and a fowl was waved over it in order to stop any man from migrating to the Land of the Dead. The deceased orders the ladder to let him pass, saying in a swearing manner that a trophy head will be taken and brought to the longhouse by the surviving longhouse warriors in future. This is an allusion to the association between headhunting and mortuary rituals discussed in Chapter 4.

The deceased thus descends the ladder and joins the troop of the dead waiting on the open space. He finds a big tree there and asks them what it is. They tell him:

```
Nya' meh batang Ranyai Padi
Peda' nuan batang gedang-gedang
Baka ke lantak tekang mau tuchi
Dan nya' sapak sepiak tawak bedil besi
Bungkong benong tajau guhi
Puchok lentor laur mndok laban tandok ruua ubi
Peda' dan perebinan ubat padi
Taring babi ke nyadi gelong bekumbang
```

That is the tree called Ranyai Padi. Look at the stem which is bright as if inlaid with pure gold. On the branch at one side are gongs and iron cannons. The knot is really a valuable jar. The top is bent by the weight of antlers of a sambhur deer. Look at the branches full of agricultural charms. Tusks of wild pigs which form complete circles.

The deceased then takes charms from the tree and hands them over to the surviving members of his longhouse. He gives them charms for success in agriculture, charms for bravery for the men, and charms for ability in making handicrafts for the women. The expectation that the deceased may be benevolent toward the living is characteristic of Iban attitudes.
about the supposed relationship between the living and the dead, which we have seen and will see repeatedly.

Now Dara Rambai Garuda makes ghostly shamans from the Land of the Dead apply various protective measures to the surviving community, which has been endangered by being "exposed" to the troop of the dead. After this is done, the troop of the dead sets out on the return journey to their own country, this time escorting the newly deceased person.

The Route of the Journey

They pass at first a field of croton plants in which a ceremonial post set up for a headhunting festival can be seen. Croton plants, usually found around the longhouse, have a special symbolic connection with headhunting rituals. Then they reach the bathing place of the longhouse community, where the deceased bathes in sorrow, as he knows it will be the last occasion.

As they move along, they pass a field of banana plants and a number of old sites of deserted longhouses. The sight of them sets the deceased to reminiscing on the glorious headhunting festivals held in those longhouses.

Now the dead go along a long ridge, passing a number of the "countries" (menoa) of various species of birds. All the verses describing the countries they pass are structured in a same fashion, and similar kinds of expressions and metaphors are repeatedly used. For example:

Ke dulu' enda' sempat alai datai di Munggu' Sentugu' Tungku' Tiga Tinting pandang perenching panas bisa
Seberai denjang begayang tapang lamba' chenaga
Bandir luar dilanggar pesilav ular bisa
Batang manah gedang-gedang baka ke lantak tekang mau jera...
Sapa orang mangkang menoa diau ditu'...
Nadai ditanya' nuan ka bukai
The leading party soon reaches the Three Hills,
On the ridge exposed to burning heat [of the sun].
On the other side there is a big bee-tree,
With a wide buttress around which a poisonous snake coils.
The stem is bright as if inlaid with gold...
"Whose country is this?" [asks the newly deceased]
"It is no other place than the country of Mensenggai,
Who watches over the orchid flowers.
The beauty who keeps a bottle of a powerful love charm.
Her other name is the Spirit of the Bird Tunggok Dara,
Who is waiting for the cool full moon,
Who cries and sings for her lover,
Under the bright full moon."

The bird Tunggok (a kind of frogmouth) is said to cry on the night of
the full moon, and therefore is referred to here as the moon's lover.
After having passed the countries of rather ordinary birds, the party
of the dead then passes the countries of the seven major omen birds (for
the significance of these birds in the Iban augury system, see Freeman,
1960c:73-98).

While advancing through the bird countries, the party passes the
rice field of the previous year, where some rice plants still remain
unharvested. In the field they see *tuba* (fish poison) plants which are
customarily planted at the centre of a rice field. The party takes a
short rest here, and the deceased collects some *tuba* roots for use in
the Land of the Dead, saying that they may have a dry season suitable
for *tuba* fishing even in the Afterworld.
Country of Selampandai

Soon they reach the country of the deity called Sempandai (or Selampandai) who is the maker of human bodies. He is said to forge the body each time a woman conceives in this world. Also he is supposed to contribute to the maintenance of human health. The deceased wishes he too could be cured, but in vain.

"Tu' menoa Bujang Ganggam beputan tebelian lamba' lulai
Bujang lempong bestung buloh kelawung buloh tuai
Kedua bali' nama ukai tu' enda' Bunsu Sempandai tuai
Nya' orang tau' begulai ka darah perai nemula nyadi orang
Nya' iya bedulang tapang lamba' lulai
Enti' buta' mandi' dia' ngambi' meda' utai
Enti' sakit mandi' dia' nyambi' gerai
Ti' mit mandi' dia' ngambi' besai
Nama munyi nga' aku ka' mandi' dia'
Enda' nuan tau'
Ba' kitai baka besi nadai semang

The country of the Healthy Youth who uses ironwood bellows. The Youth who blows a bamboo pipe to make wind.
He is the deity Sempandai, Who can mix red blood to create a man. He had a trough made of bee-tree wood. The blind gain sight if they bathe in it. The ill become healthy if they bathe there. A small child becomes big.
"Oh, if so, then I would like to bathe there."
"No, you can't.
For no iron is available for us, the dead" [that is, there is no material for mending the deceased's body].

The dead go on and pass the country of god (referred to by the generic term Betara) and the country of Antu Buau, one of the Antu Gerasi, the huntsmen. Then they enter the deep silent forest, in which not even the cry of a monkey can be heard. In the forest they pass the countries
of spirits who inhabit trees, such as Lembia (the sprite inhabiting bee-trees) and Tuchok (the sprite living in other, unidentified trees).

**Country of Bastards**

Before long the dead arrive at the country of the children who have no fathers. According to Empiang, they were born illegitimately of mothers who could not identify the men who had impregnated them. In former days, the Iban say, such illegitimate children were much despised, and many of them were even abandoned in the deep forest as soon as they were born.

Nyau enda' sempat alai datai di Bukit Senggang Sadai
Baka tempalai uma nauang
Munti' perin rigai ketapu' panjai
Baka perambai manok menang
'Sapa mangkang menoa diau ditu'
...
Tu' menoa Selenda' merinsa' nadai apai
Bejalai bekejama'
Nyabak bekelenga'
Betuboh nyampau pemaioh lima' puloh lima'
Nyin apai kangau ka aya'
Au' enggai kami tu' kumbai nuan apai kangau ka aya'
Enda' kala kami ngudang menimang di simbang papan lada'
Enda' kami kala' menchuri indai nuan bediri silup lempeda'
Enda' kami kala' malai indai nuan di bungai rampan bungai beta'
Peda' baka nya' diambi' ka bujang tinggi' kert' tebu tengang
Di ruyak bujang biak terudak kandong lalong
Sipat bujang sigat chuat tungkul pisang
...
Nyampau pemerinsa' ka bumai nadai beruga'
Laban kami ke rugi bebad'i lela' kelia'
Enda' dibaida' ka sida' indai kami lungga' besi semang
Nya' alai kami diau naka pemerinsa'-ringa' ninting hari
Besila' ka lemba' lansau takang
They arrived at the Hill of Senggang grasses dried up in the sun, Which is like a failed rice field. Various pieces of bamboo with long caps like the plumage of victorious fighting cocks. ... This is the country of Solenda' who suffer from being fatherless, Who walk toddlingly And cry endlessly. "How many we are — fifty-five. Look, there come our fathers and uncles" [say the children]. "Oh, we don't want you to call us fathers or uncles. We have never visited your mother in her sleeping platform. We have never 'stolen' your mother while standing on the woven mat. We have never lain with your mother in fragrant flowers." Thus the Tall Bachelor [the deceased] takes a young shoot of tengang creeper. He splits the useless seeds of lalang grasses. He kicks a bundle of banana buds. ... "How great is our suffering when we want to work in the rice fields, For we have no knife. For when we died long ago, Our mothers did not give us iron-pieces as the share of the deceased; So we must use our bare hands to split tough lemba' grasses." Sandin explains, in his translation of the death dirge collected from the Paku (a tributary of the Layar) area, that this country, as its description is in most respects identical with the above lines, is the country of foetuses that died in miscarriage (lulus) (Sandin, 1966b:40). I admit that his explanation is pertinent to his version, for there the inhabitants are referred to by the term enselua, a syllabic inversion of lulus. But I follow here the exegesis given by the singer of this text. For the image of dead illegitimate children (anak ampang) who pester those passing their land is remarkably prevalent among the Iban of the region I personally know (see p.234). Moreover, as bastards they were often deserted as soon as they had been born, or possibly abortion was
operated on an illegitimate pregnancy, the dead bastards are easily equated with dead neonate or miscarried foetuses (*lulus*). Perhaps this accounts for the convergence or the confusion of these two categories.

In the above verses the miserable state of the dead bastards is described rather graphically; they lack toys, which are usually made by fathers, and they must work without iron implements, which would normally be given to the deceased in mortuary rituals. They are still disdained so much that the deceased passing there rejects their claim that they are his children and drives them away by giving them nonsensical things as substitutes for toys. There are obvious metaphors of their useless birth, such as the failed rice field and the useless seeds of *lalang* grasses, which are the most formidable weeds hindering the growth of rice plants. Significantly, this abode of dead bastards is not in the actualy realm of the Land of the Dead. Empiang explained that it should be so because such creatures would be apt to disturb others and steal their property if they were to share the same sphere with the rest of the dead. Similarly, these ghosts of bastards are not invited to a commemoration festival, for they would disorder the festival by stealing offerings and gifts dedicated to the other ghosts.

*The Seven Branches*

Having left that troublesome land, the party reaches the point at which the path to the Land of the Dead diverges from the paths to the lands of mythical shamans, the benevolent deities and the mythical heroes. This point of junction is called the Seven Branches (*Pampang Tujo*oh) and is the place where Antu Kamba', the spirits who make men go astray in forests, live. The newly deceased asks the dead who escort him about the destinations to which the different branches of the path lead. They answer him and show him the way which they will take later to return to their own land.
The Bridge of Fright

Now the party of the dead goes on the path to the Land of the Dead and reaches the edge of a *lalang* grass field. Here they see a log bridge across a deep valley. On the other side of the valley, trees and flowers make sounds like a song, as they sway in the wind. It sounds like love calls made by a dead girl who counts the number of days while waiting for the arrival of her lover. This is the country of the Spirit Bird Bubut (a species of coucal), who watches the path of the dead. The dead take a brief rest here and have a close look at the bridge.

Oh, look at the bridge, look at the deep dark pool below,
Crocodiles are waiting with mouths wide open,
The river banks are steep rocky cliffs.
Upstream the river is full of gigantic boulders blocking the way.
Oh, look at the Bridge of Fright.
How the sharpness of the bridge is like a blade of a knife.
"Where is the way to return to your land?
I am afraid there is no way to get there under these conditions.
Now I will not accompany you further to the Land of the Dead."

[says the newly deceased]
"Oh, this is the way we take later.
I shall take your hand later,
I shall carry you on my back." [replies one of the escorting ghosts]
The dead then cross the Bridge of Fright (Titi Rawan), seemingly without much difficulty (for further discussion on this bridge, see p.212).

Countries of Birds Relating to Death

As they go on, they pass again the countries of several species of birds, which, this time, are the birds which have a special connection with death in Iban ideas. First, they pass the country of Bubut Tuai ("Tuai" being the epithet for "elder") who is described as being accustomed to hanging the ceremonial fabrics (baiar pandang) used in the funeral ritual. Then they pass the countries of the Semalau (Magpie-Robin) bird, the Sebelangking bird, the Tiup Api bird, the Undan bird and the Kong-Kebat bird. The Tiup (Plaintive Cuckoo) is said to blow on the "fires" in the Afterworld, where it serves as a slave for the dead. The Undan (Wreathed Hornbill) — also called Burong Raya in the religious texts — is said to be the carrier of the special offering of food (pana) from this world to the Land of the Dead (cf. p.82). The Sebelangking and the Kong-Kebat (both are kinds of cuckoo) as well as the Bubut may make special nocturnal calls, which are thought to foreshadow or tell of the presence of a dying man somewhere.

The dead then reach the country of a spirit called Seliba-liba, who is the guardian of the border between this world and the world of the dead. Then they pass the country in which dwells a legendary woman named Kuche, who is said to have been married to Antu Belang Pinggang (one of the antu gerasi); the event is described in some Iban genealogical accounts.

Allusions to Graveyards

The dead then go through the country of Aya Raja Ladit who watches over the hill called Bukit Tabor Bara' Api (The Hill of Scattered Embers).
This place is described as being opposite the hill of piled baskets, the country of the spirit who watches over the ceremonial fabrics displayed in funerary rituals, and the river named Tempaya', where a great quantity of woven mats are abandoned. All these places refer to the entrance path leading to the graveyard. And this part of the dirge can be regarded as an allusion to the actual customs of the funerary procession when it enters the graveyard (see Chapter 3). In this context, The Hill of Scattered Embers probably stands for the place where the procession party prepares the meal, that is, the opposite side of the stream from the graveyard entrance. The party of the dead proceeds still further and reaches the country of the Spiritual Tiger (Bunsu Remaung) and then the country of the Flies.

The Gate of the Earth

And soon after that they arrive at the point from which the Gate of the Earth (Pintu Tanah) can be seen. The gate consists of a huge block of earth, rising high above the plain. Here Dara Rambai Garuda makes the party stop and look at the Gate:

Malik ka tuju moa meda' kerapa madang bindang
Malik ka kanan meda' belayan vi jerenang
Malik ka kiba' meda' repa' nadai pensiing
Jalai besai nadai bekau perandang

... 
Ni kitai sekayu' Batang Mandai Nyadai
Puntan kitai baka jelan jelu jalai
Ukai patut baka tanah nadai tembawai

To see the direction that we face, it is the woods of agathis trees, To see to the right, it is covered with thick rattan creepers, To see to the left, it is overgrown and not cleared. The wide path has lost its trace.

...
"Oh, there is no way for us all from the Mandai river to advance. We are at an impass as in a wild pig track...
It's bad like a land without an old longhouse site.

Then Dara Rambai Garuda chides in a mocking manner the youths who have paid night courting visits to girls of the party, telling them to try to attack the Gate of the Earth and to open it by force. They decline to do so. Then she calls the men who claim to be brave and to have obtained human heads during their lifetimes. Several brave men try to open it, all in vain. And the leaders of the dead — Niram, Kedawa and the others — are in turn provoked into trying to clear the way. They attack the Gate fiercely with their sharp swords, shouting uproarious war cries, but all with the same result as before.

Au' ni nuan Raja Ngerai
Nuan meh ngentong ka kitai pintu ladu tanah perai
Lama' meh kitai tu' udah mai' ka rimp'i mantai pulai
Nadai jalai pulai ka sungai Suba-ubai
Mali pansai jadi keruang
Lalu beradu' Raja Ngerai
Melit ka sekehit sirat lumbai

... Nangkin berangin pedang panjai
Sentagai mirai-irai nepas tatai tingkah tebiang
Ulu ke lelendu bok panjai

... Au' meh endit ka tumbit kaki panjai
Panjong Raja Ngerai tak kaung-kaung ngelawa' ka kebong langit landai

... Lalu dirandang lang pintu ladu tanah perai
Kapa' ka bisi' jalai sida' iya ke rimp'i mantai pulai

... Semuti' iya tanggal chimit mesai terabai
Kena' sida' tariang mekang bujang besai
Bekesai ka salimai mata pedang
"Where are you, Raja Ngerai?
Try to open for us that Gate of the Earth.
Long have we been escorting the dead man.
But there is no way to return to the River Suba-ubai
where it is prohibited to fish with baskets but permitted to drag
for fish."
Then Raja Ngerai dresses himself up,
putting a beautiful loincloth around his waist.
...
He holds a long sword
whose long belt touches the steep cliff,
whose handle is adorned with long hair.
...
He steps forward,
And roars to the vast sky.
...
Then he tries to break through the Gate of the Earth.
Is there a path for those who are dead?
...
Only as small as a shield is the damage on the Gate,
inflicted by those sturdy young bachelors,
who shook their swords in vain.

This part of the dirge describes at length their vain attempts to
open the Gate and shows a marked atmosphere of competition in bravery
and ability among the men as well as the mocking provocation given by
the womenfolk. This depiction of attempts to get through the firmly
shut gate, which is not peculiar to the death dirge but found also in
ritual songs of other categories, provides an entertaining interlude in
the rather monotonous itinerary of the spiritual journey.

Hearing the noisy tumult in front of the Gate, the guardian of
Pintu Tanah, Bunsu Belut (The Spirit Earthworm), intervenes. She tells
the party of the dead that her Gate should not be the object of their
vain competition of bravery and audacity. She threatens them by saying
that they would not dare utter curses at the Gate if her brothers were
not out engaging in cockfighting in the Country of the Dead. Dara Rambai Garuda then asks Bunsu Belut to open the Gate for them. She complies with the request and slides the Gate open as if she were operating a loom. The party of the dead are delighted to see it open and at the same time they feel sad to think that they should leave the world of the living, where the moon shines and high clouds float overhead.

Obviously, the Gate of the Earth alludes to the grave which the deceased has now to enter. It is rather obscure why the ghosts have a difficulty in passing the Gate of the Earth. Possibly it refers to the digging of a grave which takes a while. Or it may be a conventional literary elaboration characteristic of Iban religious chants. In any case its relevance to burial customs is not clear in this dirge.

It is in a death dirge sung at the festival for ghosts that its relevance to a burial practice becomes more specific. In a dirge collected by Freeman from a Baleh expert, the Gate of the Earth appears to the ghosts advancing from their abodes to attend the festival as a huge obstacle which mercilessly stands before their faces. The Gate is firmly closed with a bar, which alludes to kayu' tunsang planted on the graveyard after burial (see p.68). The ghosts cannot pass through this obstacle and have to wait until the Spirit Earthworm shows them a bypass leading to the world of the living (Freeman, fieldnotes, 1950).

**Indai Bilai**

After passing the Gate of the Earth, the party of the dead hurry along in fear that the Gate might fall on them and soon reach the country of an old woman, named Indai Bilai, whose long breasts are said to hang back over her shoulders. This female figure, as is sung in timang jalang, plays a leading role as the guide to (and even the representative of)
the party of the ghosts which visits the world of the living to attend 
the gawai antu. But in the text of the death dirge she has no apparent 
role.

**Ensing Jara**

The next place the dead reach is the country of Ensing Jara (a species 
of Kingfisher). He is the leader of the devotees of cockfighting and 
the rival of the Iban ghosts in that game. It is said that the *semengat* 
of the defeated and killed fighting cocks will migrate to this country 
and eventually belong to Ensing Jara. Here the dead engage in cock­
fights with him. The newly deceased man employs the cock which he has 
brought from this world, that is, the one which the living have given 
him as a graveyard sacrifice (see p.64). The result of the contest is 
invariably the defeat of Ensing Jara's cocks. The deceased asks him 
not to be vengeful toward him because of the defeat, and Ensing Jara 
gives him reassuring words, saying that the contest between him and 
the deceased is only the traditional custom.

**Seraganti'**

The party of the dead then pass the country of Bujang Seraganti', whose 
house is built upside-down hanging in the air. Seraganti' and his party 
are said to be the traditional enemy of the dead Iban (*munsoh sebayan*); 
particularly, the enemy of those who were killed in battle fields. 
Apparently these figures have nothing to do with the affairs of the 
living. Their existence may be the result of a certain logical necessity 
that the dead should have enemies in the Afterworld if their life there 
is to be fully analogous to life in this world. As the description of 
their house implies, they may be the former enemies who were killed by 
the Iban and whose heads are hung in Iban longhouses. But this would
contradict a prevalent notion that the ghosts of the killed will become slaves (ulun) of the killers in the Afterworld; in fact, the singer of the dirge denied the equation of Seraganti' with the killed enemies.

Countries of Those who Died in Unusual Ways

From this point on the party pass successively several lands of those who died by various unusual types of death. As I will take up this topic in more detail in Chapter 7, I will omit any further analysis here.

First, the party reaches the field of *tekalong* trees and the hill of *pudu* trees. These trees, both of which belong to the genus *Artocarpus* (bread-fruit trees), provide the traditional material for bark cloth. A bark belt made from them is used to tie the waist of a woman after giving birth. This is the country of a female figure called Dara Nelap Chelap Pusat Tungkul Belakang, which means "The Kind Maiden who is Cold of Navel, Heart and Back". Thus this is the land of women who did not warm their bodies after delivery, that is, those who died in childbirth.

Then they reach the land of *melaban* trees, whose roots are swollen by absorbed blood. This is the country of the youths who did not heed the warnings of the gods given in dreams and went to work in the fields in spite of such dreams. They were seriously injured by accidents in the fields and died.

Next, they pass the land in which dead children dwell. These children have nothing to do but to cry while seeking their mothers. The party then goes through the field of *nibong* palms which have no shoots and the field of areca palms which bloom without producing fruit. As the symbolism of barren palms suggests, this is the country of dead bachelors and maidens. They are always adorning themselves with festive clothes and accessories.
They then pass the country where live people who died suddenly during their sleep. These people live on a hill ridge and spend all their time trying to wake each other up. Then the party passes the country of brave men who were killed in the war against the Government of the Rajah. They are always preparing their guns and shields. Their anxiety is so great that each time they hear tiny animals such as squirrels breaking dead branches, they are frightened and take up their weapons in fear of an approaching enemy (cf., Seraganti').

Next, they pass the place where live people who died because they lost their money in gambling. They cannot sit calmly but always wander around in a discouraged mood. Then they pass the country where live men who died because they lost their way in the forest. They are hitting the knots of wild gutta trees as if to call their friends with the sound.

From there they arrive at the country of people who fell from trees and died. They are always watching the ropes used for climbing trees. Then they come to the land of maidens who died by eating shoots of poisonous plants, that is, those who committed suicide. There they are always collecting the leaves of poisonous plants. They do not let even one leaf be passed over, for they sell them to the people in the Land of the Dead, and this makes enough profit for them to buy valuable jars. Finally they pass through the country of those who died by drowning. They are always watching bubbles on the surface of water.

The Mandai River

After leaving these various lands behind, the party of the dead reaches the riverside, where a big kepayang tree stands. The tree is so big that a longboat can be made from a fragment of one of its nuts. The newly deceased person sobs upon seeing the river, which is a tributary
of the Mandai river, the river of the dead. This river is curious, as
the dead tell the newcomer; if the upper part is flooded, the pebbles
on the shores can be seen, and if the lower part is dried up, the flat
terrain along the river is submerged. Empiang explained this as an
example of the overall reversed nature of the Land of the Dead, but it
may be no more than an example of the word play that typifies the
language of Iban religious texts.

The dead stop here to prepare boats for going down the river toward
their final destination. The newly deceased person boasts of the beauty
of his own boat, referring to his coffin which was prepared for him by
members of his longhouse (see p.73). In preparing the equipment for
the boat, the deceased insists that he should use valuable objects,
apparently those given to him as offerings at his death: an old jar to
support the boat's roof, a big plate for the bailer, an iron implement
(probably, a bush knife or adze) for the sitting frame, a spear-tipped
blowpipe for the wallframe of the shelter on the boat and beautiful cere­
monial fabrics for the roof or awning. The dead make their slaves, called
mengalai who are said to appear as a kind of cricket or cockroach in this
world, carry the loads into the boats, and they persuade the newly
deceased to stop complaining and grieving so that they can set out on
the journey down the river.

As they advance down the river, they pass the countries of various
fish and aquatic animals in exactly the same fashion as they passed the
countries of birds in the early sections of the dirge.

Near the end of the long riverine journey, the boats of the dead
pass a pool which is crossed by a bridge and surrounded by a cleared
area in which beautiful dillenia flowers are blooming. This is the land
of the dead Malay people, who light their lamps in the evening. Then
they pass the land of the dead Europeans in which they see telephone
lines and European style houses with windows, through which furniture can be seen.

Next, they pass the rocks, called Batu Kudi', which emerged in the river as the result of past supernatural events. This is the place where the dead gather and prepare food before they start on a journey to the world of the living to fetch a newly deceased person. Then they see on the shore the landing places of the houses of famous war leaders of the past. Their boats which are tied there still have marks of blood on the bows, which indicate that they returned with enemy's head taken in war expeditions.

The End of the Journey

Finally the party of the dead reaches the landing place of the leaders of the dead, which is so beautiful as to be compared with the wharves of overseas steamers. The dead tie their boats to the beautiful dry aur-bamboo which stands on the shore. Dara Rambai Garuda then tells the newly deceased to get down from the boat and not to feel too much grief, for they have finally arrived in the Land of the Dead.

Then they bathe at the river shore as the Iban usually do when they arrive at their destination. The scene of bathing is described somewhat comically, as is shown by the following lines.

\begin{verbatim}
Mandi' kitai wai nyelam ka isi' peloh langkang
Lalu nyelam ka pesingan bau' landai
Pari' ka isi' mulai ka kerigai
Peda' daki' tak beanti'-anti' anyut kili' parai empelasi'
   ikan enselua'
Udu meh ditaroh aku tegoh-tegoh
Simpan dalam bengkan buloh kirai
Kunohi aku alam peti dua berimbai
Angka' nabat sida' ke baroh takang bintang berintai
Baroh keleman bulan mingkai
\end{verbatim}
Bisi' gawa' sida' iya ngayon ka pampling piring rendai
Ngibun pun padi rubai
Angka' orang gawai umai
Dia' kitai ke nandang ngabang mansang nemuai
Kena' kitai ngante rendai tak bunsai-unsai
Ke pemangai jelumpang tumbang

Let's bathe, let's submerge our bodies covered with dried sweat,
Let's submerge our shoulders, rub our bodies around the breasts,
Look, our dirt floats down the river,
and then kills the fish there,
How poisonous the dirt of the troop of Kedawa is,
More poisonous than tuba roots...
"I want to collect their dirt, [says the newly deceased]
and keep it in a bamboo container...
When those who are under the star constellations,
those who are under the full moon [the living],
hold a festival and display the offerings
in order to take care of rice plants,
and we go there to attend the festival,
Then it can be exchanged for the puffed rice grains
which are sprinkled like jelumpang blossoms falling."

After bathing, the dead dress themselves up. The newly deceased boasts
that he is nice looking now and yet says that he is still sad and not
comfortable with living among these who have been long dead. For, he
says, he is a newcomer to this Land of the Dead, and he feels as if he
were going to a longhouse other than his own to attend a feast; that is,
he feels timid and shy. The long dead try to console him by saying that
there is no need to be shy here because he shall later see his old lover
who has been long dead, thus suggesting that the Land of the Dead is not
actually an alien place to him.

Then the party leaves the bathing place for the longhouse in which
the newly deceased person will dwell. On the way they pass fields of
various fruit-bearing trees, all of which are full of ripe fruit. In
an open space they pass, they play games such as top spinning. Thus the final stage of the journey seems to be cheerful. They reach the foot of a tree called Ranyai which is guarded by a figure named Sabit Mit Perabujoh Ai' Mata ("Fine Waist-ring of Dropping Tears"). This tree, like Ranyai Padi mentioned earlier, is full of charms which are to be collected and taken as gifts to the world of the living when the dead are invited to the gawai antu. But on this journey toward the Land of the Dead, the party of the dead pass this place in a hurry, for the top of the tree seems to be swaying in a strong wind, and the dead are afraid it will fall on them.

Then after the long and somewhat painful journey, the deceased arrives at the longhouse in which his dead mother has already arranged sitting mats, a container of areca nuts and other things in order that the newly deceased can recognise the dwelling place of his parents. The singer of the dirge advises the members of this longhouse to take the deceased to the upper parts of the river for fishing if he feels uncomfortable and still longs for the world he left behind.

The newly deceased, being still reluctant to be cut off from the world of the living, looks for those who have become gods after death (see Chapter 8) and ask them to take him to the hill top from which the world of the living can be viewed.

At the end of the dirge, the singer insists on returning to the world of the living without delay. She curses the Land of the Dead as not good to live in; rice there is tasteless, the water of the bathing place is muddy, and the house is full of the excrement of pigs, cocks, dogs and men. And she asks the dead for charms to ensure a good harvest as the reward of her painstaking task of accompanying the deceased into the world of the dead. Finally the Spirit of Wind (Antu Ribut) speeds her semengat back to the world of the living.
SHAMANIC VISIONS

The description of the route from this world to the Land of the Dead as given in the text of the death dirge is fairly self-explanatory. In the itinerary we see a gradual change of scenery from the real world, beginning with the longhouse and nearby locations into the purely imaginary world of the Land of the Dead via numerous geographically arranged points. In this sense there is a strong continuity between the real world and the Afterworld. Characteristic of this spiritual passage of the Iban is its abundant use of topographical images, which are, in their turn, arranged linearly to make up the whole itinerary. The journey of the deceased is then conceived to be somewhat similar to a real journey which living humans may make, particularly in their emigration (*pindah*) to a new territory.

The initial topographic images are rooted in the landscape of the real world. The departed spirits, having left the longhouse, go along the long hill ridge before they arrive at the land of a mythical figure, the god Sempandai, and then into further imaginary spheres. It is important, however, that even on the landscape such as the open space around the longhouse and the hill-ridge, certain imaginary things are superimposed. The newly deceased sees in front of the house an unusual tree full of charms which he never saw during his lifetime. And the different places along the hill-ridge are described as the countries of "spiritual" birds while their features as real landscape are still maintained. Perhaps we are concerned here with what may be called the "double visions of scenery", which derive from the superimposition of spiritual visions on reality. This doubleness is without doubt the counterpart in the external world of the division of the experiencing subjective entity into the corporeal person and the *semengat*. In the context of the death dirge (and of other Iban ritual songs), the real landscape viewed in this
way provides the preparatory stages for going deep into genuinely imaginary spheres.

With regard to the double vision of scenery, the shamanic view of the way from this world to the other world presents a more revealing exemplar. It consists of the symbolic equation of the significant points on the itinerary with particular parts of the longhouse as a physical structure. I will present below the shamanic views in some detail. For the spiritual route formulated in shamanic practices is similar to that depicted in the death dirge and, therefore, with necessary notes provided, it may well serve as an explanatory supplement for the text of the death dirge. Furthermore, the symbolism involved in the shamanic views may lead to a deeper understanding of certain aspects of mortuary rituals described in previous chapters.

As was mentioned in Chapter 2, the *semengat* of a seriously ill person may be diagnosed by a shaman as being absent from its usual location. Often, though not always, such a *semengat* is said to be on the way to the Land of the Dead. The shaman's *semengat* pursues it along this route while a shaman is in a trance. Usually the shaman claims to have caught the errant *semengat* at a particular point along the way. He may tell the attendant people that he has caught it, for example, at the foot of a gallery pillar. In the spiritual vision of the shaman, a gallery pillar in the longhouse structure is said to be seen as a *nibong* palm which stands by the path to the Land of the Dead. Thus the shaman is claiming that the errant *semengat* had advanced as far as that point by the time it was recovered by his *semengat*. What I will present as the shamanic view of the spiritual journey consists of these points assembled together to form a continuous route. While the shamanic view of the route is well formulated and recognised as such, there is, as far as I know, no single
ritual (shamanic) song which depicts this journey as the death dirge does. The following view was taken from the shaman Chundi and from Anggok, who is not a shaman but is well informed on shamanic practices and visions.

The way from this world to the abode of the dead is well maintained (tauas), that is to say, not overgrown by grasses and shrubs. This indicates that the path is frequently followed by errant semengat, the departed spirits and the party of the dead who visit this world. When a semengat sets out on the journey to the Land of the Dead, it departs from the post of the fireplace, the location of the bungai of the bilek, which is often thought to be the cluster of bilek members' semengat (see Chapter 2).

To the semengat and the shaman, the fireplace is seen as a hill which is called, obviously by simple allegory, "The Fire Burnt Hill" (Bukit Lebor Api). A ridge (tinting) named Lanjan extends out from the hill. This ridge is symbolically equated with the upper edge of the wall (dinding) separating the bilek from the gallery — their names produce an obvious pun. At the foot of the hill there is a lake called Danau Alai, which is, in relation to the actual longhouse structure, identified with the spot behind the bilek door where water storing gourds (labu') are placed. A path leads from the lake to the "Rock Shutting Violently" (Batu Tekup Daup), which continuously opens and closes in quick and violent movements. This rock is equated with the bilek door. According to Anggok, there are two paths which a semengat may follow after its departure from the fireplace post. One is the path along the Lanjan Ridge, which is followed in the dry season, and the other is from the lake Danau Alai to the Shutting Rock, which is followed in the rainy season, apparently by boat. However, this distinction has no bearing either on the mortuary or on the further journey of the departed spirits.
After leaving the bilek, the semengat passes the point of "Seven Branches" (Pampang Tujoh), which is supposed to be just outside the bilek, and goes along the tempuan-passage of the gallery. It is thus said that the tempuan-passage is the path to the Land of the Dead (Jalai Sebayan), or when the journey is imagined to be by boat, it is thought to represent the river (ai' sungai) — in particular, the long reach (rantau) of the river — which also leads to the Land of the Dead. These two images, however, are not differentiated in functional or ritual terms. Rather both visions are held indiscriminately, possibly depending on the extent to which a person takes the symbolism of the ritual objects used in shamanic practices (e.g., a place standing for a boat; see Chapter 4, p.100) to be relevant to the journey of the dead.

At any rate, the symbolic equation of the tempuan-passage with the path along which the disembodied semengat travels is quite understandable. For this passage is the normal and proper route by which people move from one bilek section (including the ruai gallery) of the longhouse to another, and, furthermore, it is the path along which the corpse should be taken from the deceased's gallery to the outside of the longhouse. The semengat follows the way the body goes. But the scenery seen by the semengat differs from what is seen by ordinary people. The mortars placed along the tempuan-passage are seen by the semengat as single rocks or boulders (batu tunggal). The main part of the gallery (ruai) is seen as a vast sea shore (tebing tasik). The main pillars standing between the tempuan and the ruai appear as nibong palms, whose upper parts are swaying beautifully to please the passing semengat.

Somewhere on the journey through the tempuan-passage the way is supposedly obstructed by a (wild?) pig called Babi Rundong, which is lying or squatting across the path. The pig is supposed to be as big as the
longhouse. So, as Anggok commented, if a dying person suffers a long coma (*jingap-jingap*) but continues to breathe, it is traditionally said that the dying person's old dead lover(s) have not been able to drive away the pig and therefore have been unable to reach this world in order to fetch the dying person's *semengat*. An old custom, to help the sufferer to die, was to break a weaving stick (*lidî*) on the *tempuan*-passage to frighten the pig away and to throw a sugar cane (*tebu*) from the open verandah across the longhouse in hope that the pig would follow its favourite food. Babi Rundong is symbolically equated with the Iban longhouse itself or, on the night of the wake, with the mortars placed at both ends of the *tempuan*-passage (see p.56).

The advancing *semengat* approaches one end (which one is not specified) of the *tempuan*-passage, passing the edge of a field of sharp-bladed *lalong* grasses, which is identified with the part of the open verandah under the roof eaves, where the thatch hangs down in a fringe. The end of the *tempuan*-passage, which forms an entrance of the longhouse, leads to a ladder made of a notched log. Here the *semengat* sees a rapid or a waterfall in a river, over which the Bridge of Fright (*Titi Rawan*) crosses. Obviously the bridge is symbolically identified with the ladder (*tangga'). The house of Antu Bubut, guardian of the bridge, is located at the head of the waterfall (*pala' riam*), that is, at the top of the ladder. The image of Antu Bubut is an old woman and, according to Anggok's account, she lives alone in her house. The house is supposed to be very poorly constructed. The planks of the floor and walls are very rough and widely spaced. The inside of the house is dirty with heaps of excrement of dogs and fowls. Antu Bubut, seeing a *semengat* pass by her house, invites it to enter her house, calling, "Enter my house, grandchild, stop your journey." But the *semengat* whose owner is destined to die does not accept her invitation, apparently disliking her dirty house; if it did,
the person would recover or revive. Bubut cries, as she watches the semengat go past, showing her concern for the dying person. Thus the nocturnal cry of the bubut bird forecasts someone's death (see p.195).

Anggok made a comment, which was confirmed by Shaman Chundi, that a shaman can pursue and catch an errant semengat as long as it remains on this side of the Bridge of Fright, that is to say, inside the long-house in terms of real space. They contended that any shaman who claimed to be able to search for semengat beyond this point would be a liar. Beyond the Bridge of Fright, they say, it is already the realm of the dead, to which the ablest shaman dare not go without risking his own life.

As its name clearly indicates, the Bridge of Fright is usually imagined to be narrow and to cause those who cross it to be afraid of falling from it or of its breaking. But as far as I know, the image of this bridge crossing the deep valley between this world and the other world has no clear bearing on the destiny of the dead. There is no moral judgment to be made at the entrance to the Land of the Dead. Crossing the bridge does not constitute any spiritual ordeal or trial. The fate of those who fell from the bridge may be that they would be eaten by crocodiles, as is suggested in the dirge text (see p.194). But a view of such a doomed fate is certainly not held by the Iban. Empiang (the singer of the dirge) asserted that semengat would never fail to cross the bridge if a person actually died. Anggok gave the rather idiosyncratic view that the Bridge of Fright is wide enough for a number of people to cross it at the same time so that an accidental fall would be extremely rare. Such an accident would, according to him — and probably it is widely known among the Iban — result in the miraculous revival of the deceased (cf., Nyuk, 1906:23). This view of revival as a consequence of an accident is fairly consistent with ideas which the
Iban hold about the reasons of revival. All the stories I heard about such rare happenings invariably indicate that the revived persons were rejected in some way or other by their dead relatives or by the party of the dead who were escorting them, usually resulting in the disruption of the journey.

The image of the spiritual journey represents to the Iban the existential shift from this world to the other world. The journey which the *semengat* undertake thus reproduces almost precisely the journeys the living Iban make in this world. The advancing *semengat* should also depend on omens as the living do. There are, it is supposed, a number of huts (*langkau beburong*) on the way up to the point of "no return", which is the Bridge of Fright. The errant or departed *semengat* will stop at each hut for a while to seek favourable omens, the signals that he should go on. The meaning which each omen is normally supposed to convey is reversed for such a *semengat*. What is taken as a good omen by the living Iban is a bad sign for an errant *semengat* and will cause it to stop its journey. The owner will then recover. Conversely, an inauspicious omen to the living is taken by a dying person's *semengat* as a favourable omen indicating that it should continue on its journey into the Land of the Dead.

The shamanic vision of the spiritual journey ends at the Bridge of Fright. The shamanic insights do not extend to the further steps of the journey. Shaman Chundi told of the symbolic equation of the Gate of Earth with the bathing place (the river bank) of a longhouse, to which a "pretentious" or "deceitful" shaman claims to go in search of an errant *semengat*. In any case, however, visions of the Land of the Dead proper are not included in shamanic practices, at least not among the present-day Skrang (and presumably Layar) Iban.
NOTES

1. Among the Balau Iban the death dirge for speeding the departed spirit to the other world is *sabak nganjong pana* which is chanted a few days after the burial (see p.82).

2. This name alludes to the traditional method of digging a grave (see Chapter 3, note 11).

3. The name Seraganti' may be derived from the term *gantong* ("to hang").
The journey of the departed spirits, described in the previous chapter, is the imaginary process of the separation between those who have died and those who remain in this world. In this chapter I turn to the long-term destiny of the dead after they establish themselves in the Land of the Dead, which includes the relation between the dead and the living, the graphic view of the other world and the final destiny of human semengat.

THE RELATION BETWEEN THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

Myths of Separation

The separation of the dead from the living takes place in stages which correspond to the successive funerary rituals: the initial burial, the separation ceremonies and the commemoration festival for the dead. The separation is necessary for the benefit of the survivors and the mortuary practices are thought to be a prerequisite for this separation. The Iban say that their primeval ancestors did not "look after" (ngintu) their deceased fellow members; that it to say, they had no such mortuary rituals as are observed today. They are said to have behaved just "like beasts" in that matter. The following myth begins during this period.

Once when Serapoh, an ancestor of the Iban, and his followers lived in the Lower Batang Ai, many members of his longhouse died in a very short span of time. In the morning the mother died, and the father died in the evening. A lot of people died. Serapoh was afraid that
those of his longhouse would be exterminated, and he was at a loss. One day a stranger visited him and asked why he was so distressed. Serapoh told the stranger about what had been happening. The stranger asked how they dealt with a person's death. Serapoh replied, "We do nothing. If a man dies, his corpse will be thrown away from the open verandah to the ground." The stranger, having heard this, taught him a proper way of taking care of the dead, saying that the lack of it was the reason they suffered this unfortunate spate of deaths. He gave instructions about the arrangements of mortuary rituals, from the making of coffins, burial under the ground and mourning regulations to the arrangement of the gawai antu. Serapoh followed these instructions. In this way the community recovered from its miserable conditions. The stranger turned out to be a miscarried son of Keling, the prominent mythical hero. Later he married Serapoh's daughter.¹

This myth is straightforward as an etiological account. What it tells us is that a person's death is a danger to the survivors and that this danger is lessened only through well arranged cultural means, that is, the mortuary rituals. When the separation through ritual means is complete, the dead are supposed to live quite self-sufficiently in their own realm. Once established in the Land of the Dead, they "do not know the way to return to this world" (sebayan enda! nemu jalai kitu!), at least as physical persons. The living need not worry much about ghostly interferences in their activities, despite the possible and, in fact, frequent communication between themselves and ghosts through dreams.

However, some Iban stories say that in the remote past the interaction between the living and the dead was easier than it is today and that even physical contacts were possible. The following is the most widely known story of this type. As the Shaman Chundi told it:

There once lived a mother and her children, a son and a daughter. Nothing is said of their father. Either he was dead or did not live with them, I guess. The son was about ten years old. His
sister was small and the mother was still suckling her. But the mother died leaving them behind. The daughter did not stop crying because she was hungry. On the day after her burial, the son heard the mother's voice at her grave, and then the mother appeared before him. She told the son to bring his sister to the grave so that she could give the breast to her. He did so. The mother then said that she would continue to appear before them for three years. But in order to do so, she told the son, he must not eat the fruit of a *lemayong* palm which stood on the side of the path to the grave.

They continued to meet in this way for days and months. But one day the boy got too hungry on the way to the grave. He said to himself, "Mother told me not to eat the *lemayong* fruit. But I am hungry and can't understand why I should not eat it." He ate up all the fruit. Later, when the children came to the meeting place, they heard the mother's voice but she did not appear again.

The motif involved in this story is obvious. The deceased mother could show her affection toward the bereft children by fulfilling her maternal responsibility to feed her infant — paradoxically, in order to keep it alive — until the contact between them was made impossible by the disobedient act of the son. It is plausibly suggested that eating the fruit was necessary for the living son to fill his own stomach and to keep himself alive. Certainly the interaction with the dead mother did no good to him. We may see then two conflicting relations in this story: the mother-infant relation on the one hand and the mother-son relation on the other. The former puts stress on the beneficial aspect of the deceased's presence and the interaction between the living and the dead, while the latter emphasises the meaninglessness or even the possible harm involved in such interaction. This reflects in a precise way the conflicting attitudes the Iban take toward the ghosts and, particularly, toward their supposed presence in the course of mortuary rituals. We have only to remember in this regard the various ambivalent ideas and attitudes illustrated in the previous chapters. The boy's breach of the prohibition
imposed by the mother brings about a new state of affairs which has also both good and bad sides. His act nullifies the possibility of physical contacts with loved ones after death, thus deepening the sorrow of the survivors at being separated from them, but, in compensation, it established a boundary between the realms of the living and the dead, thus freeing the living from the threat of ghostly interference.

Another story shows us rather comically how verbal abuse directed by the living against the dead put an end to the primordial co-operation between them. Anggok recounted:

In the past the dead worked in the rice fields together with the living. They used to come to work from their houses, and the living came from their own houses. In the evening the two groups returned to their respective houses. The dead could not swallow rice because the rice they put in their mouths dropped through the holes in their cheeks that had been made by maggots. Once when the two parties were engaged in weeding, the dead found some weeds that were unknown to them. They asked the living for their names. The living answered, "This is rubai, for roasting corpses (rum bangkat). That is embaswang, for plugging holes (penensang lubang; lubang = hole, grave)." Having heard this, the dead were frightened and returned to their realm. This ended their co-operation.

Like the first story, this attributes the cause of the separation to the deeds of the living; in this case, it was the wicked word play (use of sound similarity) directed at the dead, advertently or inadvertently. I cannot determine whether the primordial co-existence of the dead and the living is taken by the Iban as a kind of lost paradise or as an embarrassing and confusing situation. Probably both notions are involved in a vague way. The contribution of labour by the dead in farming could be both an advantage and a disadvantage for the living, for it may confirm the dead's claim to a share of the harvest. The image of the dead here is totally unattractive, but they do not seem to have any evil intention
toward the living. By and large, there is no clear-cut value judgment about the past in comparison with the present situation; that is, there is no obvious gain or loss due to the change in circumstances.

At any rate, the situation today is different. The border between the world of the living and the Land of the Dead is well established. There is no possibility of direct and corporeal communication or interaction between the living and the dead.

The most conspicuous symbol of this border — as we see among the Skrang Iban — is the *lemayong* palm (*Salacca* sp.). Its fruit and leaves are used in the *serara' bungai* ritual as a barrier put between the living and the dead. They make the living and the ghosts invisible to each other. The story presented above is an etiological myth which explains the origin of this symbolic use of the *lemayong* palm. Perhaps the extremely thorny frond of the *lemayong* palm plays a certain understandable role in this symbolic association. It may obstruct the access of the dead to the world of the living (about the use of thorns for a similar purpose, see p. 241).

And yet, it should be emphasised, this established border exhibits its own inherent ambiguity. For even nowadays there exists some communication between the dead and the living — in dreams and through mystical apparition. Moreover, man shall die and pass this border to enter the realm of the dead. The border is not impassable. Indeed it is easily passed, as the frequency of death indicates. The Iban express this communicability across the border by an easily intelligible metaphor; "Between Sebayan [the realm or its inhabitants, the dead] and us, the living, is only the inner skin of a *lemayong* fruit" (*Antara sebayan enggau kitai selupu' lemayong*). Apparently the boundary between the two realms is conceived by the Iban to be as thin and semi-transparent as the inner skin of this fruit and thus to be penetrable.
In fact, the closeness of the living to the dead as expressed in this metaphor is at the very core of Iban eschatology and the related practices. The stories about the primordial interaction with the dead were actually told to me as evidence of the present thinness of the border, which is significant now only by contrast with the past, when it was entirely absent. To the Iban, it is this premise that provides the rationale for their concern with the dead, as reflected in their ritual care for them as well as in their spiritual and mystical communication with them.

Ghostly Intereference

The ways in which the Iban perceive the presence of the dead around them derive either from purely psychical experiences (dreams and dream-like experiences such as shamanic trance and coma) or from the association of certain psychological states with events in the outer world. Roughly speaking, the latter leads to phenomena of ghostly apparition or interference.

Ghostly apparitions (ngemba) are perceived most often by individuals who are out at night, in the vicinity of the longhouse, soon after a person's death, say, for fishing or hunting. More rarely, a group of people or even the whole longhouse community will experience them. In most cases, they consist of strange loud noises, such as those made by rolling boulders or by strong winds. As far as I heard, there were no instances of visual apparitions, that is, of seeing the deceased, though sometimes occurrence of an apparition may be proved by visible traces — a thing may be said to have been removed from one place to another; a thing may drop from a shelf without an obvious physical cause, and so on. Apparitions occur frequently shortly after a person's death and dwindle away as time passes. They are undoubtedly caused by the anxiety of the living about a recent death and are a projection of that anxiety
onto the experiential plane. People's anxiety may be intensified if
the death occurred in a shocking way, say, by violence. It is not
surprising that intense and frequent apparitions follow such a death,
and that, conversely, a peaceful death is less likely to cause them
(see p.66).

The Iban fear a ghostly apparition. But their fear is not intense.
People may be frightened by such apparitions and take counter-measures
to prevent them, for example, by promptly performing the separation
ritual saying bungai). However, it is characteristic of Iban attitudes
toward ghosts that they do not attribute the cause of these phenomena
to vicious and harmful intentions of the deceased. The ghosts, as some
Iban strongly claim, have no intention of attacking (nganu', which
originally means "to reprimand") the living by their apparitions, but
they are merely asking (nanya') the living either to pay more attention
to them or to make offerings. Or, as an informant once said, "The
deceased simply feel sorrow at leaving the world. So, there would be
no serious consequences from ghostly apparitions." In short, a ghost
is not regarded as a genuinely malevolent being.

Yet the presence of the dead is not a favourable state. It is at
least inconvenient and cumbersome to the living. Ghosts interfere with
or confuse (ngaohau) the living's affairs in a secret manner. Stories
are frequently told among the Iban about mysterious losses of rice.
Sometimes uncooked rice in storage jars disappeared, and sometimes left over
cooked rice was stolen from cooking pots. Or ripe ears of rice in the
fields were harvested secretly during the night. To the Iban, these
are the typical cases in which the spirits of the dead interfere with
the life of the living in this world. More often than not, the cause
of this ghostly interference is imputed to the living's failure to carry
out the proper funeral rituals of which the offering of a portion of
food (with other things) to the deceased is an essential part.

The idea that the spirits of the dead are consuming and even stealing beings is strongly held by the Iban. In fact, antu rua', a category of antu which are believed to cause the meaningless waste of the rice crop, are usually identified with some spirits of the dead. In order to evade their inconvenient coveting of the living's products, the Iban throw a small proportion of rice wine on the ground at every religious festival, in much the same way as the share of things for the deceased (utai sebayan) is thrown away at various stages of mortuary rituals. Ghosts may ask for things which are occasionally lacking in the Land of the Dead. The Iban say that sounds made by crickets (a type called mengalai) on the ground under the cooking place are messages sent from the ghosts and conveyed by their slaves (ulun), the crickets. When the living hear such sounds, they throw to the ground things such as rice, tobacco, betel nuts, burning woods and so on until the sounds cease and the ghosts are supposed to be satisfied with the things given to them.

The pre-eminent association of the trouble caused by the ghosts with the consumption of the living's products in general and of rice in particular is understandable in light of the limited and unstable productivity of Iban agriculture and of the great value put on rice. Moreover, the Iban are a rather unreserved people, being meticulous in assessing the contribution to production and the consumption by individual members of a household. Familial quarrels are often caused by or result in disputes about the labour contributions of the contenders. The dead may be mentioned in such quarrels as exemplary of persons who do not do their share of the work. Even a son once spoke openly of his ailing father in this fashion, saying with disgust that he was "feeding a corpse" (the relationship between them had been extremely bad). By and
large, the acts of ghosts as perceived by the Iban can be explained as a straightforward reflection of the social and economic relationship between the members of a bilek-family. Socially the ghosts are not vicious beings, but ones pitifully separated from the rest of the members. Economically, on the other hand, their presence may be harmful or at least a burden to the living.

Dreams of the Dead

All that has been said about ghostly apparitions and interference applies also to the most frequent and commonest means of communication with the dead, that is, encounters with the dead in dreams. Dreams of the dead (mimpi sebayan), in which the dreamers usually communicate with their deceased relatives and friends, make up an important category of bad dreams (mimpi jai'), which the Iban read as inauspicious signs for their general health and especially for undertaking any sort of activities away from the longhouse and its vicinity. Those dreams give the dreamers an uneasy feeling (enda' lantang), which is roughly equivalent to "being anxious". Usually, encounters with the dead in dreams are brief and sporadic reflections of routine circumstances: conversation in the gallery, hunting or working in the fields together, eating a meal together and so on. Any possible bad effects of these sporadic dreams are easily avoided by taking a day's rest, and the Iban do not seem to worry much about them. But if one has such dreams repeatedly for a certain span of time, or if a dream has an extraordinary or emotionally intense content, one takes the occurrence more seriously. A shaman is to be consulted in such a case, and often the shaman will diagnose something wrong with the dreamer's semengat.

The inauspiciousness of dreams of the dead is derived from the contact itself and is independent of the ways in which the dead behave
toward the dreamers in the dreams. The dead often appear to be kind to dreamers, warmly talking with them, preparing meals for them and so on. Yet even this type of dream is categorised in cultural terms as a bad dream. The rationale the Iban hold is simply that the living cannot mix together (begulai) with the dead. Persistent dreams of a particular dead person are regarded as a sign or evidence indicating that the relational tie between the dreamer and the deceased has not yet been fully severed. The deceased, say, a dead spouse, is thought to be still eager for a reunion, which implies the dreamer's death.

Thus the feeling expressed by the phrase *enda' nyamai* ("uncomfortable"), which is recurrently used during the mourning period and at various stages of mortuary rituals, prevails also regarding such dream experiences. Usually, I believe, there is no manifest fear or terror produced by dreams of the dead, except when the dead are persons who have become harmful *antu*, as illustrated in Chapter 2 (p.36). As in the case of ghostly apparitions, the unfavourable aspect of the contact with the dead in dreams is attenuated by the affectionate sentiments the living hold toward their dead relatives and friends, which leads projectively to the notion that the dead have no intention to do harm, but just to communicate with the living. In fact, some individual Iban say that they do not worry about such dreams because they are merely commonplace phenomena. We can sometimes even see a positive attitude toward such dreams, as when a woman wailed by the side of her mother's corpse, she expressed her expectation to see her mother in future dreams (see p.55). For those missing a loved one, encounters with the deceased in dreams are surely something more than a culturally defined category of a bad dream. As I once witnessed, a youth who had lost his mother about half a year before declared to a group of people who were talking about their dreams of the dead that he was not afraid at all of seeing the dead in dreams (possibly, having dreams of his mother in mind).
As a category of bad dreams, the manifest contents of dreams of the dead do not usually demand specific interpretation. Merely to have such a dream is considered a vague bad sign. But occasionally dreams of the dead may convey messages that are specifically relevant to the present social situation. This derives from the basic notion that dreams of the dead are, above all, a spiritual interaction between the dead and the living and that, therefore, a particular deceased person may appear in order to say something to the living. The following case presents a good example.

Baki, a 15 year old boy, left his bilek-family which was suffering discord between his mother and her son-in-law and a shortage of male workers to sustain a family with two dependent young daughters. He eventually came to live with Jimbat, his dead father's brother. Jimbat and his wife had no prospective successor for their bilek-family (their only daughter had married out). Formerly, the couple had adopted Baki's brother, but he had died, and then they adopted one of Baki's sisters, but she too had died three years before Baki joined them. It was out of the question that Jimbat should adopt Baki, for his mother was not pleased with Baki's leaving, and the relationship between her and Jimbat deteriorated. Yet Baki continued to live with Jimbat as if he were a full member of the family. About half a year after Baki joined Jimbat's bilek-family, Suat, a first cousin to Jimbat and Selan (Baki's father), had a dream in which Selan talked with Suat and told him that his two children had died in Jimbat's bilek. Suat interpreted this dream as being a warning from Selan that Baki would also die if he continued to live with Jimbat. He told Jimbat of the dream. They agreed that Selan did not want to let Baki be adopted by Jimbat. Jimbat asked Kemat to perform a ritual to neutralise the effect of the dream and thus to ensure that Baki would not be harmed by living with him.

We need not go into a discussion of the sociological implications of this case. What is significant for the present discussion is the notion that the deceased may maintain a continuous concern with the living's affairs and send a message to the living through dreams. Although this type of dream is still classified as being inauspicious on account of the contact with the deceased, the difference from the usual type of ghost dream is obvious. The dreamer can find a positive message in such a dream if it has specific relevance to the dreamer's present concerns and to the existing social situation.
In order to give a comprehensive view of the relationship between the living and the dead, as the Iban conceive it, mention should be made of yet another type of dream of the dead. That is dreams of anonymous spirits of the dead (antu sebayan) as a collective category within the Iban system of demonology rather than of particular identifiable deceased persons. A dream of Kemat's gives an interesting example.

In his dream Kemat entered a strange longhouse. There were lots of people in the house. He could not recognise them, but they knew his name. He thought the longhouse belonged to the dead because he had entered the house by a ladder standing in the old (now abandoned) graveyard. The people there were engaged in some curious activity on the gallery. When he asked what they were doing, they said that they were "eating a dream", that is, holding a ritual for neutralising the effects of a bad dream. Kemat observed the whole procedure for the ritual in the dream. He thus acquired the knowledge and the ability to practise the same ritual.

In this dream the character of antu sebayan as deceased persons is diluted. The association between those whom Kemat saw in his dream and the category of ghosts seems rather incidental, being merely inferred by the dreamer himself from the association between the longhouse and the graveyard. Otherwise they are not obviously different from other categories of superhuman beings which can be encountered in such dreams. I will discuss in Chapter 8 some implications of the relationship between this collective category of ghosts and the category of the gods. However, it may be pointed out that this dream does reveal one important feature of the Iban view of Afterlife. This is the notion that the dead (or their semengat) continue to exist not merely as isolated and vagrant spiritual entities which occasionally communicate with the living (as in usual dreams of the dead), but as beings who settle together in a certain established sphere and lead their own way of life.

Usually the subjective experience in which individual Iban perceive the existence of the ghosts do not give a detailed type of picture of the Land of the Dead. Although they provide (from the Iban point of view) the experiential basis for the firm belief in the continuity of
the spiritual components of humans after death, they consist essentially of rather routine interpersonal contacts, accompanied by an emotional charge of anxiety or affection. Graphic images are, by and large, alien to those individual experiences. Very rarely, however, some Iban have lengthy dreams in which they visit the Land of the Dead. Such dreams may be told in public and listeners enjoy them as narratives. These accounts of dreams broadly reproduce culturally defined ideas and images such as seen in the death dirges and thus reaffirm traditionally transmitted representations. Sometimes they may also offer new images which differ from culturally defined ones. Some of these new images are accepted by people and are incorporated into the cultural stock of knowledge usually without totally rejecting the traditional images. Among the present-day Skrang Iban, for example, a traditional image of the filthy house of Antu Bubut (cf. Chapter 6, p.211) co-exists with a new image derived from a personal dream in which the dreamer saw the house well-constructed and full of valuable jars.3

It is difficult to determine to what extent individuals' dream experiences have contributed to the formation of the overall imagery of the Afterlife. It is, however, an essential premise when we inquire into the representations the Iban hold about the Afterlife that individuals tend to speculate about it on the basis of their dreams of the dead.

THE AFTERLIFE

The Land of the Dead in Iban Cosmology

The Iban conceive of the universe as having three basic divisions: the sky (langit), the sea (tasik) including all water (ai') and the earth (tanah). The universe was created by three beings — Sercgendit, Sercendi' and Seregendah — who are each credited with producing one of the three divisions, though the exact means by which they did it is not...
explained. In each case the name of the creator being rhymes with that of the division of the universe for which he is held responsible. The sky, sea and earth together make up the totality of the Iban universe.

The sky is the abode of the benevolent superhuman beings, among whom Singalang Burong, the god of war, and Manang Menyaya, the principal mythical shaman, are prominent figures. The heavenly bodies — the moon, the pleiades and the three stars in Orion — are carefully watched by the Iban who use their movements to determine the proper time for each stage of the agricultural cycle. The sea and the lands beyond the sea, by contrast, form an essentially alien sphere to the Iban. It is ambiguous in nature, being the abode of the legendary enemies of the celestial gods who, the sagas say, engaged in headhunting expeditions against the sea dwellers and took their trophies and treasures back to their own territory. Nowadays the sea is considered the place of origin of foreigners and much praised foreign goods. And yet it is to the sea that the Iban attempt to drive all the vermin which damage their crops, in a festival performed to protect their fields.

The earth or the land is the sphere in which the living Iban engage in their mundane and religious activities. It includes not only the country or territory occupied by a particular group but also the far away lands unknown to them. The earth is also the home of animals, domesticated and wild, plants in the cultivated fields and in the forests and various superhuman beings who dwell wherever they wish. This sphere constitutes the primary experiential world of the Iban in the sense that their waking experiences are embedded in this earthly plane. In addition, the earth is the world of dreams, although in dreams it is perceived in a very different way. The land, of course, is geographically complicated enough. But, because the Iban combine their waking and dreaming experiences of it, it appears to them to be even more complex.
and changeable than if waking experiences alone were considered.

Within the tripartite division of the universe the Land of the Dead falls definitely in the sphere of the earth. The Iban have no notion that the abode of the departed spirits is far off in the sky or the sea. Rather the Iban would say, "The Land of the Dead is not far (from the living's world)," echoing the metaphor of the thinness of the lemayong fruit skin. The dead share with the living the same sphere of the universe in its broadest sense. The idea that the worlds of the living and the dead are geographically close together parallels the notion that the living and the dead are socially close, as can be seen in their continuing interaction (see above). This closeness, I believe, is the basic notion which underlies all the divergent ideas the Iban hold about the locality of the Land of the Dead.

We can discern roughly three types of ideas concerning the locality of the Land of the Dead; all are related to certain aspects of the earth or the land. They are the ideas that (1) the realm of the dead is beneath the surface of the earth, (2) it is somewhere on the surface of the earth, but is geographically separated from the country of the living Iban, and (3) the Land of the Dead is the same as the land of the living. Each of these views is held by different individuals who can find some basis or evidence to support their view in traditional stories of the spirits of the dead, the mortuary rituals and what they see in dreams or, in the case of shamans, in their visions during trances. In the following I will present each of these ideas in more detail.

The idea that the abode of the ghosts is in the Underworld (that is, beneath the earth) is probably most widely held among the Iban. This subterranean view of the Land of the Dead is held by the Iban at two ideational levels. At one level, it represents a rather naive association of the eschatological view with the burial practice and
vaguely postulates that the soul goes with the body into the ground. The Iban themselves are well aware of this association, as Anggok said when he rejected the Underworld as the location of the other world, "People often say Sebayan is under the earth. They say so perhaps because bodies are buried in the ground." At another level, this simple association finds more elaborate expression in various representations in the death dirge. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the spiritual journey depicted in it follows, symbolically or allusively, the way from the actual longhouse to the graveyard. It depicts the world of the living as being "under the moonlight", "under the floating clouds", "beneath the blue sky" and so on; the departure from there saddens the deceased so deeply. The contrast implied here is one between the living's world and the other world which is under the surface of the earth and therefore deprived of a view of the sky. The border between the two realms is represented by the Gate of the Earth.

Being placed under the earth, the Underworld seems to constitute a fourth sphere in the cosmological frame. But the Iban do not see it this way. Their view is that the living and the dead reside in the same domain, namely, that of earth or land (tanah means both). It is merely that the dead live on "the other side" of the world in which the living reside, and that is how the idea of an underground afterworld is best understood.

To say that the subterranean view is most widely held among the Iban does not mean it is the only orthodox view about the location of the Land of the Dead. In fact, many, among whom knowledgeable elders and shamans are counted, hold the view that the Land of the Dead is located in a geographically separate place on the surface of the earth. The name of the place often given is Mandai. It is mentioned in the death dirge as the name of the main river along which the Land of the
Dead lies. More often than not, however, Mandai is thought to be a mountain which is identified with the real Mt. Mandai in the Upper Kapuas in Indonesian West Kalimantan. Some assert that the abode of the dead is an invisible mountain called Mandai Mati (the Dead Mandai) which is adjacent to the visible real mountain called Mandai Idup (the Living Mandai). It is almost certain that the image of Mt. Mandai, visible or invisible, as the Land of the Dead was derived from the Memaloh people, who, as silverwork peddlers, frequently visit and sometimes stay prolongedly at Iban longhouses. A number of tales are told among the Iban about this mountain, most of which are clearly recognised by them as of Memaloh origin.

Interestingly, this rather heterogeneous idea seems to have been accepted by the Iban without much resistance, as is well shown by the incorporation of the name Mandai into the text of death dirges. The subterranean view and the surface region view largely co-exist side by side and are not normally fused with each other. However, some individuals have managed to reconcile the two views in some way. For example, Kemat accepted the stories about Mandai from a Memaloh peddler and now holds a personal belief that Mandai and the Memaloh country both exist on the side of the earth.

Apart from the image of Mandai, the notion that the Land of the Dead is on the same surface of the earth with the living is held by some individuals who have shamanic insight or a certain speculative aptitude. Shaman Kasi described his pursuit of an errant soul while in a trance as follows:

"When a semengat has gone astray and is on the way to the abode of the dead, it goes up a hill. The shape of the hill is a very long ridge like Bukit Kelingkang [the range separating the lower drainage of the Lupar river from Indonesian Kalimantan]. The other side of the hill is the country of the dead, whose name is beyond my knowledge. The semengat advances very fast, but as long as it is on this side of the hill, I can catch up with it. The foot of the hill
To be sure, this last idea was given in this explicit form only by individuals who were rather exceptional in their personal speculation. Most Iban seem to accept more readily the culturally formulated representational images of the supposed locality of the Land of the Dead. But we cannot dismiss the idea as merely idiosyncratic to the common views. On the contrary, I believe it represents, more manifestly, the core notion which is characteristic of the Iban view of the other world and the relationship between the living and the dead, that is, the proximity of the two realms and the possibility of spiritual communication across the border.

The Afterlife as a Replica of Life in this World

Now we turn to some of the concrete imagery of the life the dead are supposed to lead in the Land of the Dead.

First of all, it is generally assumed that life in this world and life in the other world are very similar. The dead engage in rice farming, hunting and fishing in exactly the same way as the living do. Women weave fabrics and plait bamboo and rushes to make baskets and mats. The dead reside in longhouses which contain separate bileks just as in this world. Their favourite pastime is cockfighting, which gives a festive quality to life in the Land of the Dead. The afterlife as the Iban conceive it is not gloomy and depressing. On the contrary, it is what may be called a modest idealisation of the life of the living. That is to say, within the limit of similarity to life in this world, the afterworld is imagined to be a more comfortable place than this world. The rivers, the main one of which is called the Limban, are abundant in fish; the forests provide plenty of game, and the fields always yield good harvests. The social life there is amusing, being characterised by over-crowding or populousness (ramít) which also connotes festivity.
This image of the afterworld as a nicer replica of this world provides the Iban with the rationale by which they explain why the semengat of a person who has died does not normally return to this world, thus causing him to revive. Stories about the revival of persons who died (or suffered prolonged comas) often say that such persons were driven to this world, rather against their will, by their dead relatives. A typical example, though it is not a revival experience, is given in the following dream.

In his dream Jeram walked along a broad path with many fellow merrymakers as if they were on the way to attend a feast. When he passed the longhouse in which lived illegitimate children (anak ampang), he was pestered by them, and they did not release him until he made toys for them. In the longhouse which he finally reached he saw his recently dead father and his dog which had died shortly before. The old torn clothes abandoned in this world were seen to be new there. The atmosphere in the longhouse, which was crowded with people, was cheerful. They were copulating promiscuously (bong). He did not want to return to this world. But his father insisted that he should go home because he had not yet died. So he left the longhouse reluctantly and then he woke up.

Social relations in this world are supposed to be largely maintained in the Land of the Dead. Those who were fellow members of a bilek-family will continue to be so in the afterworld. The prohibition on making more than one miniature house (sungkup) for a bilek-family at a single gawai antu is supposed to prevent the splitting of the bilek-family in the other world. By contrast, the idea of continuity of the unity of a longhouse community is less firmly held. Some say all the dead members of one community reside in one longhouse in the other world. But still many are not certain about this. In fact, among the Upper Skrang Iban in the mid 1970s, one prevalent notion is that the dead live not only in Iban-style longhouses but also in Malay-style detached houses. This notion is said to be derived from a person’s dream. The unambiguous emphasis put on the other-worldly unity of a bilek-family in contrast to the uncertainty about that of a longhouse community is easy to understand. It reflects
straightforwardly the core of Iban social value, which is the solidarity and continuity of the bilek-family.

There is, on the other hand, much ambiguity about marital relationships in the afterlife. Broadly, it seems to be assumed that a husband and a wife, if only because of being members of a bilek-family, will be reunited after both are dead. But what will happen if the surviving spouse remarries or just leaves the bilek-family? If a man has two dead former wives, which will he join after his death? Or to what extent does the symbolic divorce between the deceased and the surviving spouse that takes place in the ngambi' tebalu ritual continue in effect after the surviving spouse also dies? Some say that only the last relationship that a man has before his death is counted relevant to what will happen after his death. But even this apparently plausible notion is not strongly asserted by them. By and large, the Iban are unconcerned with these matters. We may say that Iban thinking about the other-worldly marital relationships, so far as they think about them, is situational rather than prescriptive. Anggok said simply that all these matters depend upon personal desires. This emphasis on personal desires is pertinent to the most consolatory notion the Iban maintain about the fate of the dead; that is, that death is the occasion on which a person meets again his or her old lover (ambai lama'), whether the former spouse or not. It is especially the old lover who looks forward to seeing a dead person arrive in the other world. This sentimental notion, I believe, overshadows and blurs notions relating to marital relationships. A similar sentiment is projected onto an image of a new spouse in the other world. In a man's dream, which is now widely known among the Upper Layar and Skrang Iban, he met a beautiful girl on his way to the Land of the Dead; she guided him all around there and when he returned to this world, she remained with a promise of their future marriage after his death.
Persons of special social categories, such as shamans and slaves, will have the same status after death. Shamans are needed in the other world, for even the dead may fall ill and must seek a shaman's help. In the Upper Skrang area there is no notion that the destiny of deceased shamans is remarkably different from ordinary people, though some say that shamans live in a separate community in the other world. A somewhat heterogeneous notion about the special destiny of shamans is testified among the Balau and the Saribas-Krian Iban. The _semengat_ of dead shamans are supposed to migrate to the summit of a hill called Bukit Rabong, which is located in Indonesian Kalimantan and is visible from some parts of the Second Division of Sarawak (Howell and Bailey, 1900:134). Sandin writes that a shaman should be buried with his head pointing upriver in order that his _semengat_ can reach the top of the Bukit Rabong which is associated with the prominent mythical shaman Menyaya (Sandin, manuscript, 64).

It is certain that this notion belongs to authentic shamanic tradition, and its absence among the Upper Skriang Iban is due to weakening of shamanic discipline. It remains, however, constant that the status of shamans does not change after death.

The continuity of the slave's role is expressed by a facetious notion that a deceased slave would bring a basketful of wooden sticks to be used by the slave's owner for cleaning himself after defecation.

So goes the notion of the similarity between life here and life hereafter. The only remarkable difference that the Iban are ready to point out is the reversal of day and night between the two realms. When it is daytime in the world of the living, it is night in the Land of the Dead, and vice versa. That is why, the Iban say, communication with the dead is possible most frequently through dreams, when the living are asleep. This reversal of night and day is usually explained by the Iban as a consequence of the supposed underground location of the Land of the
Dead; the sun is under the earth when it is night on the earth, thus bringing daytime to the Land of the Dead.

The Iban often emphasise the reversed nature of the afterlife in more general terms in saying, "Things in the Land of the Dead are all inverse" (Sebayan tunsang magang). Some contradictory phrases in the death dirges, such as a flooding river with dried-up banks, are explained in this way. More often it is asserted that the language used by the dead is different from that of the living and incomprehensible to the latter. But this emphasis on the reversal nature is not substantiated by the overall imagery of the Land of the Dead, in which similarity to the living's world prevails. Rather, it can be better regarded as a figure of speech intended to make a minimal contrast between the two worlds which are otherwise too similar to each other. And obviously this contrast includes the incompatibility between death and life which is shown, for example, in the notion that inauspicious omens for the living are seen by the dead as good, in particular as signs that they should continue on to the Land of the Dead (see p.213).

Divisions of the Afterworld: Special Types of Death

At one level of imagination, which is exemplified by the texts of the death dirges and the timang jalang ("Song of Bowls"), the Land of the Dead is supposed to comprise several subdivisions. Each subdivision is usually imagined to be a separate longhouse which houses the people who died in certain special circumstances or the dead who occupied a special social status, such as that of shaman, during their lifetimes. Discussion on this topic would raise the problem of the types or varieties of death as the Iban conceive them. It deserves a separate treatment in this section.
The notion of so-called "bad death" is widespread among various (mainly proto-Malay) people in Southeast Asia. It concerns "sudden", "violent" and "untimely" kinds of death, which are distinguished from more normal deaths. More often than not, the corpses of those who died from these deviant types of death are treated in special ways. And the destiny of their souls is often believed to be different from that of those who died in normal ways (Sell, 1955:17; 26-28; 35-38; Fox, 1973: 342-368).

By and large, these features of "bad death" fit the Iban notion of special types of death, though Iban do not use the term "bad" (jai') as the one which designates the all-embracing category of these types. Instead, the Iban speak of "surprise death" (parai ngenyit) or "cutting-off death" (parai najar), which opposes to natural and more expected ways of death. The Iban say that only such "sudden" deaths "matter" (bisi' gawa') while, as an informant said about a death from old age, "This type of death doesn't matter much." What is meant in this statement is that sudden deaths may provoke some argument about their causes and, further, that they are more likely to lead to ghostly apparitions (ngemba) than normal deaths. They arouse more intense emotion, whatever it may be, among the people concerned. No doubt, unexpectedness is a decisive factor in emotional intensification at such a death. The violent aspect often involved in sudden accidental deaths aggravates it. Understandably enough, ghostly phenomena are more frequently perceived after such shocking deaths.

The category of "surprise" or "cutting-off" deaths is a broad one. Some of them have certain bearings on the destiny of the deceaseds' souls and require some special treatment in mortuary rituals. Others, however unexpected and sudden they may be, are treated with normal ritual procedures and have no apparent eschatological bearings. For example,
a sudden death from an acute disease may be explained by the Iban as a result of an evil spirit's assault. But this type of death does not make up a special type of death either ritually or eschatologically. Obviously the suddenness alone does not explain why the Iban conceive some types of death as being so extraordinary that separate subdivisions of the other world are allotted to those who died in these ways.

The death dirge texts give a "catalogue" of extraordinary deaths. Those who died in each particular way are supposed to share a land or country distinct from that of those who died in another fashion. The semengat of the newly deceased person passes these countries before it reaches the final destination where it joins its deceased relatives. When a commemoration festival is held for the ghosts, the party of the invited ghosts goes through these countries, calling occasionally the special ghosts there to join them in visiting the world of the living. But they refuse to accompany the invited ghosts, saying that they are busy with their own business.

The parts of the death dirge which enumerate various types of death are flexible and one can omit some of them. They can be classified into the following major varieties: (1) accidental deaths, which include death from accidental wounds in fields, death caused by falling from a tree, death from being drowned, death of men lost in forests, death by harmful animals such as crocodiles and snakes, and so on, (2) deaths with intense physical and mental infliction, which are, death of a woman during childbirth, death in warfare or headhunting, and suicide, (3) untimely deaths of small children, young bachelors and maidens. We may add to this list (4) the category of much despised deaths: death of abandoned bastards, whose country is located outside the Land of the Dead, and death in madness, which is not mentioned in the texts.
It goes without saying that these types of death are remarkable and impressive in their own right. Suddenness is only one of the factors which make them semiotically marked. Violent aspects and untimeliness may account for their remarkableness. But one will be puzzled to see such "novelty" types as a gambler's death and a clerk's death in the same section of the death dirge. One may say that dividing the Land of the Dead into separate countries is no more than a conventional, though convenient and effective, way of presenting such a vast variety of remarkable deaths. Thus the "novelty" types which interest the singer of the death dirge appear there, alongside the more serious types. As the Iban ritual songs always describe a journey or a route, it is only natural that a more or less abstract classification should be presented as a set of spatial divisions. Accordingly, it is important to note, most Iban hold the notion of a subdivided afterworld with less conviction than the notion that the afterlife is generally similar to the life in this world. A statement about such subdivisions is almost invariably accompanied by qualifying remarks such as "according to the death dirge".

But there still remains the problem of extraordinary types of death itself. I will discuss below some types which deserve mention because of their importance in Iban cultural contexts.

(i) Death of a Woman in Childbirth (parai beranak)

Fear of the hovering ghosts of women who died in labour is widely known among the Malay and various proto-Malay peoples (Sell, 1955:70-73; passim). Among the Iban such ghosts are known as antu koklir, the attackers of male genitals. They are encountered especially in forests when men are walking alone or in a small group at night. They appear as ugly women with long unbound hair and projecting fingernails. They are seen sitting by the side of a fire, which indicates they are the ghosts of those who
died while warming themselves at a fire following childbirth. It is said their main target of attack are men who often pay courting visits to girls at night. The *koklir*'s attack is then a projected image of revenge by women on the men who get them pregnant.

Not all women who die in labour are supposed to become *koklir*. Simple measures can be taken to prevent such a woman from turning into a vengeful ghost. In the Upper Skrang this is done by throwing thorns of some kinds of plants around the grave after it has been covered with earth. Among the Baleh Iban a fish hook is laid on the lid of each eye in order that the woman might not see the living, and thorns are driven into soles of feet and palms of hands (Freeman, fieldnotes, 1950). Traditionally, the corpse is "taken away at once and buried in the earth without ceremony and without a coffin" (Brooke Low in Ling Roth, 1896:140). But among the present-day Skrang Iban a night of a wake is observed.

It is not certain what factor makes some women become *koklir*, while a majority of women who died in childbirth do not. All we can say is that, people, particularly men, tend to show manifest fear after such a death has occurred, and that the possibility of a ghostly apparition is always present. Any inexplicable sound heard around the longhouse after such a death may be interpreted as one made by a *koklir*. It is not only the possible demonological consequence that makes the Iban fear this type of death. Death in labour is the most bloody death which may occur in the longhouse and causes horror among witnesses. Some twenty years ago a woman died during her labour in the old longhouse of the Sungai Pay community. A great amount of blood ran out of her corpse, which lay on the gallery, and ran down onto the ground. People still remember the horrifying scene in which a horde of pigs gathered under that part of the gallery and licked the blood while being smeared with it themselves. It was such an obnoxious scene that one man became unable to eat the
meat of domestic pigs from then onwards. Nothing is told, however, about her becoming an antu koklir.

Mourning is observed for a woman who died in childbirth and she is eventually commemorated at a festival for the ghosts.

(ii) Death in Warfare or Headhunting

"The Sea Dayaks who have fallen in battles are seldom interred, but a paling is put around them to keep away pigs, and they are left there" (St. John, 1863: i, 59). This early observation supports information I received about the way in which those who died in battles or were killed in headhunting raids were treated in the past.

The father of a Sungai Paya woman in her eighties was ambushed by a headhunting party from the Upper Batang Ai when he was on the way home from wild gutta tapping with his brother-in-law. In this surprise attack he was speared to death, while his brother-in-law barely escaped and got to their longhouse to tell what had happened. When they arrived at the spot, the men from the longhouse found the man's body without a head but later discovered his severed head in a nearby bush. They made a wooden platform (tempara') on the spot and placed his body and head on it. A fence was set around it. After the decomposition of the remains was complete (according to an informant, about a month later), his bones were collected, wrapped with a ceremonial fabric, and the package was then put in a jar. This was done by the man's mother. The jar containing the bones was taken to a common graveyard and placed on the surface of the ground.

This collection of bones is called nulang, a verbal derivative from tulang, "bone(s)". Mourning and other mortuary observances were performed as usual for such a death. Information concerning the temporal relationship between the collection of the bones and mourning was not available. It seems, however, that there was no established custom in this respect. For what was required was a prohibition (malî) on burial for victims of battles and headhunting, and the nulang treatment was probably an additional treatment only practised when fortunate circumstances allowed it. I heard of other cases in which victims' corpses were simply left on the spot with improvised shelters made over them, and collection of the bones was not
carried out. It is said that if the corpses of such victims were interred, it would make retaliation (malas) against the enemy difficult or even impossible. This rationale, as far as I heard, has nothing obvious to do with the supposed destiny of the semengat of the killed. It seems rather that leaving and preserving the corpse as it fell served as an observable reminder of the incident, which could inspire a passion for revenge in the surviving members of the community. Or one may infer that the burial of such corpses would clear the evidence away, thus closing the matter and making retaliation senseless.

As for the destiny of the semengat of the killed, or more specifically, of those whose heads were taken by enemies, two contradictory notions are given. One is that they will live in a separate region in the Land of the Dead suffering perpetual anxiety and fear of the imagined approach of their enemies, who appear as Seraganti' and his folk as described in the death dirges. The other is that they will become slaves (ulun) who should serve the killer's semengat in the other world when the latter dies in the future. Thus, the Iban say, a successful headhunter is fortunate, leading a comfortable life without much toil in the afterlife. The contradiction is obvious, but this only reflects two different points of view regarding heroic headhunting: the emphasis on the blessed future life of successful headhunters on the one hand and a relatively sympathetic view of the destiny of the victims. Anyway it is unlikely that people of a victim's group would easily accept the theory that their killed fellow man would become the enemy's slave in the afterlife.

(iii) Suicide

Suicide is far from an unthinkable mode of death among the Iban. On the contrary, they well perceive the danger of suicide in serious disputes and quarrels, particularly, in familial ones. I witnessed one meeting
called to settle a family dispute in which a young married woman threatened her adopted parents with her willingness to kill herself if she and her husband continued to be mistreated. She seriously claimed that her adoptive bilek was the only place for her to live in, that she had no other place to return, saying, "Where can I go back to? Say, to Sebayan?"

The motivation for suicide, according to the stereotype the Iban hold, is anger or infuriation (ringat), and it is thought to be more common among women than men. Traditionally the most common method of committing suicide was to eat poisonous roots or fruit (buah tubai) which are used for poisoning fish. Imagery in the death dirges or in some personal dreams derive from this stereotype and traditional method. According to an informant's personal opinion, if it is the case that those who committed suicide have a separate community from others in the other world, that is because their anger is not appeased, so they do not want to see others. He added, however, whether they live in a separate community or live together with their relations in the afterworld may depend on individual circumstances, presumably on the degree of their anger. One may paraphrase the informant's statement as follows. The idea of a separate community of those who committed suicide, if it is seriously believed, is derived from or reflects the frequent phenomenon of social schisms which result from disputes and quarrels. Separation in the afterworld is not a state of condemnation as is implied by the Christian-biased views recorded by Howell and Bailey (1900:144).

Suicide makes a strong impact upon the living. That is not because it is a morally condemned act or a religiously inauspicious deed. Rather, there is a feeling of responsibility for the death. They may feel that the deceased's aggressive anger is directed towards them. The survivors may have a sense of guilt and "uncasiness". Thus, in a case of the suicide of a barren woman who threw herself in the Skrang river after a quarrel
with a girl of the bilek, the period of mourning was even a little longer than usually required. The suggestion that they put an earlier end to the mourning was opposed by a man of the longhouse. He insisted that a hunting expedition should be carried out to lift the mourning, which ran counter to the established longhouse custom of using an old trophy head for this purpose (see p.116). The prolongation of the mourning period amounted to a decision to endure increased inconvenience, and may be interpreted as a self-inflicted punishment, an understandable reaction to feelings of guilt.

(iv) Death in Madness (parai gila)

The most despised death among the Iban is death which is caused by, or occurs during, violent madness. The community does not observe mourning. Nor does the surviving spouse need to abide by the period of prohibition on remarriage. The deceased who suffers this type of death will not be commemorated in a gawai antu. Death in madness is not even mentioned in the text of death dirges. Empiang (a dirge expert) said that she did not even want to utter the words parai gila in her death dirge, though she admitted that those who died in this way would also go to a part of the Land of the Dead. In sum, those dying in madness are deprived of all the usual mortuary rituals except the burial (disposal of corpse), and they are excluded from eschatological concern.

It is said that a person who dies in madness will become an antu (not specified). No specific explanation is given about the reason for this dreadful connection. My conjecture is that madness, which is often accompanied by an extreme degree of violent behaviour among the Iban, is inexplicable in human terms. This inexplicability combined with violence makes the mad seem almost inhuman. Unlike being simply inspired by antu (which is explicable and can be detected in someone's dream or
even confessed by the person in question), a madman is a more dreaded being whose existence and behaviour are far beyond human comprehension. He is thus almost directly equated with an antu. Mortuary rituals, which are to the Iban the expression of concern for the deceased, may become unreasonable procedures for death in madness.8

(v) Death of Neonates

An infant who has not yet obtained a tooth is not regarded as a full person. No night vigil is held for a dead infant of this stage and there is no obligation to observe prolonged mourning (ulit). The corpse may be put in a wooden coffin or simply wrapped with a matting and hurriedly taken to the graveyard for burial. The longhouse community may take three days rest (dīau) but does not make any offerings for the dead infant during this period. Some of my informants called such dead infants by the same term as for miscarried foetuses (lulus), implying that they were of no concern to the general community. Some longhouses have separate graveyards for dead neonates. Such graveyards are usually near the longhouse. An old woman explained the presence of such a graveyard in her community, saying, "Perhaps people don't want to be bothered with burying neonates in the distant common graveyard."

Despite the insignificance commonly attached to a neonate's death, the parents may not be satisfied with neglect of their beloved infant. There is a remedial measure to provide a dead infant with full status as a person. A shell bangle (simpai rangki') is put on the infant's chest and buried with the corpse. This is supposed to become the infant's teeth in the afterworld and thus presumably enables the infant to live there without its mother's breasts to nourish it. The dead infant who has got such substitute teeth will be commemorated at a future gawai antu, from which it would be excluded if the treatment were not made.
Appraisal of the Iban Afterworld

To conclude this section and before going into the topic of the final destiny of human existence, I will make a brief general appraisal of the image the Iban hold of the Land of the Dead.

According to Iban eschatology, the dead enter or, using a common Iban expression, "migrate" (pindah) to the realm of the dead. There may be certain exceptions to this, as I will discuss in the next chapter, but the great majority of Iban go through this process. An undeniable fact is that life in this world is limited in time. It is, in other words, transitory in nature. The Iban say this world is the "borrowed land" (menoa injau), the place in which a person resides only temporarily. Opposed to this temporary world, the land to which he or she will migrate after death is an "old land" (menoa lama'). The metaphor arouses warm feelings toward the Land of the Dead in Iban minds. What is connoted by it is that the Land of the Dead is, as it were, the person's own land, from which he came and to which he will eventually return. The deceased will meet his dead relatives, friends and lovers again in that world. A further implication is that it is one's permanent home (lama' as an adverb means "a long time") as against one's transient residence in this world.

The Iban often use the term "returning" (pulai) instead of the straightforward term "dying" (mati or parai) when a person dies from old age. Such a death is taken by the Iban as natural, in fact the most natural type of death. This alternative word is significant in relation to the Iban view of the completed life. Most probably, the usage of the term pulai implies that the dying person is finishing or concluding the full course of his or her life without suffering an earlier death. As the noun derivative pemulai designates "result" or "conclusion", such a death may be taken as the final stage of one's life. It is the sort of
death which concludes the full period allotted to one's lifetime, as the idiom *chukup umor* (a sufficient life span) is also used to describe it.

The term *pulai* may also be explained as a transition from this world to the Land of the Dead. In fact, Iban eschatology concludes that virtually all the dead go there after death. If *pulai* really means a "return" to the Land of the Dead, there must be a certain additional implication which makes it semantically limited to death from old age. My suggestion is that "return" implies a more peaceful transition permeated with nostalgic sentiments, which are lacking in the simple image of transition of "migration". To the Iban, who are convinced that they can meet their former friends and relations in the afterworld, death from old age is like a sentimental journey to the land where a person spent his younger days and where old friends and "lovers" are waiting for him.

Thus an old person's death usually requires a shorter period between the death and the separation rituals than the unexpected death of a younger person, who is less willing to leave this world than an older individual. There is even a culturally established custom of dispensing with mourning (*ulit*) for a person old enough to have more than one great-grandchild (*ichit*) and whose own children are already dead. This custom evidently reflects the significance of the third descending generation in the Iban concept of time. Figuratively speaking, such a long-lived person who has survived his own children and has a great-grandchild (who is entitled to be his namesake) has finished and closed a generational cycle (see pp.258-260).

The metaphorical contrast between the "borrowed land" and "old land" well evinces the rather pleasurable image of the Land of the Dead. Iban eschatology not only ensures the continuation of the spiritual parts of humans in the same conditions as they enjoyed in this world, but colours the image of the afterlife with what I called earlier a "modest
idealisation" of life in this world. The Iban have no notion of the posthumous judgment of the dead. This lack is remarkable even in comparison with other primitive eschatological systems which usually lack the notion of judgment on moral bases but which often postulate some sorts of ordeal at the admission to the afterworld on the basis of the deceased's rank, the feat he achieved in this world and so on (cf., von Führer-Haimendorf, 1967:70; Moss, 1925:118-122). Even the destiny of those who died in unnatural or extraordinary ways is not too different from that of those who died in ordinary ways. As I remarked earlier, the notion of a subdivided afterworld is not very firmly held by the Iban. After the suicide of a woman, for instance, a man of her longhouse strongly rejected my insinuation that her semengat might have an extraordinary fate, saying, "Why is there any other country? All the dead go to the same place."

No doubt the type of eschatology that the Iban hold can help to attenuate or palliate the anxiety about personal extinction which one may have when one confronts one's own fate. Death is a transition from one state of life to another state of life without any drastic change. So far as it goes, the Iban image of the afterlife is successful in denying that human death is the total extinction of one's existence.

THE FINAL FATE OF THE DEAD

Transitoriness of Human Souls

Notwithstanding the pleasant metaphor of the "old land", the idea of immortality or eternal existence of human souls is alien, at least as a formulated theory, to Iban eschatology. In this respect, it is similar to many or even most primitive eschatological systems (cf., Fraser, 1913, passim; von Führer-Haimendorf, 1953:48; Firth, 1967:331). The primary concern of the Iban is with the continuity of life after death in this
world. The idea of the eternal existence of souls which characterises Christian eschatology would seem unnecessary and unfathomable to traditional Iban.

According to the Iban theory, the *semengat* of the dead are not permanently settled in the Land of the Dead. They are supposed to undergo further transitions until their existence is finally extinguished. The Iban characteristically express this in terms of the mortality of the *semengat* even after death in this world, as they often say, "We humans die three times", or "We die more than once." Few Iban worry about the specific nature of the mortality of *semengat*. To some people such expressions are no more than figures of speech which allude to the *semengat*'s successive changes of location. But the general similarity of life in the other world to life in this world is pertinent to the notion of the presence of death in the afterlife, as the following testimony shows.

Lengidai, mentioned earlier, who is familiar with Christianity, once argued, "Christians say the soul is immortal (*semengat enda' nemu mati*). But I think the *semengat* is mortal. We see in dreams persons who have been dead. They are seen to be in various conditions. Sometimes they look healthy, and sometimes they are seriously ill, just as when they were still alive. Then why may we not die also in the Land of the Dead?" As we have already noted, to the Iban, dreams are important sources of information — along with culturally transmitted knowledge — about the states of the dead. Lengidai's argument is a personal inference made on the basis of deduction from evidence seen in dreams. To be sure his deduction is facilitated by the culturally accepted notion of the transient nature of *semengat* even after death. But it is important to note that, at least on the level of the individual's own understanding, the idea has a substantial experiential basis.
As a matter of fact, the Iban classify all the dreams in which the dead are encountered as dreams of departed spirits in the Land of the Dead, that is, in the initial stage of their posthumous migration. The dead are supposedly no longer seen in dreams after their "death" in the afterworld. Therefore the subsequent stages of existence after the "second death" are not experienced or revealed by any means. Although further stages are postulated in theory, the semengat in these stages do not intervene in any way in the affairs of living humans. In this sense, they are devoid of the character of personal entities.

Thus the notion of the mortality of semengat does not diminish the significance of the other world and the continuity of life there. On the contrary, it makes more real the image the Iban have of the afterlife by elaborating its similarity to life in this world. The second death in the other world is, after all, no serious concern of the living. If the belief in the existence of a happier Land of the Dead brings a certain degree of equanimity to people who suffer anxiety about the undeniable fact of death in this physical world, then the presumed existence of a second death should be perfectly acceptable, as it helps to confirm the reality of the future life.

Most Iban agree that the semengat of the dead will be extinguished and dispersed in the end to become dew or mist. But concerning the stages preceding this final dispersion, there is some variation in opinion. Anggok gave the following view:

"The semengat will reside in the country of the Limban river after the death in this world. When the commemoration feast (gawai antu) is held for them, they die in that country and the semengat will then migrate to the country of Mandai. Mandai is the last country in which we lead our life. I have no exact idea of the geographical relationship between Limban and Mandai, but I guess Mandai may be in the downriver area of Limban. In Mandai our semengat die again. The period we stay in Mandai is indefinite, as it depends on the providence of the gods (ator petara)."
It is interesting that Anggok made Limban the first and Mandai the second of the stages of man's future life. This conforms to a fairly common ascription of the second posthumous stage to Mandai, whereas the geographically neutral term Sebayan is more commonly used for the initial Land of the Dead. But there is in fact little agreement about the names of the second and subsequent places of the dead. There is an element of improvisation in any scheme that claims to give a proper name to these remote stages of the souls' migration.

Menai, an old woman who was in mourning for her mother Rimbu, told of a rather different course which the departed spirits follow. She asserted that the first abode of the deceased's semengat was no other place than the graveyard. There they live until a gawai antu is held for them, when they die again and go to the Land of the Dead (which could be called Sebayan or Mandai). The semengat will continue to exist there until they finally dissolve into mist. The association of the graveyard with a ghostly presence, which recurs in rather crude forms throughout Iban ideas and behaviour, is given here a certain degree of ideational elaboration. And Menai's explanation conforms to the common notion that the gawai antu establishes the dead in the Land of the Dead more firmly than before.

Some Iban assert that a man has seven semengat. As Jensen mentions, some of them interpret this as indicating that there are seven stages of death. Supposedly these semengat die one after the other, and each death corresponds to a movement from one "division" (serak) of Sebayan to another (Jensen, 1974:108). But to insert intermediary stages between the (initial) Land of the Dead and the final dissolution of semengat is rather commonplace thinking among the Iban, and there is no logical necessity that there should be any fixed number of those stages. The
number "seven" is probably used here simply because of its general mystical significance among Malays and proto-Malays.

The Dissolution of Souls

The theory of the final dissipation of *semengat* into mist or dew (*ambun*) is one of the most conspicuous features of Iban eschatology. The dew falls from the sky in the early morning and remains visible on the earth until the sun causes it to disappear. Plants on the ground remain wet until this time. According to Iban traditions, evaporated *semengat* enter the stalks of grasses called *enterekup* (*Miscanthus* sp.). The stalks of *enterekup* are hollow and contain a red liquid when they are mature. The Iban call the liquid "the blood of the ghosts" (*darah sebayan*) and say rather jokingly that this is visible evidence that the *semengat* of the dead have entered these stalks. *Enterekup* grow ubiquitously in the Iban land. But according to the local people, it is most abundant during the season of clearing undergrowth in preparation for the new year's rice field, when this grass is cut in great quantities.

The ultimate destiny of the *semengat* is their transformation (or absorption) into rice plants. It is not clear whether the *semengat* are thought to "become" the plants or merely to "enter" the plants. I once suggested to my informants that the red liquid from *enterekup* grasses cut down in preparing the new rice fields might be absorbed into the rice plants. But they did not confirm my explanation. Anggok insisted that *semengat* really "become" rice plants, adducing a story which told of the origin of rice plants from a human corpse. But such an assertion is rarely made, and usually the process remains vague.

The Iban say that rice plants are their ancestors because they are composed of (or contain) the last elements of the *semengat* of the deceased. This final destiny of human souls is highly pertinent to the prime
importance and value the Iban put on rice plants (cf. Freeman, 1970:153; Jensen, 1974:151). Rice is not a mere crop to the Iban. It has a spiritual aspect of its own, called semengat padi or antu padi. As such it must be cared for in proper and affectionate ways, not only through agricultural rituals but also in mundane attitudes toward it. The Iban express this notion in the clearest way; 'We should take care of rice plants, for they are our ancestors.'

This is the end of the lengthy series of stages through which the semengat goes after death. It is worth noting here that there is no explicit idea of a cycling of human souls. Certainly the rice, which contains the ancestors' semengat, is taken into living human bodies and generates physical energy to make the Iban "tough". But the Iban do not have an idea that the ancestors' semengat participate in the formation of the living's spiritual power or in the making of an expected neonate's semengat. Nor is the semengat of rice equated directly with the ancestors' semengat. Rather, Iban eschatology is characterised by a complete lack of an idea of reincarnation or of the "re-cycling" of souls. The semengat has its end as well as its beginning.9

It is evident that this lack is connected with a characteristic feature of the Iban notion of human souls which I emphasised in Chapter 2. That is the idea that an individual's semengat is personal, belonging to a particular person, and is in this sense unique. The Iban have no notion of a division between a personified soul and an impersonal (and therefore possibly remouldable) "soul-substance", which many if not most peoples in Southeast Asia share in common. The perishable nature of individual semengat is, after all, no more than a reflected image of the mortality of individual human beings, though the span of life of the disembodied semengat is longer than that of humans as physical entities. Further, if one is allowed to say that the uniqueness of an individual
is shown most acutely by his death, the ultimate disintegration of a person's semengat also restates the individual's uniqueness.

Nevertheless, we should also notice that Iban eschatology makes an attempt, within the limits allowed by the theory that semengat are unique, to connect the final destination of semengat with the living in this world. The final transformation of the semengat into rice plants has almost the same effect on the imagined ties between the living and the ancestors as the theory of the reincarnation, for instance, of an ancestor's soul in a child may have. The living maintain their lives by eating rice and thus by incorporating some elements of the ancestors' existence. This is evidently an expression of an underlying Iban social ideology of the continuity of human existence through generations, which will be discussed below.

The duration of time during which the semengat of the dead stay or live in the Land of the Dead, that is, the time between death and the final transformation into mist and then into rice, is not clearly conceived by the Iban. It is interesting, however, that a few who were willing to express their personal views gave remarkably similar accounts; they said that it was a long time, about two or three generations. It may be relevant to point out that this duration is roughly identical with the time during which there would still exist people who know a deceased person personally and might therefore recall him, for instance, in dreams. This is particularly pertinent because in Iban eschatology the living's memory of the deceased, as manifested in dreams, is considered crucial evidence of the very existence of a future life in the Land of the Dead.

Transition of the Body

The destiny of humans after death is equated in Iban eschatology with the destiny of the semengat of the deceased. The continuity of personal
life in the Land of the Dead and the possibility of communication between
the dead and the living are explained by the Iban solely on the basis of
the persistence of the spirit. The physical component of humans plays
virtually no part in this theory. Although the body of the deceased is
referred to as an *antu* when it is still visible and the object of
funeral activities, and the graveyards are often feared as the haunted
place of *antu*, the body after burial is not thought by the Iban to retain
any personal quality (with possible exception in the case of the enshrine-
ment of the deceased; see Chapter 8).

To the Iban, corpses merely decompose under the ground as time
passes, without being noticed by the living. Having been buried in the
ground, a corpse, the Iban often say, will become or return to soil.
I witnessed once how this idea was rooted in the Iban mind. After having
completed the interment of Sta's coffin and when some of the participants
in the burial work were still levelling the ground over the new grave, a
young man who was watching this from the side of the grave remarked in
a rather unmoved but sincere tone, "In this way we humans add to soil.
How could soil run out?" Another man responded, saying, "That's true.
Iban constantly die and become soil."

To most Iban with whom I talked about this topic, the simple amal-
gamation with soil is the final destiny of human bodies. But a few gave
a more elaborate view of what happens to bodies after burial.

Empiang (death dirge expert) expressed her view as follows. After
the corpse is buried in the ground, it becomes rotten and eventually
melts. Gradually its elements are evaporated by heat and go up to the
sky like smoke. Then these elements fall down to the ground as rain or
mist. They are absorbed into rice plants and finally eaten by the living
Iban. So, as Empiang said, "We eat our ancestors." It is obvious that
this reproduces the common view of the final stages of *semengat*. Empiang
herself was well aware of this, but insisted that her personal guess was
the true situation. This is, however, not so idiosyncratic an idea as Empiang herself thought it to be. I met a few people in the Upper Batang Ai who gave exactly the same account of this matter as Empiang did. I am not sure whether the difference between this view and the more common view that it is the soul that becomes rice is due to different local traditions or to purely personal variations. What we should bear in mind here is that among the Iban even such a basic topic as the outline of eschatology is open to variation.

Interestingly, Empiang gave another more remarkable and genuinely idiosyncratic view of the duration of the life of the dead in the Land of the Dead. According to her (she noted it was her personal conjecture), life in the other world is longer than life in this one, and it may be that the soul of the dead person continues to live there as long as his or her bones still remain in existence in this world.

This notion of a connection between the state of the corpse and the state of the soul of the deceased reminds us of the well-known formulation presented by Hertz concerning the "collective representations" of death among the peoples who practise secondary burials (Hertz, 1960). The Iban, who normally practise a form of interment as the method of disposal of the corpse, have no shared or "collective" notion of this kind of correlation. But it is important to point out that such an idea can be created (or adopted from outside the culture, which is less likely in this case) by an individual who is immersed in a cultural background that has no custom relevant to that idea.

Relevance of Generational Cycles

In regard to the length of time necessary for the spiritual or bodily elements to be absorbed into rice plants, I was told by some informants that it would take a long time, perhaps three generations or more.
Although my data are not sufficient on this point, it may be suggested that a set of three generations has a certain significance in the Iban conceptualisation of time. A typical Iban bilek-family, if it is not a newly founded one, consists of three generations, which thus form a set of generations existing contemporaneously (cf. Freeman, 1970:11). It would be rare for a bilek-family to consist of four successive generations, especially with children of the lowest generation being older than infancy. It is a possibility, then, that when an Iban speaks of three generations somewhat idiomatically as designating "a long time", concerning the duration of the afterlife or the "cycle" of the spiritual and physical components of humans, it would be because he recognises, if only vaguely, the set of three generations as a temporal unit, in a certain sense. (Some speak of two or three generations, but this does not matter because the issue here is a vague notion of time, not an exact calculation.)

The custom of naming a child after a great-grandparent or a brother or sister of a great-grandparent is prevalent among the Iban. Although it is not a norm for all children to be named in this way or for the name of every person of the ascending generation to be given to a child, it has a special relevance to the Iban notion of the transition of generations. Usually the person whose name is given to a child has already died; if the person is still alive, the parents of the child must give a piece of iron or some kind or ironwork to the person, presumably as a protection for his/her semengat. As a consequence of this custom, if we think of an ideal and hypothetical case, a personal name re-appears in every three generation set. It can be suggested then that this is correlated with the much vaguer notion of three generations as a unit. A set of three generations is not only a unit of contemporaneous existence in Iban familial life, but also a unit in the cycle of personal names,
by means of which the Iban place the existence of the living in relation to preceding generations and, more generally, within the continuity of generations from past to future.

This is particularly significant among those Iban whose genealogical knowledge is limited. Although some knowledgeable Iban can recite a lengthy genealogy (tusut) which traces back to a first human being (or rather an anitu-like being, the Iban say), such a person is rare, and in the longhouse in which I stayed during my fieldwork, no one could trace more than two generations beyond the existing oldest generation. Ignorance of genealogy, however, does not make much difference for them. As one resident of this longhouse put it rather jokingly; "We don't know any genealogy. We know only the names of our grandparents. But this is no problem. Our names are often taken from those of preceding generations. So I am sure we can find the names of our ancestors (even remote ones) among our own names."

It would be unwarranted to draw too close a connection, not to say a causal one, between this custom of cyclic naming of third generations and the time imagined to be needed for the soul (or physical) elements of the deceased to return to the world of the living. For the latter is only vaguely expressed by the Iban and is not so clearly defined in theory or custom as the name cycle is. My suggestion is that the implicit significance the Iban put on the duration of three generations may be relevant to the time reckoning they make concerning the destiny of souls and physical elements.

As I mentioned before, the Iban view of the states of the dead is largely dependent on the memory the living retain of the deceased persons. The dead of remote generations will sink into oblivion as time lapses and fewer living persons who remember them survive. In a similar way, the dead will maintain their personal qualities so long as they are
supposed to be in the Land of the Dead, but in the long run they will fade from memory. Then the theory of the return to this world as rice plants can be interpreted as an affectionate, and even compensating, solution to this oblivion, in much the same way as the cycle of names can maintain the personal names of ancestors who would otherwise be totally forgotten.
NOTES

1. A similar and much longer version of this myth is published in Sandin, 1962:13-19. In Sandin's version the name of the instructor spirit is Puntang Raga, who is, according to one of my informants, the guardian of the border between this world and the Land of the Dead. Sandin's version also gives an account of the origin of headhunting which is said to have been required in order to terminate the period of mourning by holding a festival for the ghost (gawai antu). Jensen gives a version almost identical with Sandin's, but it does not mention headhunting or gawai antu (1974:93-4).

2. The Baleh Iban have a similar metaphor, which compares the division between the living and the dead to the skin of the egg-plant fruit (Freeman, 1970:39).

3. Another such new image derived from a personal dream is that the miniature houses (sungkup) made at gawai antu do not become new houses for the ghosts in the Land of the Dead, but perching bars for fighting cocks. The dream was told by a visitor to the gawai antu held at the Sungai Paya community in 1961. This image was taken by many as a pleasant joke, and did not damage their belief in the purpose of making sungkup.

4. As the Iban often say: "The ghosts engage in rice cultivation like the living (Sebayan sama bumi)." This is a succinct expression to indicate the overall similarity between afterlife and life in this world.

5. The sexual promiscuity of the ghosts is sometimes told as a joke. It may be connected with the orgiastic horseplay and night courting at the traditional festival for ghosts. The Iban have no notion that the ghosts may beget offspring in the Land of the Dead.

6. Among the Baleh Iban parai jai' ("die badly") refers specifically to those who were killed in battlefields and whose heads were taken by enemies (Freeman, fieldnotes, 1950).

7. The term nulang designates the procedures of secondary burials among some other Bornean peoples (e.g., the Berawan [Metcalf, 1975]). The Iban nulang has nothing to do with the customary practice of "multi-staged" treatment of the corpse.

8. Freeman witnessed among the Baleh Iban a case in which a dying woman
who had become delirious was suffocated to death before she breathed her last (fieldnotes, 1950). The danger of her becoming an antu was thus evaded and the normal mortuary customs were observed.

9. The Iban have no clear idea about the ontogenesis of human semengat. It is vaguely held that a foetus comes to have a semengat at some stage of the pregnancy. One of my informants said that the semengat came into being at the very beginning of the pregnancy and that the mother's semengat conceived the baby's semengat. This is personal speculation. What should be kept in mind is that a semengat is the spiritual counterpart of a physical entity, so its origin cannot be separated from that of the body.
The majority of the dead, whether they died normally or in abnormal ways, establish themselves finally in the Land of the Dead (Sebayan). Sebayan is a self-contained sphere, in which the ghosts lead their lives without, ideally, depending upon the economy of the living. Although communication between the dead and the living does not cease altogether by the establishment of the ghosts in their own sphere, there is no longer formal occasion on which the living should make offerings to cater for the dead after the final festival has been held for the ghosts. The living and the dead are thus ontologically, if not emotionally, separated from one another by the completion of the whole series of mortuary rituals.

In this chapter I will present an evidently aberrant view of the fate of the dead which is connected with the special practice of enshrinement of the dead. This is not a practice found among all the Iban subgroups. It is confined to rather limited groups of the Iban of the Second Division, that is, the Layar (Saribas), Skrang and Balau Iban (and possibly also the Lemanak), and their direct heirs in the present Sixth Division. It may be regarded as a local phenomenon peculiar to these Iban. However, the practice of enshrinement and the ideas underlying it are important, though exceptional, in understanding the eschatological ideas of these Iban and deserve special notice. They appear, at least in certain respects, to be an antithesis to ordinary eschatology which the Iban assume to the majority of the dead.
TYPES OF ENSHRINEMENT

What I am calling enshrinement of the dead is concerned with the special status afforded to some individual deceased persons. It is distinguished from the state of ordinary ghosts (*antu sebayan*). In contrast with ordinary ghosts, the *semengat* of the enshrined individuals are supposed to remain in the world of the living long, if not eternally, after death. The living maintain close ties with them in various ways. More often than not, a special shelter is built for an enshrined individual and it is supposed to be the abode of his or her *semengat*. We can discern three types of enshrinement in accordance with the forms of the disposal of corpses and the motivational conditions which lead to the enshrinement. For all the differences, however, the ontological status (of remaining in this world) of these enshrined spirits and their relation to the living are basically the same.

The first type of enshrinement involves an unusual treatment of the corpse, which makes a distinct contrast with the usual burial in the common graveyard. The coffin in this treatment is not interred. It is placed on a wooden platform raised on stilts above the surface of the earth and covered by a roof so as to make a shelter with a coffin inside it. Such an exposed coffin (or sometimes the whole shelter with the coffin) is called *lumbong*. A *lumbong* used to be made on the summit of a hill, often near the longhouse to which the deceased belonged. The practice of making a *lumbong* has now been abolished, but it was traditionally regarded by those Iban who practised it as the most respectful treatment of the corpses of renowned warriors or war leaders.

The second type of enshrinement is apparently derived from the first. A person may request, before death, a special type of burial. He may want his corpse not to be buried in the common graveyard but to be buried
at a separate spot or even to be placed above the surface of the ground. Sometimes such a person adds to his straightforward request a kind of prediction, which, if it turns out to be true, will indicate a special status of his departed spirit. This request may be made by any adult male, and is not confined to those who have won renown as warriors or war leaders. However, according to some, this type of enshrinement cannot be done independently. It can be carried out only if the community has a genuine lumbong made for a person of high renown. Those who aspire to be enshrined in this way are thus said to wish to follow or imitate the way in which a respected predecessor was treated.

The third type of enshrinement differs from the other two in two major respects. First of all, it does not involve special treatments of the corpse. The corpse is buried in a graveyard in the ordinary way. It is not until some while after death and burial that the enshrinement of a particular deceased individual is arranged. That is because the factors which determine the enshrinement are special sorts of events which occur after a person's death. To be specific, these events consist of a mysterious appearance of some kind of animal or other in a longhouse or some other human habitation, and someone's dream which predicts or belatedly acknowledges the animal's appearance and its relationship to the deceased. The second difference from the other types of enshrinement is that this type of enshrinement may be applied both to men and women. Unlike the other two, in other words, this enshrinement does not directly reflect the male centred value and prestige system. The Iban regard the spirits enshrined in this way as "those who have become gods" (nyadi petara).

This listing of three types of enshrinement is not artificial. The Iban are quite aware of the differences between them. However, it should also be noted that the Iban tend to stress the special status of the
spirits enshrined in any of the three ways in comparison with the ordinary ghosts. As a consequence, they often regard all types of enshrined spirits as being of the same category. Thus, the term lurbong is often used to refer to any shelter built for an enshrined spirit, regardless of whether or not it contains a corpse. Similarly, "becoming a god" may be used to refer to all enshrined spirits, not merely to those of the third type. In view of these facts, we can talk about the category of enshrined spirits, lumping the three types together.

The most salient feature common to all the enshrined spirits is, as the Iban believe, that their semengat continue to remain in the world of the living, somewhere around the summits of the hills on which their shrines (shelters) are set up. These enshrined spirits are in more active and continuous interactions with the community of the living than are the ordinary dead. They are thus said to be "still alive" (agi' idup). This expression is revealing for understanding the ideas which underlie the practice of enshrinement. Firstly, it expresses a straightforward denial of the fact of physical death by emphasising the survival of semengat more strongly than the ordinary eschatology does. And secondly, those spirits are thought to be active and approachable by the living, as being "alive" (idup) connotes such a condition in various daily usages.

In accordance with the assumption that an enshrined person is still "alive", the usual mourning regulations are not imposed at all for anyone whose enshrinement has been acknowledged before death or immediately after death. When a deceased person is acknowledged to have become a god (petava) during the mourning period, the mourning is lifted as soon as the occasion permits the living to proceed with the proper ritual. By the same token, the enshrined spirits are not necessarily commemorated at a gawai antu with the rest of the dead whose semengat are supposed to arrive at the festival from the Land of the Dead. It is said that to enshrine
the deceased, maintain the shrine-shelters and make occasional offerings to the enshrined spirits surpass the obligation of the living to commemorate the ordinary ghosts at a gawai antu.

In the subsequent sections I will present several cases in which individuals are enshrined. Causes and events which lead to an enshrinement are various. But the basic motivations seem to be fairly constant in most of these cases. To summarise them before the presentation of cases, they are (1) an individual's aspiration for personal distinction, which the ordinary eschatology and burial practice does not fully afford, and (2) the bereaved survivors' refusal to accept the separation from the beloved or respected deceased individuals. I am not saying, of course, that all the individual cases of enshrinement involve one or both of these motivations. Some other aspects will be considered in the course of presentation of cases.

**LUMBONG: PAST AND PRESENT**

Let me begin with the first two types of the enshrinement, that is, the practice of making a lumbong and the imitative practices. They are manifestly related to the male centred value system in putting strong emphasis on renown and prestige achieved through prowess and leadership shown in headhunting and warfare. The lumbong practice can then be regarded as a male cult incorporated into the cult of the dead.

As I mentioned earlier, a corpse used not to be buried when a lumbong was made. As is commonly found among the peoples who practise multi-staged treatments of corpses — typical examples are seen among the Ngaju (Grabowski, 1889:181) — the coffin containing a body which is placed on an elevated platform has a hole in the bottom, from which the decomposing soft parts of the body drain out through a bamboo pipe. As a consequence, the remains or the skeleton are sometimes preserved in a fairly good dry
condition for quite an extended period, though no other special means of preservation is used. The construction of lurribong was thus an exceptional but impressive means of disposing of the dead seen among some Iban who usually practised straightforward interment of corpses.3

I will present here what is, I think, a typical example of the traditional lurribong treatment of the dead. The lurribong made for Uyu is well-known among some Iban of the Second and Sixth Divisions for the relatively good state of preservation of the corpse placed there. The hill, the summit of which provides the location for the lurribong, is situated at the source of the Julau river, on the ridge which forms the watershed between the Julau (the Sixth Division) and the Layar (the Second Division). Although it is usually known as Uyu’s lurribong, skeletons of two other persons are preserved in the shelter made of iron-wood, and three other people are buried on the summit plain, each with a separate small shelter. Thus there is a total of six people enshrined on this one hill-top.

Uyu was a participant in the rebellion against the Brooke Government in the mid nineteenth century, associated with the battles of Mt. Sadok. After the fall of the Iban stronghold on Mt. Sadok in 1861, Uyu fled, migrated to the Julau and established a longhouse near the summit of a hill called Bukit Buli, where he later died of old age. It was probably around the turn of the century that his body was placed on the summit of Bukit Buli, which was at that time almost within the open space (tengah laman) surrounding the longhouse. Uyu is said to have been a brave man, having taken five enemy heads and being capable of assuming the leadership of a small headhunting party (kayau anak). The quality of leadership is, according to Lengidai (the former headman of a longhouse at the foot of Bukit Buli) on whose information I largely rely here, the crucial criterion in deciding whether a person deserves the distinguished treatment of being placed in a lurribong.
The other people who are placed or buried on the summit were enshrined only because of their relationship to Uyu. Linggang, whose coffin was placed beside Uyu's in the same shelter, was Uyu's brother. Although he is also said to have taken enemy heads, Linggang did not attain leadership of a war party and was not, therefore, sufficiently qualified to "open" (mungkal) a new or independent lumbong. As for the other four, including the other person placed in Uyu's shelter, their feats during their lifetimes were not remarkable enough for Lengidai to be able to recount them in any detail. They were either brothers or sons or remoter relatives of Uyu. As Lengidai said, "They were not particularly brave, nor were they prosperous, but they themselves wanted to be placed on the summit of the hill, just to follow Uyu's example."

The manifest ideology involved in the practice of the lumbong enshrinement is that of the outright glorification of distinguished personages. According to Lengidai, the first lumbong was made by Keling, the principal mythical hero, for his dead father, Gila Gundi, on the summit of the mountain called Bukit Sentubong (lit., Mt. Coffin), which is located at the mouth of the Sarawak river. The Iban imitate or copy the practice originated by the hero. It is on this basis that only the bravest persons — "the living heroes" — among the Iban are qualified to be enshrined in this way. I am not sure whether the attribution of the origin of the lumbong to the mythical hero is generally acknowledged among the Iban. But without doubt the heroic association of the lumbong practice is quite pertinent to the value system involved with it.

The mythical heroes of the Iban are collectively known as "the people of Panggau" after the name of the legendary country in which their longhouse is supposed to be found. Their bravery, success in
headhunting, miraculous deeds in agricultural activities, night court-
ing of the heroines and the like are described in long saga cycles.
They are the mythical portotypes of the Iban ideal of the "brave man";
they exhibit all the qualities and perform all the feats that the Iban
cherish in their men. In their interaction with the living humans they
make up a category of antu, giving inspiration and help to those who
encounter them in dreams. They are essentially beneficient to humans,
and in this respect they resemble the gods (petara), named or unnamed
(see p.40; and p.284 below).

The aspiration involved in the lumbong practice is to raise humans
to the level of these ideal heroes. The wishes of some people to be
treated in this distinguished way should be understood in this light.
They want to show off their distinction, whether it is really recognised
by others or merely fancied by themselves. Perham wrote in one of the
earliest accounts about Iban religion:

Occasionally, a man has a fancy to have his body put on the top
of a mountain, and the relatives probably dare not refuse to carry
out the wish through fear of imaginary evil consequences (1885:292).
In order for this fancy or extravagant wish to be taken seriously by
others, some who are not actually distinguished persons may rely on
contingent happenings, which they foretell before death. Angking, Uyu's
son, had a dream before he died, in which an antu told him that he
should be buried on the hill-top if the pig to be killed at his funeral
did not scream when it was speared; if it did scream, he was to be
buried in the graveyard. As it turned out, the two pigs killed did
not scream, and Angking was buried on the summit of the hill.

Such an individual fancy aside, it is understandable that success-
ful headhunters and war leaders were regarded as the guardians of the
living community and were given special treatment after death. It is
remarkable that in the lumbong practice the preservation of the body or
the attempt to maintain the remains in a visible condition for an extended period is emphasised. This is most unusual in view of the common Iban practice of interment of corpses. Perhaps the implication here is that the preserved body may represent one's personal integrity even after death. For, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, it is the combination of the body and the semengat that makes an individual active and vivid as an integrated person while he is still alive. In the context of ordinary eschatology the identity of the dead is shifted from this total (or rather bodily) personality to the semengat. The preservation of the body thus contradicts most radically the basic assumption of Iban eschatology. Just as the enshrined spirit is said to remain in this world, so the body is maintained above the surface of the earth. The visibility of the body, even though it is a mere skeleton, might have some appeal even to the Iban, who believe firmly in the survival of the personality as a spiritual entity.

In this connection the bones may be kept as the visible part of the enshrined person or, we may say, as the embodiment of his spirit. Again, according to Perham, who is writing about the Balau Iban:

Great warriors have been sometimes buried for a time and then exhumed, and their relics sacrely kept by their descendants in or near their houses, or it may be, on the spur of a neighbouring hill, with the object of securing the departed ancestor as a tutelary spirit (1885:293).

In a longhouse in Sungai Gran (a centre of the Balau Iban) one enshrined person's bones are kept in a wooden box placed on the rack over the gallery of his descendant's bilek. The man, named Nangkai, was one of the founders of the community, about five generations ago, and was a courageous warrior against the Bugau and the Kantu' as well as a successful defender of the community against the raids of the Saribas Iban. His corpse was not buried, but was exposed on a platform set up in the open space near the longhouse. His bones were taken into the longhouse
when someone dreamt that Nangkai wanted to be brought into the house. Today persons joining the army or police sometimes open the box and make offerings to Nangkai, asking for his protection in possible battles. Interestingly, the local people call the practice of preserving the bones by the term guna, which means "use", referring to the practice for the living to use them for their benefit.

Thus, the enshrined spirits are expected to help (nulong) and protectively watch over (ngemata) the community they belonged to during life and, in particular, their descendants. In this respect they are markedly local and kin-based. This distinguishes them from other commonly recognised gods and benevolent spirits. A story is told about an ancient lumbong which illustrates the nature of the enshrined spirits as the guardians of local or kin-based groups. The lumbong for Dujau, an ancestor of some people in the Upper Skrang, is located on the top of a hill called Bukit Ringka, or more commonly known as Bukit Lumbong by the local people, far up the Skrang river. At the end of the previous century when the Skrang Iban were afflicted by frequent headhunting raids by the Upper Batang Ai Iban, it is said, a white banner was seen on the lumbong site. The banner was believed to have been erected by the enshrined spirit to strengthen or encourage his descendants in their struggles against the enemy, who, incidentally, would have to cross the ridge of which the lumbong hill was a prominent part.

Usually, like other benevolent spirits or gods, the benefaction the enshrined spirits grant to the living is either fighting prowess (pemerant) or material wealth (pengeraja) which is mainly acquired through agricultural success. But sometimes a more bizarre sort of help is sought. Uyu is said to have had a body which was invulnerable (kebal) to injury — this is taken as the reason his corpse has remained in fairly good condition. The Iban in the vicinity of his lumbong often go there
to take a bit of his flesh or skin in order to feed it to their favourite fighting cocks, which, having incorporated it, will, supposedly, become invulnerable to the spurs of the opposing cocks.

The living, in turn, are obligated to make offerings to the enshrined spirits. This is usually done on the occasion of festivals. At Uyu's lumbong, people from the longhouses in the vicinity may hold a gawai specifically for the benefit of those who are enshrined there. There is no fixed time for this gawai, which they call simply "going to the hill" (ka bukit), though some time soon after the harvest is most usual. Although the descendants of the enshrined persons are held responsible for holding the gawai, the diffuse nature of cognatic kinship, in which responsibility is dispersed to a wide range of descendants, makes the focus of responsibility somewhat vague. At the gawai, besides making offerings to the spirits, the people clean the utensils (plates, bowls, jars and the like) dedicated to them, clear the summit of undergrowth and engage in cockfighting on the site. All these activities are intended to keep the objects and the site in a "usable" (tau' kena') condition in order to encourage the spirits to continue to watch over the living.

Individuals may visit these sites seeking spiritual guidance, help or inspiration from the enshrined spirits. The practice known as nampok consists of sleeping alone at an isolated site which is supposed to be the abode of superhuman beings in the hope of encountering them in dreams or dream-like states (Jensen, 1974:122). A hill-top where a lumbong is located is thought by the Iban to be one of the most suitable places for this practice because of its association with the enshrined spirits.

Even today, despite the general decline of the nampok practice among the Layar-Skrang Iban, lumbong sites are frequented by those who seek release from ritual prohibitions such as personal mourning, by those who intend to make a prolonged journey, and by ritual bards who are preparing
to perform ritual chanting. Although no special inspiration is explicitly sought in these cases, it is thought to be appropriate to go there simply to make oneself "comfortable" (that is, free from prohibitions and mental afflictions) or "prepared" for ventures they are about to undertake. Generally speaking, the lumbong sites are thought to be auspicious places in contrast with common graveyards. As Lengidai puts this figuratively, "You can stop at the lumbong to take a rest or to take refuge in the shelter whenever you meet rain in the vicinity, not like graveyards."

The practice of making a genuine traditional lumbong has now ceased. Today a distinguished personage may be buried on a spot separate from common graveyards, usually on the summit of a hill. In 1976 the first Christian penghulu of the Upper Layar area was buried on the spur of a hill near his longhouse. The interment spot was marked by a cross and a white flag. Some of the local people still call this separate spot lumbong, though the rationale for carrying it out was somewhat different from those described above. As they say, "The Christian penghulu would not be pleased to be mixed with the dead who had followed the old customs."

Yet there are still a number of people who have "fancies" about being treated differently after death. I will present one such example in the next section, which deals with the enshrinement of the dead in one particular longhouse community. It is mainly concerned with the third type of enshrinement.

BECOMING A GOD (PETARA)

Metempsychosis

The Iban say that the deceased has "become" a god (petara) when an animal of a certain species appears in the longhouse or some other human habitation, such as a farm hut, after the person had died. Most commonly,
these are species of reptiles and amphibians, and usually their appearance is predicted or belatedly acknowledged by someone's dreams. The Iban explain this phenomenon as the transformation of the deceased's semengat into the animal, which is further equated with a petara. For example, "So-and-so died and, becoming a python, became a petara" (Iya mati, nyadi sama', nyadi sawa', nyadi petara) is a common phrase referring to such an event.

An early observer called this striking notion by the term "metempsychosis", that is, transmigration of the departed spirit into another body (Gomes, 1911:143). This term can be appropriately used so long as it signifies the transformation of soul (semengat) as against corporeal transformation (metamorphosis), which itself is a prevalent and meaningful phenomenon in the realm of Iban fantasy (see Chapter 2). But a certain qualification is needed here. Among the Iban the semengat of the deceased are supposed to "become" those creatures rather than just to enter their bodies. Only in this direct transformation can the creatures be regarded as the deceased themselves.

Certain animals, usually serpents, can be taken as guardians by individual Iban, without any connection being postulated with deceased persons. Such an animal is called tua'. Its appearance is foreshadowed in a dream of the person concerned, and he is supposed to look after the animal by making offerings just as he does for deities. Presumably a tua' is a visible manifestation of a petara, or of a "hero" (see p.159), which favours a particular individual Iban through this appearance. The creatures which appear after some persons' deaths are also often called tua', though some reject the term as inapplicable in such cases. Whether the term is applicable or not, however, the underlying ideas remain the same as far as the connection between certain animals and petara is concerned. The logic which equates the deceased with petara is simple and straightforward:
the deceased = his semengat = animal (tua') = petara.

In the actual course of events, the middle equation of the nexus depends on sheer chance, at least in Iban eyes. It only occurs when, firstly, an animal appears inside a human residence and is observed, and, secondly, when the connection of this animal with the deceased has been established by dreams. It is, therefore, totally unpredictable whether a particular person will become a petara in this way after his or her death. This "judgment" can only be made posthumously, and it cannot be foretold according to any characteristic of the deceased's personality, his life or the particular circumstances in which he died.

Enshrinement in Sungai Paya

On top of a small low hill, adjacent to the Sungai Paya longhouse, three wooden shelters and a sungkup (memorial house model for ghosts) stand in a row on a level area which has been cleared of all grass and undergrowth. These shelters are called "petara's houses" (rumah petara) and were made for three deceased members of the community who are reputed to have become petara. They are Dugoh (d. 1960), Mading (d. 1966) and Bunga (d. 1973). The present shelters were made in 1974 when the community held a major agricultural festival (called gawai batu) for commencing the new agricultural cycle. Until then there had been no shelter for Bunga, and Dugoh had been provided only with the old sungkup. Mading's old shelter was replaced by a new one at this festival.

Each time the community holds an agricultural festival, these petara are invited by the living members to attend the festival. In the daytime, prior to the evening when a party of lemembang begins the ritual chant to inform the god of agriculture, Pulang Gana, of the festival, a party of community members goes up to the top of the hill, led by a man carrying
a white flag and a youth beating a drum. A female member of each enshrined deceased's family takes a set of offerings arranged on a tray and a bottle of rice wine, which will be placed inside the petara's shelter. Those petara are supposed to accompany the party when they return to the longhouse.

Although the three of them are now regarded as being of the same nature, i.e., as petara, their lives and the circumstances in which they died and eventually attained the status of petara show remarkable differences. In the following I will describe these individual cases briefly, in the hope of showing the degree of variety that exists in the phenomenon of becoming petara.

Dugoh

Dugoh was hit by a falling tree when he was on the way to gather fruit with some friends and he died on the spot. He had been married for less than a couple of years and had no children, though he and his wife had already established a separate bilek. His wife returned to her natal longhouse after the mourning period ended and remarried there after the proper ceremony of ngambi ' tebalu.

In the next year, the community held a gawai antu after a good harvest. It was thought particularly appropriate to carry out the festival in that year, for they had made the new longhouse in the previous year. They had abandoned their previous longhouse following a spate of deaths which suggested that the longhouse was too "hot" (i.e., unlucky). Several days before the day of the festival a small (some say, baby) python was found in a rice bin placed in the loft of Liang's (Dugoh's father's) bilek. As Liang disliked, as he still does, any kind of snake, he was scared by its appearance there.

But Dugoh's mother put the python in a basket and took care of it, offering food and rice wine, presumably thinking of the possible relationship between the snake and her dead son. "On the day of the festival", said Liang, "the loft was so full of guests who wanted to see the python that I was afraid the loft might fall down."

Dugoh's former wife came to the festival with her new husband and made a contribution of a fowl and two tins of biscuits.

The miniature house (sungkup) was at first taken to the common graveyard in which Dugoh had been buried. But several days later it was removed from there and placed on the hill-top. The reason it was moved was that they got news from a distant longhouse that a second cousin of Dugoh's had a dream in which Dugoh had expressed his dislike for being in the common graveyard. People assumed on this account that Dugoh had become a petara.
After the *gawai antu*, Liang was summoned to Dugoh's wife's longhouse to perform a ritual chant for the *gawai batu*. On the night before leaving the house, Liang had a dream in which his son said that he would accompany his father. During the festival, to Liang's consternation, another python (the first one was still in Liang's *bilek*) appeared on the common gallery and crawled on to Dugoh's father-in-law's lap. The small python in Liang's *bilek* disappeared a few weeks after its first appearance.

**Mading**

Mading was probably around ninety years old when he died. His death was attributed to old age, as he had lived long enough to see two great-grandsons well into adolescence. His *bilek*-family was and still is the most prosperous in the community, and its members have "never felt hungry", which means they have had exceptionally good fortune in their agricultural pursuits. In brief, Mading died in the most happy situation imaginable to contemporary Iban, though his personal renown during his lifetime was by no means remarkable.

Before his death, Mading often expressed to Kemat, his son-in-law, his wish not to be buried in the graveyard, but to be placed above the ground, or if that was impractical, to be buried in a separate spot. The actual motivation for this wish was unclear. But it may have been due to a feeling similar to that expressed by Kemat for himself, a "fear of being mixed with other *antu* in the graveyard."

Mading's wish was carried out. His corpse was buried on the summit of the hill, next to Dugoh's *sungkup* and, incidentally, at the centre of the level area at the summit. A long brass gun and a brass gong were placed on the grave in honour of this fortunate person, and a shelter was made over the place.

Although he was enshrined on the hill-top after Dugoh, Mading's shrine is regarded as the most important by the present community. It is situated at the centre between the shrines of the other two *petara*. By this fact and also because he was actually the oldest at the time of his death, Mading is regarded as the leader of these *petara*. Probably the fact that he is the only one whose body was buried at that place plays an additional but significant role in establishing his dominant position in the group. The Iban notion of the living personality as the combination of body and *semengat* retains its pertinence here. I once witnessed a clear demonstration of the Iban belief that the *semengat* and body remain in close association among the enshrined dead. Some people went to the hill-top to get the enshrined spirits to return with them to the festival. While offerings were put inside the shelter, a mother explained to her daughter that Mading's *semengat* was living in the shelter after having departed from his body which was buried beneath it; therefore they would put the offerings in the shelter. A moment later Saging, Mading's grandson, took hold of the edge of the gong which was placed on the spot and shouted toward the earth, while shaking the gong as if to wake the sleeping, "Oh, Grandfather, do you hear? We are holding a *gawai*. Come! You first! You are the eldest, residing at the centre of the place."
Bunga

Bunga was an eleven-year old schoolgirl who died after having been ill for about a week. Her illness and rather unexpected death were thought to have been caused by "being passed by an antu". She was so pretty a girl that, according to her elder sister, all the community members, her schoolmates and the teacher heartily missed her. During the mourning period, one of her schoolmates, who was living in a dormitory hut attached to the school, had a dream in which he saw a swallow with beautiful plumage perching leisurely in the school teacher's hut. The dream was recounted publicly, and it was taken as a sign of the dead girl's wish to return to this world.

Simultaneously Bujau, Bunga's adopted mother, repeatedly dreamt of Bunga, who in the dreams expressed her unhappiness at being in the graveyard and claimed that she was not really dead. Following these dreams, which were considered revelations, Bunga was generally regarded as having become a petara, though it was not until the next year's agricultural festival that a shelter was set up for her on the summit of the hill and that her spirit was enshrined there.

The enshrinement of the dead in this community during the last fifteen years shows the emergence of what may be called a vogue. Although the practice of enshrinement and the belief in "metempsychosis" are commonly found among the wider Iban population, my impression is that the frequency of enshrinement at Sungai Paya — three out of the total of eleven persons who died during this period — is an exceptionally high rate. This is all the more remarkable because there was, in people's memory, no other case of enshrinement in the previous history of the community, which extends well over half a century.

Apparently, this vogue was triggered by the opening of the hill summit as the place for Dugoh's sungkup. I even wonder whether Mading's wish would have been actually fulfilled or whether he would have pressed it so hard if there had been no precedent for the use of the hill-top as a petara's abode. Possibly Mading's wish was largely stimulated by the incidents surrounding the previous enshrinement of Dugoh, and, further, his separate burial was facilitated by the availability of a suitable place which had already been used for a similar purpose. Similarly, Bunga had the advantage of the presence of two precedents
in the community. Without those, revelation in dreams alone probably
would not have been enough to lead to her enshrinement.

In Bunga's case there was still another factor which favoured her
enshrinement. This was a schoolboy's death and a remarkable series of
events following it which occurred in the year previous to Bunga's death.

The boy, named Ladi, drowned when he was crossing the flooded
Skrang River. His corpse was found after four days of extensive
searching and was carried back to his remote longhouse. During
the mourning period, a man who lived at the time near the school
had a dream in which the boy appeared and claimed he was still alive.
A few days later a toad (raong) was found in the dreamer's hut.
Having been informed of this, Ladi's parents came to fetch the toad
to their longhouse. The mother cried vehemently to see the toad
identified with her son. Some say the toad had a queer mark on one
of its fingers, which reminded them of a finger-ring Ladi had worn,
and that his death in water had caused him to appear as a toad.
After a few days the toad disappeared mysteriously from the betel-
box in which it had been kept. However, the same things happened
in the Sungai Paya longhouse several days later. Sta had a dream
of Ladi, and a toad appeared in Ngelambong's bilek. People from
Ladi's longhouse came this time, beating a gong and carrying a set
of offerings as well as rice wine and a fowl, as they usually do
in welcoming their gods.

In any case, the people of Sungai Paya are keenly conscious of the
possibility that anybody who has died may become a petara. As I des-
cribed in Chapter 3, the person who dreamed of the dead Sta during the
mourning period was anxious about this possibility, which prompted her
and her husband to make an ad hoc offering to him (pp.90-91).

Admittedly, the practice of enshrinement of the dead is not a new
phenomenon. It is rooted in Iban tradition in the sense that it has
recurred not infrequently. But the variations in its frequency for
particular groups during particular periods of time suggests that its
occurrence may well be understood as a fashion-like phenomenon. The
case of the regional headman (penghulu) of another longhouse may provide
an illustrative case in which the lack of this sort of vogue or "short
range tradition" closed the channel to his enshrinement even though all
the necessary conditions were present.
Before his death, the penghulu, like Mading, expressed his wish not to be buried in the graveyard but to be preserved above the earth. But his son who was a powerful candidate for the next penghulu-ship, did not follow what seemed to him an extravagant wish of his father's; instead he carried out the burial in the usual way. After the burial the son had several dreams in which the late penghulu expressed his anxiety about political or social unrest in the area after his death. Shortly afterward, two people in succession saw a crocodile in the pool near the longhouse. Although it was seen in the failing light of dusk, this unusual appearance of a crocodile so far upriver surprised people. Those who trusted the witnesses regarded the crocodile as the transformation of the late penghulu.

These circumstances and happenings, combined with the deceased person's standing as penghulu, might well have led to his enshrinement. But this did not actually happen, despite the fact that some people, including the shaman who carried out the serara' bungai ritual, contended that the penghulu might have become a petara. Kemat, in Sungai Paya, criticised the penghulu's son, saying that he was the sort of fellow who did not know how to make offerings (either to gods or to his late father).

No doubt part of the reason for the penghulu's non-enshrinement was his son's disinclination to give him a special burial, but I think it was due in greater measure to the lack of precedents in the community in question. When I suggested to elder members of the community that the late penghulu would have been enshrined if that series of events had occurred in Sungai Paya, one of the elders immediately denied the possibility in their community on the basis that they had simply never done such a thing.

Although the enshrinement in the Sungai Paya community may be regarded as a vogue confined to a particular community, the three cases presented above exhibit different channels through which the possibility of the dead's becoming petara may be realised. These range from genuinely accidental events (as in Dugoh's case), to an individual's manifest aspiration (Mading) to the ready acceptance of revelations given in dreams (Bunga). We can see in this small number of examples virtually all the essential features involved in the phenomenon of "becoming a petara".
The enshrined dead form an exceptional minority of the dead. Needless to say, this fact entails special motivations or events which differentiate the enshrined dead from the rest of the dead. I have already presented a number of individual cases. I will here make an attempt to elucidate them within a general framework.

The practice of enshrinement in a *lumbong* is said to have originated in the practice of the mythical heroes ("People of Panggau"), which the Iban imitate in the hope of elevating their renowned leaders to the "heroic" level. The enshrinement through the recognition of "metempsychosis" leads some deceased individuals to "become gods (*petara*)". In both types of enshrinement the status of the enshrined dead is equated with or approximated to the status of these superhuman beings. Therefore, we should first review the characteristics of Iban gods and mythical heroes.

As already mentioned in Chapter 2, *petara* (often pronounced *betara*) and the mythical heroes are sub-categories of the superhuman beings (*antu*). The mythical heroes include Keling, Laja, Bungai Nuing and many others who belong to the legendary longhouse in Panggau and its allied longhouse in Gelong. The term *petara* can be used generically for anonymous deities so that it appears occasionally to designate the abstract notion of divinity. But, in fact, Iban religion is markedly polytheistic; the most prominent in its pantheon are the named gods such as Sengalang Burong, Pulang Gana, Selampandai and so on. These named gods as well as the mythical heroes are characterised as anthropomorphic and personalised beings. They can be encountered as human-like figures in dreams, and in this way they may come into active interaction with human beings.

The continuous existence of the named gods and heroes from time immemorial to the present without alteration of names or characteristics
indicates their perpetual or eternal nature, which transcends all human vicissitudes. The explanations which Iban give concerning the perpetuity of divine and heroic beings vary. Anggok, in response to my question which did not prompt him in any particular direction, offered three alternative "theories": (1) the gods are perhaps immortal, (2) a particular named god is not an individual being, but rather a group (*bansa*) and (3) a named god is a status like rajahship to which others can succeed when the incumbent dies. Anggok was deeply disturbed at first at having to make these rationalising explanations. His difficulty lay, of course, in explaining the divine in purely human terms, which is conceivable only because of the anthropomorphic attributes of the Iban gods.

What is important here is that the Iban take the perpetual existence of the named gods and heroes for granted, despite the contradictions which may result from the human images they hold of these beings. The assumption of the eternal existence of the gods is not in fact derived from their human images, but from their notion that the blessings that flow from them are eternal. An example will show how the Iban reconcile these two aspects of the ontological characteristics of their gods. Freeman reports an incident in which the Baleh Iban responded to a person's dream of Pulang Gana's death by going into ritual mourning for the dead god. The dream was later counter-balanced by another dream in which the dead god was succeeded by his son (Freeman, 1975a:285). Thus, the perpetuity the Iban expect for their god was maintained virtually intact.

The mythical heroes may be perpetual beings in the same sense as the gods are. Or they may be immortal in a more direct sense, as Kemat, who himself was under the spiritual guidance of the hero Bungai Nuing, used to assert that Keling and other heroes could not die, and so are
immortal, whenever he spoke of their distinguished characteristics. The mythical heroes are more human-like than the gods are, and their individuality is more evident than that of any named gods. Perhaps, the emphasis on this human aspects of the heroes promotes the notion of personal immortality of the heroes rather than the notion of perpetuity through "succession" or "group" existence, the explanations offered about the same characteristics of petara.

What differentiates the gods and the heroes from other superhuman beings is that they are generally benevolent to humans, except for rare cases in which blame is attributed to human misdeeds. The named gods and the heroes are regarded as the originators of the customs and cultural values to which the Iban have been attached since the remote past, and, even more significantly, they are still crucially important for the success of human activities such as agriculture (of which Pulang Gana takes charge), human procreation (Selampandai) and, until the fairly recent past, headhunting and warfare (Sengalang Burong and the mythical heroes). The Iban gods and heroes are not otiose, but actively involved in ongoing human affairs.

The relationship between the gods and the heroes on the one hand and the humans on the other is basically warm and affectionate. In prayers (sampi) the gods (as generic petara) are often referred to as grandfathers (aki') and grandmothers (ini'). This implies that the gods are intimate with and kind to humans, as grandparents generally are to their grandchildren. This also suggests that the gods invoked in this way may be conceived by the Iban as having been their remote ancestors (aki'-ini'). Iban mythology often takes the shape of a putative genealogy which is supplemented by narrative accounts of mystical events which are said to have taken place at certain generations. The named gods appear in those myths as direct, though remote, ancestors
of the present-day Iban. In this respect the ontological distance between the gods and humans is reduced.

Now, as I assume, the status of the enshrined dead reached or, at least, approached the status of the gods and the heroes. The attributes essential to these superhuman beings — their perpetuity (or immortality) and their benevolent relationship to living humans — are attained by the enshrined dead. As already shown earlier in this chapter, what the living expect from the enshrined dead is largely identical with what they expect from the gods and the heroes.

It is clear from the cases I presented that the motivations conducive to enshrinement of a deceased individual derive from two different sources. One comes from psychic conditions of the surviving people who are afflicted by a person's death, and the other is the aspiration of a person who is dying or thinking of his death. In some cases these two sources are combined. Analytically, however, they must be considered separately.

The most evident motivation is seen in the notion that the semengat of a really distinguished personage who is enshrined posthumously by the community of the survivors will continue to watch over and protect the living for a number of generations, if not for ever. The surviving community enshrines such a person in the deep hope of maintaining his guidance for long after his death. In this respect the ordinary eschatology shows some weakness. It ensures a certain degree of communication between the living and the ghosts, but only in general terms. Although, as I mentioned in Chapter 7, some guidance and spiritual inspiration can be gained from ghosts who are not enshrined, it is difficult to seek deliberately such guidance from the ghosts who reside in the separate sphere of Sebayan. Moreover, Iban attitudes towards ghosts show some ambivalence. Ghosts are not thought to be manifestly
malevolent to the living, but they are somewhat disturbing beings. Their undue presence in this world may be cumbersome and even inauspicious. The enshrinement solves this problem. It denies the inauspicious aspects of the spirits of the dead in such a straightforward way as saying that the enshrined dead (*semongai*) are still alive. The survivors, afflicted by the death of their leader or guardian, want to raise their dead hero to the level of the mythical heroes or gods in order to gain his "perpetual" and "benign" guidance. It is beneficial to the living to be able to approach their guardian spirit whenever necessity arises.

The data obtained during my stay in the Upper Skrang, though far from quantitatively sufficient, indicate a tendency for rather abrupt deaths of young boys and girls and accidental and often violent deaths of younger adults without offspring to be followed by mystical appearances of animals and the eventual enshrinement of the deceased. Motivations involved in these cases are sharply different from those involved in the enshrinement of respected personages. It is highly probable that the intense grief over such untimely deaths, the compassion for those who died young and the anxiety caused by accidental deaths account for this tendency. For appearances of animals and dreams are always open to interpretation by surviving people, who are ever ready to find some meaning appealing to them in such phenomena. A typical case is that of a young man murdered by a fellow longhouse member while they were hunting wild pigs and buried on separate ground on the basis that he became a cobra and a god. This was determined from somewhat dubious testimony that someone who visited the longhouse to attend the night vigil for him saw a snake on his way. It may seem paradoxical that these deceased — far from being distinguished during their lifetimes — are enshrined as gods and guardian spirits. Possibly the
psychology involved here is that the survivors feel a need to adjust themselves to such unfortunate and even miserable deaths which befall young people. In the imagery given in the death dirge those who died young or in abnormal ways live rather unhappily in separate places in the Land of the Dead. The tendency to enshrine these people suggests, however, that the so-called category of "bad deaths" is not so much concerned among the Iban with possible bad effects of such deaths, either to the deceased or to the survivors, as with the intense emotions which obtain among the survivors following these deaths. Enshrinement can mitigate the grief and the anxiety of the survivors by proffering a fictitious idea that the deceased are still "alive".

Let me now turn to the motivation which might lead a person to aspire to be treated in a distinguished way after death. This aspiration or, as Perham calls it, a "fancy" of an eccentric individual can be regarded as a quest for distinction. The Iban are individualistic and highly competitive people, eager to acquire fame and prestige by achieving feats and remarkable exploits. As fierce headhunters in the recent past, they put the highest value on fighting prowess and leadership in battle, which were traditionally the principal determinants of male prestige and renown in the egalitarian Iban society. A quest for prestige in one's lifetime and a fanciful aspiration for distinguished posthumous treatment may have arisen from the same root of mind. Arguably, the lumbong practice reflects the desire for fame and distinction, which is deep-seated in Iban minds, not only during this lifetime but for the distant future as well. It can also be said that the fame and renown attained through exploits achieved during one's lifetime is remembered by succeeding generations long after one's death. In a figurative sense one's achievements in this world are a substitute for "immortality" which is
not attainable by an ordinary human being. Immortality or perpetuity is a property of gods and mythical heroes. It is quite understandable in this connection that the lumbong practice is said to have originated in imitation of the mythical hero Keling.

Thus, the assumption that the enshrined dead "live on" may also be interpreted as a more direct denial of the inescapable human fate of death than is made by the general theory of the posthumous continuity of the semengat in an afterworld. The Iban firmly believe in the existence of the Land of the Dead and are not usually anxious about their posthumous fate. Yet it is not surprising that there may be some individuals who cling extravagantly to the existence in the world familiar to them and who want to remain there even after death. The wish expressed by Kemat (and possibly also by his father-in-law Mading) to be buried separately for fear of being mixed with ghosts (in the graveyard) suggests that such an aspiration as to be treated in an exceptional way after death is at least partly motivated by anxiety about future life.

To conclude this chapter I must emphasise again the fact that the practice of enshrinement is a deviation from the ordinary mortuary practices. It is concerned with idiosyncratic individuals or with fashion-like phenomena which occur, however frequent they may be, in particular groups at particular times. Motivations involved in enshrinement are therefore various. Each case of enshrinement must be explained as a special event, which is a result of the combination of an individual's aspiration and the survivors' reactions to it. It is very important to note that such deviation is always possible in the context of Iban culture, often at the cost of the coherence of the authentic view and practices.
NOTES

1. The use of the term *lumbong* for an exposed coffin must be distinguished from the name of the festival for ghosts (*gawai lumbong*) among the Baleh Iban (see Chapter 5), who do not practise this type of enshrinement. Among the Balau Iban a shelter which is "built to contain the coffined body of some distinguished warrior" is called *surau*, a borrowed word from Malay (Howell and Bailey, 1900: 160).

2. The enshrined spirits are invited to a *gawai antu* together with other gods (see p.163). However, they are not the dead who are commemorated at the festival. The welcoming of the spirits of such prominent historical figures such as Linggir, Rentap and Minggat to a *gawai antu* is described by Sandin (1961:184).

3. The practice of exposing the coffin above the surface of the earth is so unusual and even bizarre in the Iban context that there is every possibility that it is derived from other Bornean peoples. The Iban have long been in contact with those peoples (e.g., the Melanau, the Kayan and the Kenyah) who practise the making of huge mausoleums in which the corpses of distinguished men are placed. Since, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, the Iban are eager to incorporate any fascinating alien practice into their culture, the inference of the external origin of the *lumbong* practice is very plausible.
Chapter 9 CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude this thesis with some reflections on the relationship of Iban mortuary practices and eschatology to some other aspects of Iban culture and society. To begin with, let me note a few major elements which characterise Iban mortuary practices: (1) the almost total absence of any rearrangement of social and economic relationships following a person's death, (2) the ritual focus on the relationship between the survivors and the dead with particular reference to their separation and (3) the prominence of concern for the spirit of the deceased.

SOCIAL REARRANGEMENT

A person who dies is a social person. His death thus necessarily entails a change in the social processes in which he was involved before his death. A funeral occasioned by death is regarded by many peoples in the world as a social occasion on which the deceased's estate is discussed, his legal status is transferred to surviving kin so that the social gap created by death is filled by those who assume the role the deceased has vacated. Such social and economic functions of funerals are prominent in some African societies (cf. for example, Goody, 1962; Goldschmidt, 1973).

Iban mortuary practices, in contrast, largely lack such legal and economic involvements. The initial stage of mortuary rituals (the wake
and the burial) is not a markedly social, let alone legal or economic, occasion. In this respect the second stage of the ritual (the separation and the mourning termination) is little different from the first. They are held primarily as bilek-family affairs and the participants do not extend beyond the confines of the longhouse community. The final festival is the only designedly social occasion in the series of mortuary rituals and has some connections with legal and economic matters. Economically, contribution to the expenses of holding a festival for a particular deceased person entitles the contributor's claim to a share of the deceased's property. And legally the final festival in its traditional forms is the occasion on which the surviving spouse is released from the marital tie with the deceased spouse. It must be noted, however, that these aspects of the final festival do not directly involve the actual "transfer" of the deceased's economic and legal rights to the surviving kin. Unless the deceased is "barren" and thus has no recognised inheritor, the function of holding a festival is rather confirmatory than instrumental in dealing with inheritance. Similarly, the "divorce" between the living and the dead spouses is not so much a rearrangement of the social order as the symbolic end of the surviving spouse's mourning. Although male kin of the deceased spouse are directly involved in this "divorce" and may raise a controversy about the behaviour of the surviving spouse during the balu period, they have no positive legal rights over the future of the surviving spouse. Their role is that of agents who act on behalf of the deceased, as is exemplarily shown in the "mock trial" of divorce in the traditional festival. The "divorce" legally entitles the surviving spouse to choose options open to him (or her) concerning remarriage and bilek-family membership, but does not automatically result in new social arrangement.
This lack of secular aspects in the mortuary practices is explained, above all, by the features of the basic social unit of Iban society, that is, the bilek-family. Ownership of property, which includes cultivated land, various valuable objects, tools and utensils, is held by this distinctive social unit. Therefore, the inheritance of property leaves no ambiguity so long as the bilek-family continues to exist.

Freeman explains this feature of the bilek-family:

As long as an individual remains a resident member, he (or she) is one of the group in which ownership and inheritance are vested. Indeed, it is the bilek-family as a whole that is the basic unit in the inheritance of the conglomeration of property and rights which constitute "the bilek". Here the Iban family differs fundamentally from the English family, for the senior member of the bilek-family does not possess the right to disinherit in any way the junior members. It is the family and not the individual which is the unit in bilek inheritance. (1970:31)

In this situation no problem arises at the death of a member of the bilek-family. A former member of the bilek-family, who married out to another bilek-family or established a new one, received a share of inheritance at his (or her) marriage. He (or she) is expected to make a contribution to the expenses of holding a final festival for a dead member of his (or her) natal bilek-family, but this does not blur the principle of inheritance, which, in Iban contexts, amounts to the continuity of the bilek-family. As Freeman continues:

By the death of an elder a family is depleted of one of its members, but there is no drastic change involved for those who are left behind; the bilek is theirs, as it was before, and, as before, they continue to occupy it and to manage its affairs (ibid.:31).

Thus, the death of a person takes place as an event in the continuing process of the bilek-family. It does not create any particular discrepancy.

Nothing illustrates this process more clearly than the notion of bungai, the plant-like life-image. Each bilek has its own stem of bungai, the condition of which reflects the condition of health of the members of the bilek-family. When one of the members dies, a corresponding part of
the bungai withers away. The bungai itself, however, persists so long as the bilek-family continues to exist. The bungai must be cared for in order to maintain its vigorous existence after the drooping of one of its parts. In much the same way the bilek-family has to cope with the depletion of one of its members. The mortuary practices of the Iban are thus mainly concerned with the recognition of this depletion without any attempt to fill it with a substitute, which in the Iban context is totally unnecessary.

SEPARATION

The recognition of the depletion caused by the death of a member of the bilek-family is expressed in the Iban term of beserara' ("separation"), which is the main theme underlying all the stages of Iban mortuary practices. The deceased and the living are separated from one another at death. Further, in the eyes of the surviving, the deceased is an object which has become lost (lenyau); death accordingly is described as being a loss (rugı).

To appreciate these cultural expressions it is sufficient to acknowledge the intensity with which the Iban tend to form personal attachments to others. Iban children are treated by parents, grandparents and other community members with affectionate and persistent concern. In accordance with this, children develop strong attachments to their parents (and especially to their mothers), and, subsequently, to other elder members of the community. At a later stage young boys and girls like to sleep with friends of the same sex under a mosquito net, and even adult Iban show some fondness of physical contact. As a result of strong attachments to others, separation tends to be charged with intense emotion among the Iban. Death, as the final and irretrievable separation, causes genuine grief not only among the deceased's immediate relatives but among other community members.
Grief is directed towards the passing personality. At the initial stage of mortuary rituals it is undoubtedly the corpse that represents the personality. The night of the wake is really the occasion on which grief is expressed over this physical separation. As Sati said beside her husband's corpse, the wake is the last chance to see the person who has died, and the living are emotionally urged to wail (see p.60). The departure of the processional party is the actual farewell for the women who stay behind in the longhouse, and the burial that for the men who carry out the actual interment.

However, the separation does not end with the disposal of the corpse. To the Iban the separation occasioned by death is a longer process which involves the disembodied soul (semengat) of the deceased. We may say that the disposal of the corpse completes the separation between the deceased's body and his soul at least in terms of the objects towards which the survivors' concern is directed. After the burial the ritual emphasis is put on the semengat. On the evening following the burial a fireplace rack is set outside the longhouse in order to place offerings to the newly deceased's spirit and the ghosts from the Land of the Dead. With this the deceased's personality has already shifted its identity from the physical entity of the body to the spiritual entity of the semengat. At the ritual of the "separation of the flower", the life-images of the living and the deceased are separated. By this the deceased (his semengat) comes to know that he is dead and has left this world for the Land of the Dead. Opinions however, vary as to exactly when the ghost establishes itself in Sebayan.

The final festival is essentially concerned with the ghosts who have already been established in their own realm. Accordingly, the most remarkable feature of this festival is the invitation to the ghosts from the Land of the Dead to return to this world, and to reactivate the
affectionate ties between the dead and the surviving. Unlike the final mortuary festivals found among many other Bornean peoples, the Iban festival for ghosts is not the occasion on which the departed spirits are ultimately conducted to the Land of the Dead. Nonetheless, one can say that the Iban mortuary festival is a ceremony of final separation. For what is intended in this festival is the final recognition of the established separation by providing the ghosts with necessary facilities for them to lead lives there. The conclusion of the festival, therefore, reiterates the initial burial. This time, however, it is the ghosts, provided with grave goods, who are taken back to the graveyard.

Iban mortuary practices are a coherent and progressive series of separations between the living and the deceased. It must be noted, however, that this separation, in Iban contexts, does not intend complete liquidation of emotional ties. What Firth says about the Tikopia can be said about the Iban as well:

...when there have been strong emotional attachments to the dead person the rites of speeding the soul then represent, not so much a formal emotional severance as a formal emotional shift from the vital personality associated with the body to what may be called the survival personality associated with the spirit (1967:342 emphasis original).

Throughout the series of the post-burial rituals the living are exclusively concerned with the spiritual continuation of the deceased personality. The most important psychological function of this process is that it strengthens the belief in the survival of human souls after death. After the whole series of mortuary practices, that is, after the whole process of separation, the living feel confident that the dead are now in the Land of the Dead, which is separate from this world.
CONCERN FOR GHOSTS: ESCHATOLOGY

The Iban mortuary practices delineated above indicate the importance of the eschatological ideas which provide the cognitive basis for the rituals surrounding death. The relationship between rituals and beliefs is a difficult subject to deal with, but, as far as the Iban mortuary rituals are concerned, they can be understood to a large extent by reference to the underlying eschatological ideas. For those practices mainly consist of the acting out of imaginary interactions between the living and the continuing personality of the dead.

Let me now briefly summarise Iban eschatology. The basic assumption or major premise upon which Iban eschatology is constructed is the concept of a single soul (semengat). As long as a person is alive, the semengat works as a life principle and, being combined with the physical aspect (body), constitutes the person's totality. Its separability from the person as a physical and visible entity is the most important attribute of the semengat, originating in dream experiences and shamanic trances. In this sphere of psychic experiences the semengat assumes the role of second-self of the person, though it is distinguished from the conscious self while the person is still alive. Death is regarded by the Iban as the permanent departure of the semengat from the physical person. The departed semengat assumes the full status of the deceased personality after death. This straightforward identity of the survival personality with the spiritual aspect of the living personality is the foundation on which the Iban belief in the continuation of the individual's life after death is based.

The survival of the semengat is perceived by the Iban in their experiences of dreams and, more rarely, in hallucinatory experiences. Through externalising the inner psychic processes such as persistent
memory of the deceased, the images seen in dreams are identified with the surviving semengat. The disembodied semengat is then imagined to have a human-like figure, which is the ghostly image of the dead individual. It has become a ghost (antu sebayan). And, being an antu, the ghost assumes a firm ontological status in the Iban world. It is neither a physical nor an ethereally spiritual entity. The ghosts constitute a category of beings which exist somewhere in the broadly conceived phenomenal world. The realm in which the ghosts lead their lives should be set within the sphere which the Iban conceive as the total universe. Thus, in Iban eschatology, the most salient feature is the existence of the Land of the Dead, which in its form is generally comparable to this world.

The future life in the Land of the Dead is regarded by the Iban as a replica of life in this world. This image itself is understandable in view of the straightforward reflection of life as experienced in this world onto the plane of imagination about life hereafter. With this, the dead are afforded the continuation of life in all its known aspects. Their daily activities in the Land of the Dead are supposed to be essentially the same as in this world. They live there almost self-sufficiently, especially after the final festival is held for them. Thus, the ghosts there do not rely for their subsistence upon the living. They also have a social life of their own. The continuing unity of the bilek-family is the assumption that is most firmly held by the Iban (reflecting its importance in the Iban social system). Other relationships (including the marital one) are left unresolved or open to options.

By and large, the Iban are unconcerned with specific details of the afterlife. The Iban idealise the future life, though the degree of idealisation remains modest. Any notion of post-mortem punishment with moral implications is unknown to the Iban. To them the afterlife is a
natural consequence or continuity of this life without any drastic transformation imposed on personal existence. The notion of the inverted nature of the other world is an additional motif which lays some stress on its disparateness, and distinguishes it from this world.

From these basic assumptions — the survival of souls and the existence of the Land of the Dead — ensue some additional ideas, two of which deserve notice. One is the idea of the relationship between this and the other worlds, and the other is the idea about the final fate of souls. The importance of these ideas may be regarded as secondary in comparison with the core belief in the survival of souls and the continuity of life in the other world. However, these ideas and images enrich Iban eschatology.

The Land of the Dead is separated from the world of the living because the ghosts are usually unseen and the communication between them and the living is by no means physical. The disembodied *semengat* must depart from this world at death and move into the other world. The journey undertaken by the departed spirit into the Land of the Dead illustrates this separateness of the two realms. The border between the two realms is represented by the Bridge of Fright and the Gate of the Earth. On the other hand, the image of the journey also entails the notion of topographic continuity between the two realms. The Land of the Dead should be set as a separate realm, but it must also be reached easily and must not be too far away. That is because there is a fair degree of communication, however indirect it may be, between the living and the dead, which indicates the closeness of their respective realms. The Iban express this subtle and almost contradictory relationship between the two realms (or the two states of existence) by the symbol of the *lemayong* palm. The ritual use of the palm leaves is concerned with establishing a barrier between the living and the dead, making them
invisible to each other. As a metaphor, on the other hand, the thin semi-transparent inner skin of the palm fruit represents the existential proximity between being alive and being dead as well as the ontological continuity between the realm of the living and the realm of the dead.

The general similarity of life in the other world to life in this leads to the idea that the existence of the souls in the Land of the Dead is not permanent. As in this world, death eventually ensues. As they die, the ghosts move from one sphere of future existence into another. Logically such transition may be repeated indefinitely. But Iban eschatology cuts off this possibility at a certain point and puts an end to the existence of the *semengat*. The ghosts, it is believed dissolve into dew and return, deprived of personality, to this world, to be absorbed by rice plants, whose grains are eaten by men and women. Although the Iban do not propound an explicit theory of "rebirth" or "re-cycling" of the *semengat*, the notion of their final return to this world and their eventual incorporation into human bodies salvages the fate of the perishable souls by linking them to the future in generational cycles.

Such is Iban eschatology. Evidently not all these ideas are pertinent to Iban mortuary practices, which are mainly concerned with the separation and the establishing of the ghosts in the Land of the Dead. Eschatology as such has some philosophic or intellectual elements, which are the products of speculation. What it is important to note here is that the Iban practise their mortuary rituals in acute awareness of the existence of ghosts, whose reality is propounded in well-articulated eschatological beliefs.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Iban are not an exceedingly other-worldly people. They fully appreciate the enjoyable things of this world and do not seek any form of
substitute existence in another world. Their religion is oriented towards the enhancement of the good things in their present mode of existence. The elaborate rituals surrounding hill rice cultivation, shamanic practices and even their old sanguinary headhunting cult aim at the ends attainable in this world. Fertility in agriculture, and the individual's health and renown through heroic feats are all that the Iban endeavour to gain. Iban religion is by no means an eschatological religion which sees in the phenomenon of death a positive meaning or a solution to the predicaments of human life.

Death is to the Iban an event which is inevitable for all animate beings, and they take a matter-of-fact attitude towards death. It is undesirable in the sense that it deprives a person of familiar objects which have surrounded him. To those who are left behind his death is a sorrow exactly because it imposes separation from the person as a physical entity. As among many other peoples in the world, an occurrence of a death is regarded by the Iban as an occasion on which danger of death may possibly spread to the living. Certain measures are taken to prevent this effect. The corpse is ritually handled and contacts with it are kept to a minimum. The ritual of separation between the life-images of the deceased and the living is carried out for the same reason. Certain anxiety among the living is manifest during the initial stages of mortuary rituals and the following period.

Needless to say, the Iban do not like death. It deserves notice, however, that an exceeding degree of fear of death is not seen among the Iban. The Iban frequently speak of death, and of prospects of death of oneself and of others. Certainly, death is a concern of the Iban, but, it is my impression that this concern is only one of their many concerns such as prospects of harvests, of hunting, journeying and the like. Dreams of the dead are often told in public. A person who has such a
dream usually takes a day's rest because it may connote a premonition of some accident on the following day, but encounters with the dead in dreams do not terrify him.

This relative lack of fear of death is a correlate of the firm belief the Iban hold in the survival of personality after death. Evans-Pritchard speaks of intense horror of death among the Nuer and says that it fits in with their almost total lack of eschatology (1956:154). The same relationship between an inordinate fear of death and the poorly articulated notion of post-mortem existence is suggested for the Sebei of Uganda by Goldschmidt (1973:98). In this respect the Iban are in sharp contrast with these African peoples. The Iban believe not only in the survival or continuation of the personality, but in the existence of the special realm in which the dead enjoy more than they did in this world before death. Kluckhohn once asserted that very few cultures pictured the next world as a better one (1962:137). I am not sure whether this assertion is approved on an extensive ethnological basis. If it is true, however, Iban eschatology is an exception. With a firm belief in reunion with relatives, friends and lovers in the Land of the Dead, the Iban envisage death with a certain equanimity.

The Iban seem well content with their eschatology. Their imagination about future life does not extend beyond making a modestly nicer replica of life in this world. Once this belief is firmly embraced, there is no urge to scrutinise further details of life hereafter. There is no worry about future life, however it remains a strange land or a terra incognita to individual Iban. The Land of the Dead is like a new territory into which the Iban are going to migrate. What stimulates the Iban to migrate is the desire to get lands which are "very fertile with plenty of fish in all the rivers, and where the forest has plenty of birds and animals for food" (Sandin cited in Morgan, 1968:152). This is also the
way in which the Iban picture the Land of the Dead. Thus, the Iban express the transition of disembodied *semengat* to the other world as a migration (*pindah*). That is a land unknown to the newly deceased but with its essential features the same as those of the land which the ghost leaves behind. Moreover, it is a land which has already been occupied by his dead relatives and friends. The soul's migration there is not a pioneer migration but a following of these predecessors. As it is chanted in a death dirge, the newly deceased's hesitation to enter the Land of the Dead is appeased by the assurance that it is not really a strange land for him and that he is awaited by an old lover. These images are sufficient for the Iban to conceive the characteristics of future life. Details are unknown. Who can tell details without going there? Thus, the most frequent answer to my question about Sebayan was "I don't know. I've never been dead."

It is, however, misleading to say that Iban eschatology has the intention of soothing man's anxiety about physical extinction by postulating more acceptable images of a post-mortem existence. Certainly, it performs this psychological function, which is, however, not so much its original intention as one of its effects. I do not agree with Malinowski when he says:

The savage is intensely afraid of death, probably as the result of some deep-seated instincts common to man and animals. He does not want to realise it as an end, he cannot face the idea of complete cessation, of annihilation. The idea of spirit and of spiritual existence is near at hand, furnished by such experiences as are discovered and described by Tylor. Grasping at it, man reaches the comforting belief in spiritual continuity and in the life after death (1948:51).

Malinowski goes so far as to say that the psychological origin of the belief in spirits is "the result of the belief in immortality" which is, in its turn, "one of the supreme gifts of religion, which judges and selects the better of the two alternatives suggested by self-preservation—
the hope of continued life and the fear of annihilation" (ibid.:50-1).
Here Malinowski, it seems to me, confuses two elements which must be
distinguished from each other in the concept of death: the death of
the self on the one hand and death of others on the other. Malinowski
tries to explain the origin of the belief in immortality exclusively on
the basis of the first element, while ignoring the second.

Eschatology, as one finds it among the Iban and probably also among
the Trobriand Islanders (cf. Malinowski, 1916), is closely related to
mortuary practices. It is mainly on those ritual occasions that the
existence of the ghosts, the survival personalities of the dead, is
vividly perceived by the living. Or, as is conspicuous among the Iban,
the belief in the continuity of life after death is constantly reiterated
by reference to dreams of the dead. Without these interactions with
ghosts, eschatological beliefs would lose their experiential basis. I
would suggest that the belief in immortality or the continuity of life
after death is a direct result of the human capacity of memory. Remember­ing
the images of the dead, it is only too easy for the living to conceive
a certain kind of continuity of life of those who have died. Therefore,
as Boas once remarked, "There is probably no people that believe in the
complete extinction of existence with death, but some belief in the
continuity of life seems to exist everywhere" (1910:373). This was also
the conclusion of Sir James Frazer (1913: i, 33).

Nevertheless, however universal it may be, the variation in eschato­
logical beliefs is wide (Boas, 1910:374), and it is the specific content
of a particular eschatology that interests us. To the extent that
eschatological beliefs are concerned with the relationship between the
dead and the living, as it is the case with primitive eschatological
systems, the variation in eschatology corresponds to the variation in
human relations. For, in these belief systems, the ghosts are individual
persons who act like living persons in social interactions, not merely disconnected spirits settled leisurely in the other world. The attitudes of the living towards ghosts and the imagined behaviour of the ghosts which intervene in the living's affairs differ from one culture to another. In some cases the relationship between the dead and the living reflects unambiguously the personal relationship between the living persons. In other cases, the relationship is twisted as among the Ifaluk in Micronesia (Spiro, 1952), where various types of misfortune are attributed to the intervention of the souls of the malevolent dead. Such a variation of conception about the status and the attributes of the ghosts may be explained in each case by reference to the characteristics of each society. Furthermore, other aspects of eschatology, such as the location of the Land of the Dead (if this is conceived), the journey of the departed spirits, future life and the like, are closely linked to the supposed relationship between the dead and the living. Insomuch as this relationship is imagined by the living (the surviving), the whole range of eschatology has a foundation in what man thinks of the death of others and its consequences. I am then in agreement with a view that Firth "hazards":

It is rather as a framework for activity in this world and for positive experience in life that concepts about the continuity and fate of the soul are developed rather than as protection against death (1967:334); emphasis original).

Now, to turn back to the Iban, the ghosts retain a somewhat similar status to that which they had during their lifetimes. They continue to be the personalities. Their images, often recalled in dreams, are regarded by the Iban as continuing personalities. Although their presence in the sphere of the living is felt somewhat cumbersome and onerous, manifest fear of the ghosts is lacking among the Iban. As an informant once put it, "ghosts do not reprimand or attack us, but they merely ask
us for concern." Unless a particular ghost is frequently seen in one's dreams, dreams of the dead are spoken of as simple mundane affairs. Moreover, the ghosts are sometimes conceived by the Iban to be manifestly benevolent to the living. Some Iban have gained religious inspiration from encounters with the dead in their dreams. I witnessed at the burial of Sta a revealing example of a common attitude of the surviving towards the dead. When the coffin reached the bottom of the grave and was about to be covered with earth, a man threw a small stone into the grave, shouting, "Give me a charm (for agriculture)!" Another man later reported that one could ask the dead for something because a deceased person had become a spirit (antu). Thus, the living and ghosts have a reciprocal relationship in asking for each other's favours.

And yet the ghosts, as dead personalities, may disturb the living. Thus they tend to consume rice, husked and unhusked, to the detriment of the living's economy. In this respect it is better that they should be quietly and self-sufficiently settled in the Land of the Dead. The very term antu has often, though not always, a negative connotation to the Iban, if only because the Iban feel they are surrounded by various evil spirits in their daily life. There is thus mild antipathy towards the ghosts who frequent the world of the living. Some Iban solve these contradictory feelings towards the dead by enshrining some of the dead in the vicinity of the longhouses, that is, within the sphere of the living. They call the spirits of the enshrined dead petara ("gods"), which is itself a sub-category of antu but lacks the negative connotation. By identifying them in this way, the living expect their benevolence, unimpaired by possible hazards connected with other antu and the ordinary dead. The enshrined spirits need not be settled in the Land of the Dead, which is near to but also separate from the sphere of the living. They are thus metaphorically said to be still alive in this world.
The Iban seem to be cognitively satisfied with their eschatology which propounds the continuity of life in the Land of the Dead. Grief over a death of a loved person is gradually mitigated by the belief in the survival of his spiritual aspect. The essential element of Iban eschatology is the continuity of life. Iban eschatology is concerned with life from its initial premise of the existence of semengat to its conclusion of belief in future life. Death is a matter of fact, which cannot be avoided by any human effort. The Iban fully acknowledge this fact; their eschatology explains the fact of death by substituting life for death.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Firth, Raymond 1967 The Fate of Souls. In *Tikopia Ritual and Magic*. Boston, Beacon Press. (Originally published as a Frazer Lecture 1955.)


Freeman, Derek 1949-1951 Fieldnotes.


1975b Severed Heads that Germinate. A Paper read at 47th ANZAAS Congress held in Canberra.


Grabowski, F. 1889 Der Tod, das Begräbnis, das Tiwah oder Totenfest und Ideen über das Jenseits bei den Dajaken. Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie. 2:177-204.


1963a Dyak Burial Customs. In The Sea Dyaks and Other Races of Sarawak. Kuching, Borneo Literature Bureau.


Kruyt, A.C. 1906 *Het Animisme in den Indischen Archipel.* s'Gravenhage, Martinus Nijhoff.

Leigh, Michael 1975 *The Rising Moon.* Sydney, University of Sydney Press.


1962 *Sengalang Burong.* Kuching, Borneo Literature Bureau.

1966a *Tusun Pendidai.* Kuching, Borneo Literature Bureau.


1967b *Peturan Iban.* Kuching, Borneo Literature Bureau.

1968 *Leka Sabak.* Kuching, Borneo Literature Bureau.

1972 *Gawai Antu.* Kuching, Borneo Literature Bureau.

(n.d.) Manuscripts.


Sell, Hans J. 1955 *Der schlimme Tod bei den Völkern Indonesiens.* s'Gravenhage, Mouton.


Sutlive, Vinson Jr. 1978 *The Iban of Sarawak.* Illinois, AHM.


Wurm, S.A. and Wilson B. 1975 *English Fderlist and Reconstructions in Austronesian Languages.* Canberra, Department of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University.