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THE COMING OF THE GODS
A Study of an Invocatory Chant
(Timang Gawai Amat)
of the Iban of the Baleh River Region
of Sarawak

James Jemut Masing

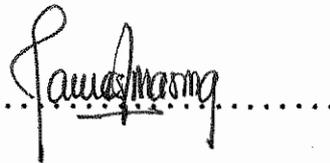
Thesis submitted for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
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February, 1981



Pelajar tu kena ngingat ka samoa lemambang bansa Iban di Sarawak, laban penemu enggau pengelandik sida adat asal timang bedau meruan sampai ka sahari tu.

This dissertation is dedicated to all of the bards of the Iban of Sarawak, whose knowledge and skill have kept alive to this day the tradition of the *timang*.

Except where otherwise acknowledged in the text,
this thesis represents my original research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Jemut Masing", written over a horizontal dotted line.

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Abstract

Traditionally, the Iban of Sarawak were swidden cultivators whose economy based on hill rice (*padi bukit*) depended upon the availability of virgin forest. Their farming practices, coupled with their dependence on the forest for its produce and game, and the social prestige attached to pioneers involved them in periodic migrations in search of new territory. In so doing they came into conflict with other tribes of Borneo who, like themselves, depended upon the forest for their livelihood. To be a successful pioneer an Iban had to be an effective warrior. To be an effective warrior, it was necessary, according to Iban belief, to have the assistance of their high god of war, Singalang Burong, commonly known as Lang. Lang was invoked by the performance of a *gawai amat* and the chanting of its associated *timbang*. This *timbang* depicts the gods on their journey to the world of men, and their subsequent participation in a ritual feast and other activities, at the end of which charms and blessings are bequeathed on the man who has performed this ritual.

This dissertation has two objectives: i) the translation of the whole text of the *timbang gawai amat* into an English version that captures the spirit and aesthetics of the *timbang* as an oral tradition; and ii) the discussion of the place of this *timbang* and its associated ritual feast in traditional Iban society. The views are advanced that this particular version of the *timbang* came into prominence when the Iban, in migrating to new territories, were faced by the need to become effective warriors, and, that the continued performance of these ancient rites and chants, once integral to the cult of warfare and head-hunting, is an attempt by the contemporary Iban to maintain their identity in the face of their rapidly changing world.

Acknowledgements

The research and writing of this dissertation, including my M.A. (Qualifying) course, was carried out under the generous auspices of a Research Scholarship from the Australian National University. Throughout the period of my work I have been indebted to many people whose assistance I have greatly appreciated.

I would first like to express my gratitude to my academic supervisor and mentor, Professor J.D. Freeman, without whose help and dedicated supervision the writing of this dissertation would not have been possible. It was Professor Freeman, who, in 1976, first suggested to me that, having read anthropology at Victoria University in New Zealand, I might, as an Iban, make a study of the principal invocatory chant of my own people, which he had been instrumental in having recorded in 1949. During my field study of Iban bards he regularly, through correspondence, commented on my field reports pointing to gaps in my inquiries and indicating problems that required further investigation. On my return to Canberra he meticulously and patiently read every chapter of this dissertation in its various draft versions, especially the translation of the *timbang* text, pointing out weaknesses in my arguments and suggesting words and phrases that would be more expressive and appropriate. His deep appreciation of Iban culture has been an invaluable asset to me in my struggle to grasp the significance of the various facets of my own Iban traditions. The availability of his fieldnotes, from thirty years ago, provided me with excellent historical data. I would also like to thank Mrs M. Freeman for allowing me to include her portrait of the *Lembang*,

Igoh anak Impin, in this dissertation. I cannot enumerate all the benefits for which I am indebted to Professor Freeman. Nonetheless, I alone am responsible for descriptions and interpretations contained in this dissertation, written under his guidance.

I wish to thank Dr. M. Young, Dr. K. Endicott, Dr. J.J. Fox, Dr. G.N. Appell, Larry Cromwell, Mrs. Sue Walker (NZ), and the Anthropology (Faculty of Arts and R.S.Pac.S.) thesis writing seminar group headed by Professor A. Forge, the members of which read parts of my draft chapters and gave me many useful suggestions. Particular thanks are due to Mr. David Wilkins (Linguistics Department, Faculty of Arts) for assisting me with linguistic aspects of my work; to Ms. Judith Wilson for helping me with my English expression; to Mrs. Ann Buller, Mrs Ita Pead and Mrs. Ria van de Zandt for their generous assistance, including the typing of some of my drafts; and to the friends who proof read this dissertation before and after its final typing.

I would also like to express my thanks to Mr. Lucas Chin, Curator of the Sarawak Museum, for his assistance during my researches in Kuching; to Mr. Benedict Sandin for the useful discussions I had with him at his home in Kerangan Pinggai, in May, 1978; and especially to Mr. Patrick Ringkai of Gansurai, Sungai Layar, Saribas District, who, in 1949, under J.D. Freeman's direction, meticulously recorded in writing from the lips of a great Iban *lemambang*, Igoh anak Impin, the original version of the *timang* studied in this dissertation. The task of accurately recording an Iban *timang*, as I myself later discovered,

is a most demanding one. To all of my Iban informants who have assisted me in innumerable ways I remain extremely grateful.

I would like to express my special thanks and appreciation to my wife, Fiona, who, despite testing conditions in the field, accompanied me on all my travels in Sarawak. During the writing of this dissertation she read my drafts, helped me to improve my English, and assisted me in typing. I am also especially thankful to my mother and the other members of my family whose understanding has been a constant help and encouragement to me.

Last but not least, I wish to express deep gratitude to *aki* Igoh and all of the Iban *lemambang* who, over the years, have kept alive a truly magnificent piece of oral tradition. It is these *lemambang* indeed, who made possible this study of the *timbang gawai* that is central to the culture of the Iban of the Baleh region of Sarawak. It is to the *lemambang* of the Iban people then, that I dedicate this dissertation, in the hope that through it their achievements will become widely known and appreciated.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1. On the Translation of Iban into English

This dissertation is an attempt to understand a specific ritual, or invocatory chant (*timbang*) in the context of pagan Iban culture, and to translate its complete text into English. The *timbang* in which I am particularly interested, and which will be the focus of my study, is chanted during the Iban's most elaborate and prestigious ritual activity, the *gawai amat* (ritual of high significance). The main body of this text (Parts 1 to 8) was collected by Freeman, and an Iban field assistant, Patrick Ringkai, in the Baleh region from July, 1949 to January, 1950. The last episode of the *timbang* (Part 9), including the version of Kesulai's emissary to Lang Singalang Burong, the Iban god of war (see Appendix A), was collected by me during my fieldwork in 1978-1979. The *lemambang* (bard) responsible for the text collected by Freeman and Ringkai was Igoh anak Impin of Sungai Majau in the Seventh Division.

A brief account of Igoh's background may give us insight as to the quality of the *timbang* to be studied. His father, Impin, was a reputable *lemambang* and his uncle, *manang* Bungai, was a well-known shaman in the Baleh region in about 1950 (cf. Freeman, 1967:315-345). By the time he became Freeman's informant, Igoh was a *tuai rumah* (longhouse headman), and was widely recognized as a highly accomplished *lemambang* whose repertoire of skills included a wide range of traditions. He died from



Igoh anak Impin, master *lemambang* of Sungai Majau, in the Baleh region of Sarawak; a drawing made by Monica Freeman on 13 July, 1949, during the period that Igoh was communicating to Patrick Ringkai the *timbang gawai amat* translated and studied in this dissertation.

ill health in the late 1960s. His reputation as a master *lemambang* is still vividly remembered by many, including my *lemambang* informants of 1978-1979, some of whom were once the students of Igoh. In fact, Sanggau, from whom I collected the last episode of the *timbang*, once studied with Igoh.

My primary aim in translating this *timbang* into English is to bring to the attention of anthropologists and others, one of the most significant facets of Iban culture. One of the things revealed in the course of my research was the intense interest and keen enjoyment shown by the Iban to the recitation of their traditional *timbang*. I never failed to attract an audience, ranging from the age of about eight upwards whenever a *timbang* invocation was played on my cassette player. Bearing in mind that on such occasions the *timbang* is chanted out of context (i.e. not during a ritual feast), and its text contains many esoteric words and phrases, the interest shown by both young and old, requires closer investigation. What I found in my ensuing investigations considerably influenced my approach to the task of translation. The young appreciate the *timbang* mainly as an epic with their favourite culture heroes and well-known gods and spirits as the main characters. While the adults appreciate it on at least three levels: (i) a traditional epic, (ii) as a piece of poetry, (iii) for the style in which lines are chanted or recited. The *timbang* then, when chanted out of the context of a *gawai* (ritual feast) is admired and listened to principally as an epic narrated in a free flowing style. It is my intention in this present dissertation to adhere to the particular aesthetic of the *timbang*, as a piece of oral literature.

This is not a dissertation in linguistics, but in the field of cultural anthropology. In my handling the Iban text of the *timbang gawai amat* my intention has not been to produce a strictly literal, word for word, translation into English, for the reasons that this approach, appropriate though it is for a technical study of the Iban language, does not result in a version that adequately conveys to an English reader the meaning and spirit of the original. In carrying out this intention I have worked in very close collaboration with my academic supervisor, Professor J.D. Freeman, with the constant aim of producing a translation that is faithful to the meaning and spirit of the Iban text. And at the same time to make it both comprehensible and readable in the English language so facilitating an appreciation of the anthropological significance of the *timbang* as a whole. This has been no easy undertaking, and has, indeed involved long discussion and frequent revision in the course of an attempt to arrive at the best possible translation. As an example of the kind of problem regularly encountered in the very lengthy Iban text, let me cite the following line from Part I, translated word for word.

Line 3 Lunchik geman di rarik unsai ka di
pointed/ teeth/ which slice/ pours/ on/
tikai aji bakebelik.
mat / a species / variegated./
of rat

The words *lunchik geman di rarik* refer literally to human teeth, but in the context of the *timbang*, are understood as referring to the voice, or chant of the *lemambang*, it being in this way that they are construed by Iban listeners. Thus, a strictly literal translation into English

involving the specific mention of teeth, tends to create misunderstanding. In such cases I have endeavoured to produce in the English version, the meaning to which the Iban words are actually referring. And where the literal meaning of the Iban text seems warranted, a footnote is used. Again, in cases where the Iban text contains a reference to some culturally esoteric detail, such as the particular motif in a mat, or *ikat* fabric, I have, elected to give a generalized description of the object in question. A literal rendering into English, in those cases, would present difficulties that would be likely to interrupt the flow of the overall translation without compensating advantage in comprehension. Thus my translation of the Iban:

Iban: Lunchik geman di rarik unsai ka di tikai aji bakebelik
(literally: Pointed/ teeth/ which slice/ pours/ on/ mat/
a species of rat/ variegated/)

becomes "My song I pour forth on this beautifully patterned mat."

There are occasions when some metaphors appear in both versions without affecting the flow and clarity of the translation. The use of seed as a metaphor for a trophy head, is an example. Thus, *igi ranyai* is literally translated as 'seed of the shrine'. In cases where diverse and rare kinds of seed are used as metaphors for a trophy head, I gloss them all as 'seed' in quotation marks.¹ In some instances I have taken the liberty of adding an English word or phrase to the formal translation of the Iban text. Take for example line 57 of Part II:

Laman aji pesiri tedong, literally means, "Abode/ male/ potent/ cobra/. I, however, have translated this line as follows: "The abode of the potent cobra: the Spirit of the Knife."

Lemambang and well-informed Iban know that *aji pesiri tedong* specifically refers, in this instance, to the Spirit of the Knife. This information I have added to the translation to ensure essential comprehension of the Iban text. Such interpretations are necessitated because of what Steiner (1975:46) has described as 'the element of privacy in language', or the 'concurrent flow of articulate consciousness' in human speech.

Language is also in a state of constant flux. "A text is embedded in specific historical time," writes Steiner (*ibid.*:24), thus to read fully "is to restore all that one can of the immediacies of value and intent in which speech actually occurs." I have therefore, had to contend with two challenges in translating the Iban *timang*. I have had to deal with a text dating, in the main from the 1940s and earlier, and I have also had to transfer meanings from one culture to another. A metaphor, or simile when it is literally transferred from one language to another often assumes an incongruous meaning. Lang Singalang Burong, for instance, when complimenting his wife often addresses her as '*kendi aji*' or 'an antique kettle'. Such a form of address is scarcely complimentary in the western society; but to translate them using words or phrases which would convey the appropriate meaning is impossible without changing the wording of the Iban version. When faced with this kind of situation, I simply resort to literal translation and use footnotes to convey the intended meaning. Quite often in the course of my work, I have had in translating the *timang*, to reconstruct past events and objects that were being referred to in the Iban text. This has necessarily involved some degree of interpretation, but this is inescapable in dealing with such a complex, traditional text. I have striven for historical accuracy in all these reconstructions and interpretations.

Similarly in the course of translating other parts of the *timbang*, I have also tried, as far as possible, to be faithful to the version. Even though it has not been possible to reproduce in English the intricate structure of the Iban text, an attempt has been made to reproduce an approximation to the general form of the Iban version.

Some notes on written Iban

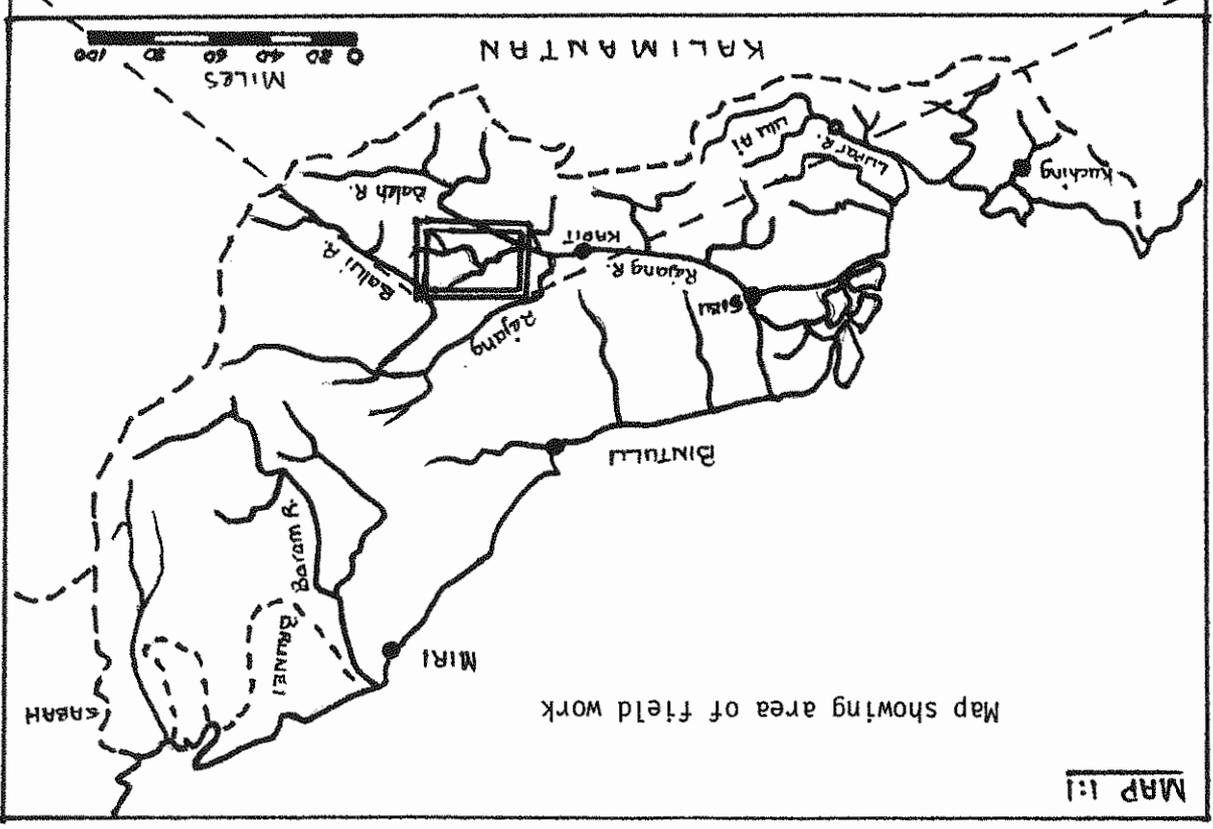
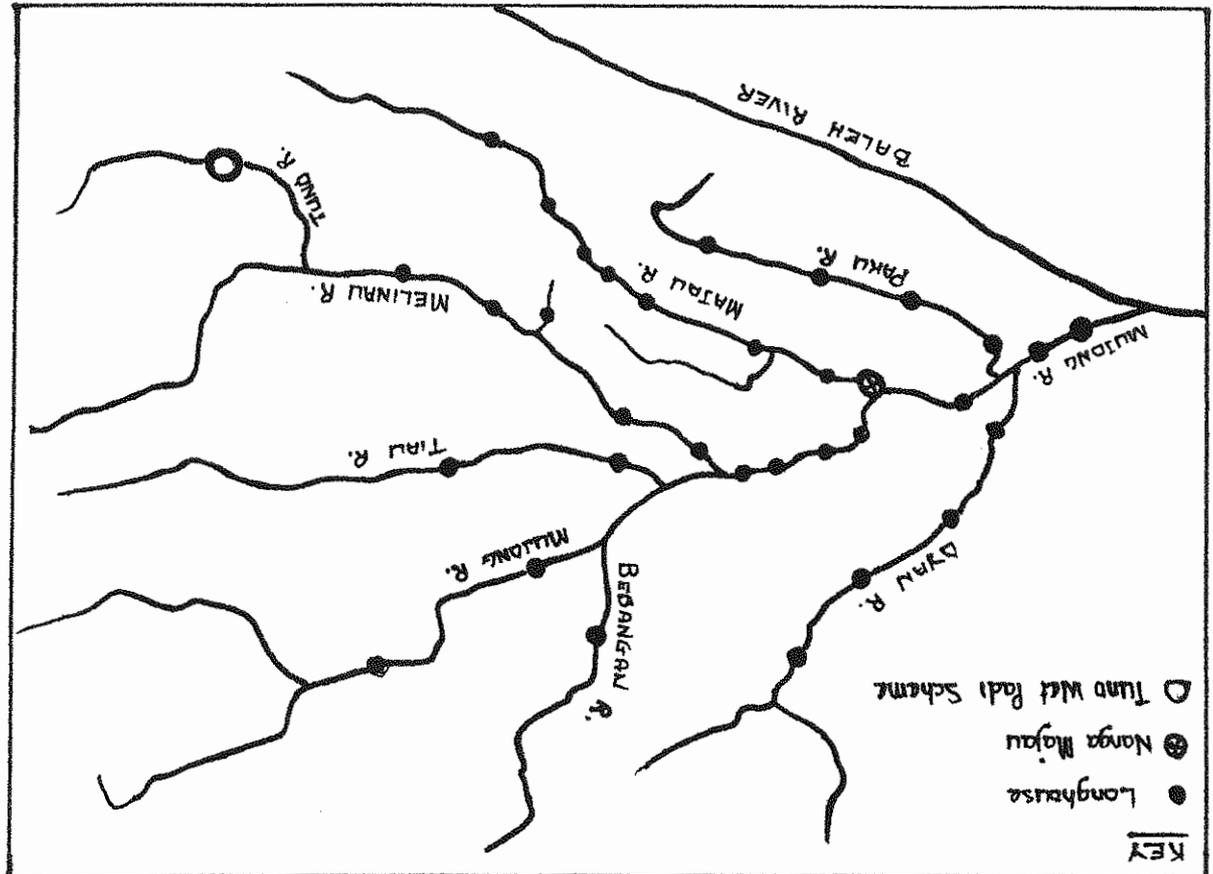
The orthography of the Iban language, based on the standard Roman alphabet, approximately represents its phonetic characteristics. Despite the general uniformity of spoken Iban throughout Sarawak, there are some regional differences in orthography, as for instance, between the Saribas-Skrang Iban and the Baleh Iban, in their intonation and stress in certain words. This results in regional differences in orthography. For example, the Iban word for 'brave': the Saribas-Skrang spell it as *berani* (cf. Sandin, 1977), while the Baleh Iban spell it as *brani*.

In the Iban language glottalization is significant because it marks not only the pronunciation of words but also their meaning. For example, the Iban word *baka*: without the glottal stop after the final vowel *a*, means, like or similar; while with the glottal stop (*baka'*) it means, basket. In this dissertation, however, I have followed the now widely accepted convention of not indicating glottalization in printed Iban. Information on glottalization is given in N.C. Scott's A Dictionary of Sea Dayak (1956).

2. Areas of Field Work

Most of my field research was conducted in the Mujong river basin, in the Seventh Division, a part of what was the Third Division, from June, 1978 to July, 1979. The fast flowing waters of the Mujong run from the ranges of the Hose Mountains to the Baleh river in a north-east to south-west direction. The Mujong river has six main tributaries (the Oyan, Paku, Majau, Melinau, Tiau and Bebangon), and contains 33 longhouses (see map 1:1). Throughout my field work, my wife and I stayed at my family's farm house at Nanga Majau, and from there I carried out my research among different Iban communities in the Baleh-Mujong river basins.

My field research was facilitated by two important circumstances. Firstly, my arrival in Sarawak at the end of May, 1978 coincided with the beginning of the Iban festive season which usually lasts for a period of about three months; while my departure at the end of July, 1979 was at about the end of the festive season for that year. Thus, during my 14 months of research I was able to witness and participate in two seasons of ritual activities. This circumstance greatly contributed to my understanding of the various rituals and rites associated with the *timbang* invocation. The gathering of large numbers of Iban, including *lemambang*, from different parts of the Baleh-Mujong region into one place during a *gawai*, meant that I did not have to travel far and often for information pertinent to my work. Moreover, by actually attending the numerous *gawai* and other ritual activities I was able to learn, directly, from the *lemambang* and others involved in the rituals about their values, aims and nature of their rites and skills. Secondly,



MAP 1:1

Map showing area of field work

the presence of a major wet *padi* scheme in the headwaters of the Melinau river, was also a particularly favourable consequence. This scheme is situated on an unusually flat area of land in the Tuno river at the foothills of two famous mountains, Bukit Salong and Bukit Mabong, where Iban rebels led by Penghulu Merum made their last stand in May, 1915 (cf. Pringle, 1960:262; Freeman, 1970:130ff). The Tuno scheme was first mooted in early 1970, with the intention of developing, by proper drainage and irrigation, a wet *padi* area. The actual clearing of the primeval forest began in 1973-1974. About 20 longhouses, all of which are from the Mujong river basin, take part in the programme. Each participating *bilek*-family is allotted a two acre plot for planting rice. At the time of my research, a *bilek*-family only had the right over their plot as long as it was being cultivated.² Should they decide not to plant their plot, and instead cultivate a traditional swidden, any interested *bilek*-family might cultivate their unused plot without any compensation. If a family fails to cultivate their plot for two consecutive years, the *bilek*-family concerned then relinquished all rights over the plot, and it was allotted, by the Government, to some *bilek*-families wishing to join the scheme. This scheme meant that I could focus my field work in one small area, and have, at my disposal, a large number of suitable Iban informants. Under Sarawak conditions where researchers often have to navigate treacherous rapids to seek information, the congregation of many informants in one place is a real advantage.

3. The Iban Occupation of the Baleh River Basin

The Iban of Sarawak migrated from the Kapuas river (which is now part of Indonesian Borneo) into the middle reaches of the Batang Lupar

river (which later became part of Sarawak) during the 16th and 17th centuries (Sandin, 1967; Pringle, 1970; Freeman, 1970; Jensen, 1974). The geographical depression which stretches from the lake district of the Kapuas river into Batang Lupar is one of the easiest routes into Sarawak from Indonesian Borneo, and it was this route that the early Iban migrants most probably used. It should be noted that the Iban migration from the Kapuas into Sarawak was a long and complex process with much ebb and flow of population (Pringle, 1970:42). Thus the Dutch Colonial Government, in the early 19th century, viewed the Iban as spreading from their homeland in the Batang Lupar into the Kapuas river valley.

From the mid Batang Lupar the Iban migrated into Sarawak in three main directions: (i) to the north-west, (ii) the north-east, (iii) and the east. Those who went north-east went down the Lupar river and settled at Bukit Balau, and from there proceeded westward into the Sebuyau, Sadong and Samarhan river basins in what later became known as the First Division of Sarawak. The north-east movement, according to Sandin (SMJ, 1956:60-62), was into the Saribas-Skrang river basins. This group came into contact with the pre-existing population of Baketans and the Serus. The Baketan after some initial resistance, accommodated themselves to the ways of the newcomers, while the Serus strongly opposed Iban incursions. Subsequently, however, caught between the Iban expanding from the interior and the Malays from the coast a number of the Serus were converted to Islam and thereby became 'Malays'. The Iban who moved eastward settled in the headwaters of Ulu Ai, Engkari, and Lemanak river basins. It is the further

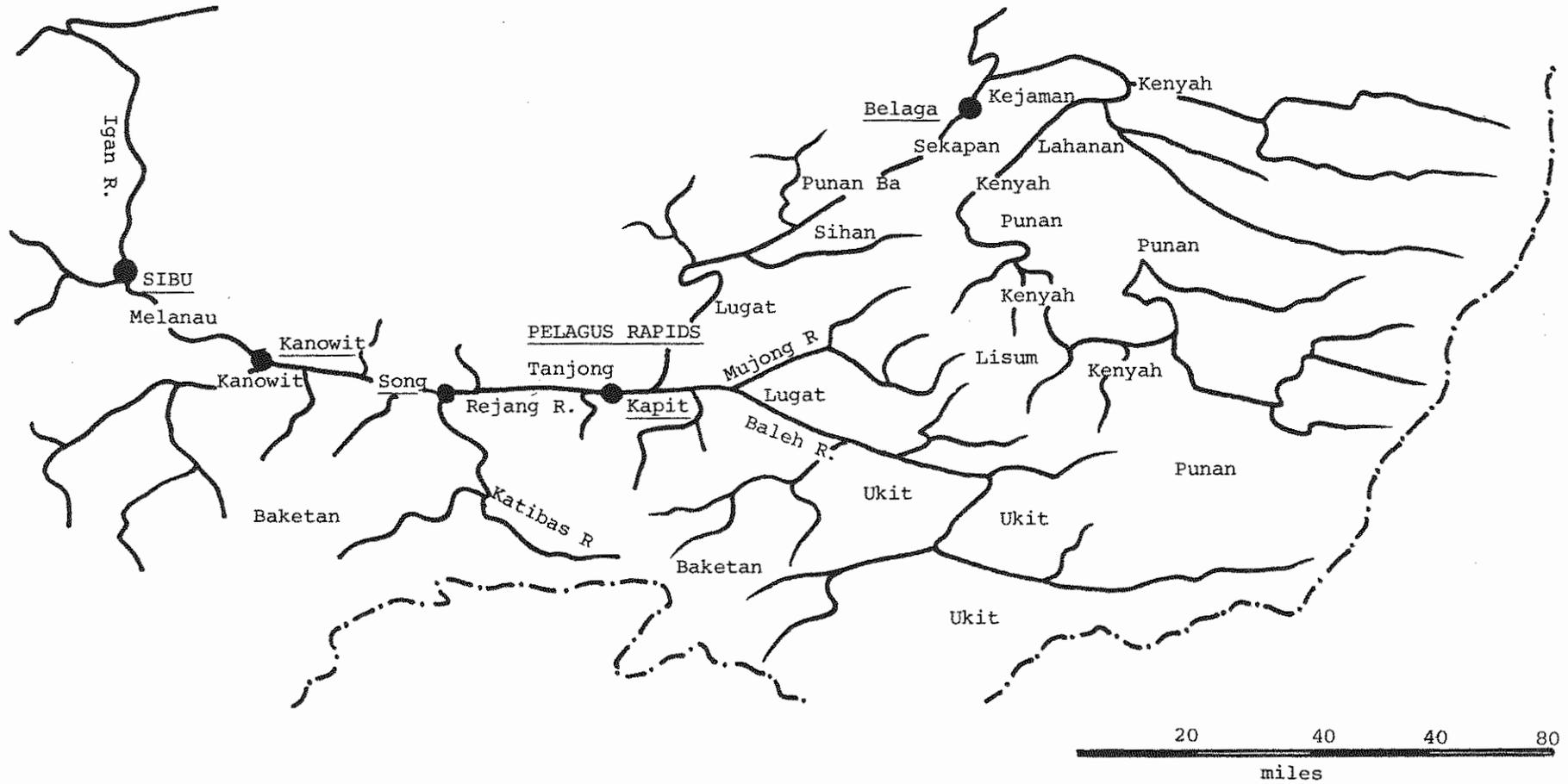
migrational history of the Ulu Ai Iban into the Baleh river basin that is of particular relevance to this present study.

Iban migration into the southern tributaries of the Rejang river began in the early decades of the 19th century (Freeman, 1970; Pringle, 1970). The Ulu Ai Iban came from the Batang Lupar and the Kanyau (a tributary of the Kapuas river), into the headwaters of the Katibas (cf. Freeman, 1970:130ff; Pringle, 1970:252ff). The precise chronology of Iban migration into the Katibas is not known, but by the time Charles Brooke visited this river in December, 1861 Iban settlements were established along its banks. "This Katibas river," wrote Brooke (1866, ii:192), "must muster about 10,000 souls; and here is one instance of the rapid increase of inhabitants as they came from the Batang Lupar." They were in 1861 "rapidly clearing every hill in the vicinity of the Katibas river" for their swiddens.

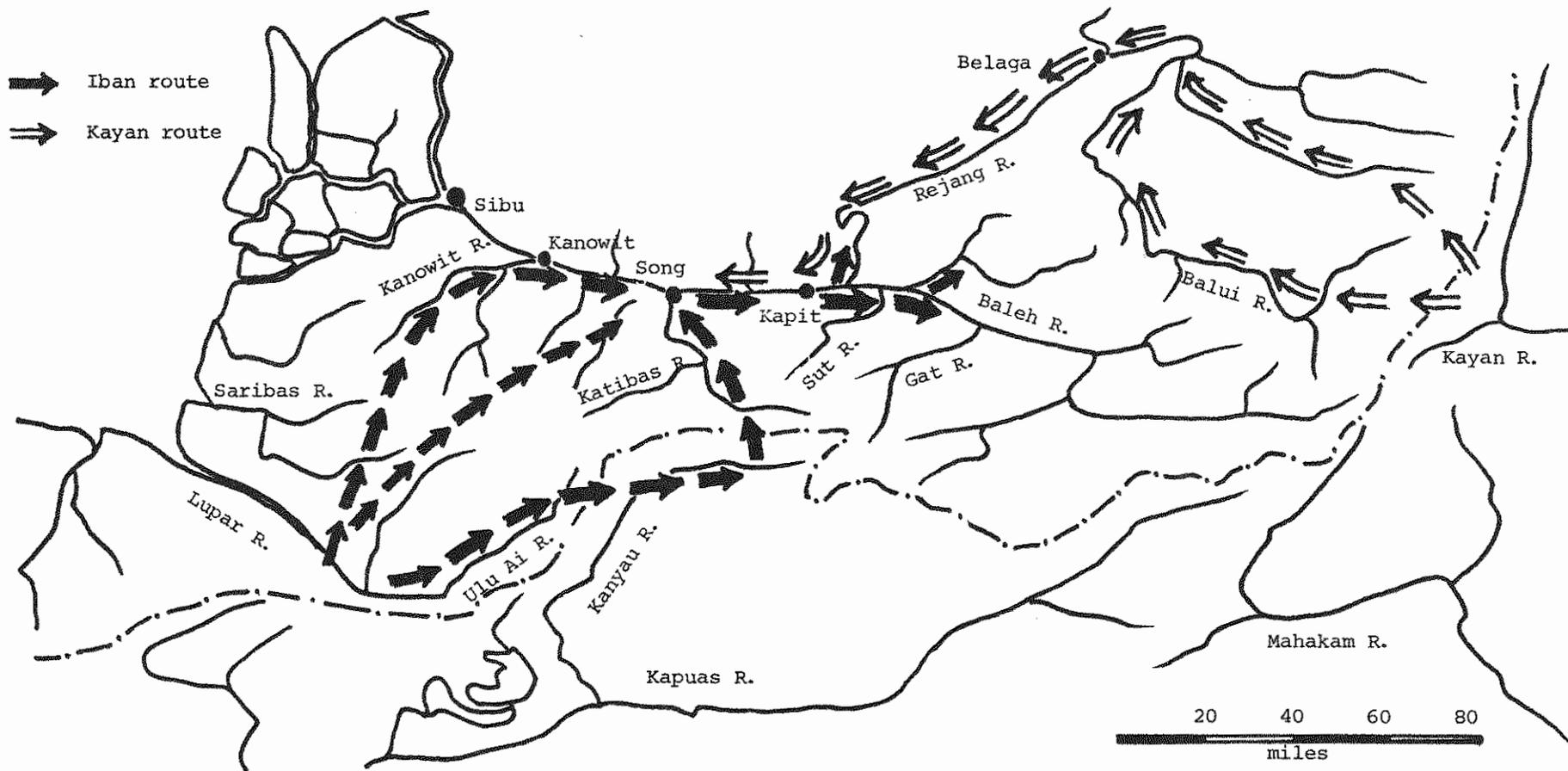
At the time of Iban migration into the Rejang river basin the areas were sparsely populated. Scattered along the Rejang and its main tributaries (from Sibu to the Pelagus rapids, and parts of the Baleh) were communities of Kanowits, Tanjongs and Lugats, living in longhouses and cultivating sago and other crops (cf. map 1:2). The forest was the territory of bands of nomadic Ukits, Punans and Baketans, who relied on the plants and animals of the forest for their subsistence (cf. Freeman, 1970:130). The Baketans similar to those encountered by the early Iban settlers in the Second Division, established a symbiotic relationship with the Iban. The Ukits however contested the Iban advance at many places, and especially in the Baleh area. It was the Kayan, who, like the Iban themselves, were newcomers to the Rejang river basin who became the main opponents of the Iban for the occupancy of the region.

Map 1:2

Map showing the approximate locations of aboriginal tribal groups in the Rejang river valley prior to Iban and Kayan settlement



Since it was the Kayan³ who were the most formidable opponents of the Iban, and who are the subject of Iban curses in the chanting of the *timbang*, I shall briefly refer to the migrational history of the Kayan. In so doing I shall focus on the conflict that inevitably developed between these two invading peoples of the Rejang-Baleh river basins. The original home of the Kayan was in the mountain plateau situated beyond the headwaters of the Balui river on Sarawak, in the upper Batang Kayan river of Indonesian Borneo. This region is commonly known as Apo Kayan (*apo*, means plateau). About the middle of the 18th century, the Kayan began migrating in three main directions (Smythies, SMJ, 1955:495; Rousseau, 1974:17-24): (i) north-east into the Baram river valleys, (ii) north-west into the headwaters of the Rejang river, (iii) south-west into the Mahakam and the Kapuas headwaters.⁴ My main concern in this section is with the north-west movement of the Kayan into the Rejang river valley. The Kayan, like their Iban opponents, were swidden cultivators, whose livelihood depended on the primeval rain forests of Borneo. As they migrated down from the headwaters of the Rejang, clearing tracts of virgin forest for their swiddens, and exploiting the neighbouring jungle for its produce, the Kayans either displaced or subjugated the ancient inhabitants of these places (the Lahanan, Sekapan and Kejaman, cf. Rousseau, 1974 & 1978; de Martinoir, 1974). By the middle of the 19th century the Kayan advance reached the middle reaches of the Rejang river. Baring-Gould and Bampfylde (1909:281-282) report numerous attacks by the Kayan in the 19th century on Iban living in the middle section of the Rejang river valley. And Charles Brooke (Brooke, 1866, ii:196), while travelling down the Katibas



Map 1:3

Map showing the migration routes of the Iban and Kayan into the Rejang river valley in the 19th century

river on the 6th December 1861, writes: "We shortly after mid-day passed the black posts of Balang's house, which had been burnt by the treacherous attack of the Kayans⁵ subsequent to the attack on the Kabah." Thus in about the middle of the 19th century we have in the middle section of the Rejang river, two belligerent peoples confronting one another, and competing for the same material goods: the primeval rain forest of Borneo (cf. map 1:3).

Then, in 1863, Charles Brooke organized a punitive expedition to punish the murderers of Fox and Steele who had sought sanctuary among the Kajang and Kayan in the upper reaches of the Rejang (Brooke, 1866, II:231ff). This expedition which included some 15,000 men (most of them Iban) later became known as "The Great Kayan Expedition of 1863". It dealt the Kajang and Kayan of the upper Rejang a crushing blow, and effectively broke their resistance to Iban occupation of the lower and middle sections of the Rejang. It did not however, discourage them from occasionally attacking and harassing the Iban advance, especially as the latter ventured into the jungle of the Rejang headwaters for forest produce.

After the Brooke raj had made peace with the Kayan and other interior tribes of Borneo at Kanowit in October, 1863, the Iban were free to resume and extend their occupation of the main valley of the Rejang. Freeman in his Report on the Iban (1970:130-142) gives a summary account of the Iban occupation of the Baleh river basin and its tributaries. Soon after 1863, there was an exodus of Iban settlers moving up the main valley of the Rejang and its minor tributaries. The Brooke raj made no attempt to restrain the Iban, and by the early

1880s, the lower reaches of the Baleh river had been occupied. However, when the Brooke government decided to restrain the Iban from further settlement along the Baleh, some Iban not wishing to be subject to Rajah Brooke's authority, retreated to the precipitous ranges at the headwaters of the Mujong river. The government launched two punitive expeditions (both in 1881) before the Mujong Iban rebels surrendered. They were then asked to settle below Kapit, and the whole of Baleh was banned from further settlement.

This situation was not to last. Less than ten years after settling below Kapit, a group of Iban circumventing government ban on the settlement of the Baleh, moved overland by way of Sungai Kapit, to the headwaters of the Sut (a tributary of the Baleh). Then in 1905, led by Merum, a large group of Iban went down the Sut river and emerged into the Baleh river, and settled its banks as far as the Mujong river. Expecting to be severely reprimanded for defying the Rajah's order, the Iban settlers were surprised when the Rajah at a meeting held in Kapit on 25 April, 1906 announced to the Iban that:

The Baleh river should be opened for occupation by Dayaks as far as the mouth of the Gat river; that no permanent dwelling would be permitted in the side rivers; and that anyone putting up a permanent dwelling beyond the boundary of the Gat river, would be dealt with severely (SG, 1909:171).

However, appetite of the Iban for fresh tracts of virgin land was still not satisfied, and once again, led by Merum, the Iban in 1909 and 1910, in direct defiance of the Rajah's order occupied the Mujong river. Similar movements took place in other parts of the Baleh river. Iban settlers entered the Gat and the Merirai, both tributaries of the Baleh, which the Rajah had, in 1906, explicitly ordered as forbidden to

settlements. It took the Brooke government, from February, 1915 to May, 1918, in three punitive expeditions to clear the Baleh river of 'illegal' Iban settlers. Merum and his followers who had taken up a defensive position on Bukit Salong in the Melinau headwaters were defeated by the Rajah's force in May, 1915, and later surrendered at Kapit. The Iban rebels in the Gat were finally defeated by the punitive expedition of May, 1918. In that same year all Iban settlers in the Baleh region had been asked to settle below Kapit, and thus for the second time the Baleh river valley was empty of Iban settlement.

Then in 1922, the Iban were granted permission to reoccupy the Baleh and its tributaries. And again, for the third time, the Iban with their insatiable appetite for fresh tracts of primeval rain forest moved into the valleys of the Baleh, clearing the land for their swiddens, and searching the forest for its produce. By October, 1923, about 95 longhouse communities had reoccupied the Baleh and its main tributaries (SG, 1924:22). Today the Baleh river basin is one of the most important areas in Sarawak occupied by the Iban.

The Iban occupation of the Baleh was not entirely devoted to the cultivation of *padi*, nor was it marked by peaceful exploitation of the forest, instead as Freeman (1970:139) notes, "there was a sharp re-crudescences of head-hunting." It was this practice of head-hunting more than anything else, which had led the Rajah to ban the Iban from settling in the Baleh river basin in 1881 and 1918. The custom of head-hunting was too deeply-rooted a part of Iban culture for it to be easily abandoned. Thus, many Iban, when there was no government organized expedition, took it on themselves to launch raids on neighbouring tribes and communities.

For ambitious individuals, eager to establish themselves as men of courage and prowess, such raids were an irresistible attraction. The presence of overland routes from various tributaries of the Baleh into the Rejang, Batang Kayan and the Kapuas headwaters made it possible for the Iban raiding parties to enter these areas, and led to a period of sustained raiding of the tribes occupying the regions adjacent to the Baleh river.

Beyond borders of Sarawak, in what was then Dutch Borneo, the Kayan, Kenyah, Kanto, and other tribes occupying the headwaters of Batang Kayan, Mahakam, and the Kapuas rivers were subjected to Iban attacks.⁶ In 1900, for example, when a rumour spread that the Iban from Sarawak were organizing a punitive expedition in revenge for the five Ibans murdered in the Mahakam two years previously, the entire left bank of the Apo Kayan was deserted (Smythies, SMJ, 1955:507). The constant fear of Iban attack forced the tribes in this region, at the turn of the 20th century, to petition the Dutch colonial government for protection. In response to this petition a Dutch post was established at the headwaters of the Batang Kayan river, at Long Nawang, in 1906. This action was an expression of the Dutch colonial government's growing concern for the safety of their subjects inhabiting areas adjacent to Iban territories.

In Sarawak, the Iban advanced into the Baleh and their predilection for head-hunting resulted in bitter conflict with the Kayan and other tribes of the Upper Rejang, and proved to be a major problem for the Brooke government. In August-September, 1903, H.S.B. Johnson (SG, 1903 no.454) reported in accounts typical of those frequently published in

the Sarawak Gazette of that time, of an Iban raid in the upper Rejang.

August:

A Dyak name Unchat living in the Amang river had collected a *bala* (force) for the purpose of attacking the Lanan Kayans in Balulok Sabong's house a short distance above Belaga Fort. A report had been spread about by Dyaks returning from Belaga that Balulok Sabong had murdered a Machan Dyak by the name of Yai about 4 years ago.

September:

On arrival I heard from Mr Blaydes that Unchat's *bala* had returned having killed twenty-one of the Lanans in Balulok Sabong's house and taken ten captives and that about 500 upriver Dyaks had taken part in the expedition.

The frequency of Iban raids either for the reason described above, or simply for the purpose of procuring trophy heads fell heavily on the tribes residing on the upper Rejang. When H.B. Low (SG, 1882, November) was in the Balui river in April, 1882, the Kayans complained bitterly about Iban who had invaded their farms, and implored the Brooke government to keep the Iban out of their lands. Kirkpatrick, then the Resident of the Third Division, reported to the Rajah on the possible consequences of Iban raids, in these terms:

I cannot too strongly express to your Highness the restlessness which prevails in the upper waters. The Kayans are unable to farm or work away from their houses for fear of attacks from the Dyaks, and are even now very short of rice. They even talk of removing from the Rejang if this state of affairs continue as they are unable to obtain a livelihood (SG, 1905:230).

Understandably the Kayan and others retaliated by attacking Iban travelling parties. C.V. Brooke (SG, 1904:146) for example, reported two attacks on the Iban in 1904: "Some Dyaks had been killed in the Uma Lisoom country and ... a party of Dyaks gutta hunters from Yong had been attacked in the Mahakam country and lost three men." The Iban suspected the aggressors to be either Pengs or Ukits.

When two groups of belligerent 'forest people' were competing for the same area of land for their livelihood, such conflict was unavoidable. The Kayan, like the Iban, not only needed the primeval rain forest for the cultivation of their crops, they also required its produce for other uses. By the end of the 19th century, for instance, jungle products like damar, gutta-percha, *jelutong* resin, and rattan had become valuable sources of cash income. Because of this many Iban from the Baleh and Rejang crossed into the headwaters of the Rejang, Mahakam, Batang Kayan and the Kapuas in search for these commodities, while the Kayan and other tribes travelled down the Baleh and Rejang rivers to Kapit (predominantly Iban territory) in order to sell their goods. Both the Iban and the Kayan when on such trips were apt to resort to the taking of heads, when the opportunity offered. As Baring-Gould and Bampfyde (1909:387) wrote of this process:

... the young men have been mostly to blame, who, when away in the remote interior collecting jungle produce ... meeting with detached parties of their old foes take such opportunities of gaining renown as warriors, which awaits the return of a Dyak with a head trophy, however meanly obtained. Indiscriminate retaliation follows in the train of these acts, the victims being the first Dyaks met with, nearly always men guiltless of any hostile act, and often peaceable produce collectors from other parts of the country. So fresh feuds are established.

This atmosphere of unrest and distrust prevailed well into the early decades of the 20th century among the groups occupying the Rejang-Baleh river basins. The Brooke's government strategy of imposing heavy fines on any individual found initiating or participating in a raid without the approval of the Rajah, did not discourage some groups from taking enemy's heads whenever the opportunity arose.⁷ Finally, in November, 1924, a peace ceremony between the Kayan, Kenyah and Iban was

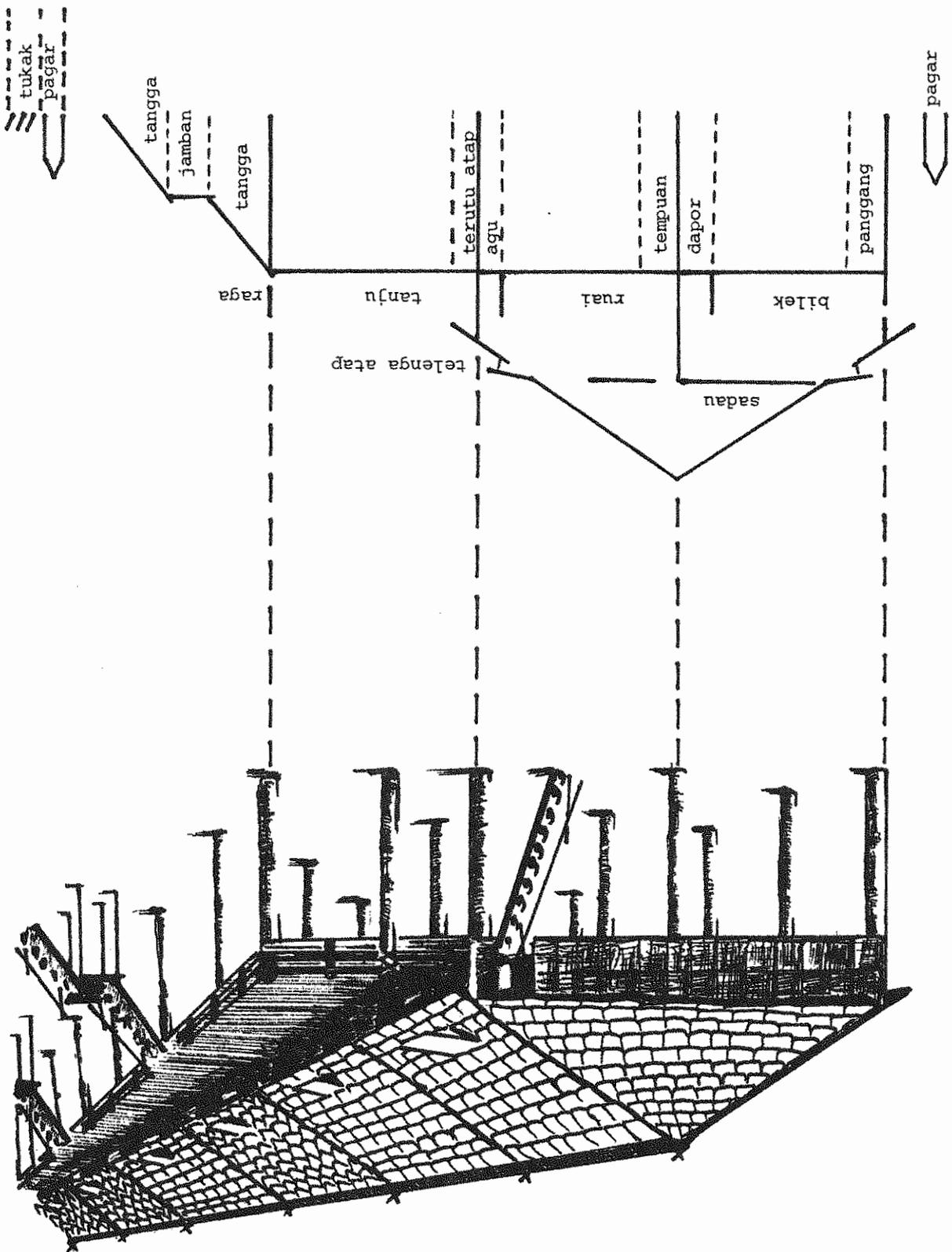


Diagram 1:1

An Iban Longhouse

held in Kapit. This pact in Pringle's (1970:239) words "enjoyed considerable success" in ending old enmities, and effectively marked the termination of hostilities between the Iban and other tribes of interior Borneo.

The Iban predilection for warfare and head-hunting, however, was revived when the Japanese occupied Sarawak from 1940 to 1945. Many Iban men of the Baleh region, especially in the latter part of the occupation, took part, with British troops, in the mopping up operation against Japanese soldiers in towns like Song and Kapit along the Rejang river valley. Then in the 1950s, during the communist insurrection in Malaya, a number of Baleh Iban were recruited by the British army as trackers. These historical events revived the desire of the Iban to invoke the power of their war god, Singalang Burong, and resulted in many special performances of their war ritual, the *gawai amat*. Thus the *gawai amat* performances witnessed by Freeman in the late 1940s and early 1950s, were directly associated with heads that had been taken during the Japanese occupation (personal communication).

4. The Longhouse: Its physical characteristics

The most salient characteristic of Iban social organization is the practice of longhouse domicile ... A longhouse is made up of a series of independently owned family apartments which are joined longitudinally one to the other as to produce a single attenuated structure (Freeman, 1970:1).

Freeman, in Report on the Iban (1970) describes and analyses the basic principles of Iban social organization. His thorough and systematic investigation of various aspects of an Iban *bilek*-family and the longhouse, makes, in my view, further extensive discussion of these

topics unnecessary in this thesis. It suffices in this context to point out that in Iban social organization a *bilek*-family is a social, ritual, allied unit of primary and paramount importance. It manages its own affairs, possesses its own land and property rights, cultivates its own crops, keeps its own charms (*pengaruh*), observes its own set of ritual prohibitions (*pemali*), and acknowledges no other *bilek*-family to be its master. In understanding the autonomous nature of an Iban *bilek*-family, it is crucial to realize, at the same time, that its right to make its decisions about its own affairs is exercised strictly within the framework of Iban *adat* (customary law). The Iban, it should be emphasized, are acutely aware of the need of keeping the *adat* if society is to be maintained. Thus any transgressor is promptly fined. Heppell (1975:303) in his study of Iban social control writes:

The Iban are quite clear about the importance of the *adat*. Without it, they say, there would be chaos and a quick demise of their society. This is why a person who repudiates the *adat* is driven from the group, for he is regarded as a harbinger of destruction. Each Iban therefore, belongs to an *adat* community, the harmony and continued existence of which is dependent on the members behaving as the *adat* requires.

Thus any member of Iban society may do as he or she chooses as long as the choice is made within the limits circumscribed by the *adat*. It is the recognition of the role of *adat* in their society which binds the otherwise aggressive and individualistic Iban into an actively co-operating society.

Some knowledge of the basic physical characteristics of an Iban longhouse is essential if we are to understand and appreciate the various references to a longhouse in the text of the *timbang gawai amat*. I shall therefore briefly describe a traditional Iban longhouse. A longhouse is divided into four main parts:

- (i) The *bilek* (family living room)
- (ii) The *ruai* (gallery)
- (iii) The *sadau* (loft, or garret)
- (iv) The *tanju* (open platform)

The Bilek

An Iban *bilek* (living room) is a place for cooking, eating, sleeping, and a variety of other domestic tasks, and for storing family heirlooms. It is separated from other *bilek* and from the *ruai* (gallery), by walls, usually of wooden planks. Sometimes there are openings in the side walls, so providing inter-communication between adjacent apartments. In some *bilek* there are openings in the back wall of the living rooms from which, on ritual occasions offerings are hung. A portion of the roof is so constructed that it can be raised a foot or two by means of a stick to form a kind of sky light (*telenga atap*). This sky light is opened at day time to let light into the living room, but is closed at night. On the floor at the back of the *bilek*, and frequently along both sides are jars (*tajau*), and bronze gongs (*tawak*) standing on a wooden board known as *panggang*. At the other end of the *bilek*, next to the wall separating it from the gallery is the family hearth (*dapur*). This is a place where the family meal is cooked. The hearth is made of packed clay, and is usually furnished with two relatively large stones, one on each end, on the top of which are placed iron rods for holding cooking pots. A few feet above the hearth, stacked in neat piles on a wooden scaffolding, is firewood, ready for use. On one side of the hearth is a door which opens to the

ruai (gallery). Iban doors are usually made of wood (hardwood is preferred when possible), and are closed by means of a heavy weight suspended from a string.

The *Ruai*

The *ruai* (gallery) is about the same size as the *bilek*, the difference being that the latter is open on all sides and thus giving access to all parts of the longhouse. Consequently it is used by members of the community as a kind of public thoroughfare. In this aspect it contrasts with the *bilek* which is the preserve of the immediate *bilek*-family. The space about three to four feet wide immediately adjacent to the wall which separates the living room from the gallery is known as *tempuan*. Here we find a large wooden mortar (*lesong*), stacks of additional firewood, a notched ladder (*tangga*), by which to reach the loft, and tethered fighting cocks. About half way to the centre of the *ruai* a cluster of blackened trophy heads may be found hanging from the loft. Directly beneath such trophy heads is a *bedilang* (made from a large stone slab or from packed clay) on which fires are kindled on chilly nights and during head-hunting rituals. On the wall directly opposite the *tempuan* a bunk-like enclosure (*agu*) may sometimes be found. This is a place where young unmarried men sleep. Immediately beside it, at a slightly lower elevation is a board, sometimes carved, about 3 feet wide, which runs the entire length of the *ruai*, which makes a convenient back rest. This is called *papan penyandih* (lit. 'board to recline on'). In the roof is a sky light similar to that found in the *bilek*. In the old days bronze cannons

taken during a raid or expedition were conspicuously placed on the *ruai*.

The *ruai* is a very important part of an Iban *bilek*-family's apartment. On it meetings (*baum*) are constructed, ritual activities performed and guests entertained. There too, men of the family spend most of their leisure time. At night it is turned into sleeping quarters for boys, unmarried men, and male visitors. Placed within easy reach on the roof, or hanging from the post in the *ruai* are the family accoutrements of war. The *ruai* is thus an important venue for social interaction in Iban society.

The *Sadau* (loft)

Above each family room, and jutting half way above the gallery is the *sadau* (loft, or garret). Here, in huge bark bins (*tibang*) a *bilek*-family's *padi* is stored. The *sadau* is also used to store other family possessions like mats, cane baskets of all sorts and other implements for domestic use. Young unmarried women may use the *sadau* to sleep in.

The *Tanju* (open platform)

The *tanju* is an open platform of about 20 to 25 feet wide adjacent to the *ruai*, and joined to all sections within the longhouse to form an unbroken raised platform. Because it is uncovered, hardwood is used to withstand the weather. The *tanju* is the main venue on which the *padi*, immediately after harvest, is winnowed and sunned before storing in the bark bins (*tibang*) in the loft. But, basically it is a drying platform on which anything that needs sunning or drying, may

be placed. At the outer edge of the *tanju* there is some kind of railing, which is interrupted for the placement of the notched ladders to the ground below. Because Iban longhouses are raised above the ground to a height of up to 15 feet (Ling Roth, 1896, ii:17n), there are usually two notched ladders used, separated halfway by a small platform known as a *jamban*.

The Fortification of an Iban Longhouse

In former days when hostilities existed between the tribal groups of the interior of Borneo, Iban longhouses were surrounded by strong wooden palisades to withstand enemy attacks. On the ground outside the palisade, sharpened bamboo spikes (*tukak*) were planted, and pits (*engkelubang*) were dug, in the bottom of which spikes again were planted. These pits were concealed by constructing some kind of weak wooden covering over the opening, and then camouflaged with dirt and dry leaves. As an added precaution, the notched ladder that gave direct access to the longhouse could be pulled at will. Brooke Low (in Ling Roth, 1896, ii:9-18) has given us a fairly detailed description of what a 19th century Iban longhouse was like.

A Sea Dayak village is a terrace upon posts varying in length according to the number of houses of which it is composed ... There is always a ladder at either end of the terrace by which to ascend, and sometimes one or more towards the centre of the *tanju* or open-air platform. The roof is thatched throughout with the same material - shingles or palm leaves ... The flooring in some villages is made of palm trees split into laths ... The outer walls are of plank, the inner of bark. No nails are used, the beams or rafters are lashed together with rattans or secured together with wooden pegs. The posts are innumerable and of hardwood. The village is surrounded at its base by a wooden palisade which is itself protected by *chevaux de frise* of pointed bamboo.

To conclude my discussion of the physical characteristics of a traditional Iban longhouse, it should be mentioned that the ground between the *tanju* and the *pemendai* (bathing place and mooring place for boats) is of some significance. On this area fruit trees and plants of various kinds are grown. Usually found beside the main entry ladder are dracaena plants (*sabang*), the leaves of which are used by the Iban for ritual purposes. And on the intervening ground, in front and around the longhouse are fruit trees like the jack-fruit (*nangka*), durian, rambutan, *lensat* (lacium), coconut, arecca palm and many others. Every fruit tree is individually owned by one of the *bilek*-families of the longhouse. Winding down from the base of the entry ladders to the river bank where the inhabitants of the longhouse bathe, wash and moor their boats, are several paths. Should a longhouse hold a cleansing ritual of some kind, it is on these paths that signs, sometimes in the form of a ritual hut (*langkau sukul*) are placed, notifying would be visitors that the longhouse is temporarily taboo (usually for a day) to visitors.

5. The Supernatural Beings: *Petara, Antu, Orang Panggau*

For the Iban, the term *antu* has a range of related meanings. *Antu* among the Iban is a generic term for spiritual beings; applied (in certain context) to all supernatural beings, as well as to the ghosts of the dead. When the term *antu* is used to refer to the ghosts of the dead, it is qualified by the Iban name for the after world, *Sabayan*. Thus the expression used to refer to the ghosts of the dead is *antu Sabayan*, meaning spirits of the after world. This term *antu*

is also, in a few instances, applied to gods (*petara*), who are said to be benevolently disposed to mankind, as, for example, Antu Betuah (the god of good fortune), and Antu Gayu (the god of long life). In the great majority of instances, however, the term *antu* refers to spirits whose disposition to humans is believed to be malevolent and threatening. In what follows I shall discuss the spirit world of the Iban under three headings:

- (i) *petara*, or gods
- (ii) *antu*, of a malevolent kind
- (iii) *orang panggau*, or culture heroes

Petara

The term *petara* refers to all supernatural beings who have benevolent intentions towards human beings. Perham (in Ling Roth, 1896, i:178-180) describes Iban *petara* in general as 'the preserver of men' who 'cannot be wrong, cannot be unclean'. The Iban state their gods cannot be but good (*petara nadai enda manah*, cf. Jensen, 1974:101). Iban *petara* are essentially anthropomorphic, exhibiting all human emotions and physical characteristics. Like humans the gods are susceptible to illness, prone to emotional extremes, and participate in ordinary tasks (e.g. farming, hunting, fishing) for sustenance. However, unlike humans they possess supernatural powers which, when occasion demands, empowers them to accomplish extraordinary feats, and enables them to metamorphose into any form.

Both beings, man and gods, from their respective worlds, can and do find themselves in each others domains. There are myths which

relate incidents where gods appear in the world of humans, and participate in their activities without being recognized (cf. Howell, 1963:17-23). Then again, there are humans, it is related, who find their way to the world of the gods, marry their women, and take part in their affairs. The ease with which gods and humans move between one another's worlds indicates the informal and direct relationship the Iban have with their gods.

Iban have many *petara*. The most well-known of them are: Lang Singalang Burong, commonly known as Lang (the god of war), his sons-in-law (the augural birds), Pulang Gana (the god of agriculture), Sem-pandai (the creator of human beings). There are a whole host of minor deities whose powers are invoked on ritual occasions. Their importance in Iban culture will be discussed in Chapters two and three. In the Iban pantheon 'Singalang Burong takes the highest position in honour and dignity among the principal deities ... He is the god of war ... and only by his direction can they conquer their enemies' (Howell, BLB, 1963:18). The text of the *timbang gawai amat* is quite explicit about this. Just before Lang and his entourage ascend the entry ladder into the longhouse to which they have been invited, Lang confers with his party as to who should lead the way. Pulang Gana promptly replies, 'Who other than you should lead the way, Uncle Lang?', thus attesting to the paramount importance of Lang in the Iban pantheon. Furthermore, Lang only deigns to attend the most elaborate and prestigious ritual feast of the Iban, the *gawai amat* (ritual of real significance). The appearance of Lang has been variously described. Chadwick (1940, iii: 478), for instance, describes him as having the face of 'a young man

though his hair is white'. While Freeman (1979:239) sees him as 'an amalgam of Jupiter and Mars, with a dash of Bacchus. In his human form he is an imposing man of heroic proportions, who, despite his mature age is in full command of his great physical powers'. The guests who attend the feast with Lang, as depicted in the *timbang*, have this to say about his appearance:

You are the most ancient, Uncle Lang,
Yet you are still full of life, like a still flourishing
banyan tree on the fruits of which hornbills feast,
Your appearance, grandfather, still has the freshness of
youth as does a sapling of the forest.

The importance of Lang's sons-in-law in Iban religion is well illustrated by the myth of Siu (cf. Gomes, 1904; Freeman, 1960; Jensen, 1974:83-92). Briefly, the myth tells us of a man named Siu, who finds his way into the abode of Singalang Burong in the skies. After staying with Lang for a period of time, he decides to return to the world below. But before he departs Lang advises him in these terms:

I am the ruler of the spirit world, and have the power to make men successful in all they undertake. At all times if you wish my help, you must call upon me and make offerings to me. Especially this must be done before you go to fight your enemy. And to help you in your daily work, my sons-in-law will always tell you whether what you do is right or wrong ... These birds named after my sons-in-law represent them, and are the means by which I make known my wishes to mankind ... Whenever you have a feast, you must make an offering to me, and you must call upon my sons-in-law to come and partake of the feast. If you do not do these things, some evil is sure to happen to you.

Below is the list of the main augural birds of the Iban:

<u>Iban name</u>	<u>Systematic name</u>	<u>English name</u>
<i>ketupong</i>	<i>Sasia abnormis</i> (Temminck)	Rufous Piculet
<i>embuas</i>	<i>Lacedo pulchella</i> (Horsefield)	Banded Kingfisher
<i>berasai</i>	<i>Harpactus duvauceli</i> (Temminck)	Scarlet Rumped Trogon
<i>papau</i>	<i>Harpactus diardi</i> (Temminck)	Diard's Trogon
<i>bejampong</i>	<i>Playtlophus galericulatus</i> (Cuvier)	Crested Jay
<i>pangkas</i>	<i>Blythipicus rubiginosus</i> (Swainson)	Maroon Woodpecker
<i>nendak</i> ⁸	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i> (Scopoli)	White rumped Shama

Pulang Gana, is the god of agriculture, and should be propitiated before the clearing of a swidden is commenced. His powers are invoked to make the soil fertile, to produce abundant crops, and to ward off any would be pests and other devouring creatures from the swidden. Because Pulang Gana is responsible for the successful cultivation of *padi*, his position is high in the Iban pantheon. A similar position may be ascribed to Sempandai whose principal duty is to mould humans into shape. It is often said by the Iban that when a baby is being born the sound of Sempandai's hammer can be heard as he busily moulds the child into human form.

Iban *petara* are found in the skies (*di langit*), across the sea (*di tasik*), and in the domain of humans (*di tanah*). The varied locations of Iban *petara* is clearly shown in the routes of their *timbang* (cf. Diagrams 3:1-3:4). Finally, these beings when giving aid and bestowing blessings on humans do not discriminate, as long as an individual has performed and observed the required rituals.

Antu

Although as already remarked *antu* is a generic term for spiritual beings, it is commonly used to refer to evil spirits. These *antu* are regarded, by Iban, as being constantly disposed to harm and hinder

humans' progress and success. *Antu gerasi* (ogres), for instance, are believed to roam the forest, especially at dusk or at night, with their ferocious dogs called *pasun*, hunt for the souls of humans for food. While *antu kepapas* (spirits of envy) are thought to be intent on 'robbing' humans of their good fortune, and thus denying them success. To guard against these ever threatening dangers and misfortunes, humans seek divine help through the performance of certain rituals. "If you do not do these things" warns Lang (cf. the myth of Siu, supra), "some evil is sure to happen to you." Therefore, there is in the Iban world view, an on-going battle between the gods and the spirits over the fate of man. This struggle which may be simplified as good versus evil, is succinctly expressed by a shaman's prayer (Ling Roth, 1896, i:180).

Laboh daun buloh,	"When the bamboo leaf falls,
Tangkap ikan dungan;	And is caught by the <i>dungan</i> fish
Antu ka munoh,	And the <i>antu</i> wants to kill,
Petara naroh ngembuan.	Petara puts in safe preservation.
Laboh daun buloh,	When the bamboo leaf falls,
Tangkap ikan mplasi;	And is caught by the <i>mplasi</i> fish
Antu ka munoh,	And the <i>antu</i> wants to kill.
Petara ngaku menyadi.	<i>Petara</i> will confess a brother."

Some *antu* however, have benevolent tendencies towards humans. *Antu gerasi* (ogres), indeed, are believed to have helped Iban in the past. Naga, the great grandfather of Sanggau (my *lemanbang* informant), for instance, is believed to have had an *antu gerasi* as his spirit helper (*antu nulong*). When Naga died the voice of an *antu gerasi*, I was told, could be heard in the nearby forest, while the vicinity of Naga's longhouse. There were others who had *remaung* (mythical flying tiger which, when provoked, devour humans for food) and *nabau* (water dragon) as their personal spirit helpers. These forms of supernatural

aid may be obtained through dreams or supposed personal encounter with the spirits concerned. It should be noted that while these malevolent spirits help some individual Iban, they do not cease to be malevolent towards other humans. Thus *antu*, unlike the *petara*, can only be benevolent to a chosen few.

The *antu* are believed to reside in the domain of humans (*di tanah*). They are known to inhabit the forest, hill tops, caves, rapids, pools, and other isolated places. The division which separates the world of spirits and humans, the Iban claim, is as thin as the skin of an eggplant (*nebal kelumu terong*; cf. Uchibori, 1978). Because of the close proximity of humans to the world of spirits the dangers posed by malign intentions of *antu* is of primary concern to the Iban.

Orang Panggau

Orang Panggau (lit. 'people of Panggau') are Iban culture heroes who are believed to occupy the bank of the mythical Panggau river. These people are accredited with great beauty and grace, and their heroic exploits and prowess are the themes of numerous Iban sagas (*ensera*). The most well-known of the Iban culture heroes are Kling and his wife Kumang, Laja and his wife Lulong, Bungai Nuing, Pungga and a few others who are mentioned in the text of the *timbang gawai amat*. Kumang and Lulong are sisters who, after marrying the two brothers (Kling and Laja) move from their native home in the mythical Gelong river to that of their husbands in the Panggau river. Bungai Nuing and Pungga are Kling's most famed *Manok sabong* (lit. 'fighting cocks' or lieutenants), and whose affiliations to Kling's household is the subject of various stories. One story claims that Bungai Nuing is an *antu gerasi* (a son of Nising) whom Kling's father

captured as a child, and adopted as a member of his *bilek*-family.

Pungga is said to have been found by Kling's father among the leaves of the jungle palm, and hence the name 'Pungga our kinsman of the leaves of the jungle palm' (*Pungga aka sabila daun isang*).

Like the *petara* and *antu*, the *orang panggau* have supernatural powers. These powers are not used for the destruction of humans, but are used, even if selectively, for the benefit of mankind. In this aspect, *orang panggau* are more like the gods than the *antu* who, in general, seek the downfall of man. The difference being that the gods usually render help to anyone who has performed the required rites, while *orang panggau* only help a selected few. And when that help is given, it is usually made known to the person concerned in a dream.

The domain of Iban culture heroes according to one saga (*ensera*) comprises of seven rivers, namely Panggau, Gelong, Nunyan, Trusan, Nanga, Runjai and Bakong. All these rivers drain into one huge lake called *saka ulak jawa ai beranti tujuh nanga* (a big pool into which seven rivers flow). The precise location of the domain of the Iban culture heroes is not known, but most Iban agree that it is located in the world of man, invisible to human eyes, except in dreams.

Footnotes

1. Some Iban supernatural beings are known by a variety of names. Singalang Burong, the god of war, for instance, besides being called Lang, is also known as: Singalai Nyakai, Singalai Lang Mukong, Singalai Nyakai Lang Julak, etc. These names are the creation of Iban *lemambang* as kind of oral devise to achieve internal rhyme and rhythm in their narration. However, for the sake of clarity I shall refer to the Iban god of war as Singalang Burong, or Lang. The same rule applies to other supernatural beings who possess more than one name. I shall refer to them by their common names.
2. The land tenure system used in the Tuno Wet *Padi* Scheme is created by the Sarawak government specifically for schemes of this kind, and not based on traditional Iban land tenure as described by Freeman (1955, 1970).
3. The Kayan is by far the biggest single unitary group of the tribes in the interior of Borneo. According to government figures in 1950 (taken from Freeman's field notes) there were 1772 Kayans residing in the upper reaches of the Rejang river, compared to the second biggest group the Kenyah, who had 871. The whole Kayan population, as with the Iban, speak only one language, in contrast to the ethnic groups of interior Borneo (e.g. Kenyah, Kajang, Punan, etc.).
4. There has not been any thorough and systematic study on the migrational history of the Kayan. Charles Hose (1926), one of the earlier students of Kayan culture, does not specify when this group began moving from the Apo Kayan into the headwaters of the Rejang and Baram rivers. Although 1750 is generally accepted as the time when Kayan initial movement into Sarawak commenced, there has not been much in-depth historical investigation to substantiate this.
5. The early European administrators and the Iban often glossed the interior tribes of Borneo as Kayan. Some of the reported attacks on the Iban residing in the middle section of the Rejang river valley in the 19th century might have been carried out by the Kajang who inhabited this region.
6. One Pnihing's (Peng) chief by the name of Owat ambushed and killed seven Iban in the Baleh river valley. Angry about Owat's raid into his territory, the Rajah in 1885 dispatched a punitive expedition (without any European officer) consisted of about 1000 Iban warriors to Owat's longhouse which was situated at the head of the Mahakam river. This punitive force not only destroyed Owat's house, but

also raided and burnt the villages of neighbouring inhabitants who were friendly to the Rajah, and resulted in the loss of more than 200 enemies' lives. Nieuwenhuis, a Dutch explorer, who saw the destruction caused by the Iban attack commented:

From an European point of view the excessive loss of life and the plundering involved in this type of punishment is to be deplored, but the Rajah could not afford to maintain a standing army of disciplined troops, so what was the alternative? (Smythies, SMJ, 1955:499).

7. The standard item accepted by the Brooke government as payment of fines other than money was one of Iban's most prized possession, jars (*tajau*). C.V. Brooke (SG. 1907, no.502) on hearing that some Baleh Iban were away on what later turned out to be an unsuccessful raid, collected from their *bilek*-families some 3000 to 4000 dollars worth of jars in order to discourage them from organizing further illegal head hunting raids.
8. Nendak is not one of Lang's sons-in-law, but an ordinary *anembiak* (follower) who lives in Lang's longhouse. Nendak is often referred to by the Iban as *burong chelap* (lit. 'cool omen bird').

Chapter Two

Iban Ritual Activities

The Iban believe themselves to be surrounded by two kinds of supernatural beings: good and evil. The good beings are called *petara* (gods), while the evil ones are generally called *antu* (spirits). All good things are attributed to the benign nature of the gods, and man should reciprocate this benevolence by performing appropriate rituals and giving offerings. Any form of misfortune, be it death, ill-health, or simply the general lack of success in life, is ascribed to the disposition of the malevolent spirits (*antu*), and man should, in order to avoid further misfortune, make propitiation. In accord with that notion that good things come from the acts of gods for which man should be thankful, and misfortunes from the evil deeds of the spirits whom man should propitiate, the life of the Iban is punctuated by ritual activities, varying not only in emphasis but also in the length of performance and complexity. Despite the fact that there are numerous forms and types of ritual, the Iban divide their ritual activities into three broad categories, namely: (i) *Bedara*; (ii) *Gawa*; (iii) *Gawai*. I will discuss each of these separately.

(i) Bedara

Bedara is the least complex of all Iban ritual activities. The length of performance varies from about an hour to a day, and its prohibitions normally bind only the immediate members of the family.

(*bilek*), although there are occasions when all members of the longhouse participate in its rites and observe its restrictions. The holding of a *bedara* arises from various causes, ranging from bad dreams to an occasion marking the arrival of a person from a successful *bejalai* (journey, cf. Appendix part II:L251-256). The *bedara* ritual has two basic functions. First, it is believed to nullify the effects of bad dreams, ill omens, and man's transgressions against the gods (e.g. incestuous unions). Second, it is a way of thanking the gods for the good fortune they have bestowed and of beseeching their continued grace.

In the *bedara*, as with all other rituals, the giving of a *piring* (offering), is an integral part of the rites. A *piring* normally consists of a small amount of tobacco and a roll of dried banana leaf, a pinch of salt, a few grains of uncooked rice, rice cakes (*tepong* and *ketupat*), glutinous rice (*asi pulut*), popped rice (*rendai*), and some boiled or raw eggs. The number of eggs used in a *piring* is either one, three, five, seven or eight. (What determines the number of eggs in a *piring* will be discussed later.) All of these ingredients are placed on a large plate by a person of standing in a community, in prescribed order with the eggs and a small amount of rice wine in a small cup being placed on the top. The man who has prepared the *piring* then waves a cock over it, and over the members of the family concerned, while uttering a prayer invoking the gods to cast away bad dreams and ill omens, and wishing them long life and good health. After this rite is completed some cock's feathers smeared in its sacrificial blood are thrust into the *piring*, which is then put in place for the gods and spirits to

consume. All members of the longhouse who have participated in the *bedara* ritual are given some rice wine to drink and a few delicacies to eat. The number of *piring* in a *bedara* ritual depends on the number of males in a family.¹

In the case of a small *bedara*, for instance, for the celebration of the arrival of a man from a successful journey (*bejalai*), or the placation of minor ill omens, the giving out of food and drink to the participating members of the longhouse, marks the end of the rite. However when dealing with a more serious matter like the rite of *minta ujan* (asking for rain), or *minta panas* (asking for dry weather; cf. Appendix part 11:L40), or the nullification of the effects of dreams associated with death, the *bedara* ritual becomes more lengthy and complex, and its rites and prohibitions involve people other than the immediate members of the family concerned.

In December, 1978 I witnessed a lengthy and complex *bedara* ritual called *berunsur* (lit. to wash, or clean). This rite was performed because two members of the family had been suffering from ill health and plagued by bad dreams. One of them, the man, while on a journey, dreamt of being buried in a landslide (*tanah tusur*) which in Iban belief is an ominous sign foretelling death. And the other, a girl, who had been vexed by ill-health, kept dreaming of visiting *Sebayan*, or the world of the dead. The rite commenced on the open platform, or *tanju*, at about 9 o'clock in the morning with a *piring* ceremony, and was attended by most members of the longhouse. After the *piring* or offering ceremony had been performed, and the guests had been offered drinks and food, the two persons concerned were seated on a large brass gong (*tawak*), and a piece of white cloth was placed over

their heads. Then the man who was officiating sacrificed a small pig over their heads, allowing its blood to drip down their bodies.

After the pig had been sacrificed, the three of them, followed by some members of the longhouse, then proceeded to the longhouse bathing place. When they arrived there an offering was thrown into the river and the officiant chopped the water with his knife a few times,² after which the three of them dived into the water and ritually cleansed themselves with *pakar* (a species of creeper that the Iban of former days used for washing themselves). After they had washed themselves clean of pig's blood they returned to the longhouse where each one of them was given a glass of rice wine to drink, and a cock was waved over their heads. That afternoon the members of the longhouse were invited to a meal by the family who performed the rite. The *berunsur* ritual ended that evening with the performing of another *piring* ceremony on the gallery, *ruai*.

This *berunsur* ritual reveals one of the most important tenets of Iban belief, the sacrificing of a pig (a four-footed animal) to secure a human life. The man's dream of being buried in a landslide and the girl's numerous dreams of visiting the world of the dead, are interpreted as omens that *antu*, or evil spirits wish for the lives of these two persons. The Iban, however, believe that the evil spirits' desire for human lives can be satisfied if a four-footed animal like a pig is sacrificed. If a pig is not available, then two chickens (which have a total of four feet) may be used as the sacrificial animals. In all Iban rituals which arise from dreams, or bird omens foretelling man's imminent death, the sacrifice of a

four-footed animal becomes an integral part of the rite.

There are times, nonetheless, when a *bedara* ritual, or the sacrifice of an animal, fails to stop a person from being vexed with ill health and bad dreams. When such a time arises it calls for a much bigger and a more elaborate ritual in which the presence and the help of the gods are required. This more elaborate form of ritual is classified under the category of *gawa*.

(ii) *Gawa*³

Gawa is an Iban word which means 'be busy, at work'. Thus the phrase '*Aku gawa ngaga rumah*' means 'I am busy building a house'. However, the word *gawa* has a secondary meaning which denotes a category of Iban ritual activity. An Iban who wants to hold a *gawa* ritual, for example in June, would say: '*Aku gawa dalam bulan enam*'. This phrase can be interpreted to mean: 'I will be busy in June'. The use of the word which primarily means to be busy or at work, to denote a category of Iban ritual activities, is fitting; for rites such as these do involve much work and dedication, and the festive aspects of the rites are of quite secondary importance for the Iban who perform them.

Gawa ritual may be performed if a man wishes the gods to cast away the evil consequences of bad dreams and ill omens which a *bedara* ritual has failed to dispose of, and at the same time wants to beseech the gods to extend his life span and grant him good fortune. It may be held simply to bestow blessings on a new dwelling. Gods are invoked to participate in these rituals so they may, with their supernatural powers, protect the Iban from the malign intentions of *antu*, and upon

their return share with the Iban their potent charms (*pengaruh*). The invocation of these gods is performed by a *lemambang* or bard with the assistance of either a two or three-man chorus, through the chanting of a *timbang* or ritual chant. The end of the *timbang* chant marks the conclusion of the *gawa* ritual.

Even though there are many variations of ritual in the category of *gawa*, each with varying procedures and emphasis, there are two factors which bind these rituals into one category. First, the primary function of *gawa* rituals is to invoke the gods for help in dealing with the mundane problems of living. A *gawa* ritual is performed not for propitiation or thanksgiving as are *bedara* rituals, but rather it is performed as a means of seeking divine help in countering the evil spirits who are predisposed to harm human lives and limit their success. For instance, should a man have a premonition, through dreams and auguries, that his life is threatened by the spirits, an appropriate ritual will be held, and the gods responsible for this man's life and well-being would be invoked to protect him from the threatening danger. If another man feels that his family has been plagued by a string of misfortunes, and their attempts to increase their worldly possessions have been constantly frustrated by failure, then the gods whose duty it is to bestow good fortune upon humans will be invoked. Thus *gawa* rituals are a special category of rite through which the Iban manipulate the divine powers of their gods to serve their needs.

Unlike the *bedara* ritual where only members of the longhouse are invited to participate, the family or families who hold the *gawa*

ritual extend invitations to people from other longhouses. The number of longhouses to be invited is decided by the whole community, and their decision depends on the number of families holding rituals. Even though every family in a longhouse observes the prohibitions and contributes to the general festivity of the ritual, the responsibility for feeding the guests rests solely on the families who perform the ritual. And it is essential during the entire duration of the ritual that the guests are well provided for. Any sign of insufficient or inadequate food and drink reflects on the families immediately concerned, as well as on the longhouse as a whole. Thus it is in the interests of both parties that the number of guests to be invited is well within their means of providing.

Even though the actual *gawa* ritual lasts for only one and a half days, the preparation for it begins weeks before, and its effects linger for some days after it has ended. The detailed preparation for a *gawa* ritual and its associated procedures, up to the day the ritual commences, are basically similar to that of *gawai amat* (ritual festival proper) which I shall discuss later in this chapter. I shall, therefore, defer discussion of this aspect until then. At this stage it will perhaps suffice to point out that a performance of all *gawa* ritual is done with great dedication and at a considerable cost both in time and money. During my field work (1978-79) I witnessed many ritual activities, and I recorded with care one family's *gawa* ritual expenses of June, 1979 (cf. Table 2:1). On this particular ritual occasion there were two families holding a *gawa* ritual, and three holding a more lengthy and complex form of *bedara* ritual, while the other thirteen families

individually performed a small *bedara* ritual as prescribed by the Iban custom (cf. discussion on *gawai amat*). Seven longhouses were invited with an average attendance of 30 guests from each, totalling about 210 guests in all. By the time the one and a half days of ritual activities were over, most of the food and drink was consumed, and the guests had returned home well satisfied.

There are many variants of *gawa* ritual which can be further sub-divided as follows: (a) *Gawa Timang Beintu intu*; (b) *Gawa Timang Tuah*. Among the Iban of Baleh region the different variants of *gawa* ritual are commonly called by *timbang* (ritual chant) names. If an Iban, for example, wants to hold a *gawa tuah* (*tuah* may be glossed as fortune), he will say: '*Aku ka nimang tuah*' (*timbang* is a verbal form of *timbang*), and thus *gawa tuah* becomes known as *timbang tuah*.

(a) *Gawa Timang Beintu intu*

The following are some variants of *timbang beintu intu* ritual which are still performed by the Iban of the Baleh region. The word *intu* or *beintu* means to take care, or to look after, the repetition of the word *intu* emphasizes its meaning. This category of ritual thus has to do with taking care of man's welfare and life.

1. *timbang Sukat*

The word *sukat* means to measure. However, when it is used in this context it connotes the measuring of the human life span. This ritual is performed if a person feels that his life is in danger, or if he is going to participate in a dangerous enterprise (e.g. working in a lumber camp). The *lemambang*, or bard, when chanting the *timbang*

invokes the presence of shaman Betuah, the guardian of human *ayu* (soul-substitutes), Antu Gayu, the god of long life who possesses the power of extending the human life span; shaman Jaban, the spirit of all shamans; and Sempandai, the creator of humans. The Iban believe that by holding this ritual their lives are extended, their *ayu* or soul-substitutes are made healthy, while all forms of ill are cast away by shaman Jaban.

2. Timang Bulu

The word *bulu* literally means hair. However, when used in this context it symbolizes a kind of invisible mantle or armour of the human body which the Iban believe shields them from the evil intentions of *antu*. The Iban believe that a man's *bulu*, or 'mantle' must, at least once in his lifetime, be strengthened with the potent charms of the gods, lest it be weakened by constant assaults of the spirits. During the ritual these charms symbolized by coloured cotton threads are sewn on to the man's jacket by women of standing in the community. The aim of *timang bulu* and *timang sukat* is basically the same, therefore the same gods are invoked, the difference being in the requests made of the gods. In one, the gods are directly beseeched to lengthen man's life by seeing to it that his *ayu* (soul-substitute) grows luxuriantly, and all manner of ills do not vex his life. While in the other, the gods are indirectly enlisted to prolong a man's life by strengthening his 'mantle' (*bulu*) against the forces of evil. The closely similar purposes of these two rituals make their concurrent performance by one family a common happening in contemporary Iban society.

Table 2:1

Statement of Expenditure of Gawa Timang Buloh Ayu, June, 1979

<u>Items</u>	<u>Cost</u> (in Malaysian dollars)	
A. Food		
1. Smoked fish	\$21.00	
2. 2 tins cream cracker	11.00	
3. Pork, 50 katis (61 lbs)	50.00	
4. Salted fish and peanuts	10.00	
5. Prawn crackers (<i>kerupok</i>)	8.00	
6. Noodles	10.00	
7. Rice, 10 gantangs (10 imp. galls.)	28.00	
8. 5 chickens	25.00	
9. Ingredients for cooking	5.00	
10. Pith of wild palms (14)	nil	
11. Cooking oil	<u>12.00</u>	\$180.00
B. Drink		
1. 1 tin arak (4 galls.)	\$32.00	
2. 4 bottles whisky	82.00	
3. Glutinous rice, 14 gantangs (rice wine)	70.00	
4. Yeast	1.20	
5. Coffee, 1 tin	4.50	
6. Sugar, 20 katis (24 lbs.)	<u>15.00</u>	204.70
C. Lemambang's Fees		
1. Cash	\$25.00	
2. 1 small jar	12.00	
3. 1 iron bar	3.00	
4. 1 chicken	5.00	
5. White cloth, 2 yds.	<u>3.00</u>	48.00
D. Miscellaneous		
1. Eggs for offerings, 60	\$16.00	
2. Petrol, 5 tins	<u>88.00</u>	<u>104.00</u>
Grand total:		<u>\$536.70</u>
* Rate of exchange was \$A1 = \$M2.40	or	<u>\$A223.62</u>

The expenditure of \$M536.70 or \$A223.62 is above average for a few items in A and B (e.g. whisky) a family can do without. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that one family, on average, would spend in the region of \$M400.00 or \$A166.66 when holding a *gawa* ritual.

3. Timang Buloh Ayu

The word *buloh* means bamboo, while *ayu* may be glossed as soul-substitute. The Iban image of *ayu* as a kind of bamboo plant has been discussed by Freeman (1970:21), and is brought to the fore by Uchibori (1978:25-26) when he writes of a shamanic ritual involving the health of a child. In this ritual a bamboo is planted in the open space near the longhouse by a shaman to symbolize the *ayu* of the child.

In a *buloh ayu* ritual all the shamanic gods, especially shaman Betuah the guardian of man's *ayu*, are invoked. According to the Iban these gods, while partaking in the ritual, nourish the growth of the *ayu* of the person or persons who are holding the ritual. This, however, is not the only thing that happens during this ritual. There is another thing more interesting and perhaps it offers better insight into the Iban conception of their gods. It is the changing of a person's name that the ritual is particularly held (cf. part VI:L509-510). At the conclusion of the ritual every member of the family suggests as many names as they think appropriate to the *lemambang* or bard. As each name is suggested, the *lemambang* places a plate filled with popped rice in front of a ritually selected chicken (*manok tawai*) for it to peck at. If the chicken fails to peck at the rice, then another name is suggested. This procedure is repeated until the chicken complies. In most cases the rite is short, but there are times I have been told when the chicken fails to peck, and a very long list of names is gone through. Amid the noises and clamour accompanying such a rite, the finding of an acceptable name can be quite protracted. The whole objective of the rite is to confuse the *antu* about their victim's new identity. The Iban believe

that once the spirits are confused and fail to recognize their victim's new name, they can no longer harm that person.

4. Timang Panggang

A *panggang* is a board on which the Iban place jars. Jars, or *tajau*, in Iban society, are among the most prized of heirlooms, and so a *panggang* board comes to symbolize the foundation on which wealth and prosperity grows. This ritual is held when an Iban feels that his attempts to acquire worldly possessions have been thwarted by failure. By holding this ritual he hopes that Jembu, the custodian of *panggang* board, will share with him his numerous *panggang* boards, and thus establishing a foundation on which his wealth will grow.

5. Timang Panggau

The word *panggau* has two meanings. First, it refers to a wooden frame with which the Iban thresh their *padi*. Second, it refers to a sleeping platform, or a bed. Because *panggau* is associated with *padi*, and at the same time is a man's private abode, the performance of a *panggau* ritual is concerned both with wealth and life. The gods invoked are those who are associated with these two important aspects of Iban existence.

6. Timang Engkune

Engkune is a species of tree the Iban commonly use as house posts. Its wood is associated with the notion of *chelap* (coolness), and thus one of the ritual's main aims is to bring the essence of coolness into

human dwellings, especially a new one. It is also a ritual aimed at obtaining wealth, for the *engkune* tree is usually used by Iban for posts to support a house after an abundant harvest.

(b) *Gawa Timang Tuah*

The second category of *gawa* ritual, *timbang tuah*, or a ritual to increase one's fortune, has no variants as do *timbang beintu intu*. Its aim is basically similar to *timbang panggau* and *timbang panggang*, and that is to beseech the gods to bestow upon man wealth and good fortune. In spite of its parallel aim with these two variants of *timbang beintu intu*, *timbang tuah* is distinguished from the former by two important characteristics. First, the main god invoked to attend the ritual is Antu Tuah (not Shaman Betuah as invoked in the first category of *gawa* ritual) who resides in a land far across the sea. Second, the *timbang* (ritual chant) which a bard chants is different from those in the first category of *gawa* ritual (see discussion in Chapter III). *timbang tuah* ritual, at least in the Baleh region, is still frequently performed, and much credence is still given to its power of achieving its aim. It is my expectation that this ritual will eventually incorporate the aims and functions of *timbang panggau* and *timbang panggang*, thus making these obsolete.

There are also variants of *gawa* ritual which are very seldom, or no longer, performed by the contemporary Iban of the Baleh region. It appears that the environment and the social circumstances which once made their performances relevant and necessary, either have undergone some change, or they have completely disappeared. For instance,

the Iban of former days had a ritual called *timbang seligi* (*seligi* is a barbed spear used in war) in which the custodian of this weapon, Apai Pangkas, was invoked to attend, bringing with him a barbed spear. Upon his return from the rite, Apai Pangkas is expected to give this instrument of war to the person who holds the rite. Today such a weapon is an anachronism for the now peaceful Iban and, consequently, all rites associated with it have disappeared. And there are others like *timbang panggau*, *panggung* and *engkune* which are so rarely performed that they are on the verge of disappearing from Iban ritual activities. When it happens, I would suggest their disappearance will not be because the Iban no longer value what these rituals hope to achieve, but because their functions will have been taken over by another ritual.

The social and environmental changes which have caused the disappearance of some Iban rituals are the very factors which have generated the emergence of some new ones. In 1978 an Iban from Mujong river in the Seventh Division, encountering some problems in growing pepper vines performed, as far as I know, a completely new ritual called *timbang lada* (*lada* is an Iban word for pepper). In this ritual, Antu Tuah, the god of fortune, and Sigai, the son of Pulang Gana (the god of agriculture), both of whom reside across the sea, were invoked to attend the ritual. In attending the ritual they brought with them pepper seedlings to be given to the man who held the ritual. In that same year two brothers, also from Mujong river, had dreams in which their deceased father advised them to perform a new ritual called *timbang tuah bank* (lit. 'ritual bank fortune'). In so doing, their father continued, their money would ever increase like that in banks. In this ritual, Antu Tuah was once again

invoked, this time to bestow a large sum of money. During my field work I witnessed two performances of another new ritual called *timbang jambatan* (*jambatan* is a plank-pathway which leads from the longhouse to the river bank). It is built by the government under the Minor Rural Project Scheme. This plank-pathway has slowly replaced the traditional means of entering a longhouse using a notched-ladder or *tangga*. The aim of this ritual is to beseech the gods to bestow on the plank-pathway blessings, so that it may become a pathway for wealth and prosperity.

The first two new rituals were performed in response to new stimuli: the introduction of pepper as a profitable cash crop, and the use of the bank as a place to keep money. Both of these two stimuli have been known and used by a few Iban in the Baleh region for quite some years, but for the majority of the Iban, realization of their significance has been recent. The third innovation, *timbang jambatan*, is a new name for an old ritual called *timbang tangga* (ritual associated with notched ladder). In the advent of new rituals, an unprecedented set of responsibilities emerge; the Iban, however, do not create new gods to deal with them. But instead they assign new responsibilities to their traditional gods. Sigai, for instance, whose divine duty is associated with rice farming is now given the new job of looking after pepper plants, while Antu Tuah, who is usually charged with blessing the Iban with numerous jars and gongs, is commissioned with the extra duty of bestowing on them large sums of money. Thus, changing conditions generate new rituals, and new rituals impose an extra set of responsibilities on the Iban gods.

The years ahead in the Baleh region will be of especial significance as far as Iban *gawa* rituals are concerned. They are likely to witness the decline in importance of some, and at the same time see the ever-increasing importance of others, as well as the emergence of further innovations. During this period, not only will some *gawa* rituals sink into the background while others come to the fore, but the whole Iban pantheon associated with these rituals will experience major changes. Some of the gods will be subjected to much exposure and their powers constantly beseeched, while others will simply lapse into seclusion. This phenomenon, I would suggest, epitomizes the ever-changing nature of Iban religion.

(iii) *Gawai*

The words *gawa* and *gawai* are etymologically the same. *Gawai*, however, refers to the most elaborate, complex and prestigious category of Iban ritual activity. This category of rituals has numerous variants which may be sub-divided under three headings: (a) *Gawai Antu*, or Ritual for the Dead; (b) *Gawai Bumai*, or Ritual Associated with Farming; (c) *Gawai Amat*, or Ritual Festival Proper.

(a) *Gawai Ngelumbong or Ritual for the Dead*

*Gawai antu*⁴ is a name given by the Iban in the Saribas-Skrang region to a ritual marking the formal termination of mourning for the deceased. The Iban in this region attach great importance to this ritual (Jensen, 1974:58-59). Its performance is elaborate, costly and irregular. Uchibori (1978:148) writes "To the best of my knowledge it tends to be held at intervals of twenty to thirty years." Because

a ritual for the dead is not held at a definite time after a person has died, the traditional prohibition against a widow or widower marrying before its performance is no longer in force. Today it functions primarily as an occasion in which the spirits of the dead are invited to partake of a feast in the land of the living.

Among the Iban in the Baleh region the ritual marking the termination of mourning is called *ngelumbong*. The word *ngelumbong* is a derivation from the word *lumbong*, meaning coffin. The addition of the prefix 'nge' alters it to a verb *ngelumbong* which means to encoffin. A *ngelumbong* ritual is not an occasion for the making of a coffin, rather it is a rite at which a small beautifully decorated shelter is built on the ground where the deceased is buried. This ritual is usually held one year after death, and lasts for one and a half days. Like its counterpart the *gawai antu*, a *ngelumbong* ritual involves the invocation by a wailer (*orang nyabak*) of the spirits of the dead to attend the feast by the chanting of a death dirge (Uchibori, 1978). The Baleh Iban ritual of the dead is by no means any less complex in its rites than that of the Saribas-Skrang Iban, but the importance and prestige attached to it by the Baleh Iban is in no way comparable to the aura of their *gawai amat* (ritual festival proper).

The varying importance attached to the ritual associated with the dead by the Iban of Baleh region and those in the Saribas-Skrang river basins is due to their different historical encounters since migrating from the headwaters of Batang Lupar river (cf. Pringle 1970: 38-65). As the Baleh Iban migrated from Batang Lupar headwaters into Rejang-Baleh river basins, they successfully conquered vast territories

occupied by various tribes of Borneo, some of whom contained formidable warriors. These successes raised the importance of *gawai amat*, which deals with warfare, above the ritual of the dead. Another group who migrated seaward (e.g. into Saribas-Skrang region) encountered 'a thin pre-existing population of Bukitans and Serus, of which only the latter resisted Iban encroachment' (ibid. 39-40). This group, upon the establishment of Brooke regime in 1841, were subjected to numerous defeats in punitive expeditions, and later were among the first to be converted to Christianity. These and associated factors lessened the importance they attached to rituals associated with warfare. The declining importance of *gawai burong*, or bird festival, left the ritual associated with death as their most important rite.⁵

(b) *Gawai Bumai* or Rituals Associated with Farming

The Iban do not commonly use the term *gawai bumai* (*bumai* to farm) to describe the rituals associated with hill *padi* farming. I have adopted this term to identify two major farming rituals, namely:

(1) *Gawai Batu*, or Whetstone Ritual; and (2) *Gawai Beneh*, or Seed Ritual, under one classification.

1. *Gawai Batu*, or Whetstone Ritual: The word *batu* (lit. stone) when used in this context refers to the *batu panggol*, or whetstone which the Iban use in the rite of inaugurating the clearing of a swidden (cf. Jensen, 1974:164 seq.; Freeman, 1970:171-218). The farming whetstone is usually about 8 inches long, 4 inches wide and 2 inches thick, and looks like any ordinary whetstone on which the Iban sharpen their farming implements. There are, however, significant differences

between a farming whetstone (*batu panggol*) and an ordinary whetstone (*batu pengasah*). A *batu panggol* is one of the Iban's most sacred objects. It is looked after with the utmost care, and is kept by one *bilek*-family through successive generations. Should a *bilek*-family split into two, this whetstone remains the possession of those who remain in the original *bilek*. Even though the Iban do not actually sharpen their knives on it, they believe that the potent magical power of their *batu panggol* will make their implements of farming sharp and their swiddens productive.

The need to perform the whetstone ritual is influenced by the outcome of the previous year's harvest. If the last year's harvest is judged to be unsatisfactory, a course of ritual action to alleviate the situation is sought. The members of the longhouse, with the advice of their *tuai burong* (chief auger), may decide that the whetstone ritual is the appropriate ritual action to rid their community of unsatisfactory harvests. The holding of this ritual is the collective concern of the whole longhouse, and the expenses incurred are borne by the entire community. Briefly, a whetstone ritual (*gawai batu*) involves the blessing of all the *batu panggol* (whetstones) of the longhouse by shedding the sacrificial blood of a pig on them. After this rite is completed, all of the whetstones (*batu panggol*) are placed in a shrine (*ranyai*) erected in the middle of the *ruai* of either the chief auger or the headman (*tuai rumah*) along with other farming implements. When this is done, the *lemambang* or bard is commissioned to invoke Pulang Gana, the god of agriculture, Sigai his son and the guardian of *padi* seeds, and Saugun Ugun, the custodian of *batu panggol* (whetstones) so they may give the

Iban the appropriate charms and bestow on them the blessings of abundance.

Today, the whetstone ritual (*gawai batu*), is no longer performed by the Baleh Iban. Its aims and purposes have been incorporated into a much simpler and less expensive ritual called *muja menoa*, or cleansing of the land (cf. p. 501, L154n. This ritual does not necessitate the invocation of the gods by a *timang* or ritual chant, requires minimal preparation, and its prohibitions are in force for only a day and a night.

2. Gawai Beneh or Seed Ritual: A *gawai beneh* is performed by an individual *bilek*-family. The performance of a seed ritual arises from basically two contingencies. First, when a *bilek*-family's harvest has been bad for successive years. Second, when due to some accident a substantial amount of *padi* is lost (e.g. a boat laden with *padi* capsizing, or a house in which *padi* is stored catching fire).

The main gods invoked to attend this ritual are Pulang Gana, the god of agriculture, and his son Sigai, the guardian of *padi* seeds or *beneh*. Pulang Gana attends the ritual bringing with him all kinds of seed which, on his departure, are given to the family who has been his host. While partaking in the ritual, he blesses the family farming implements and bequeaths his charms, thus ensuring an abundant harvest in the coming years. Sigai brings with him the necessary *padi* seed or *beneh*. (Even though Sigai is said to be the guardian of *padi* seeds, Pulang Gana, when invoked will bring the required *padi* seed). Sigai's attendance at the seed ritual becomes very necessary if the family who holds it has had an accident in which some of their *padi* is lost

in the river. The Iban believe that in such an accident the soul or *samengat* of the *padi* is swept into the sea, and unless the *samengat* is brought back their *padi* crop will not yield a good harvest. Sigai, who Iban believe lives on land across the sea, retrieves the drifting soul of the *padi*, and when invoked brings it back to the *bilek*-family concerned.

A *gawai beneh* (seed ritual) is held in three successive stages. (Some maintain there are four stages, but the number of stages is of no great significance.) Each successive stage is more elaborate and requires a longer time to perform. The first time a *bilek*-family holds a seed ritual, the bard (*lemambang*) chants the *timang* to the point where the *padi* seed has been nursed (Ngua; cf. part V:L407-658). The second time, the *timang* is chanted to the stage where Pulang Gana joyfully surveys his *padi* crop growing on the swidden, or *ninjau belayan* (cf. part VIII:L310-317). The third and final time, the bard chants the *timang* to its end, when the *padi* is stored in bark bins (cf. part VIII:L521-550). Each of these stages is referred to by the general term of *gawai beneh*, even though Howell and Bailey (1900:48) have called the third stage *gawai nyimpan padi* (lit. 'ritual for storing the *padi*'). The *timang* used in seed ritual has a similar course and resembles the same ritual festival proper (*gawai amat*). The analogies, metaphors, similes and the characters are, however, quite different to the *timang* of *gawai amat*. I will elucidate this further in Chapter III.

My informants described the seed ritual as *Pun pengawa bansa Iban* (the foundation of all Iban rituals or endeavours). Considering the fact that *padi* was once the most important of all Iban crops, and its

abundance not only symbolized wealth, but it was also an important means of acquiring items of wealth, such description succinctly sums up the Iban's obsession with the obtaining of *padi* in abundance. Among the contemporary Iban the aspiration of having abundant *padi* is still present, but it has perceptibly waned. This, I would suggest, is due to two new factors. First, among the Iban of the Baleh region the availability of virgin forest which in the past was the source of abundant crops is rapidly diminishing. This has dulled the hope of ever getting prolific crops of *padi*. Second, the introduction of cash crops like rubber and pepper,⁶ have lessened the Iban's dependence on their own *padi*. Thus, the disastrous effects of a poor harvest can now be cushioned by money obtained from these new sources. Furthermore, these new crops mean added responsibilities and a heavier work load. Consequently, the cultivation of hill *padi* no longer monopolizes Iban time as it did in the past. Perhaps it is due to these factors that *gawai beneh* (seed ritual) is rarely performed to its second or third stage. In 1978 one *bilek*-family held a seed ritual for the first time. When I asked them whether they would perform this ritual to its ultimate conclusion, their answer was a definite no. The most telling fact about the declining importance of the seed ritual among the Baleh Iban, perhaps, is the reclassification of this ritual from *gawai beneh* to *timbang beneh*, and thereby demoting its importance to the category of *gawa* ritual.

(c) Gawai Amat or Ritual Festival Proper

Gawai amat is a class of ritual considered by the Baleh Iban

to be the most elaborate and prestigious of all their rites. It is held in honour of their god of war, Singalang Burong, and his sons-in-law who, in their animal forms, are the Iban's most important omen birds. Among the Iban in the Second Division, especially those in the Saribas-Skrang river basins, this class of ritual is still, appropriately, referred to as *gawai burong* (bird festival, cf. Sandin, 1977). It is my view that as the Iban migrated from the Second Division to the Rejang river basin in the early part of the 19th century and became involved in frequent fighting with alien tribes, they attached increasing importance to a *gawai* attended by Singalang Burong and his sons-in-law, while still performing other *gawai* like the whetstone and seed rituals. In order to differentiate the former from the latter, the term *gawai amat* (*amat* means true, proper, of especial significance) would have been adopted to describe those rituals held in honour of Singalang Burong, the god of war.

Unlike other rituals where the gods are invoked either to counteract the malign intentions of the spirits (*antu*), or to bestow various blessings, *gawai amat* is held to enlist the supernatural powers and charms of Singalang Burong as potent aids in warfare. It is then, reasonable to suggest that this class of ritual (i.e. *gawai amat*) may have originated in the days when the Iban were intent on being effective warriors. And this need would certainly have intensified during the early period of their migration into new tracts of land inhabited by tribes who resisted invasion by the Iban. The importance of *gawai amat* as a ritual means of invoking divine help was maintained and nourished during the whole period of Iban expansion into new territories, as

was the position of Singalang Burong as the highest and most honoured god in the Iban pantheon. The text of the *timbang* proper around which this ritual revolves confirms beyond doubt that in the minds of the Iban the gods are their helpers, and no enemies or other challenges are beyond their reach. This feeling of strength and superiority has been constantly boasted of throughout the Iban history, and is evidenced by their immense successes in conquering new territories. During the whole duration of my field work the Iban constantly impressed upon me the efficacy of their *gawai amat* in giving them success in all their endeavours.

The performance of the *gawai amat* is not only a means of involving divine help, but it is also a public demonstration of an individual's success. A successful warrior and head-hunter, when holding a *gawai amat* is proclaiming to the whole community his personal valour and achievements. Because this ritual is a public validation of what a person has done and achieved, not any Iban male can perform it. The lavish manner in which it is held, which is sanctioned by the belief that the gods would be displeased if it were staged by any man deemed unworthy, restricts its performance to those members of the community who have achieved a marked measure of success. Thus *gawai amat* has become a means through which an Iban living in an egalitarian and classless society, makes public his achievements, and acquires great prestige in the process.

There have been in the past numerous variants of *gawai amat*, but many of these have now disappeared. Howell and Bailey (1900:49) for instance, list six variants out of which four have either

disappeared, or are being performed under new names. Sandin (1977:13) writes of nine stages of which five are not in the current list of Baleh Iban ritual. I was informed of one ritual called *gawai Baketan tunggal* (lit. ritual of Baketan effigy) which used to be performed by the Baleh Iban (cf. part IX, Line 270n). Briefly this ritual involves the mounting of the effigy of a Baketan on a lofty pole – the Baketan being forest nomads with whom the Iban had a symbiotic relationship. This effigy was then invoked by offerings, prayers and *timbang* to destroy the enemies of the Iban. The only current ritual which has a close resemblance to the Baketan ritual is the prestigious *gawai Kenyalang* (hornbill ritual, cf. Freeman, 1960:99-102). Most of the traditional *gawai amat* that have survived the social and environmental changes of the 20th century are those which have modified their functions to incorporate the values and aims of the contemporary Iban. The hornbill ritual is one of those ancient *gawai* which have survived these changes. In former times the soul of the hornbill was believed to have 'detached itself from its icon' to fly straight to the attack for which it had been created ... 'tearing the foundations of enemy houses, plundering their property and striking down their warriors' (ibid.:102). Today the soul of the hornbill is invoked to fly to distant lands in search of wealth and riches for its owner. Thus like its counterpart the *gawa* ritual, the survival of the *gawai amat* depends upon its modification to accord with the changing environment and new values.

New *gawai amat* (in comparison with *gawa* rituals) have been few in number. One of the most well-known *gawai amat* that has come into being in the last 50 years is called the *gawai lesong*. (A *lesong* is

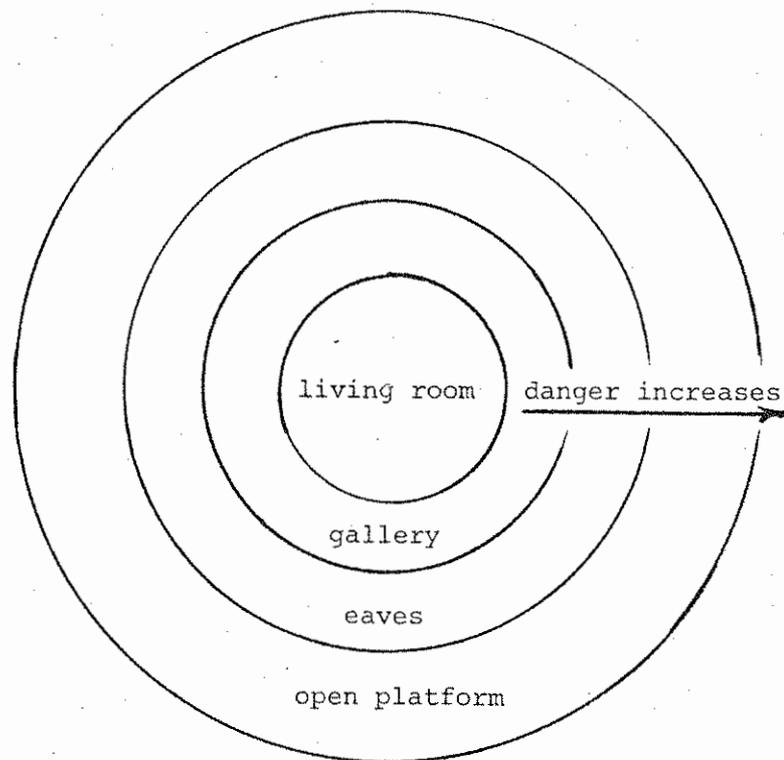
the wooden mortar in which the Iban pound their *padi*. It symbolizes the foundation of Iban life, or *pun pengidup*.) This ritual was the direct result of a dream of Temenggong Koh (cf. appendix part III: L112-125). Since its inauguration in the 1940s, this ritual has been adopted and performed by many Baleh Iban. In June 1949 Pengulu Kuleh held a ritual called *gawai nangga langit* (lit. 'ritual of notched-ladder to the sky'). The aims and rites of this ritual were virtually identical to that of the *padi* mortar ritual (*gawai lesong*). The *tangga* (notched-ladder) which is an item of symbolical importance in Iban ritual was incorporated into the *gawai lesong* through the dream of Temenggong Koh (Freeman, field notes, 1950). The incorporation of old rituals into new ones or vice versa, is an example of Iban attempts to adopt old religious beliefs to achieve new aspirations generated by the ever-changing social conditions.

A striking feature of the Iban's performance of their religious rites is the total lack of solemnity. Such nonchalant attitudes when superficially observed might lead an outsider to a wrong conclusion about Iban and their religion.⁷ For underneath the facade of indifference there is a strong sense of dedication and a deep belief in the reality and efficacy of their rites in achieving a desired end. Any unusual event which occurs during the performance of a ritual is carefully scrutinized and interpreted in the finest detail. There is also a certain amount of apprehension to the point of fear when holding a major ritual like the *gawai amat*, lest one might make mistakes thereby incurring the wrath of the gods. Thus, every Iban male from an early age is prepared for participation in major rituals. Let me

illustrate this by considering what happens to an Iban male from the time of his birth. As soon as he is born his family must, each time they hold a *bedara* ritual, allocate one offering to the gods on his behalf. The number of eggs used and the place where his offering is placed depends upon his age. From birth until about five years of age there is only one egg in the offering, which the family places in a corner of the family living quarters, or *bilek*. Between the ages of six to ten the number of eggs increases to three and the offering is placed on the gallery, or *ruai*. Between the age of eleven and fifteen the number of eggs is five and his offering is put in a specially made bamboo pole receptacle called a *tresang*, erected under the eaves of the roof of the longhouse (*terutu atap*). From the age of about sixteen onward the offering consists of either five or seven eggs, and it is put in a lofty bamboo pole receptacle 20 feet or more in height on the open platform, or *tanju*. This last rite, from the religious point of view, symbolizes an Iban male's entry into the world of adults, and he is now permitted to hold the first stage of the *gawai amat* any time he sees fit.

Perhaps we may better understand the relationship between the placing of an Iban male offering and his chronological age, if we regard the various compartments of an Iban dwelling as concentric circles, with the family living quarter (*bilek*) at the centre. The family living quarter is the most private part of the dwelling, occupied only by the members of the immediate family, and therefore holds the least amount of danger for a young and vulnerable child. But as one moves further away from the *bilek* and on to the gallery (*ruai*), occupied

sometimes by total strangers, the danger increases. The open platform (*tanju*) represented by the outer-most circle, is a place where all kinds of supernatural beings lurk, and therefore poses the maximum amount of danger within the longhouse. This belief, supplemented by the Iban notion that one's invulnerability tends to increase with age, makes understandable the gradual introduction of a male child into ritual life.



The *gawai amat* is performed in ascending stages, and with every performance of this ritual the length of the *timang* chanted increases, as does the prestige of the man who performs it (see Table 2:2). Thus 'once an Iban has decided to stage this class of *gawai* he is like a

man who is putting his foot on the first rung of a ladder, As he becomes more successful in his undertakings he takes another step up the ladder until he reaches the top' (Masing, 1978:12-13). In former times this last rung of the ladder was represented by the most important variant of the *gawai amat*. According to Sandin (1977:13) the last variant was *gawai antu gerasi papa* (lit. 'ritual of the ogre'). Immediately upon the completion of this ritual the inhabitants of the longhouse moved to a new site. However, among the Baleh Iban this 'last rung of the ladder' is represented by the chanting of the ultimate stage of the *timbang*, the *nempalai kasai*, or the planting of cotton (cf. part IX). In 1977 two brothers from the Mujong river had this *timbang* chanted during the performance of a *gawai amat* to its ultimate stage. From the Iban point of view, these two have reached the zenith of their ritual activities. But the *gawai tangga hari* (lit. 'notched-ladder of day') which they held at that time is by no means the highest stage, or the most prestigious of the ritual festival proper rituals. In December, 1976 another man held a *gawai kenyalang* or hornbill ritual, the Iban's most elaborate and lavish festival, as an accompaniment to his second performance of the *gawai amat*. This man no doubt is regarded by his fellow Iban as a man of immense wealth and stature, but his religious activities are far from over. Thus, the criteria which marks the end of an Iban male's ritual activities, and hence the culmination of his socio-religious status, is the chanting of the *timbang* to its ultimate conclusion, rather than the performance of an accompaniment, such as the *gawai kenyalang*.

To perform a *gawai amat* is a very expensive affair (see Table 2:3). The desire to accumulate prestige and religious benefits by holding such ritual is tempered by the expense involved, and because of the great expense many Iban shrink from staging a *gawai amat*. One wealthy Iban businessman held two of the most expensive rituals (hornbill ritual, 1976; and ritual of hornbill abode, 1978) at a very considerable cost. When I asked about his reason for doing so, he informed me that he was instructed in his dreams to perform these *gawai*. In 1978-1979 I witnessed two *gawai amat* rituals and was informed of another in which the families concerned only did so because of their dreams. The part dreams play in the performance of the *gawai amat* rituals among the contemporary Iban is undoubtedly important and is likely to continue to be so. But would we be correct in supposing that dreams have always been the crucial factor both in determining the performance of *gawai* and in creating new ones? When one prominent Iban was asked this question, his answer was *samoa pengawa Iban bepun ari mimpi* (all Iban ritual activities originate from dreams). My own observation of Iban attitudes to dreams and their zealous adherence to their 'commands' make this statement the most plausible of explanations.

The following are the main *gawai amat* rituals performed by the Iban of the Baleh region.

1. *Gawai Tresang Mansau*

The 'ritual of the red bamboo pole receptacle' (*gawai tresang mansau*) is the compulsory first stage of the *gawai amat*. The rites

include the placing of a bamboo pole receptacle (*tresang*) over an offering on the gallery with its top protruding through the roof of the longhouse. The passing of the bamboo pole receptacle through the loft (*sadau*) and the roof symbolizes the offering reaching the celestial abode of the gods.

2. Gawai Kalingkang

Kalingkang, it appears has three meanings. Howell and Bailey (1900:71) describe it as 'a mat a span square with the corners tied up with string, used in ceremonies'. Among the Baleh Iban *kalingkang* refers to a small container hung inside a shrine in which an offering is placed. It also refers to the lengths of rattan plaited together to form a circular frame about 3 feet in diameter used in the construction of the shrine. This ritual is still regarded by the Iban as the second stage of the *gawai amat* rituals. After the performance of this ritual an Iban may hold any variant of the *gawai amat* in whatever order he desires (cf. Table 2:2).

3. Gawai Ijok Pumpong

The *Ijok* is a gamuti palm, while the word *pumpong* means to decapitate. This ritual may be glossed as the 'decapitation of gamuti palm ritual'. It deals directly with the rites of head-hunting. The depiction of beheading an enemy occurs at the conclusion of the rites when the shrine is dismantled by severing the rattan length that holds up the shrine with a single blow of a sword (see diagram 2:2).

Table 2:2

Names of <i>gawai</i> ritual	<i>Timang</i> length or stage	When the chanting of <i>timang</i> ends
1. <i>Gawai Tresang Mansau</i>	<i>Ngua</i> (Nursing the trophy head) Part V:L658	Afternoon second day
2. <i>Gawai Kalingkang</i>	<i>Nyinka</i> (end of forging) Part VI:L668	Later afternoon third day
3. <i>Gawai Ijok Pumpong</i> (Decapitating of gamuti palm ritual)	<i>Bedua antara</i> (dividing the land) Part VII:L416	Afternoon fourth day
4. <i>Gawai Tangga Raja</i> (Notched-ladder of wealth)	<i>Nyulap</i> (first rite of planting) Part VIII:L246	Morning fifth day
5. <i>Gawai Kayu Raya</i> (Tree of wealth ritual)	<i>Ninjau balayan</i> (Surveying the padi) Part VIII:L325	Morning fifth day
6. <i>Gawai Kenyalang</i> (Hornbill ritual)	<i>Nekok</i> (first rite of harvesting) Part VIII:L369	Afternoon fifth day
7. <i>Gawai Nangga Langit</i> (Notched-ladder to the sky)	<i>Nyimpan padi</i> (Storing the padi)	Afternoon fifth day
8. <i>Gawai Tangga Ari</i> (Notched-ladder of day)	<i>Nempalai kasai</i> (Planting of cotton) Part IX	Morning seventh day

This table shows the possible order in which the *gawai amat* rituals may be performed.⁸

4. Gawai Tangga Raja

Tangga raja means the notched-ladder of wealth and prosperity. The Iban believe that every family who aspires to be affluent must build their own symbolic ladder from the ground to the sky where the gods and their wealth are to be found. This rite involves the man who is holding the ritual ascending the notched-ladder placed beside the shrine and climbing to the loft of the longhouse. That action symbolizes the man's entry into the world of the gods and their wealth.

Other *gawai amat* rituals like 'notched-ladder to the sky' (*gawai nangga langit*) and 'notched-ladder of day' (*gawai nangga ari*) are different forms of ritual depicting one central idea, which is man's attempt to reach the world of the gods and become like them.

5. Gawai Kayu Raja

The *kayu raya* (lit. 'big tree') ritual's main purpose is to fetch a tree of wealth found growing on the land across the sea, and bring it to the *bilek*-family holding the ritual.

6. Gawai Kenyalang

The 'hornbill ritual' (*gawai kenyalang*) and its counterpart the ritual of hornbill abode (*tansang kenyalang*) are performed in order that wealth and prosperity will come to the *bilek*-family concerned.

The Preparation, Procedures and Rites of Gawai Amat Rituals

The decision to hold ritual activities is discussed in a meeting attended by at least one member of each *bilek*-family in the longhouse.

Table 2:3

Statement of expenses, showing major items used in
 a *Gawai Kenyalang* (hornbill ritual)
 held 12 December, 1976

Items	Quantity	Price in Malaysian \$
1. Rice	12 sacks (336 gantangs)	\$744.00
2. Eggs for offering	200 @ 25c	50.00
3. Pigs for sacrifice	4 (one for every male participant)	250.00
4. Rice wine	9 jars	308.00
5. Arak (spirit)	12 tins (48 galls.)	480.00
6. Fees for bards	4 jars @ \$18	72.00
	6 chickens	30.00
	cash	75.00
7. Miscellaneous food items		800.00
	Grand total:	<u>\$2809.00</u>

This account does not include the transportation cost, and many minor items needed for various rites of the *gawai kenyalang*. The exchange rate in 1976 was \$A1 = \$M2.45. The ritual festival lasted for 16 days.

During this meeting the number of *bilek*-families who are going to hold the rituals and the type they intend to perform is made known. Once these two factors are known, all those present decide on a tentative date for the performance, the number of the longhouses to be invited, and which *bilek*-family is to be responsible for each of the longhouses being invited.

The general patterns of preparation for a *gawa* ritual and a *gawai amat* ritual are basically the same, the difference being in their elaboration, emphasis and intensity. The first thing a *bilek*-family has to do is to ask a number of people, either from their own community or from the neighbouring longhouses to attend to certain specific duties during the actual performance of the ritual. The following are some of the roles that must be filled during the performance of a *gawai amat*.

1. Lemambang (Bard) and his Assistant

Their duty is to invoke the gods to attend the ritual. Without this invocation a *gawai amat* cannot be performed.

2. Chief Ritual Supervisor

This man has two main duties. First, he is responsible for erecting the shrine (*ranyai*), an action that the Iban describe as *nanam ranyai* or 'planting the shrine'. Second, he is the man who decides all procedural matters, the interpretation of omens, when and how the offerings should be offered, and so on. Because he practically orchestrates the whole ritual proceedings, this person must have great ritual experiences and be of some standing in the community. In the

former days this duty was allocated either to a chief auger (*tuai burong*), or a very outstanding warrior (*tau kayau*).

3. Female Ritual Supervisor

This woman is called '*orang megai pengawa indu*' (lit. 'person who handles woman's ritual duties'). Her duties complement those of the chief ritual supervisor. The latter decides when an offering should be presented, and it is left to this woman to instruct her assistants in the type of offering and the number of eggs to be used.

4. Parading Warriors

After the shrine has been erected, a group of five to seven Iban males dressed in full regalia, one at a time, strut up and down the longhouse in the *ngerandang* rite. During this performance each individual circles around the shrine with a drawn sword, shaking a tassel of wild palm leaves and yelling war cries.

5. Men Involved in *Piring* Ceremonies

During every major ritual activity there are offerings which must be prepared and offered by men of status. They must be appointed before the ritual commences.

It is necessary to ask the abovementioned people as soon as the date of the ritual is known. Failure to do so may result in a family having to search for people further away and thus incurring higher travelling expenses. There are other minor ritual duties that need to be attended to, but persons to undertake such duties are always available among the guests.

Once the various people involved in the rites have been notified, the *bilek*-family turns to their domestic preparations. Large amounts of firewood must be chopped and temporary shelters for extra hearths constructed. Substantial amounts of *padi* have to be pounded, a task which in former days took weeks to complete. (Today it takes only a few hours with a rice-milling machine.) If a *bilek*-family's fowls, pigs, eggs, are judged to be inadequate, then the men have to travel to their relatives asking for the required items.

About a month before the ritual is due to commence, the yeast, (*chiping*) used for brewing rice wine (*tuak*) is prepared. This occasion is called *ngeretat*. The family who holds the most important ritual prepares the yeast, after which every *bilek*-family takes a portion and mixes it with their own. Once the yeast is dried and ready for use, the whole longhouse in the space of one day, cooks the glutinous rice (*brau pulut*) needed to make rice wine. The amount a *bilek*-family cooks depends on the type of ritual held. However, on average, one *bilek*-family uses about 10-15 gantangs (1 gantang = 1 imperial gallon) of glutinous rice. This produces about the equivalent amount of rice wine. After the rice mixed with yeast has been stored in the jars, no disputes must be heard in the longhouse lest the rice takes on a distasteful flavour.

While waiting for the glutinous rice to brew, the men usually go on a hunting expedition (*begiga*) for about two weeks. From such expeditions the men quite frequently come back with large quantities of smoked and pickled meat. Upon the arrival of the men from their hunting expedition, the date of the ritual is finalized. Within the next day or two, groups of men go to all the invited longhouses

telling them of the actual date of the ritual, and leaving behind in each longhouse one offering and a bottle of rice wine as a form of official invitation to the feast (cf. appendix part II:L29). If a longhouse accepts the invitation, the rice wine is consumed by those who attend the ritual, and the offering is thrown on the ground for the gods to eat on the day the ritual commences. Should a longhouse, due to unforeseen circumstances, be unable to accept their invitation, then the offering along with a bottle of rice wine is returned at some time before the ritual begins.

Seven days before the ritual is due to begin, mats are rolled out on the gallery of every *bilek*-family; *padi* is popped (*rendai*); drums and gongs are beaten, and in the evening every *bilek*-family performs a *bedara* ritual. These ritual acts (except the rolling of the mats) are repeated once a day for the next seven days. This is a way of announcing to the gods and spirits that ritual ceremonies are forthcoming (see part I, line 191n). From this day until the ritual ends, all of the inhabitants of the longhouse must desist from work except those duties which are pertinent to the preparation of the ritual. And these duties for the next seven days involve every able-bodied man and woman of the longhouse. The women make huge quantities of the ingredients used in the offerings. They cook a variety of rice cakes and other delicacies, and extract wine from the fermented rice, while the men are out in the forest looking for the pith of wild palm (*upa panto*) as vegetables, and their young shoots (*dawn isang*) for decorating the longhouse and other ritual purposes. It is the responsibility of the men to see that all structures, platforms and scaffoldings used

during the ritual are constructed, and materials for the shrine (*ranyai*) are available. These preparations could become a real burden to the family holding the ritual but for the young men and women from other longhouses who have been asked to help. Their presence not only reduces the amount of work, but it also generates an atmosphere of gaiety and festivity in the longhouse as a whole.

The day the ritual festivity commences, the rites performed by the *bilek*-family holding the ritual become more intense. Early on this morning, an offering for *antu kepapas* (spirits of envy) is placed on a bamboo pole (*tresang*) beside the foot of a entry ladder. The Iban believe that once these spirits of envy have been expiated they will leave the longhouse without causing any trouble. Soon after this, a pig (normally there is one pig for every male in the *bilek*-family) is taken to the river to be ritually washed, and then placed in a shelter built on the *tanju*. Once this rite is completed every male in that *bilek*-family is prohibited from sleeping until after the pigs are sacrificed and their livers divined the following morning. The ritual washing of the pig, the Iban claim, helps to ensure an auspicious liver, while the prohibition against sleeping ensures there will be no bad dreams. From mid-morning to early afternoon, the guests from various longhouses begin to arrive, ascending the notched-entry ladder dressed in finery appropriate to the occasion. As they do so, the host-family arranges a welcoming party at the top of the entry ladder. As each guest enters the longhouse he or she is given rice wine to drink and a cock is waved over his or her head to cast away any ill omens that they may have encountered on their way. As the guests enter, the women go

to the family living quarters (*bilek*), and the men on to the gallery. Then a *piring pengalu* or offering of welcoming the guests is brought out on to the gallery and performed by the leader of the guests. Every *bilek*-family performs this rite as their respective guests arrive.

Soon after this, on the gallery, the construction of the shrine begins. Once constructed, the shrine becomes a crucially important part of the rites. It is therefore appropriate at this stage to discuss Iban conception of the *ranyai* or shrine. The action of constructing or erecting the shrine is called *nanam ranyai* (lit. 'planting the shrine'), and the man who erects it is called *orang nanam* (lit. 'the person who plants'). The trophy head (*antu pala*), or its symbol, a coconut that hangs from the shrine, is called *igi ranyi* (lit. 'seed of the shrine'). The shrine itself is often referred to by the *timbang* as a *nibong* (a thorny palm), or *nangka* (jack-fruit tree), or other seed-bearing plants the seeds of which may be planted for human consumption. There is, I would suggest, little reason to doubt Iban conception of the shrine (*ranyai*) as a kind of plant or tree of inestimable value. It is also, in Iban belief, the abode of the gods while partaking of their ritual feast, and the place where the gods leave their charms (*pengaruh*) for the Iban.

There are basic differences in the structures, materials used and the items placed in the shrine between that of a *gawa* and a *gawai amat* ritual. The shrine for the *gawa* category is simpler and may be erected by the *lemambang* (bard), and contain fewer items (see diagram 2:1). The shrine for the *gawai amat* (ritual festival proper) is more complex and can only be erected by a person specially commissioned to do so

(i.e. *orang nanam*). The items placed in the shrine of a *gawai amat* include the seeds of *padi pun* (sacred rice), the *batu panggol* (whetstone), and farming implements, while hanging from it are various accoutrements of war and trophy heads (*antupala*: see diagrams 2:2A and 2B). The notched-ladder lashed to its side is a symbolic depiction of man's attempt to enter into the world of the gods and be like them, which is the primary objective of all *gawai amat*.

The next rite after the shrine has been erected is called *niti daun* (lit. 'treading the leaves'). In this rite the young women dressed in *ikat* fabric skirts and adorned with silver finery solemnly promenade up and down the longhouse to the sound of a single brass gong, while casting away *berau kuning*, or yellow rice. Even though none of my informants were able to enlighten me as to why the phrase *niti daun*, or treading on leaves, is used to describe a rite which is plainly a means of showing off one's jewellery and wealth, it is reasonable to suggest that the term *niti daun* is derived from the literal 'treading of leaves'. In former times when plates were not available, the Iban used leaves to eat from during festival time. Thus it was most probable that the women who participated in this rite which followed immediately after an afternoon meal might have actually trod on leaves left lying about on the gallery. The casting of yellow rice has symbolical significance. First, it symbolizes the planting of spikes on the enemies' path. Second, the magical potency attached to yellow rice is believed to drive away bad things from the sacrificial pig, thus ensuring auspicious omens from its liver.

Diagram 2:1

Diagram showing a cross-section of the shrine used in *gawa sukat* and *bulu*, October, 1978

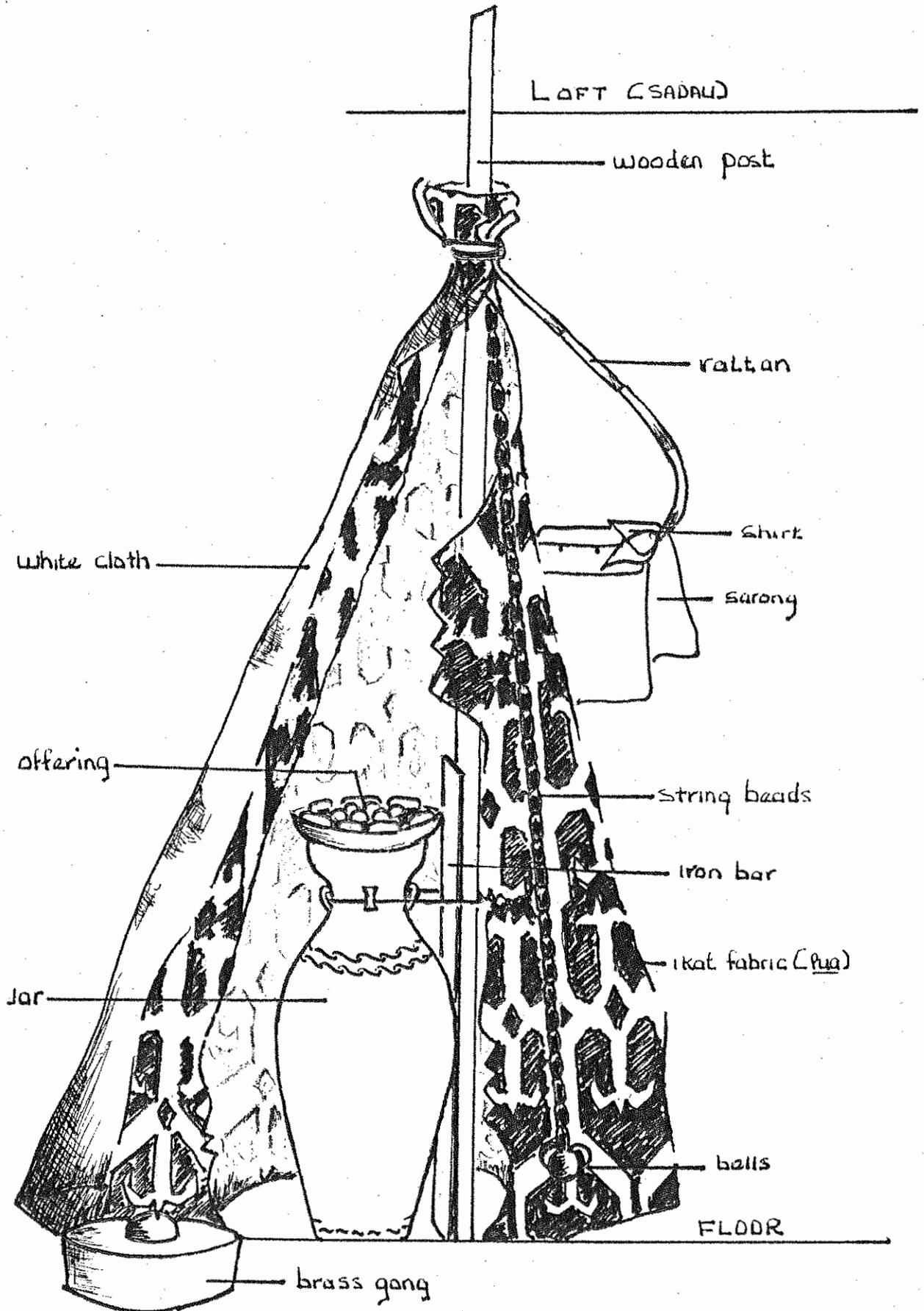
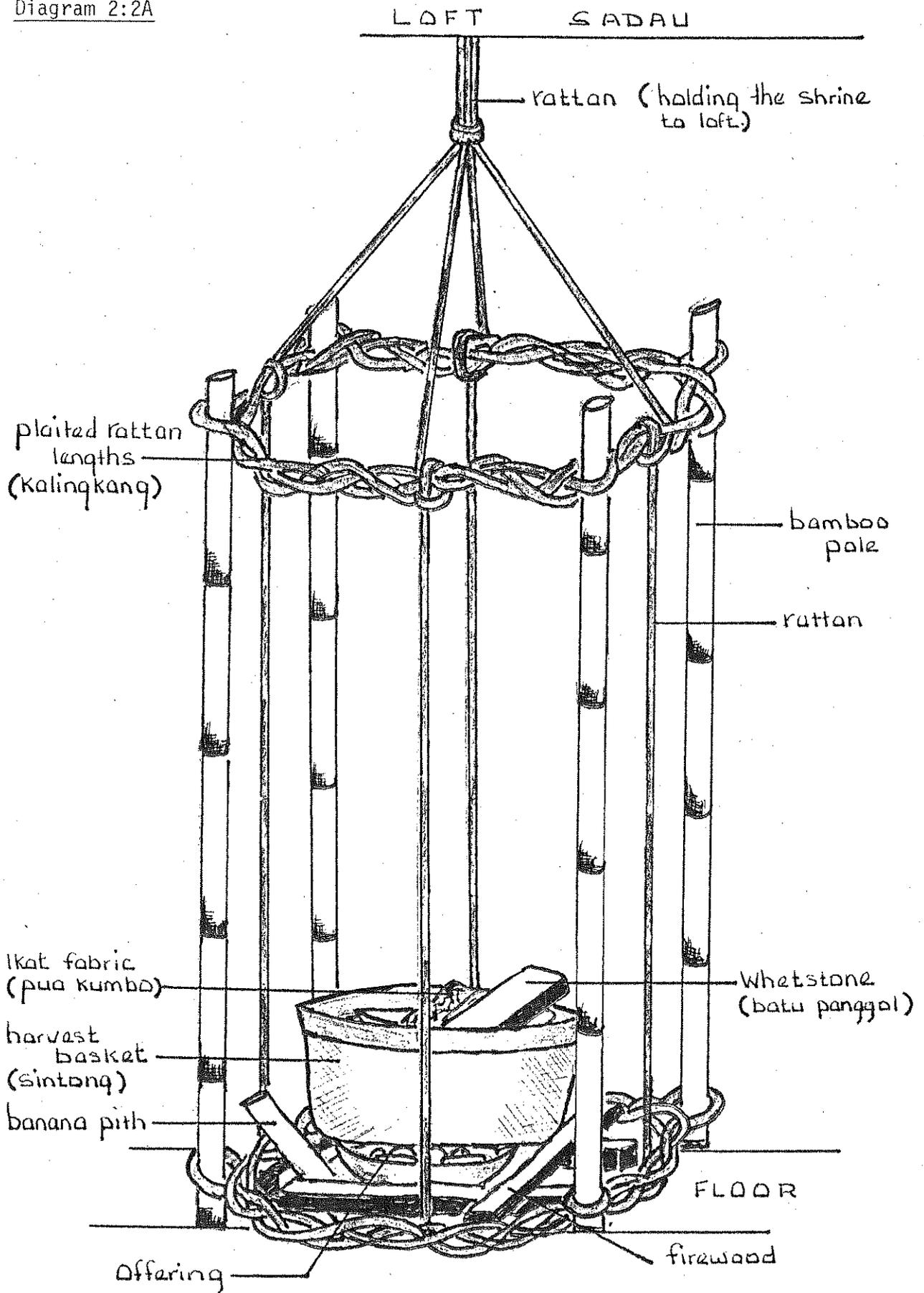


Diagram 2:2A



Diagrams 2A and 2B show the various components of the shrine used in *gawai ijok pumpong*.

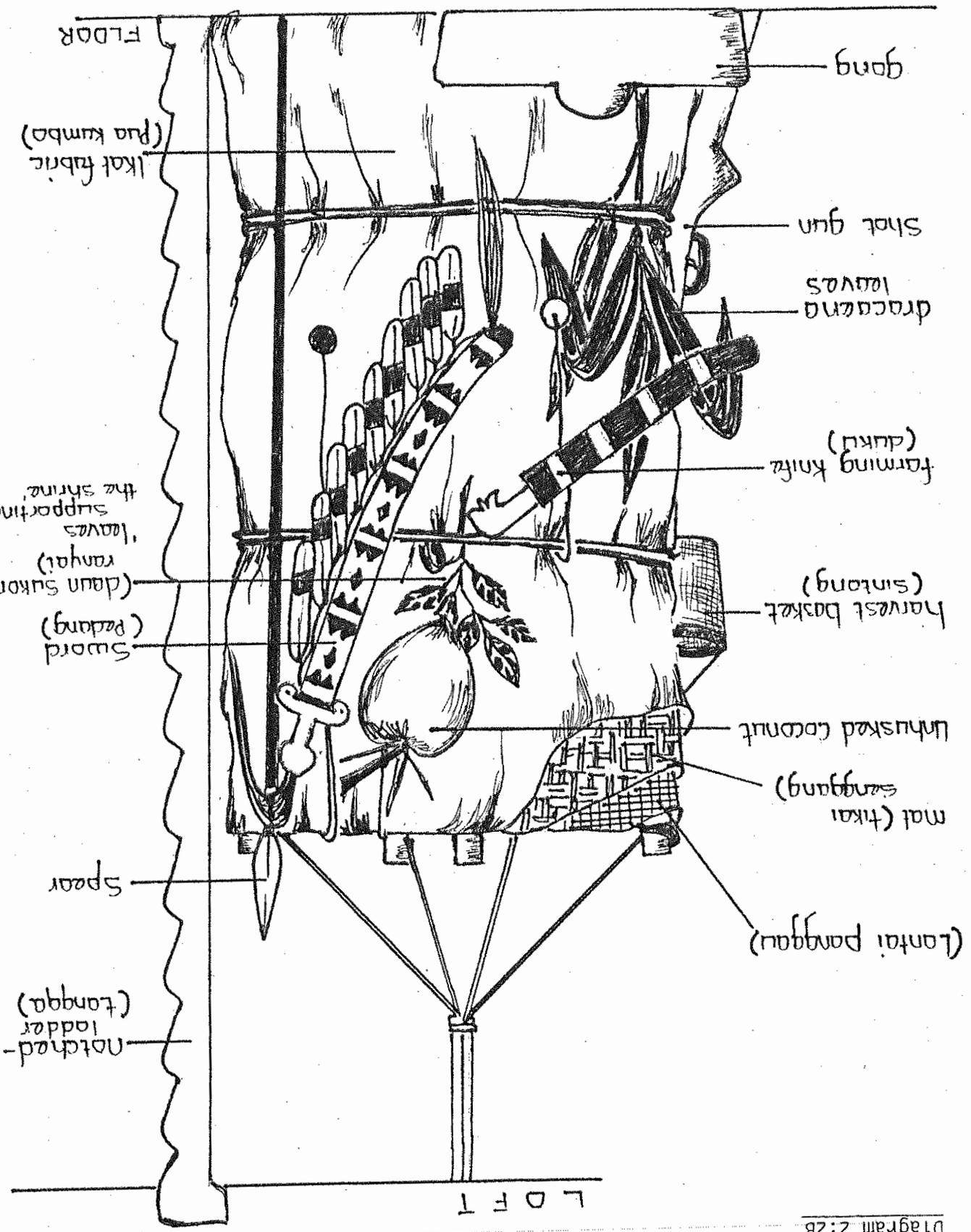


Diagram 2:28

Once this rite is completed, the parading of warriors or *ngerandang* rite follows. (*Ngerandang* is an Iban word meaning to clear a way or path.) There are usually five or seven men of some standing dressed in warrior's costume who take part in this rite. The first man, as he struts up and down the longhouse, slashes the red cotton thread stretched across the gallery of every *bilek*-family. This, according to the Iban, symbolizes the clearing of obstacles and problems from the path of the *bilek*-families concerned. Then the rest of the men, in turn, strut up and down the gallery with drawn swords shaking their tassels of wild palm leaves (*bulu papan*) which represent shields, periodically yelling their war cries. At each apartment of the longhouse each warrior is given a glass of rice wine to drink. In a large longhouse it takes a strong and determined man to perform the last part of the rite, which is circling the shrine with drawn sword, yelling out fearsome war-cries while still standing on his feet. Thus the rite of *ngerandang*, though it has deep religious significance, is also a way by which the community at large selects men of endurance and determination.

At about four o'clock in the afternoon, the rite of *ngalu antu* (lit. 'welcoming the spirits') is performed on the open platform (*tanju*). During this rite offerings consisting of raw meat and fish are offered to the spirits who have, unbidden, come to the ritual. The inclusion of raw meat in the offering arises from a belief that spirits prefer uncooked food. When all of the offerings have been prepared and offered, the *lemambang* (bard) seated on a brass gong, begins chanting the *berenong* incantation describing the various spirits coming to the

ritual feast. Below is an excerpt of this *berenong* incantation:

Lapa rumah tu nyau ka tegali tiang ka jelepi,
Asai ke digulo ai ngampoh ka lenggi pala emperan.
Angka tu aoh munsoh Kayan ka datai ngelaban,
Ngempas ari tempangan bukit Tibang.

Malik ka pendai kema kili meda antu gambi datai nandan.
Malik ka pendai kema kulu meda antu Siu datai nyeru
ngabang ngelemunan.

Ukai meh nya munsoh Memaloh munoh Kayan ka ngelaban,
Nama nya bala Laja uta ngelemayan tegong Remaung dan,
Datai nandan nadai ngabang.

Sapa meh iya nya bekelambi baju taya nebal lengan?
Iya kema kitu mangat nyelai udu bedago serak dua lapan.
Iya kema kia nadai utai baka nya beketapu ka taya
bemarik kelam.
Iya ke dudok kema kulu nya nyelai udu beketapu ka kulit
antu bauh ngelemayan.
Iya ke dudok kema kili udu nyelai bekelambi ka manyi
enggau serangan.

Sapa ke madah ka kita ninang ngabang nandan?
Nadai di tanya ka de endon Menchi Dayang Enjam,
Kita begendang kalelaki lanjan
Niki perabong manjong ngepong ke sempayong pintu bulan,
Jari kanan megai pedara piring lapan,
Sangking ka tandan ketupat puang.
Ari nya meh aku ninga salempang rinda tuboh rempam,
Sahari tu aku ninang ngabang nendan.

* * * * *

English

Why is the house swaying and the posts tottering,
As if heaving in the swirling water that floods the plain,
Maybe this is the noise made by the invading hordes of Kayan
Pouring down from the foothills of Tibang mountain.

Looking down-river behold there's an ogre Gambi coming to
the feast.

Looking up-river behold there's an ogre Siu, with bellowing
voice, attending the ritual.

Those are not the invading hordes of Memaloh and Kayans,
They are the entourage of ogre Laja, and Remaung who roars
from a bough of a tree

Coming to partake in our ritual feast.

Who is that wearing a jacket with cotton as thick as a
man's arm?

The one over this side is indeed strange with jaws in two
tiers of eight.

The one over there is beyond reckoning with a hat of
cotton and necklace of beads.

The one sitting toward up-river is strange, wearing a hat
adorned with shaggy hair of a spirit.

The one sitting toward down-river is strange, wearing a
jacket swarming with wild bees.

Who informed you about coming to the feast?

Do not ask my dear child Dayang Enjam,

For you have unceaselessly beaten on the drums,

While on the roof, you yell out cries that shatter the
door of the glimmering moon,

Holding in your right hand an eight-egged offering,

Attached to which are empty wrappers of rice cakes.

Thus I came to hear of it my dear young and tender child,

And here I am today attending your feast.

As soon as the rite of welcoming the spirits has been completed, the bard and his assistant, and the two-man chorus, put on their finery in preparation for the commencement of the *timbang* invocation. Having donned their costumes and other paraphernalia, they enter the living quarters or *bilek* of the family holding the ritual. In the *bilek* the various ingredients required for an offering are neatly arranged for the bard to perform. After the offering has been performed and offered, the bard rinses his collection of charms (*pengaruh*) in a bowl of water, the contents of which is sprinkled first on his *timbang* party and then to every member of the *bilek*-family who sit in a semi-circle facing the bard. This part of the rite is in the *timbang* text Part I. Once the *timbang* invocation starts, all rites and offerings given are governed by the events as they unfold in the course of the *timbang*, as shown in Table 2:4.

The *bilek*-family who are not holding either a *gawa* or *gawai* ritual should, at least on three occasions, perform a *bedara* ritual. The first *bedara* ritual is performed in the morning seven days before the ritual festivity is due to begin. The second one is on the night the ritual commences. The third is on the morning of the second day when Singalang Burong and his entourage arrive at the longhouse. The kind of offering (*piring*) a *bilek*-family offers depends upon the number of males it contains. Where there is no male, a family offers only one offering on each occasion. The necessity of making offerings arises from the belief that gods and spirits, when partaking in the ritual feast, visit every *bilek*-family in the longhouse. These supernatural beings, especially the spirits (*antu*), would be greatly displeased if a *bilek*-family failed

to offer them food to eat. In 1978 I was told of a woman of Rumah Ungka in the Melinau river who died suddenly on the first night of a *gawai* ritual. According to the Iban she was killed by the *antu* (spirits) because she refused to make offerings on the required occasions. This woman was, in Iban belief, *mati busong*, death caused by the breaking of a ritual prohibition (i.e. by the spirits) because of her negligence. Therefore, if an Iban *bilek*-family does not wish the displeasure of the gods and cursing by spirits, they must co-operate with other members of the longhouse in performing ritual activities. Today, religion is still one of the most potent forces uniting an Iban longhouse into a single working unit or corporate group.

Major ritual occasions like *gawa* and *gawai* are also a time for festivity and socializing. These two activities are the primary objectives of those guests who are not participating in any of the actual rites. For these people, festivity and social activity begin soon after their arrival. Once the rite of welcoming the guests (*ngalu pengabang*) is completed, the guests are invited, in turn by each *bilek*-family, to 'sample' their rice wine and to try the various delicacies prepared for the occasion. This is the time when the host-families and the guests ask news of each other, exchange information, renew old acquaintances and make new ones. In spite of the clamour and noise as rites of various kinds are being performed, the general atmosphere still permits conversation. However, after the evening meal the situation changes. The drinking sessions now take a more vigorous form. The *bilek*-family, each in turn, bring out on to the gallery a tall jar brimming with rice wine for the guests to consume.

Table 2:4

This table shows all the *piring*-ceremonies (i.e. preparation of offering) and rites performed after the commencement of *timbang* invocation of *gawai nangga langit* held by Pengulu Kuleh, June-July 1949 (Freeman field notes, 1949). All rites and *piring*-ceremonies performed in connection with the events in the *timbang* plot are distinguished by a sub-heading '*timbang*', while the rest are marked by a term 'tradition'.

Date	Time (hrs.)	Type of rite or <i>piring</i> -ceremony	Significance
29 June 1949 First day	1705	<i>piring</i> -ceremony in the <i>bilek</i>	Marking the beginning of <i>timbang</i> invocation
	1740	<i>piring</i> given to the sacrificial pig (<i>piring teresang babi</i>)	<u>Tradition</u> : To ensure auspicious omens from pig's liver
	1809	<i>piring</i> -ceremony to welcome the gods (<i>piring ngalu petara</i>)	<u>Tradition</u> : To welcome minor gods who attend the feast uninvited
	2045	offering fiven to the shrine (<i>piring sukong ranyai</i>)	<u>Tradition</u> : Shrine is a living entity, thus must be given offering
	2100	<i>piring</i> -ceremony on the <i>ruai</i> (<i>piring ngerampas</i>) for head-hunting raid	<i>Timang</i> : Lang and his sons-in-law prepare for head-hunting raid (Part III)
	2110	<i>piring</i> -ceremony for the Iban elders (<i>piring ngalu tuai</i>)	<u>Tradition</u> : To respect the older members of the community
	2300	5 women circling the shrine singing to a trophy head (<i>naku antu pala</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : Lang arrives from head-hunting raid with a trophy head (Part III)

Table 2:4 (cont.)

Date	Time (hrs.)	Type of rite or <i>piring</i> -ceremony	Significance
30 June 1949 Second day	0200	<i>piring</i> -ceremony on the gallery to invite guests (<i>piring matak ngirup</i>)	Tradition: Offering used when inviting guests to drink
	0230	<i>piring</i> -ceremony on the gallery (<i>piring pintu langit</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : Lang prepares to cut his way through the door of the sky (Part IV)
	0530	<i>piring</i> -ceremony on the gallery to welcome Lang and his entourage (<i>piring ngalu Lang</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : Lang and his entourage arrive at the longhouse for the feast (Part IV)
	0555	<i>piring</i> -ceremony on the <i>tanju</i> for the sacrificial pig (<i>piring ngayang babi</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : Lang sacrifices the pig and reads its liver (Part IV)
	0715	<i>piring</i> -ceremony in the <i>bilek</i> to welcome Lang and his party into the family room (<i>piring nungguh Lang</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : Lang is entertained in the <i>bilek</i> by a <i>berenong</i> -invocation
	1355	<i>piring</i> -ceremony performed prior to <i>bebuti</i> (<i>piring kena bebuti</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : Lang participates in festive activities (Part V)
	1615	<i>piring</i> -ceremony prior to inviting gods from across the sea (<i>piring ngambi Ribai</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : (optional route) Lang's sons-in-law prepare to journey across the sea

Table 2:4 (cont.)

Date	Time (hrs.)	Type of rite or <i>piring</i> -ceremony	Significance
1 July 1949 Third day	0630	<i>piring</i> -ceremony to commemorate the meeting of Kling and his arch enemy Ribai (<i>piring betemu ka Kling enggau Ribai</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : Lang's sons-in-law arrive from their sea voyage bringing Ribai and his entourage to the feast
	0840	2 pigs sacrificed; one for Kling, one for Ribai on the <i>tanju</i>	<i>Timang</i> : Kling and Ribai sacrifice their pigs for omens
	0915	offering given to <i>Antu Gerasi</i> (ogres) (<i>piring Antu Gerasi</i>)	<u>Tradition</u> : Expiation for the ogres who come to the feast
	1135	<i>piring</i> -ceremony for partial dismantling of the shrine (<i>piring ngerebah ka ranyai</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : Once Ribai and his entourage of deities have blessed the shrine, only its basic frame is left standing
	1220	<i>piring</i> -ceremony in the <i>bilek</i> in conjunction with the bringing of fortune into the family (<i>piring nama ka buah</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : <i>Tuah</i> or fortune brought by the 'sea gods' are brought into the family <i>bilek</i> (room)
	1520	<i>piring</i> -ceremony on the <i>ruai</i> for forging (<i>piring ngamboh</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : Lang prepares for forging (Part VI)
	1900	<i>bedara</i> ritual on the <i>ruai</i>	<u>Tradition</u> : This is performed by every <i>bilek</i> -family

Table 2:4 (cont.)

Date	Time (hrs.)	Type of rite or <i>piring</i> -ceremony	Significance
2 July 1949 4th day	0700	the man holding the feast drinks from the spout of the <i>teresang</i> by the shrine	<u>Tradition</u> : The <i>tuak</i> from the <i>teresang</i> will endow the man with wealth and bravery
	0910	<i>piring</i> -ceremony for the splitting of the trophy head on the <i>tanju</i>	<i>Timang</i> : Lang prepares to split open the trophy head (Part VII)
	1030	<i>piring</i> -ceremony before departing to see the tract of virgin jungle is performed on the <i>ruai</i> (<i>piring ngabas tanah</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : Lang and his followers prepare to go to the tract of land to seek a swidden (Part VII)
	1230	<i>piring</i> -ceremony for the <i>manggol</i> rite on <i>ruai</i> (<i>piring manggol</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : Lang is ready to perform the <i>manggol</i> rite — rite before clearing the swidden (Part VII)
	1500	<i>piring</i> -ceremony for firing the swidden to performed on the <i>tanju</i> (<i>piring nunu Umai</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : Lang prepares to fire the swidden (Part VIII)
	1900	<i>bedara</i> ritual on the <i>ruai</i>	<u>Tradition</u> : Performed by every <i>bilek</i> -family

Table 2:4 (cont.)

Date	Time (hrs.)	Type of rite or <i>piring</i> -ceremony	Significance
3 July 1949 5th day	0605	<i>piring</i> -ceremony in the <i>bilek</i> to inaugurate the planting of <i>padi</i> seed (<i>piring nyulap</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : Lang is getting ready for planting (Part VIII)
	0900	<i>piring</i> -ceremony prior to harvesting on the <i>ruai</i> (<i>piring nganjong penyedai</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : Lang prepares to harvest his crop (Part VIII)
	1020	<i>piring</i> -ceremony on the <i>tanju</i> for the smoking of trophy heads (<i>piring ngerakai antu pala</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : Lang sunning his <i>padi</i> crop (Part VIII)
	1150	<i>piring</i> -ceremony for bringing coolness to the <i>bilek</i> -family (<i>piring penyelap</i>)	Tradition: Before a ritual feast ends this rite must be performed
	1240	<i>piring</i> -ceremony for storing <i>padi</i> on the <i>ruai</i> (<i>piring nyimpan padi</i>)	<i>Timang</i> : Lang stores his <i>padi</i> in the <i>tibang</i> or bark bins (Part VIII)
	1310	TIMANG ENDS	(as does the ritual feast)

Most rites in Iban *gawa* or *gawai* rituals are accompanied by the giving of offerings or *piring* (hence *piring*-ceremony).

There are, during this session, two opposing objectives at play: the host-families want the guests to become inebriated with the least amount of wine;⁹ while the guests want to drink up all the wine without getting inebriated. The pursuit of these two objectives brings out the best of Iban humour and wit. The occasion becomes, as the night progresses, a frenzied battle of wits, not only between the host-families and the guests, but also between the opposite sexes. For an uninformed observer, such an occasion may seem to be nothing more than an orgy of drinking and merry-making.¹⁰ But for the participating Iban it has far-reaching consequence. Any Iban male who survives the vigorous bout of drinking is regarded as a man of quality, and will be talked about and referred to for days on end.

For most of the guests the festivity ends when the main components of the shrine have been dismantled on the following morning. In some *gawai* rituals this is done on the morning of the third day. Once the shrine is partly dismantled the guests may return to their homes. But for the *lemambang* and his *timbang* party, a few ritually involved individuals and the family who is holding the ritual, their duties end only when the *timbang* finishes, and this may be for as long as seven days (see Table 2:2). Thus, major ritual activities have two different meanings for those involved. For the guests, it is a real occasion, but for those who partake in its rites, it is indeed a time of *gawa* in which 'to work and to be busy'.

Concluding Remarks

The Iban regard their religion and its associated rituals as a means of achieving practical ends. The three broad categories of

rituals (*bedara*, *gawa* and *gawai*) are three varying but compatible ways of bettering their lives. There are no strict rules and procedures governing the performances of Iban ritual activities. Iban may and do, through dreams and personal experience, either alter the well-established rites, or simply ignore their performance. In July, 1979, a member of a family had a bad dream which, according to the interpretations of most older Iban, required a placatory *gawai* ritual. However, this *bilek*-family ignored their suggestions and held a *bedara* ritual instead. Another man had a dream in which he was told not to perform a *nge lumbong* rite for his deceased granddaughter if he still wanted her spirit to be able to 'visit' him in the world of the living. He did not perform the rite. These and other cases which I have mentioned illustrate both the flexibility of Iban religion and the innovative way in which the Iban practise their religion. Whether other Iban in similar circumstances would follow those innovations would depend largely upon the perceived consequences. Thus, the Iban predilection for innovation, and their inclination to adopt new rituals, is tempered by their pragmatism. It is perhaps this pragmatism which has kept the innovative and enterprising Iban from departing too far from their traditional norms.

Footnotes

1. In a collective *bedara* ritual (e.g. *minta ujan* — asking for rain; *muja menoa* — cleansing of land) the number of offerings used has nothing to do with the number of males. The amount offered is prescribed by the ritual procedures which govern such occasions.
2. By chopping the water with a knife, the Iban believe that the water will be cleared of any dangerous elements, thus making it safer for the sick to be immersed.
3. See Jensen, The Iban and Their Religion (1974:195-205).
4. Sandin (April, 1962:119) describes *gawai antu* as 'pemadu besai dikerja bansa Iban' (the highest of all Iban rituals). This is perhaps true in the Saribas-Skrang region where he lives, but certainly not in the Baleh region.
5. Uchibori (1978:170-174) argues that *gawai antu* in Saribas-Skrang region has incorporated into its rite 'through the elaboration of ceremonial drinking of the praised wine and *garong* wine' male values which used to be embodied in the head-hunting ideology.
6. Rubber trees were first introduced to the Baleh Iban at the turn of the 20th century (Freeman, 1970:267-71). But Iban attempts to cultivate rubber were thwarted by the Brooke Government who feared that the Iban in planting rubber would ignore their traditional crop of rice (cf. Grijpstra, 1976:93-94; Pringle, 1970:204n; Ward, 1966:145-146). However, by the middle of the century, rubber had established itself as one of the important cash crops of the Iban in the Baleh region. Pepper came to the Iban in this region as an important cash crop in the late 1960s and early 1970s. By 1979, assisted by various government subsidies, pepper rivalled rubber as a cash crop.
7. Gomes (1911:209), after observing Iban ritual feasts, concludes with the following remarks: "In none of these feasts does there seem to be any real reverential, religious worship. It is true food is offered to the spirits, but this is done as the mere observance of an ancient custom, without any approach to religious reverence." In Iban religion, reverence toward their gods is not an issue. These divine beings, though accredited with supernatural powers, possess all human physical attributes and exhibit human emotions. The man-to-god relationship is informal and direct. This relationship is succinctly portrayed in the *timbang*.

8. The *timbang* stages after the *Ngua* (the nursing of the trophy head) stage are not obligatory. The person performing the *gawai amat*, in consultation with his *lemambang*, decides the length of the *timbang* to be chanted. For instance, a person performing the *gawai ijok pumpong* may decide to end the *timbang* after the *nebang* (felling), instead of at *bedua antara*. Any phase of the hill *padi* cultivation can be used as an ending to the *timbang* chant. However, at the conclusion of every *gawai amat*, the *lemambang* always ends his chant with *Lang* sharing his charms and bestowing his blessings to the *bilek*-family holding the ritual (cf. part IX:L403-450).
9. To be able to get a guest inebriated is a source of great satisfaction for the host, for that is an indisputable sign that his guest has been well satisfied with what he has to offer.
10. It is this social aspect of Iban ritual that often attracts the most attention of writers when describing Iban ritual feasts. It is not surprising that most end up with a completely wrong impression of Iban religious activities. The following are typical examples of such misunderstandings:
 - (i) "The social character of the feast is of more practical importance than the religious, and feasting the guests occupies more attention than feeding the gods" (Ling Roth, 1896:257).
 - (ii) "... the partaking of food and drink seem to take more prominent place than any religious worship" (Gomes, 1911:210).

Chapter Three

Iban *Timang* or Ritual Chants

The Iban of Sarawak possess a large corpus of oral literature handed down from ancient times. This literature contains a number of legends, ritual chants, songs and other traditions some of which are embodied in prose, while others are set in rhyming pattern, and sung on ritual occasions. The stories recited or sung in plain prose are called *ensera* (legends), and they tell of the adventures and heroic deeds of Iban culture heroes (*orang panggau*). The other categories of Iban literature sung or chanted in rhyming patterns are made up of: *pantun* (songs), *sabak* (death dirge), and *timang* (ritual chant). The *pantun* is sung by women to men or vice versa on ritual occasions and during small gatherings over glasses of rice wine and other drinks. Its melody is "a rapid speech-like, rhythmically free singing on one tone which usually descends diatonically to a perfect fourth below" (Maceda, 1962:490). The *sabak* or death dirge is sung by an expert wailer depicting first, the journey of the deceased to the Land of the Dead; and second, the coming of the spirits of the dead to a ritual feast held in their honour (Uchibori, 1978:177-214). The *timang*, the most elaborate and complex of the three, which is chanted by a *lemambang* (bard) during a ritual feast is the main concern of this chapter.

The Iban recognize four categories of *timang*, namely:

- (i) *Timang Beintu intu* (ritual chant for man's welfare and life).
- (ii) *Timang Tuah* (ritual chant for fortune).

(iii) *Timang Beneh* (ritual chant for *padi* seed).

(iv) *Timang Gawai Amat* (chant for ritual of high significance).

Each of these four categories of *timang* vary in length, possess different plots and deal with specific problems. Despite these differences there are two main factors which bind them into a single body within the larger corpus of Iban literature. First, the *timang* is chanted only during a ritual festival (*gawa* or *gawai*) by a *lemambang* (bard). Second, it is both an invocation and a depiction of a journey to the world of the gods, and the gods' subsequent adventures while coming to the ritual feast in the world of humans. The manners and procedures in which the *lemambang* chant the various categories of *timang* are similar, and so are the diction and poetical styles embodied in them. I shall discuss these aspects of the *timang* under one heading later in the chapter. Now I want to outline briefly the plot of each of these four categories of *timang*.

1. *Timang Beintu intu*

The *timang beintu intu* or ritual chant for man's welfare and life is chanted during the *gawa* rituals of this same name. Despite the fact that all *gawa* rituals under this category use only this *timang* to summon the gods, the plot of the *timang* varies quite considerably at the performance of each of these rituals.

The *timang beintu intu* begins with the *lemambang*'s announcement of the approaching night and description of the various activities a longhouse's inhabitants indulge in at such a time. The plot of the four categories of *timang* from now to the time when the longhouse

depicted in the *timbang* is having a meeting (*baum*) is the same (cf. part I of *timbang gawai amat*). However, from this point on the *timbangs* begin to vary. In *timbang beintu intu* the women, during the meeting, point out that the gods needed to partake in the ritual feast have not been invited. And so Sabang Jurai,¹ an *orang Panggau*, is asked to be the messenger to summon the gods to partake in the ritual feast. (The *timbang* route is shown in diagram 3:1,² however, the gods and spirits listed are not complete.) The first group of spirits he meets are those associated with the accoutrements of war (spear, sword, shield, etc.). Then he goes under water to the abodes of Mene (the under-water goddess), and her brother Tedong, the serpent. Emerging from the water he traverses through the domains of various shamanic animals (frogs, bears, squirrels, etc.). Some of these spirits and gods attend the ritual bringing with them various assortments of charms, while those who are not able to attend give Sabang Jurai portions of their collection. Leaving behind the domains of the shamanic animals he comes to a junction where there are two routes leading to the abode of Singalang Burong and his sons-in-law. The first takes him through the domains of the fathers of the seven omen birds (*Apai burong*), and the second, through the domains of these omen birds' grandfathers (*Aki burong*). The route that Sabang Jurai takes depends upon the type of *gawa* ritual being performed.

On arriving at the abode of Singalang Burong and his sons-in-law, Sabang Jurai invites them to the feast in the world below. Singalang Burong replies that he is not able to attend the ritual, but his sons-in-law will go on his behalf.³

Tuboh besai aku Sabang Jurai enda enggau kita ninang
ngabang nandai,
Ngambi sapa baju kerai enggau kelambi baju gajai
Laban aku enggai ninggal ka igi ranyai samalam aja.

Enti ninang ngabang nindong ka kebong randang begantong,
Ngiring Begiang manang Lambong nganjong kelambi baju anjong,
Bisi menantu aku Bekubu burik bulu burong Ketupong.

My body so massive, Sabang Jurai, is not going to the feast,
To take a shirt with buttons and a jacket of frog design,
For I do not want to leave the seed of the shrine even for
a night.

If you are attending the feast in the land under the
blazing light,
Escorting the shaman Lambong and bringing with you a
war jacket,

There is my son-in-law Bekubu the speckled bird Ketupong.⁴

From now onward Singalang Burong's sons-in-law, with Ketupong as their leader, lead the way to the world below. Not far from Singalang Burong's house lives his brother, Manang Jaban whose attendance is needed. It is here that the road divides. One way leads upward to the door of the sky, or *pintu langit* and is taken by Singalang Burong when attending a *gawai amat*. No one dares to take this path without

Singalang Burong, for he is the only god who can smash this formidable barrier which separates the earth from the firmament. The other path the Iban call *jalai ensurok langit* (lit. 'the path that winds or creeps under the sky'), and this is taken by Ketupong and his entourage. This path passes through domains of various gods and later joins the route of *timbang gawai amat* at the abode of Empong, the goddess of the firmament. From then on the routes of these two categories of *timbang* become one (cf. diagram 3:1).

Even though the *timbang* chanted during the *gawa beintu intu* rituals uses basically one route or *siti jalai timbang*, there are variations in the plot and hence in the wording of the *timbang* for each of these *gawa* rituals. Let me elaborate this point by comparing the plots of this *timbang* chanted during the *gawa bulu* (ritual for strengthening one's 'mantle') and the *gawa buloh ayu* (ritual for changing name). In the former ritual the *lemambang* recognizes the necessity for Sabang Jurai to pass through the domains of the shamanic animals in order to get portions of their *bulu* or 'hair', which later will be sewn to the 'mantle' (represented by a shirt) of the man holding the ritual. This action, I was told, ritually affiliates this man with the animals (*sakaban enggau jelu*), thus lessening the danger of his being attacked by them. In *gawa buloh ayu* the need to affiliate a man with the animals is not its primary objective, and a *lemambang* may choose to ignore the domains of these animals in his *timbang* route. Another example illustrating this difference is the route a *lemambang* takes to Singalang Burong's abode. In *gawa bulu* most *lemambang* prefer the route which passes through the domains of *Apai burong* (omen birds' fathers) for these beings are

believed to possess charms that make a man invulnerable to the weapons of his enemies and the malign intentions of *antu* (spirits). While in *gawa buloh ayu*, the route is likely to be through the *Aki burong* (omen birds' grandfathers), all of whom are shaman, possessing the healing charms needed for the rite. These two examples illustrate the variations of *timbang beintu intu* when chanted at different rituals associated with man's welfare and life.

They are, however, not the most significant variations. The most significant and important variation in the *timbang beintu intu* plot occurs when the gods have all arrived at the ritual feast. In the *gawa bulu*, Rapoh, the guardian of all human *bulu* (lit. 'hair'), Antu Gayu, the spirit of long life, and other shamanic gods are depicted in the *timbang* taking out their *bulu* and other assortment of charms which they have brought to the ritual. All of these, represented by various coloured cotton threads, are symbolically sewn to the shirt of the man holding the ritual by women of standing in the community. In *gawa buloh ayu*, the *timbang* depicts the changing of a person's name, which the Iban *lemambang* effects (cf. section: *Timang Buloh Ayu*, in Chapter II). In *gawa sukat*, Antu Gayu is depicted in the *timbang* as extending the life span of the Iban concerned. This last part of the *timbang*, which lasts no longer than two hours, is the most clearly distinguished variation identifying the type of ritual being performed.

2. Timang Tuah

The *timbang tuah* or ritual chant for fortune is an invocation chanted during a ritual of this same name. This *timbang* differs from the *timbang beintu intu* on three main points: (1) Bungai Nuing and Pungga

are the messengers who summon the gods; (2) the *timbang* route takes them directly to the sea; (3) neither Singalang Burong nor his sons-in-law are invoked in the *timbang*. This is the only Iban ritual feast which these august beings are not invited to attend.

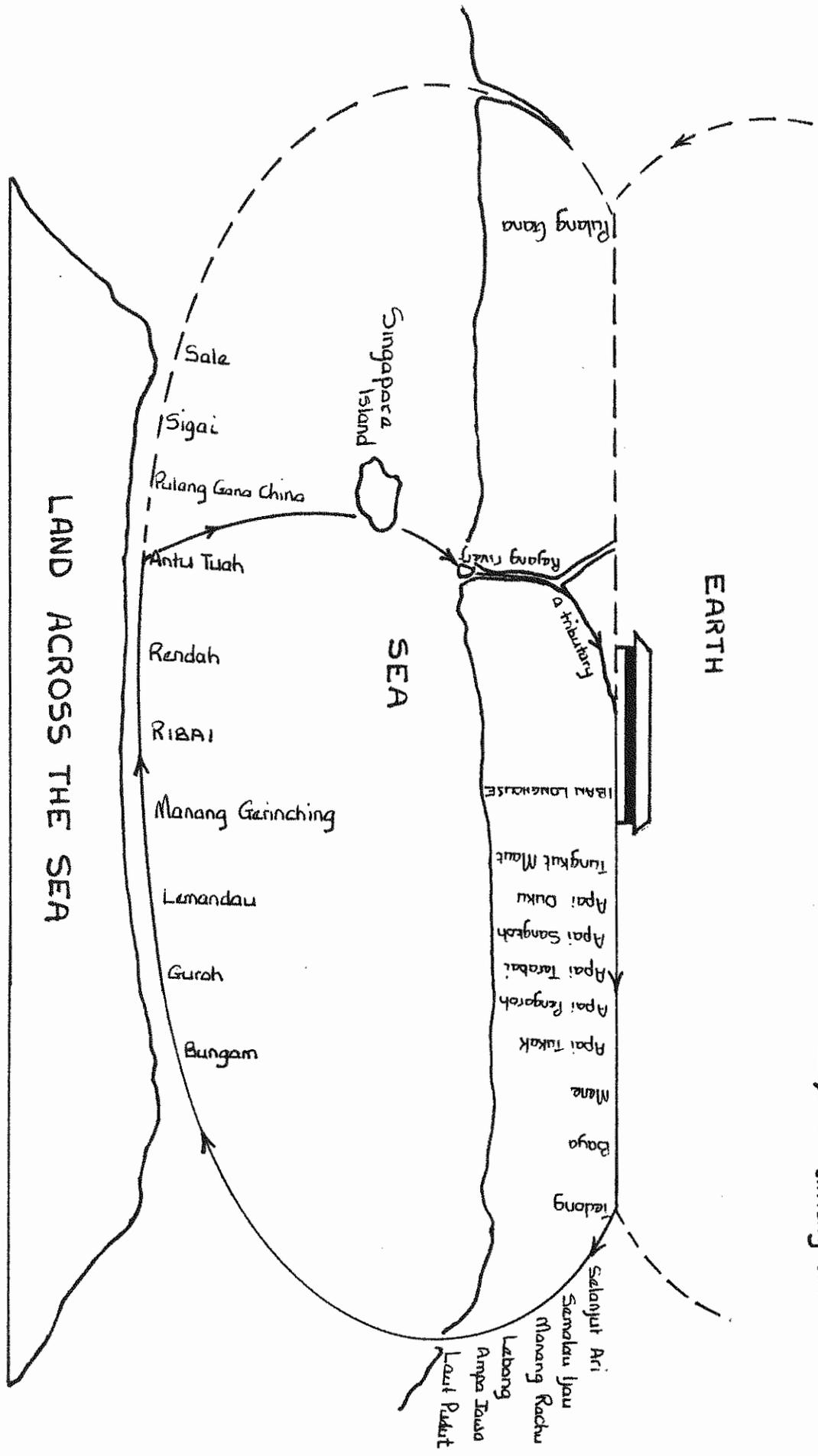
The route Pungga and Bungai Nuing take before going down the Gelong river is similar to the one taken by Sabang Jurai in the *timbang beintu intu* (see diagram 3:2). These two messengers borrow a boat from Tedong, the brother of Mene (the under-water goddess), and paddle down the Gelong river toward the sea. There they exchange Tedong's boat with the bigger one of a Pudut Malay to cross the sea onto the lands of Antu Tuah (the god of good fortune) and other deities. The crossing of the sea is considered by the *lemambang* (bard) to be dangerous, and the chanting of this section must not be interrupted by the taking of a rest, or by other extraneous activities. Upon their arrival at the lands of these gods across the sea, Bungai Nuing and Pungga extend their invitation to the feast to each one of them. With the exception of Antu Tuah, who is the principal deity for this particular ritual, the attendance by other gods is not obligatory and depends largely upon the discretion of an individual bard.

From the abode of Antu Tuah, the assemblage of supernatural beings, this time led by Antu Tuah himself, heads for the land of humans on the opposite shore. The journey takes the guest party, first, to the island of Singapore, and then up the Rejang river and into the tributary in which the longhouse holding the ritual feast is located. The significant aspect of this last stage of the journey is that as the party pass through cities, towns and places, the vessel which the party

Diagram: 3:2

The Route of Timang Tuah

key → timang tuah



uses stops to 'collect' the good 'fortunes' (*tuah*) of all the famous and affluent people living in these places. The accumulation of these people's *tuah*, supplemented by the wealth given by Antu Tuah on his departure from the feast, will, according to Iban belief, give the *bilek*-family holding the ritual a start on the way to prosperity and affluence.

3. Timang Beneh

The *timang beneh* or seed ritual chant is performed during a *gawai beneh*. In this *timang* Bungai Nuing and Pungga are the messengers commissioned to invite the gods, and especially Pulang Gana and his son Sigai, to attend the ritual feast. The route which they take is similar to that of *timang beintu intu*. The difference comes only after they have reached the abode of Singalang Burong (see diagram 3:3). To every supernatural being they meet, Bungai Nuing and Pungga put the following question:

Kati nuan bisi meda paong kunyit pemenga chit bujang pangeribang?

Kati dek bisi meda paong liang aya pemenga pada buntak balang?

Have you seen a charm — a clump of turmeric — for warding off gnawing mice?

Have you, uncle, seen a charm — a clump of ginger — for warding off swarms of grasshoppers?⁵

All knowledge of such things is denied by each of them in turn. Instead, each of these beings offers a charm (*pengaroh*) for success in farming and other pursuits. After a long and hard trail, traversing both land

and river, the two messengers arrive at Singalang Burong's abode. They thereupon invite him to attend the feast in the world below. Singalang Burong refuses the invitation saying that he is busy looking after his trophy heads. His sons-in-law, he adds, will attend the feast on his behalf.

Leaving the abode of Singalang Burong, the god of war, Ketupong who now assumes the leadership, and leads his entourage down a river called Nalan Lumpang to invite Sigai (the guardian of *padi* seeds) who lives on the land across the sea. This river drains into the sea at a headland described by the *timang* as '*tanjong nyurong entam durong apong babeyoh*' or 'a headland where myriad fronds of nipah palm wave'. Once Ketupong and his followers have made their crossing and landed in the domain of the gods across the sea, he invites Pulang Gana China (Chinese Pulang Gana) and Sigai to the feast. From Sigai's domain the party crosses the sea, paddles up Sungai Raja to the abode of Pulang Gana, the god of agriculture. Upon receiving their invitation, Pulang Gana immediately loads his slaves with all kinds of seed and charms pertinent to swidden agriculture, and joins Ketupong to attend the feast. The route they take to the longhouse holding the ritual feast is similar to that in *timang beintu intu* (see diagram 3:1).

When they arrive at the longhouse, Pulang Gana, followed by Ketupong, leads the way up the entry ladder and into the house. Their welcoming ceremonies, and later their entertainment are similar to those depicted in the text of *timang gawai amat* (cf. parts IV and V); the difference being that Pulang Gana, instead of Singalang Burong, becomes the central figure in the *timang* plot. The sacred *padi* seed

which Pulang Gana and his son Sigai bring to the feast falls on to the floor and cries. It is then picked up and nursed in identical fashion and by the same female spirits who nurse the trophy head in *timbang gawai amat* (cf. part V:L406-L658). Later it is discovered that the *padi* seed is crying because it wants to be planted. (For the first stage of *gawai beneh* the *timbang* chant ends here.) Upon learning its wishes, Pulang Gana along with other members of supernatural beings set out in search of virgin land on which the sacred *padi* seed is to be planted. The procedures and the rituals associated with the planting to the time when the *padi* is harvested and stored in the bark bins (*tibang*) are like those depicted in the text of *timbang gawai amat*. The storing of the *padi* and the subsequent finding of the lid (*medar*) for the bark bin marks the third and final stage of the seed ritual, or *gawai beneh*.

There are undoubtedly, very close similarities in the plot of *timbang beneh* and *timbang gawai amat*. The question then arises, why such similarities exist between chants which deal with two differing aspects of Iban life. The answer will, I would suggest, give students of Iban culture a vital insight into the historical and cultural interrelatedness of *padi* farming and the cult of head-hunting.

In Chapter II I pointed to the fact that the Iban describe the seed ritual or *gawai beneh* as 'the beginning of all Iban rituals or endeavours'. The *lemambang* (bard) describes *timbang beneh* as '*pun jalai timang*' or '*jalai besai*', which means 'the origin of all *timbang* routes' or 'the main route'. Further discussion of this will be included in Chapter IV. At this juncture it is sufficient to note that every

apprentice *lemambang* must first learn the *timbang beneh* before he can proceed to master the other three categories of *timbang*. The constant emphasis on the seed ritual and its associated chant as the beginning and the origin of Iban rituals and *timbang* suggest the fundamental importance of the *padi* cult in Iban culture.

Analytical Discussion of *Timang Gawai Amat*

As I have previously stated, the structures, diction, poetical style and characteristics, the formula by which the lines are composed, and the manner in which the four categories of *timbang* are chanted are similar. Because of these similarities, I shall, using exclusively the text of *timbang gawai amat*, analyse the Iban ritual chant by examining in detail the abovementioned features. In doing so I hope to shed light on a subject which has long eluded proper understanding, and so help to put the *timbang* on a footing with other oral literature.

1. The Main Plot

Timang gawai amat like its counterparts (*timbang beintu intu*, *timbang tuah* and *timbang beneh*) relates the adventures of man to the world of the gods and spirits, and of their subsequent journey to the world of mortals. However, unlike its counterparts, *timbang gawai amat* is a narrative told in a protracted allegory based on hill *padi* farming. The invocation with which the *timbang* begins is located in the Iban longhouse holding the ritual feast. After all the guests have arrived, the women find that Singalang Burong, commonly known as Lang, has not been invited. Angry about this, they suggest to the men that

Lang should be invited at once. The men agree, and as they prepare to do so the scene appears to be laid in the longhouse of the *Orang Panggau* or Iban cultureheroes. The messengers commissioned to deliver the invitation to Lang are Bungai Nuing and Pungga, both of whom are *Orang Panggau*.⁶ On their journey they meet many supernatural beings, and to each of them Bungai Nuing and Pungga pose this question:

Have you seen the seed of the shrine draped with tassels
of human hair?

Have you seen the seed of a palm which is like the red
bloom of a wild flower?

All knowledge of seeing such things is denied by each one in turn. After a long and arduous trail, spanning both land and water, the two messengers finally arrive at Lang's abode in the sky. They thereupon invite him to attend the feast in the world below. Upon hearing this, Lang summons his sons-in-law who are away on a *bejalai* or journey in foreign lands, by means of a drum (*tutong*). When everyone has assembled, Lang's daughters refuse to accompany their husbands, each saying:

If we are to attend a feast in the land where red
clouds form,

I will not go,

Unless I have seen brains spattered all over the jars,

Otherwise we'll be outdone by the women of Panggau
where deer abound.

(Part II:L319-322)

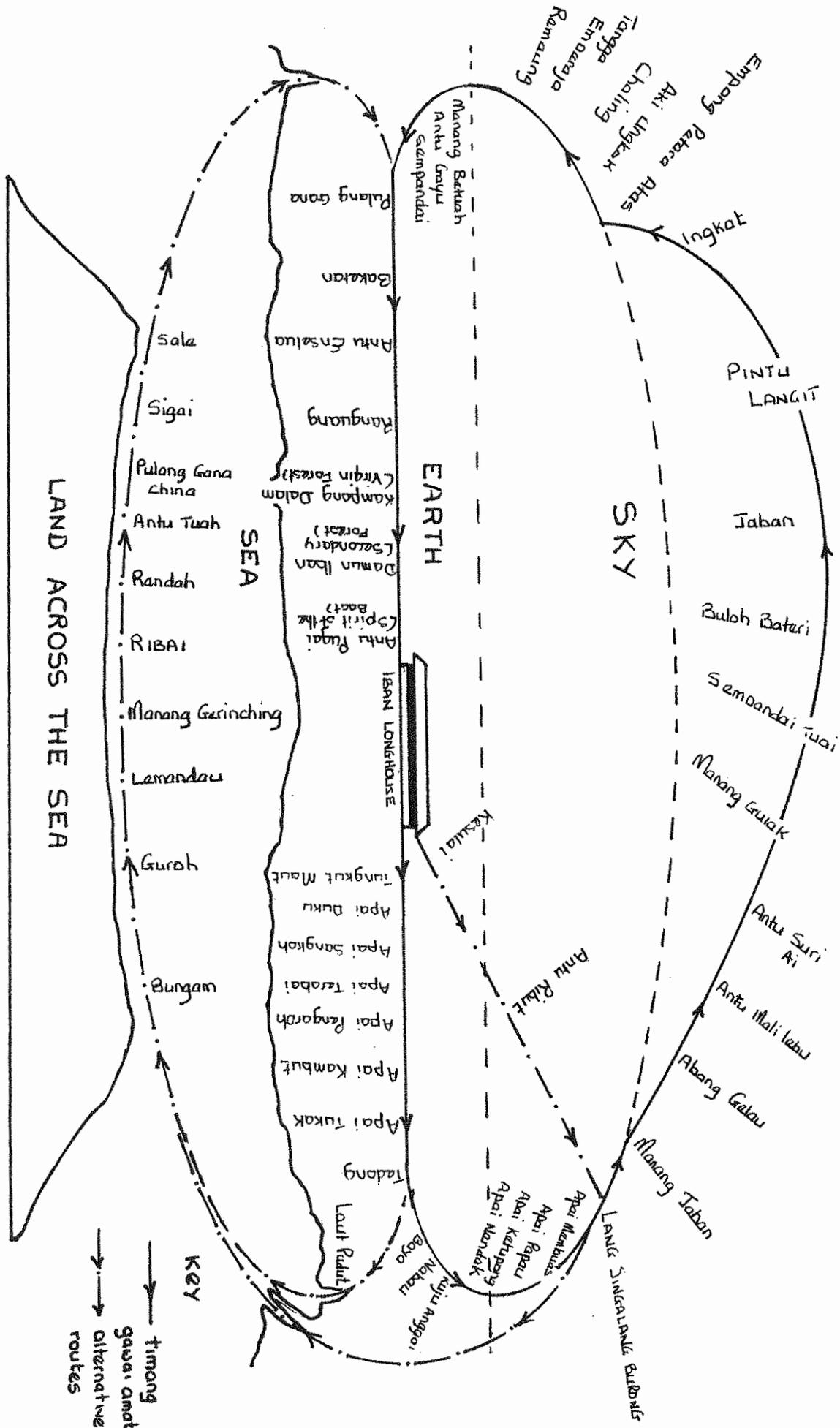
Having discovered that his daughters want a trophy head as a gift to take with them, Lang instructs his sons-in-law to prepare for a head-hunting expedition. The place to be raided is the domain of Bengkong, Lang's own father-in-law. The expedition is a success, and the warriors return with a trophy head.

Now that Lang and his entourage have procured a gift to take with them, they set off for the world below. There are two routes by which Lang may lead his followers to the feast. The first route takes Lang through the door of the sky (*pintu Langit*). This according to my *Lembang* informants is the traditional route and is the one described in this thesis. The second is a recent innovation of pengulu Ugak of Ulu Mujong, which has been adopted by a few *Lembang* from the Majau river. Briefly this route is similar to that of *timbang beneh* (see diagram 3:4). Further discussion on this alternative route which was at first not widely taken up will be included in Chapter IV.

The first route requires Lang and his followers to traverse the skies where they meet other supernatural beings and pass by places of mythical significance. Among these places is the Land of Whispering Bamboos where all those warriors who, lured to listen to the music of bamboos moving in the breeze, met their deaths. Lang wisely leads his followers around this sinister location. Finally they arrive at the *pintu langit* (door of the sky) which separates the firmament from the earth below. Without hesitation Lang's sons-in-law try to cut their way through but to no avail. After watching their unsuccessful attempts Lang arises, and with the utmost ease cuts his way through the seemingly impenetrable barrier. As they come through the sky door,

Diagram 3:4

The Route of Timang Gawai Amat



LAND ACROSS THE SEA

EARTH

SKY

SEA

KEY
 → timang gawai amat
 - - - - - alternative routes

Lang and his followers are struck by the beauty and splendour of the world below. Spread out before their eyes is a panoramic view of earthly life. After surveying the scenes they descend the rainbow and make their way through the rain forest where they meet deities such as Antu Gayu, Antu Betuah, Pulang Gana, and many others. As they approach the vicinity of the longhouse, Lang advises his followers to rest, bathe in the river and bedeck themselves for the occasion.

Having donned their festive regalia, Lang and Pulang Gana lead the way up the entry ladder on the top of which a welcoming party stands ready to receive them with appropriate rites. After Lang has sacrificed the pig and the liver has been divined, he and his party enter the gallery of the longhouse. There, together with their Iban hosts and the *Orang Panggau*, Lang and his followers participate in a ritual feast. As the activities continue, Lang half drunk, is persuaded to dance. Just as he is about to do so, the basket falls from his shoulders, and out onto the floor rolls the intended gift — a trophy head. At the sight of it the women present recoil and exclaim:

What liars are men, in claiming that this seed
glitters like gold,

Why it is hideously warped like a worn-out scabbard.

What liars are men in claiming that this seed is
shining and bright,

Why it is quite ghastly like a bat cooked over an
open fire by mother Mendai.

(Part V:L400-404)

On hearing the women's remarks the trophy head begins to cry. In an attempt to stop it from crying, the head is nursed by a long succession of female spirits, but it remains inconsolable. Finally, in desperation, it is handed to a group of transvestite male shamans (*manang bali*), who not only stop it from crying but are able to discern the reason for its crying. The trophy head, they say, has been crying because it wants to be planted.

At this juncture, the *timbang* narrative either proceeds straight to the next episode of forging the sword (cf. part VI) with which the trophy head is to be split, or it may relate the adventures of Lang's sons-in-law in summoning to the feast the gods who live far across the sea. The way in which the *timbang* plot turns at this point depends upon the type of *gawai amat* being performed. For instance, in *gawai nangga langit* (notched-ladder to the sky) performed by Pengulu Kuleh in June, 1949, the integral part of the item for the ritual is the magical *tangga* (notched-ladder) owned by Sale whose abode is across the sea. During such a ritual it is necessary for Lang's sons-in-law to summon Sale and to journey into the domains of the gods across the sea (see diagram 3:4). The chanting of this episode lasts for half a day and one full night. Once Lang's sons-in-law have arrived from their voyage, and the items obtained have been placed in their appropriate ritual places, the *timbang* proceeds to the forging of the sword, or *ngamboh*. In other variants of *gawai amat* where items needed for the ritual may be obtained from the gods in the firmament or on the earth below, the voyage across the sea is not necessary. In this instance the *timbang* narrative goes straight to the forging of the sword once the trophy

head has been comforted.

The sword having been forged Lang splits open (*ngelampang*) the trophy head out of which there pours forth sacred *padi* seed (*padi pun*) and other kinds of seed. After obtaining the seeds Lang and his followers set out to clear a tract of virgin jungle for their swidden. On the way Lang is joined by numerous ogres (*antu gerasi*) who, in a straightforward manner, one by one declare their intentions:

I am going with you, Uncle Lang

For I long to seize some Kayan children and devour
them with my pointed teeth.

I am going with you on your expedition, Uncle Lang,
For it is a long time since my deft fingers took to
pilfering.

I am coming with you, Uncle Lang,

For I long to bring my mouth that remains thickly
smeared with filth.

I am coming with you, Uncle Lang,

For I long to bring my hands from which blood is
still dripping.

(Part VII:L286-306)

Upon their arrival at the designated tract of virgin jungle, Land and his followers clear, burn and plant the seed of the sacred *padi* along with other seeds. When the *padi* is ripe, it is harvested, sunned and then stored in the bark bins (*tibang*).

The *padi* having been stored, Lang then proceeds to clear a subsidiary farm on their previous swidden in which he plants cotton seeds or *taya*. When the cotton is matured it is then picked, spun and woven into a war jacket by female spirits. Upon its completion the jacket is given to the man who has held the ritual feast for him to use in battle. This last act marks the end of the feast, and the divine guests make ready for their departure. However, before Lang leaves he bestows on the family who have been his hosts, his blessings and charms which will ensure them prosperity and long life.

2. The Episodes

The plot of the *timbang gawai amat* may be conveniently arranged into nine major episodes:

- (i) The beginning of the invocation to the time Lang's absence is discovered.
- (ii) The sending of invitation to Lang, or *ngambi ngabang*.
- (iii) The head-hunting expedition to Bengkong, or *ngerampas*.
- (iv) Lang's journey to the Iban longhouse (*mansang ngabang*), the welcoming rites, and hepatomacy.
- (v) The feasting activities, the revealing and nursing (*ngua*) of the trophy head.
- (vi) The forging of the sword, or *ngamboh*.
- (vii) The splitting of the trophy head, or *ngelampang*.
- (viii) The farming cycle, or *Bumai*.
- (ix) The planting of cotton, or *nempalai kasai*.

The division of this text into nine parts is made in accordance with the episodic nature of the *timbang gawai amat*.

While in the field, my efforts to capture the overall patterns of a *gawai amat* performance was often interrupted by my Iban informants who insisted that I should listen to certain *timbang* episodes. Such interruptions were, more often than not, my own undoing. For by prior arrangement I had instructed some of them to remind me of the progress of the *timbang* invocation, and to call me when they thought that certain episodes were of special interest. Thus during the *timbang* invocation one of the Iban listeners would remind me by saying: "Now is the *ngerampas* episode," "now is the *nge lampang*," or "now is the felling of the swidden," and so on. And when such episodes of particular interest were chanted, the noise level noticeably decreased, the audience talking in subdued tones sat and listened to the words of the *Lembang* as he and his chorus of singers circled the shrine rhythmically tapping their staffs (*tungkat*) on the floor. Once an interesting episode was over most of the audience would disperse to continue with their previous activities, while only a few stayed behind and continued listening. As the *timbang* progressed, the crowd would, from time to time, reconvene around the singers.

This periodic gathering of the crowd around the *Lembang* is a common phenomena. Bearing in mind that *timbang* do last for a few days, one cannot expect the audience to be enthralled continuously and attentive throughout its entire presentation. Besides, there are other activities and entertainments that go side by side with the *timbang* performance. The fragmented way in which an Iban listens to the *timbang*, does not, surprisingly enough, impede his appreciation, or confuse his understanding of the plot. This, in my opinion, may be attributed to

the episodic way in which the *timbang* is composed.

An episode is "a developed situation that is integral to but separate from a continuous narrative" (Webster's, New International, 1961). This definition certainly fits with the episodes embodied in the *timbang* plot. Take for instance, the episode on *ngerampas* — the head-hunting raid to Bengkong's domain (part III); it is a developed situation which, by itself, makes a complete story. Thus a listener who attends only the presentation of this episode, upon its completion, feels satisfied; for the story that he has just heard had both a beginning and an end to it. Conversely, should it be missed this would rob the listener of a part of the richness of the *timbang* plot, but it does not destroy the continuity of the story. In a situation where listeners come and go as they please, the episodic structure of epics or sagas enables the audience to enjoy the story while, from time to time, pursuing other activities. It also gives the *lemambang* or the singers of tales convenient places at which to rest.

3. The Topics

Within an episode there is a series of topics. Each of these topics tell of an incident or describe a particular situation. They are linked to each other by phrases formulated in an alternate rhyme scheme giving a sense of logical progression to the sub-plot within an episode. To illustrate my point, I shall use part I of the *timbang* as an example. There are thirteen general topics in part I, each of which can be distinguished by the two formal phrases at the beginning and by the obvious completing of the topic itself.

The tree is felled its roots severed:

Now that we have praised this shrine, let us don
our charms.

Charms to ward off curses we tie about our knees
and feet

To keep us safe as we walk amid thronging guests,
Charms made from rice grains we tie to our teeth
To protect us from those who may disdain the words
we utter,

Charms to ward off maledictions we tie about our
thighs

As among our parents-in-law we walk,
Special charms we put on our chests
That counteract the 'evil eye' of strangers.

As a log drifts when its roots are severed:

With charms in place, we turn to the clearing of our way.
The Demon of Misfortune we fling into the storm-tossed
sea,

The Demon of Falsehood we immerse in the flowing tides,
The Demon of Disorder we throw into the swirling river,
The Demon of Madness we banish to the realms of misty
death.

(Part I:L86-101)

In the first topic the *lemambang* is telling the audience the kind of charms or *pengaruh* they keep about themselves and their uses. The

second tells about the clearing of demons from their path. The casting off of these demons is made possible because the *Lembang* and his chorus of singers have the aid of their potent charms. In short, the topic in the second occurs because of what has happened in the first. Therefore, despite the fact that each topic is a complete whole, it is linked to the next by the logic of the narrative.

It is also linked by two formal phrases at the beginning of each topic. Let me take the phrases used in the above excerpt as an example.

1. Udah melingkat pampat di urat
After *melingkat* tree cut by the roots
2. Lagong sa lagong lampong tekalong:
Drifting and tossing a block of *tekalong* tree:
3. Udah kitai nangka! ka ubat
After we put on our charms,
4. Kitai belaboh beranjong,
We begin to send away,

In the English translation the first two lines appear to be out of context. And it is for this reason that I have combined lines 1 with 2, and lines 3 with 4 in the English text. However, in the Iban version the first two lines are integral to the *timbang*. Line 3 which is rhymed with line 1 reminds the audience of the previous event, while line 4 is rhymed with line 2 introducing to the audience of what is to come. Moreover, in oral poetry where the primary means of appreciation is through hearing the alternate rhyme scheme (A B A B) of which these four lines are an example, is of great importance. Finally, the first two lines give the *Lembang* a brief respite from the main *timbang* plot.

And these lines are appropriately called *pengkalan*, meaning 'rest area'. In the opening of every new topic or episode such phrases are used; their absences which occasionally happen are unintentional rather than deliberate. This, I gathered, is the result of the *lemambang's* carelessness in composing his lines.

A prominent feature of the *timbang* is the repetitive use of certain topics or series of topics. In the plot of *timbang gawai amat* a reader will, from time to time, read of a familiar situation which although it appears in a different location and involves different characters, is described in words or groups of words which he has already read. Listed below are some of those recurring scenes.

(i) The dressing for the 'warpath' (*bepasok ngepan*) and subsequent departure from the longhouse:

- a. Bungai Nuing and Pungga's preparation to invite Lang to the feast (part II).
- b. Lang and his sons-in-law prepare for a head-hunting raid to Bengkong's domain (cf. part III:L1-11).
- c. Lang's preparation to clear the swidden (cf. part VII: L246-250).
- d. Lang and his entourage prepare to plant the cotton seed (cf. part IX:L52-77).

(ii) The weaving or *betenun*:

- a. Mene weaves Lang's sword waist-band (cf. part VI:L525-549).
- b. The weaving of a war jacket by the ogress (cf. part IX: L294-325).

(iii) The farming cycles:

- a. From winnowing to the storing of *padi* (cf. Parts VII: L121-194 and VIII:L424-510)
- b. The search for a dry season (*kamarau*) either for drying the swidden or sunning the *padi* (cf. Parts VII: L166-177; VIII:L121-134, L457-471; and IX:L134-142, L195-200).
- c. The ownership of the secondary forest (cf. Parts VII: L349-375 and IX:L89-94)

As each one of these topics or scenes is repeated so are the verses and expressions which describe them. Each topic brings with it its own stock of words, phrases and expressions. One may, on closer inspection of some of the repeated events, find some degree of inconsistency in the expressions with the original version: words and phrases may have been omitted or new ones added. However, inconsistency as such is expected, for a bard or singer does not have the benefit of a written text as reference. Besides, Iban *timang* lines are not governed by any rigid form of metrical scheme or pattern, therefore, inconsistencies do occur. The bard's failure to reproduce an exact replica of earlier expressions is, in the context of a *gawai*, of no great consequence. What is important is the fact that a bard may and does employ the same stock of expressions when describing a similar situation though in a different setting. Thus an Iban *lemambang*, having learned or composed a few lines, for instance, describing Bungai Nuing and Pungga's preparation to invite Lang to the feast (part II:L 23), may use the same lines

(with slight alterations) to relate Lang's preparation for a head-hunting raid to Bengkong's territory (part III:L1-11). This flexibility in transferring his stock of expressions from one situation to the next provides a distinct advantage for a *lemambang* who, it should be remembered, is both composer and chanter.

4. The 'Stanzas'⁷

Each topic is composed of two or more 'stanzas' (*genteran*) telling, usually, the same story or describing similar incidents, but using different end-rhymes. Let me illustrate this point by using the first topic in part I as an example.

1. Lunchik geman di rarik unsai ka di tikai aji bakebelik
Sandih ka legiau tajau panik,
Tunga pedara lima piring mayoh renik,
Di moa baya beleba indai itik burik,
Kada ka beri nyarih rarengik munyikikik bayan basik nilik
ngantong sarang.

2. Sri gigi unsai ka di tikai kubor aji,
Sandih ka legiau tajau guchi,
Pandang ka di panggang ruang bilik tisi,
Tunga pedara lima piring mayoh sungki,
Di moa baya beleba indai ensing peridi,
Kada ka beri nyarih bejelili munyi api kunchi
Enggi Dayang Demi masang di kemudi kapal perang.

(Part I:L3-14)

My song I pour forth onto this beautifully patterned
mat,
Before these treasured jars,

Before this offering with its five eggs and tasty
morsels,

Before this crocodile so massive; these hens so prolific,
Would my song were like that of long-tailed parakeets as
they build their nests.

My song I pour forth onto this intricately patterned
mat,

Before the most precious of jars,
Even in the farthest room it is heard,

Before this offering with its five eggs and delicious
cakes of rice,

Before this crocodile so massive, and female kingfisher
laden with eggs,

Would that my voice were like the roar of the cooking
stove,

Of Dayang Demi in her man-O-war.

The second 'stanza' which is called *timbang* (lit. 'a reply') repeats or echoes the first: both of which express the hope that the chanting of the *timbang* will be outstandingly effective. In the Iban version each 'stanza' is chanted in a different end-rhyme. In 'stanza' 1 for instance the end-rhymes are: bakebelik, panik, renik, burik and sarang (A¹ A² A² A³ B). While in 'stanza' 2 the end-rhymes are: aji, guchi, tisi, sungki, peridi, kunchi, perang (C¹ C² C³ C⁴ C⁵ C² B).

There are cases where succeeding 'stanzas' do not merely echo the words of the first or repeat the same incident as the following excerpt shows:

"Who then among us will tell the gods of our wish
that they should join us?
What about you Lizard who guards the palisages
And swiftly darts about the rafters?"
"No, not I. I have no desire at all to fetch Lang
the god of war.
But if you want me to fetch some iron from the far
away coast,
That I will do, for I have long yearned to see
mudskippers there that are dressed, they say,
like maidens fair."

"Next, we'll ask this fellow from Panggau where palm
leaf decorations forever waving.
What about you kinsman Bungai Nuing – the famed
champion of Kling,
Will you go forth to the Ridge of Bright Light to
summon Lang?"
"Not I, for I lack the skill to ride breaths of wind
no bigger than the toe nails of a tortoise.
I lack the skill to mount rain drops no larger than
shavings of wood.
But if you want me to brandish my sword
In the land of the Pengs, that I will gladly do,
And on my return, strut, trophy head in hand, about
your shrine."

(Appendix A)

In the unabridged version of *timang gawai amat* there are usually two, four or six 'stanzas' in an event. The reason why the 'stanzas' are always in even number will be discussed later in this chapter. However, in this text due to limitations of space, purely repetitive 'stanzas' have been omitted.

5. Internal Rhyme and Rhythm

There are definite internal rhymes and rhythm in each line of the *timang*. The internal rhyme is achieved by using words with the same sound in their final syllables, while internal rhythm is achieved by using words with only two syllables. Let me illustrate these points by taking one excerpt from part I and one from part VII, and writing them in phonetic transcription.

Example A:

1. giluk sa giluk lampoŋ di tasuk
2. dudi di indik putuŋ dzeŋ kaluk muduk ka ulu dzawa gemampəŋ:
3. luntjuk gəman di raruk unsai ka di tikai adzi bakebəluk,
4. sanduh ka ligiau tadzau panuk,
5. tuŋa? pedara? lima? piruŋ majoh rənik,
6. di mōa baja beleba indai ituk buruk,
7. kada ka bəri naruh rarəŋuk muŋi kikuk bajan basuk niluk
nəntəŋ sarəŋ.

(Part I:L1-7)

Example B:

1. jako sɪŋaləi laŋ mukah kita? ke tuai tuai anaŋ bedzaləi
mai tuŋkat,
2. anak biak anaŋ nabak ransuŋ betərəkap,
3. kita paŋgau eŋgau gelau dulə? diau dudok bəkənap,
4. dzalai tuboh məkaŋ aku nəlampaŋ riraŋ igi?melumpat ləbat,
5. eŋgai ka kəna kələsi? kələmbi? eŋgi? tuboh ləmi? badzu
kəbat,
6. təgəŋ gagəŋ belawaŋ ləbat,
7. səgəŋ putuŋ sarəŋ kɪŋkɪŋ isau malat,
8. aŋka igi? səni? aŋi? nundi? ləmpaŋ ləmi? baka tadi?
mai? ati kudi? sɪŋapa pantap,
9. aŋka igi? riraŋ eŋgai di lampaŋ tuboh məkaŋ mai ati
garaŋ mōa tʃatʃinaŋ mansau aŋat,
10. aŋka igi? bunətəŋgai di tukop mata laliut gila kərəkədat.

(Part VII:L52-61)

In these lines there are at least two words in each line in which the final syllables echo the same sound. Strictly speaking some of the final syllables are only half rhyme (gilik and tasik or mudik and bakəbəlik). In oral poetry, however, such subtle difference is of no great consequence. The following are line by line examples of words which have final syllables echoing the same sound.

Example A:

1. gilik gilik tasik
2. dudi di indik putiŋ dženkalik mudik
3. luntik rarik unsai tikai bakəbəlik
4. ligiau tadzau panik
5. tuna? pədara? lima? piriŋ rənik
6. moa baja bələba itik burik
7. rərənik kikik basik nilik nantəŋ saraŋ.

Example B:

1. sinalai tuai tuai bədzalai
2. anak biak ŋabak
3. pangau engau gelau diau
4. məkaŋ ŋelampaŋ riraŋ melumpat ləbat

Not only do the words used have the same final syllable sound, but some have been chosen for the other sounds they include. In part I, for instance, there are 17 words with a final k, 3 with a glottal stop (?), 3 with h final, and 6 with ŋ final, all of which are produced at the back of oral cavity. These four final consonants account for 29 out of 56 words in example A. There is also a tendency to repeat certain sounds in a line. For instance in line 2 of example A, there is a repetition of 'd' sound, and in line 6 a repetition of 'b' sound.

Similar kinds of repetition of certain sounds are also present in example B. In line 3 the grouping of two words with 'ŋgau' sound reinforces the rhyme. Further, added to the similarities of sound, the lines appear to be arranged so to complement each other. Lines 5 and 8 of example B complement each other by the skilful use of the words in which the final syllables end with a glottal stop (?), while in lines 6 and 7 the words end with 'ŋ' sound. Each one of these regularities and repetitions of sound facilitate and reinforce the internal rhyme of an oral poetry.

The *timang* internal rhythm is achieved by using words with two syllables. In example A for instance there are 40 out of 56 words with disyllable, while in example B there are 66 out of 91 words. In both examples the disyllabic words account for about three-quarters of the total words used. In other cases internal rhythm is maintained by the grouping of words having the same meaning. Take for example line 9, example B, of the phonetic transcription:

... mai ati garang moa chachinang mansau angkat
bring/ heart/ angry/ face red/ red/ripe/ hot

During the actual performance of the *timang* the internal rhythm is also maintained by the regular tapping of the staff which the chanter holds.

6. Rhyme Scheme

There are also rhyme schemes in the 'stanza' of *timang gawai amat*. These rhyme schemes are clearly audible when one listens to the actual

performance of the *timbang* or the recitation of its lines. The precise pattern of rhyme and the reason behind the use of a certain pattern, however, is hard to determine. Therefore, the rhyme scheme that I am going to discuss is common, but not obligatory.

The first rhyme scheme, and perhaps the most common, is the A A A A B pattern as typified in the phonetically transcribed excerpts. This pattern seems to appear most often in a purely narrative 'stanza' or in a monologue. The complete 'stanza' or *genteran* of example B of the phonetically transcribed excerpt provides a good example of this rhyme scheme (cf. part III:L52-91). The second pattern is the alternate rhyme scheme (A B A B) typified by the four lines at the beginning of each event. This rhyme pattern also appears in a monologue where the first line states a condition and the second explains it.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Rumah panjang kasak kanyak | A |
| 2. Pengabang niki mai batu angin ribut kenchang | B |
| 3. Tiang tanchang ambis tebererak | A |
| 4. Pengabang niki mai batu teberuka tambang | B |
| | |
| 1. Our longhouse shakes and trembles | |
| 2. For those thronging guests have brought
charms that bring the boisterous winds | |
| 3. All the rattan lashings on our posts are undone | |
| 4. For those thronging guests have brought their
knot-defying magic. | |

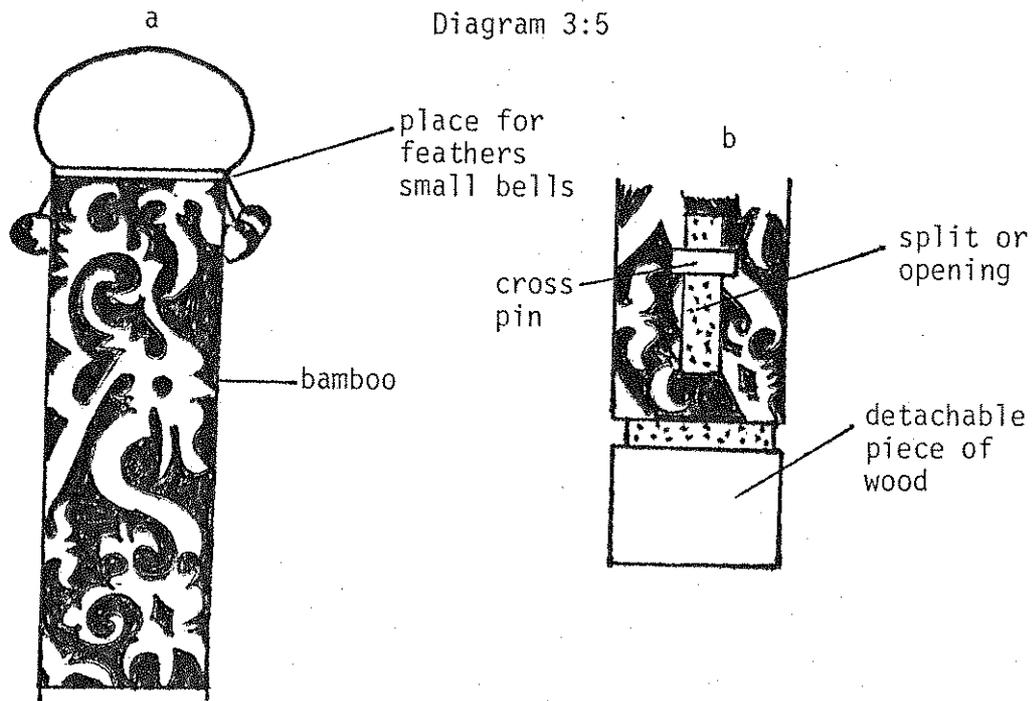
There are other patterns of rhyme schemes like A B C D or A B C B D B which appear in various 'stanzas' and parts of the *timbang*. The irregular nature of their appearances make systematic categorization and proper analysis almost impossible. This is further complicated

by the fact that the rhyme scheme of the first 'stanza' is not always that of subsequent ones. Finally, it is not always easy to identify within a topic when a particular 'stanza' begins and ends. In whatever form the *timbang* rhyme scheme may be, it seems, almost any adult Iban has the ability to point out whether the last word or sound in a line is correct. It was not unusual for me to hear an ordinary Iban who, after listening to a *pantun* (song) or a *timbang* from my tape recorder, to say: "*bisi enda satuju leka pantun, timbang*" (lit. 'some words of the song or chant do not rhyme').

7. The Chanting of *Timbang* Invocation

There are four⁸ persons involved in the chanting of the *timbang* invocation: (i) the *lemambang* or bard, (ii) the *lemambang*'s assistant or *orang nimbal* (lit. 'the person who replies'), (iii) a two-man chorus or *orang nyagu* (lit. 'persons who support'). The position of an assistant *lemambang* is usually allocated to a fully-fledged bard, while the positions of the two-man chorus are ideally suited for and are usually taken by apprentice *lemambang*. Their costume is made up of a beautiful loin cloth (*sirat*), intricately designed *ikat* fabric jackets, hats adorned with hornbill feathers, or bright coloured turbans, numerous plaited palm-fibres (*unus*) around their legs, and shell armlets around their arms. Each holds a *tungkat penimbang* or staff which is about 3 inches in circumference and five feet long. The whole length of the staff is beautifully engraved with intricate designs. At its top multi-coloured plumes either of a cock or other wild bird are tied, together with some small bells or *gerunong*. At its base is a

detachable piece of wood loosely attached by a crosspin (see diagram 3:5a, b).



The *tungkat*, or staff is usually made from a species of small, tensile bamboo; however, hardwood may also be used. Today a few *lemambang* use an aluminium pipe as a *tungkat*. During the actual performance of the *timang* the four staffs rhythmically tapped onto the floor produce a regular drumming sound supplemented by the gentle jangling of bells.

The *timang* invocation begins in the family apartment (*bilek*). While chanting this section of the *timang* (i.e. part I:L1-56), the *lemambang* and his supporting chorus of singers remain seated, with their staffs lying beside them unused. Upon the completion of this section they rise, grasp hold of their staffs and come out into the gallery (*ruai*) in single file, the *lemambang* in front, followed by his assistant, and then the two-man chorus. Once they are out on the

gallery the *lemambang* and his supporting chorus of singers begin rhythmically tapping their staffs on the floor. The speed at which they do this determines the pace of the chant. For the duration of the invocation they walk up and down the length of the longhouse, circling each shrine as they pass. Whenever an important episode or event is chanted the *lemambang* comes back to the shrine of the family for whom he is chanting.

The system by which the *timang* is chanted is quite simple. The *lemambang* chants the first 'stanza' (*genteran*), and then the two-man chorus sing the refrain. When they have finished the assistant *lemambang* then chants the second 'stanza' or the *timbal* (reply). This is again followed by a refrain from the two-man chorus. After this the whole process starts all over again (see below), and in this manner the whole *timang* plot unfolds.⁹

<i>Lemambang</i> :	1st 'stanza' or <i>genteran</i>
Two-man chorus:	Refrain
Asst. <i>lemambang</i> :	2nd 'stanza' or <i>timbal</i>
Two-man chorus:	Refrain

Because of the way in which the *lemambang* and his assistant proceed in chanting the *timang*, the number of 'stanzas' within an event is always an even number. The tone in which the *timang* is chanted has been described by Maceda (SMJ 1962:486ff), a musicologist, as follows: "The melodic style of both the soloist (*lemambang*) and refrain ... are sung syllabically on long monotones a perfect fourth apart. Ends of phrases would join these tones usually with a diatonic descent formula ... the *timang* is chanted to a steadily recurring beat or rhythmical patterns divisible by two."

There are basically two ways in which the chorus knows when to come in. First, just before the *lemambang* or the assistant finishes the 'stanza', they inverse the order of the last two words by chanting the last word first and then the second, and finally end by repeating the actual last word (B-(w)-A-B). The inserting of a word (w) between B and A is optional. Second, as the *lemambang* or his assistant chant the last line, they pause, do a half turn and face the two-man chorus. Once the *lemambang* finishes, the two-man chorus comes in by singing, first, the last two words the *lemambang* utters and then proceed with the refrain. Before finishing, they repeat those last two words again. This is the cue for the *lemambang* or his assistant to take over. The following example illustrates this.

Recital order

(last line): ... bayan basik nilik ngantong sarang.

Chanting order: ... bayan basik nilik sarang (iya) ngantong sarang.

Chorus: Ngantong sarang ... (refrain) ... ngantong sarang.

For most of the *timbang* invocation the refrains consist of formal phrases arranged, it seems, with prominent internal rhyme and rhythm. There are times, however, when the chorus sings out some remarkably witty verses called *ramban*. These verses are embedded with sexual jokes victimizing the female members of the community. They are composed in highly symbolical and metaphorical terms. Such verses do not only bring applause from the males and disapproval from the females, they generate an intense but friendly rivalry between the men and women present at the feast. Below is an example of such a verse, or *ramban*:

1. Kasih amat damun Sulat
Tanah ringat nadai bumai,
Berumpang aja Pungga ka
Mali temuda Singgai enggai.
2. What a shame about Sulat's fallow land
Upon its fertility nobody wants to plant,
Pungga (a young man) who did the first felling
Is now not willing to own the land.

The chorus provides a welcome interlude, and is humorous at times, both for the audience and the chanters. The singing of the refrain lacking any important content, gives the *lemambang* and his assistant the time to compose or bring to mind their next lines. At the same time it breaks the monotony of the *lemambang*'s voice, and hence makes listening more pleasant. Chadwick (1940, iii:479) in his brief but perceptive study of Iban oral literature describes the chanting of the *timbang* as if "we are listening to a recital of Homer, not by one minstrel or singer, but by several, each of whom speaks a part, while the narrative portions are carried on by the leader, who is responsible for the greater part of the recital as a whole."

Concluding Remarks

One of the most striking elements of Iban *timbang* is the speed with which a *lemambang* recites or chants his lines. It is not unusual for an Iban *lemambang* to recite or chant the *timbang* at an average speed of 60 words per minute for an extended period of time. This rate is more striking if we realize that a *lemambang* is a chanter, performer, composer and poet all in one. Chanting, performing, composing, for a

Lembang, are facets of the same overall task. This remarkable ability both amazed and baffled me throughout the duration of my field work. This reaction, it seems, is a common one among students of oral literature. Lord (1960:17ff), for instance, was quite astonished at the speed with which a Yugoslav bard sang his lines. Later, after meticulously studying their songs he came to this conclusion: "Since he has not memorized his songs, we must conclude either he is a phenomenal virtuoso or that he has a special technique of composition outside our own field of experience. We must rule out the first ... so many geniuses simply cannot appear in a single generation. The answer of course lies in the second alternative, namely, a special technique of composition."

His conclusion is similar to that of Milman Parry¹⁰ who studied the style of Homeric verses represented by the Iliad and Odyssey. In his definitive work on the epic tradition Parry introduces a new term called 'formula' to describe the manner and the style by which Homeric verses are composed. The term formula may be defined as "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea" (A. Parry, 1971:272). Parry also points out that a "poet who composes with only the spoken word a poem of any length, must be able to fit his words into the mould of his verse after a fixed pattern" (ibid.:269).

As I have pointed out in my earlier discussion, the plot of *timang gawai amat* is arranged in definite patterns. The main plot is composed of ten major episodes, and within each episode there are series of inter-linking topics. And each topic is comprised of two or more 'stanzas' skilfully expressed in lines containing internal rhyme and rhythm. There

are certain topics or similar scenes which keep on appearing or being used. When these topics reappear they bring with them their own stock of words and expressions. Thus it is possible for a *Lemambang* to learn or compose lines for a topic and be able to use the same composition again later in the invocation with a slight alteration. Therefore, the grouping of certain words to describe specific topics or scenes, reinforced by the repetitive nature of some topics facilitate the speed at which an Iban *Lemambang* recites or chants his lines.

Finally, I would emphasize that the *timbang* is oral literature, and must be constantly seen as such. To appreciate its intricacies and to admire its aesthetics one must attend its performance in its natural social setting. Finnegan (1970:12) in her studies of oral literature in Africa writes: "To ignore these (performance, audience and occasion) in oral literature is to risk missing much of the subtlety, flexibility, and individual originality of its creator." The quality of a *timbang* presentation is largely influenced by the audience; for there is, between the *Lemambang* and their audience, a rapport which binds them into one theatrical unit. A large congregating audience, nods of the head, smiles of appreciation, and expressions of amazement from their listeners are essential ingredients which spur the *Lemambang* to do their very utmost. In response, their voices become clearer, their composure more dignified, and the contents of their invocation are presented in their best possible style. These ingredients on which the *timbang*'s beauty largely depends cannot be conveyed in the written text of the invocation. To understand the *timbang* by simply reading and analysing the various components of the text is, rather, like trying to appreciate the beauty

of a flower by pulling apart its various parts and studying each one of them separately. A person may know the number of its grains of pollen, the minutest details of its petals, the structures of all of its parts, but in the end has lost sight of the flower. The *timbang*, like other genre of oral literature, to be fully appreciated must be experienced in the social setting of which it is a part.

Footnotes

1. The use of Sabang Jurai as the messenger in this category of *timbang* is confined, so it appears from my research, to the Majau and Melinau rivers' *Lembang*. In other rivers like the Oyan and Mujong the messengers are either Pungga and Bungai Nuing, or Sempuntang Medang or Bungai Nuing. All of these people are *orang Panggau*.
2. The diagrams 3:1-3:4 are based on a drawing made by Freeman's *Lembang* informant, Igoh anak Impin, in 1950.
3. Singalang Burong attends only *gawai amat*. In his absence his sons-in-law, with Ketupong at their head are the leading guests.
4. This is an excerpt from Singalang Burong's reply taken from the text of the *timbang bulu*.
5. Charms of turmeric and ginger are used by the Iban to protect their *padi* crops from mice, grasshoppers and other pests.
6. In the current version of *timbang gawai amat* of the Baleh Iban (see Appendix A) the messengers to deliver the invitation to Lang are Kesulai (a butterfly) and Antu Ribut (the Spirit of the Wind). In the Saribas-Skrang version (cf. Sandin, 1977) the messengers are Kesulai, Lelayang (a swiftlet) and Antu Ribut.
7. A stanza consists of "lines of verse grouped together to compose a pattern usually repeated throughout the poem. A stanza pattern is determined by the number of lines, the number of feet and stresses in each line, and the rhyme scheme" (Scott:1965:276). The stanzas in the *timbang* do not fit this definition. Therefore, I have, in using that word stanza, put it in quotes.
8. It is now a common practice in the Baleh region for only three persons to chant the *timbang* (i.e. *Lembang* and his two-man chorus). This reduction in number, I was told, is due to the smaller number of *Lembang* now available. In the Saribas-Skrang region 'the chorus ordinarily consists of either three or six bards, under the direction of a chorus leader' and each 'wearing a long robe' (Sandin, 1977:xii). The *Lembang* and his supporting chorus of the Baleh region dressed quite differently.
9. In the Saribas-Skrang region the system of chanting the *timbang* is different. The *Lembang* and his assistant chant their 'stanzas' first, and then the chorus comes in (ibid.:ix).

10. Milman Parry died at the age of 33 years on 3 December, 1935, while holding a post of Assistant Professor of Greek at Harvard. He is regarded as one of the leading classical scholars of this century.

Chapter Four

Iban Lemambang or Bard

The *lemambang* (bard)¹ played a very important role in Iban society of former times. Their importance emanated from their talent in composing and chanting the *timbang*. To understand how the *timbang* came to give the *lemambang* pre-eminence in their society we must turn to the basic religious values of the Iban and reconstruct the traditional world view of the pagan Iban of the 19th century. These two requirements are vital if we are to understand the cultural significance of the *timbang*. As Ernest Renan² (cf. Parry, 1971:2) has pointed out we cannot grasp the reality of a primitive literature "unless we enter into the personal and moral life of the people who made it; unless we place ourselves at the point of humanity which was theirs, so that we see and feel as they saw and felt; unless we watch them live, or better unless for a moment we live with them." My task in this chapter then, is to bring to the fore the historical environment in which the *lemambang* and the *timbang* were so crucially important, and to discuss the complexity of ideas and the techniques which seem likely to have caused the emergence of the *timbang* in Iban culture.

The *timbang*, especially the *timbang gawai amat*, is, in the words of my informants, *leka sumpah pemadu bisa* (lit. 'the most potent of curses'). More precisely the *timbang* is a protracted malediction against the enemies of the Iban, namely, the Kayans, Kenyahs, Kajangs, Ukits and other tribes of the interior of Borneo. These groups, as pointed out in Chapter I, were the direct competitors of the Iban for the occupancy

of land. The *lemambang* make use of every opportunity in the text of the *timbang* to insert words of malediction against these rival groups, as the following excerpts show. The first excerpt describes the scene immediately after Lang has forged his war sword, while the second and third are scenes taken from the section in which farming becomes a metaphor for warfare.

(i) ... casting fragments of red hot iron in all directions,

That become crocodiles lurking in the still waters
or rivers.

And some, glistening cobras, that lie in wait beside
a path,

Against whose bites there is no recourse.

Other fragments become wasps and hornets that hover
about the posts of Kayan Tonghouses,

No wonder that the infants of the Kayan perish,

That maidens dying are buried with precious jars,

While women are all weak of limb, and their pigs
left unattended.

(Part VI:L204-211)

(ii) "Why this is not the augural stick of the ketupong
Uncle Lang,

This is a barbed spear

With a bronze-coated shaft,

And its end adorned with the mane of a crimson horse."

"So it is my kinsman, father of my grandchildren,

Drive it into the base of that tree,

Thrust it deep into the necks of the Uma Daro Kayan
to rend and tear their throats."

(Part VIII:L15-21)

(iii) "Where, dear father Lang, is the clump of
kamayau trees?

"Oh, do not talk of those *kamayau* trees, my dear
young child,

For they have been utterly devoured by the fire
that has devastated the lands of the Uma Kulit
Kayan."

(Part VIII:L209-211)

The protracted maledictions of the *timbang* chanted again and again during *gawai*, will, in Iban belief, weaken the souls of enemies, so that when an actual raid occurs they will be easy quarries for the Iban. The hornbill ritual, *gawai kenyalang*, in which the soul of the hornbill icon is 'released' by the *lemambang* to wreak havoc and destruction on Iban enemies, is a graphic illustration of this belief. Igoh, the bard whose words account for most of this *timbang* text, when he travelled with Freeman to Kayan territories in the early 1950s, witnessing the sorry state in which some of the Kayan groups were, attributed this condition to the potency of his *timbang* (personal communication). Thirty years later belief in the potency and efficacy of the *timbang* was still very much in force. My *lemambang* informants never hesitated to impress upon me the potent results of their chanting, be it in procuring an abundance of *padi*, or the healing of somebody in ill health.

In order to comprehend the deep and tenaciously held belief of the Iban in the potency and efficacy of their *timbang*, we must first understand the basic philosophy of the Iban concerning *leka jako* (verbal utterances). To the Iban spoken words are fully capable of

determining the course of events. It is believed that what a man first utters in words will, sooner or later, become a reality. This belief can be observed when an Iban has been a victim of an unknown transgressor, or in the words of prayers uttered during a farming rite. In the first instance the victim retaliates by uttering strings of curses which one observer described as 'a solemn invocation of death' (Ling Roth, 1896:86; cf. Heppell, 1975:137ff); in the second case the prayers called down suffering, sickness and death on the creatures who had dared to interfere with the growth of their *padi* (cf. Jensen, 1974: 151ff). Belief in the potency of a curse and the fear of what it can do to the person against whom it is directed make the indiscriminate uttering of a curse a finable offence under Iban *adat* or customary law (Richards, 1961:22). The *timbang* being a 'most potent of curses or malediction' against known enemies is thus, in the minds of the Iban, a formidable weapon against which these enemies have little respite. The employers of this weapon — the *lemambang* — can thus be compared to the Celtic bards to whom Cunliffe (1979:182) attributes supernatural powers and the capability of hurting or killing by words alone.

The object of an Iban curse or *timbang* is not the visible body of a person, but rather his invisible second-being which the Iban call *samengat* (soul). To understand how a human soul can be harmed or threatened by curses we must come to grips with the Iban theory of the soul. All objects, animate and inanimate have soul-counterparts. The soul which is invisible to human eyes, with the exception of the shaman (*manang*) who claim to be able to see human souls in a *batu karas* (crystal quartz), is an integral second-being without which life cannot

exist or continue. The soul is as tender and as vulnerable as a young child (*baka pemuda anak mit*), and therefore must be protected with the greatest of care. Its safety and well-being determines the life and death of its corporeal owner. According to the Iban when a living organism is sick or dying, its bodily state is a reflection of the comparable state of its invisible counterpart, the soul. Therefore, to heal a person from sickness or to rescue him from the brink of death, a shaman is summoned to minister to his soul through certain prescribed rites. Because of the overriding need to protect and nourish the soul, there are in Iban culture complex methods by which it can be protected or retrieved from danger. According to Iban belief then, humans are ever open to harm through the vulnerability of their souls to the malign intentions of both humans and spirits.

It is on this vulnerability of their enemies that Iban *lemambang* unleash the potency of their *timbang*. Thus when a bard through his chant seeks to inflict suffering and death on the enemies of the Iban, it is their souls he attacks. This is illustrated in a scene in which iron filings from Lang's sword turn into crocodiles, snakes and wasps to kill Kayans. In their effort to forestall death, the Kayan summon a shaman to perform a rite to protect their souls (part VI:L204-211). And in fact, the whole *timbang* plot may be said to take place in the realm of the *semangat* (soul); for the *lemambang* at the end of his *timbang* invocation recalls his soul and that of his chorus of singers back into the bodies of their corporeal owners.

Whether or not the *timbang* actually affects the enemies against whom it is directed I shall not here attempt to determine. What is

certain is the psychological effect of their belief in the efficacy of their *timbang* on the Iban themselves. Numerous accounts and stories are told of Iban warriors fearlessly attacking enemy positions. Sir Henry Keppel (1846, I:49) in one of his expeditions against the Iban pirates' stronghold writes:

As we hove in sight, several hundred savages rose up, and gave one of their war-yells: it was the first I had heard. No report from musketry or ordnance could ever make a man's heart feel so small as mine did at that horrid yell: but I had no leisure to think. I had only time for a shot at them with my double barrel as they rushed down the steep ...

Charles Brooke (1866, I:351ff) gives an eye-witness account of the prodigious fervour of Iban warriors at the attack in 1859, on a well fortified Kajang longhouse in the Rejang: "... vociferating at the top of their voices," declaring that they would "die, rather than not have the blood of the enemy," they clambered up the posts of their enemies with their spears and swords, braving the poisoned blowpipe darts directed at them. Even in defeat the confidence and dignity of Iban leaders remains intact as Brooke (*ibid*, II:145) once again reports.

He looked anything but like a conquered man; nevertheless his manner was respectful and upright. He carried himself as a warrior chief of the feudal period, standing as straight as a lath, and spoke as if he were receiving a friend or visitor at the threshold of his father's domain ... and I thanked heaven I was able to confront him with as active and unfatigued an exterior as himself, although I must confess not so picturesque a one.

These qualities of the Iban were generated by their belief in their being the recipients of divine aid, as is spelt out in the words of the *timbang*. Furthermore, this belief was constantly reinforced by Iban success in territorial expansion during the 19th century.

The early decades of the 19th century witnessed Iban expansion into the Rejang-Baleh river basins. These areas were occupied by small but formidable tribes who resisted the incursions of the Iban, and it was on the effectiveness of their warriors that all Iban hope of territorial advance depended. The effectiveness of Iban warriors as discussed in Chapter II was achieved by the performance of the *gawai* ritual in which the supernatural power of Singalang Burong and his sons-in-law is invoked. The invocation of these puissant beings' power and strength was, and still is, the special preserve of the *Lemambang*, who through their chants gave to the Iban belief in their having the gods on their side. This in turn gave the Iban great courage in battle and immense confidence in the success of their endeavours. And from this sprang the special regard accorded to the *Lemambang*, especially when Iban warriors returned from a successful head-hunting raid. As these warriors basked in the glory of victory and in the adulation of the community so were the *Lemambang* esteemed for the part they had played in making this possible.

It should be emphasized that the position of *Lemambang* is not taken by Iban males who fail to exhibit masculine traits. Past records and stories reveal many Iban *Lemambang* to have been warriors of renown, and the text of the *timbang gawai amat* is quite explicit on this as illustrated by line 103 of part I: "My breath I draw as did the famed Rareioh as he sang in his camp on the war path." Even in Iban contemporary society many *Lemambang* are longhouse headmen (*tuai rumah*), officially appointed district leaders (*penghulu*), and accomplished entrepreneurs in their own right. Thus Iban *Lemambang* are

talented individuals capable of fulfilling any masculine role in a highly masculine oriented society.

The importance attached to the role of the *lemambang* and the esteem accorded to their profession has, understandably, declined since the demise of head-hunting. This decline is due to changed circumstances rather than a reduction in the *lemambang*'s range of skills. With the establishment of the Brooke regime, the suppression of head-hunting and the performing of peace-making ceremonies, towards the end of the 19th century, wars and raids into enemy territory slowly became things of the past, and peace became generally established. Consequently, being an effective warrior and head-hunter are qualities that are no longer needed or approved, and the rituals, invocations, and personalities directly associated with the cult of head-hunting have declined in importance. The *lemambang*'s primary role as an agent possessing the power and skill to unleash the lethal words of the *timbang* against Iban traditional enemies is becoming anachronistic. Given this new and peaceful environment, it is hardly surprising that a modern *lemambang* can no longer maintain the former importance of his profession, and is unable to bask in the glory that was once accorded to his predecessors. Moreover, with the advent of peace it is hard for the ordinary Iban to picture the *lemambang* as a group of persons who once inspired Iban warriors with the courage and confidence required in their fight for territory.

It would, however, be wrong to assume that the decline in importance of the *lemambang*'s role in Iban society has extinguished admiration for their talents. If I were to single out one thing which the Iban

still lavish on their bards, it would be unabated admiration for their repertoire of skills. In the 1950s, for instance, there were three *Lembang* in the Sungai Majau region, namely Igoh, Jugo and Pangiran, whom the Iban, thirty years later, still speak of with great admiration. Numerous 'stanzas' and verses recited to me were said to have been composed (with slight modifications by the reciter) by one of these great bards. The same degree of admiration, I find, is still lavished on modern *Lembang*. The quality which enable the *Lembang* to inspire such intensity of admiration in their audience must be attributed to their profound interest in the *timbang*, supplemented by appreciation of the skilful and eloquent presentation of its lines. In all my discussions and associations with Iban bards, they never failed to amaze me with their vast repertoires, not only of *timbang*, but also of other traditions. It was not unusual for me along with other Iban who happened to pass by, to pause, often for a lengthy period, listening spellbound as the *Lembang* recited or chanted line after line of the *timbang*. It is this enduring skill which, in particular, distinguishes a modern *Lembang* from his fellows.

Before I proceed to elaborate on the ways and methods used by the *Lembang* in acquiring this remarkable skill it would be appropriate, at this stage, to define precisely what the term *Lembang* means. The word *Lembang* does not have any secondary meanings. It refers to Iban bards who have mastered the four categories of *timbang* discussed in Chapter III. Those who have mastered only three or less are called *Lembang mit* (lit. 'a small or minor bard'), or simply *orang tau nimbang* (lit. 'people who can chant'). I shall, then, refer to such Iban chanters as 'minor *Lembang*'.

1. Training to Become a Lemambang

Theoretically speaking, any Iban, male or female, may aspire to become a *Lemambang*. In practice, however, it is mostly the male who can and does become one. During my research in the Baleh region I failed to find any living female *Lemambang*. Jensen (1974:62) in his works in the Second Division, however, discovered one reputable female *Lemambang* in Ulu Undup, and two minor ones at Nanga Delok. The factor which prevents more women from becoming a *Lemambang* is the nature of the task rather than religious prohibitions. A *Lemambang* travels widely and often throughout his career, which in Iban society does not quite fit with the women's domestic roles.

Iban males aspire, or at least try, to be like a *Lemambang* at an early age. It is not uncommon in an Iban longhouse to see a group of young boys of about six or seven years old parading up and down the *ruai*, or gallery, in a single file, each holding a staff, imitating a *Lemambang* and his chorus of singers. The text of their chants may consist of unintelligible phrases, but the way they rhythmically tap their staffs and move their bodies is unmistakably in imitation of *timbang* behaviour. These nascent interests will, through years of watching, listening and imitating the *Lemambang* at their task, reveal signs of the potentialities of certain individuals. These early years do not go unobserved by the adult members of the community. It is they who, upon recognizing the interest displayed by their youth, begin to help them with the rudiments of *timbang* invocation. By asking, and through participating in the various rites associated with the *timbang*, these youths learn not only the manner in which these rites are performed

but the reasons for performing them. It is essential that these young aspirants understand and believe in the efficacy of their rituals as means of obtaining desired ends. For without such qualities they will not, in later years, be able to generate self confidence and inspire credibility in the potency of their *timbang* performance. They also learn from adults as well as their peer group, verses of the *ramban*, a kind of witty refrain. The possession of a few *ramban* refrains is a significant step forward, for these youths are now at the age (about 16 years) when they may participate in the *timbang* invocation as members of the two-man chorus. This participation introduces them, for the first time, to the realities of *timbang* invocation: the exhilarating feeling of being the centre of attention, along with the strain and stress of the profession. For once a person has been accepted as a member of the chorus, that will be his sole preoccupation for the duration of a ritual feast. For a young man who loves the gaiety of such an occasion, and enjoys the fun and frolics that a ritual feast has to offer, it is a difficult choice. Entry into a two-man chorus is the first, and in my view one of the most important influences on any young man's decision to become a *Lembang*. I have been told of and met many young Iban males whose aspiration to become *Lembang* never went further than participation in this chorus.

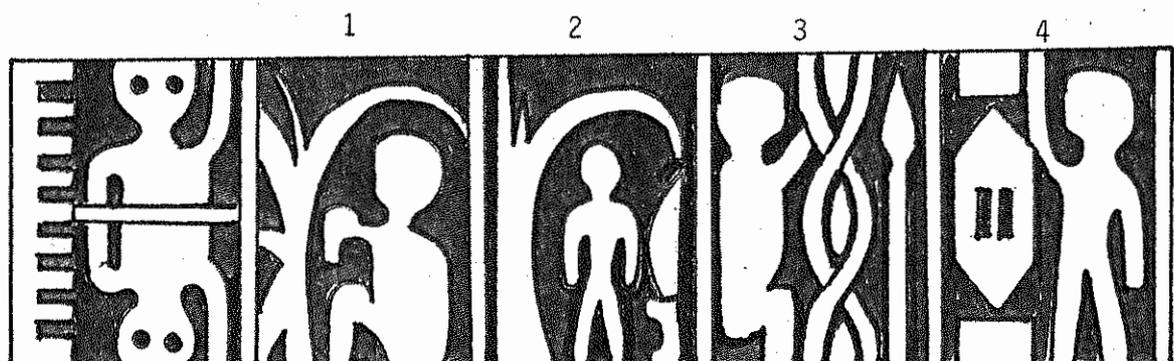
Once a young man has participated a few times in the *timbang* invocation there are two options open to him. He can either go on being a member of the chorus for a few more years to gain better insight and knowledge of the profession, or he can go to a *Lembang* of established reputation and become his pupil.

There is, in Iban society, no such thing as a 'school' in the Western sense of the word, where a young aspirant may undertake formal study. The whole process by which a young aspirant learns is arranged to the convenience of both the pupil and the master, rather than in adherence to any strict and formal system. It is usually during a lull in farming activities when a young aspirant, along with a few interested friends, will approach a *lemambang* and inform him of their desire to become his pupils. Once the *lemambang* has agreed to teach them, a *piring* ceremony is performed. During this ceremony the *lemambang* shares with his 'pupil' his *ubat pengingat*, a charm to aid one's memory, either by letting them drink the water in which the charm has been rinsed, or by slicing tiny pieces from it and giving one piece to each of his pupils. Upon the completion of the *piring* ceremony, the instruction commences. Most instruction takes place in the evening when the daily tasks are done. The first category of *timbang* that the *lemambang* teaches his pupils is the seed ritual chant, or *timbang beneh*. This is because *timbang beneh*, in the words of my informants, is described as the *jalai pengidup* (lit. 'path to life'). In Iban culture, rice is without doubt the most important of crops for the sustenance of life. Therefore, priority is given to the teaching of the rites and invocations pertinent to its procurement — preferably in abundance. There is, however, a more practical side to the matter. If we study carefully the routes of the four categories of *timbang*, we find that the route of the *timbang beneh* overlaps quite substantially with the other three categories. And, furthermore, its route passes through the domains of the most important deities in Iban pantheon. Thus, as a basis or

foundation from which the learning of other *timbang* may develop, *timbang beneh* is the logical choice.

The primary method of acquiring information, at this stage, is through rote learning, hence the necessity of obtaining from the *lemambang* his charm for memory (*ubat pengingat*). The information memorized is not so much the lines, but rather the objects or scenes described by these lines. These objects in most cases are the deities and spirits whose domains are included in the *timbang* route. Thus, an aspirant will memorize the names of the gods and spirits, their special characteristics and duties, and their location in the Iban cosmos. To memorize all of this information, the aspirant is aided by a device called a *papan turai* (lit. 'engraved board'). A *papan turai*, which I shall refer to as a mnemonic board, is a long lath of wood measuring approximately 6 feet in length, 3 inches wide, and a half-inch thick, on both sides of which figures of humans, animals and birds are engraved. Each of these engravings occupies an area about 2 x 2½ sq. inches, and represents either a god, an animal, or a bird encountered during the *timbang* journey. These are arranged in their order of appearances from left to right. In *timbang gawai amat*, for instance, the first supernatural beings that Bungai Nuing and Pungga encounter soon after leaving the longhouse, are Tungkut Maut, Apai Duku (the Spirit of the Knife), Apai Sangkoh (the Spirit of the Spear), Apai Terabai (the Spirit of the Shield), and so on. The figures on the board are engraved and arranged in that order as shown in diagram 4:1 (based on engravings made by Igoh for Freeman, 1950).

Diagram 4:1



Bungai Nuing
and
Pungga

Tungkut
Maut

Apai Duku

Apai Sangkoh

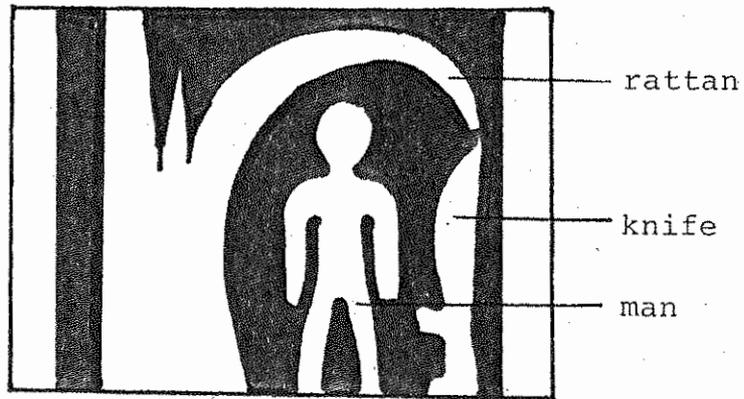
Apai Terabai

The details of each engraving bear the closest possible resemblance to the known characteristics of the god or spirit being depicted, being depicted, being thus readily recognized and remembered. Let me elaborate this point by examining in detail the second and third engravings of diagram 4:1. The *lemambang* describes the domain of the Spirit of the Knife (Apai Duku) as:

They reach the clump of curling rattans stretched
out like the necks of wreathed hornbills,
From which war jackets are hung;
The domain of young Gamarang Lampong,
The abode of the rearing cobra; the Spirit of the
Knife.

The engraving representing this spirit consists of (see diagram 4:2):
(i) a rattan length which curls; (ii) a figure of a man; (iii) a knife.

Diagram 4:2

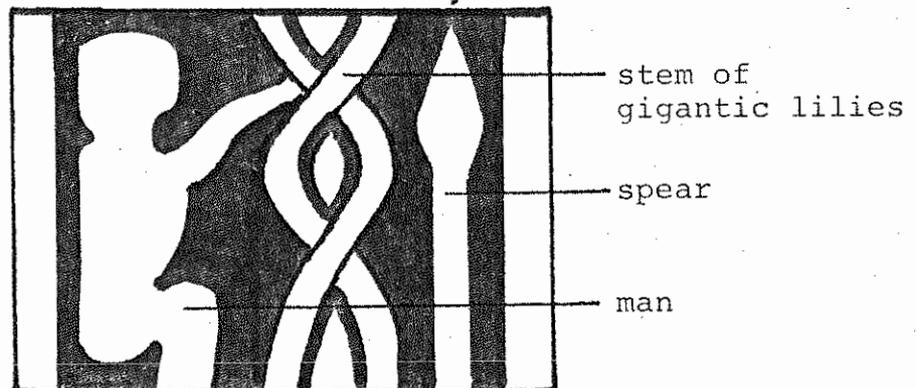


In the third engraving, the domain of the Spirit of the Spear is described as:

They journey to the land where gigantic lilies
intertwine,
To the people of the tightly woven lily stems,
The domain of Keling who soars through the air,
The abode of young Ulop, the Spirit of the Spear.

The engraving representing this spirit consists of (see diagram 4:3):
(i) the stems of gigantic lilies which intertwine; (ii) a figure of a man; (iii) a spear.

Diagram 4:3



In this way any aspirant is helped to remember the names of the various spirits and gods encountered on the *timbang* journey.

There are two aspects of the *lemambang*'s mnemonic board which warrant special mention. First, the engravings on the mnemonic board are idiosyncratic in nature; that is, the figures depend largely on the individual *lemambang*'s own ideas and interpretations. Therefore, it is difficult, if not impossible, for anybody outside his tutorship to 'read' his engravings. Second, the 'board' is no more than an aid in the memorizing of the names and locations of the various supernatural beings encountered in the world of gods and spirits, and of the subsequent journey to the land of mortals. It does not, for instance, describe the activities of Lang while participating in the ritual feast. The *papan turai* (mnemonic board) is thus designed for a specific group of persons and for a specific purpose, and to assume that it is an Iban writing board as Sandin and Harrison (SMJ, vol. XIII, no.27, 1966) have done, is a mistake.

An aspirant does not usually study under one teacher until he has mastered all four categories of *timbang*. The length of continuous tutoring by one *lemambang* extends from three to fourteen days, at the end of which each pupil pays to the *lemambang* a nominal amount of cash, plus some symbolic items which I shall discuss later in this chapter. Upon the completion of this training, an aspirant is not expected to have mastered any *timbang* in great detail. At best, he hopes to have learnt the route of the seed ritual, or *timbang beneh*, and some of its verses. Further learning and the main acquisition of *timbang* skills are achieved by informal means, and in a surprisingly

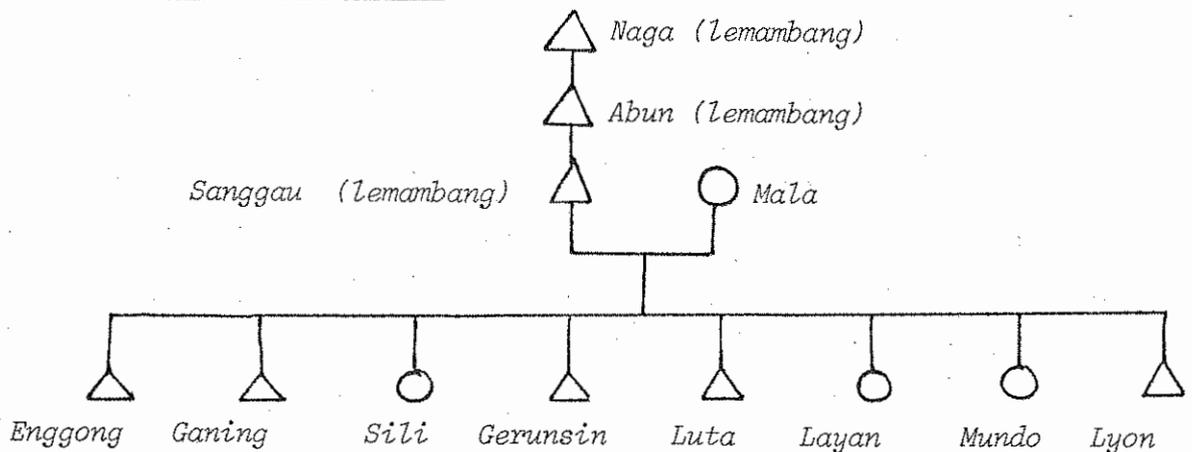
unsympathetic fashion. From now on, learning is by the aspirant's own choice and initiative. He may, without performing a *piring* ceremony or the payment of any fees, learn from any other *lemambang* he meets as opportunity permits. Opportunity for further learning may occur at work, during a social visit, on ritual occasions, or during the quiet of an evening in the longhouse. This informal method of learning is discontinuous, and only for brief periods, and very rarely lasts for more than a day at a time.

It is, however, ritual occasions which provide the best opportunity for learning. One of the most enlightening moments on such occasions is the early afternoon on the first day of a feast. This is the time when *lemambang* from various parts of the region gather together, and the accompanying discussion (as I myself found) is exceedingly valuable for the understanding of the *timang* and their intricacies. It is also on a ritual occasion that an aspirant may put into practice what he has learned by participating in the *timang* as a member of the chorus. Through years of watching, learning and participating on ritual occasions, an aspirant gradually develops confidence and acquires the skills that eventually enable him to take over the role of a leading chanter. His first venture in this leading role, though confined only to a small *gawa* ritual, nevertheless elevates him to the status of a minor bard, or *lemambang mit*. With more years of individual learning and participating in these small rituals, a minor bard usually acquires further skills and competence that finally enable him to take the role of a leading *lemambang* in the most elaborate and prestigious feast of all — the *gawai amat*. Once a minor bard has become competent to

assume the leading role in the *timbang* invocation for a major ritual feast, he will have mastered all four categories of *timbang*. He is then, in the strict Iban definition of the term, a *lemambang*.

Three Illustrative Cases

Case 1. Sanggau anak Abun



Sanggau anak Abun (*anak* means son of) was born in 1935. He lives in Rumah Ugap, Sungai Melinau in the Seventh Division of Sarawak. His father and grandfather were both accomplished *lemambang*. It was they who influenced, encouraged and, in later years, guided him to become a *lemambang*. It was from watching and listening to their performances that he learned of the various facets of *timbang* invocation and about the value of *timbang* performance. This knowledge and skill Sanggau put into constant practice by participating as a member of the chorus on ritual occasions. One night Sanggau had a dream:

In my dream I was assuming the role of a leading *lemambang*, with Umbar who was also a *lemambang* and who was my kin, as my assistant. After we had been chanting the *timbang* for a while, we sat down for a rest. While we were resting, Umbar turned to me and said: "My grandson, now that I have been your assistant, your knowledge and skill far exceeds mine."

Iban version:

Dalam mimpi aku lemambang Umbar, tanah kaban nimbal aku nimang. Uдах kami dua iya nimang enda lama, kami dua lalu ngetu dudok. Leboh kami dua ke dudok, Umbar lalu bejako enggau aku: "Neh ucho, nya aku udah nimbal de nimang, jauh de ila pandai ari aku."

When Sanggau woke up he told his parents about his dream. They then advised him to go and learn from a well-known *lemambang* from Sungai Majau, named Pangiran. He, along with a few interested friends, travelled to Sungai Majau. They stayed with Pangiran for this formal training only for a few days. At the end of this training, Sanggau paid Pangiran (i) 2 yards of black cloth; (ii) one small jar or *jagok*; (iii) a knife; and (iv) \$M2.00 in cash. Pangiran had, at the commencement of their training, shared with them his memory charm called *batu ilum pinang* (lit. 'stone-charm of betel nut') given to him by Rareioh the god who inspires Iban bards. Further discussion on deities associated with Iban bards will appear later in this chapter. After this formal training, Sanggau made use of every available opportunity to further his learning. One of the *lemambang* with whom he had close association was Igoh anak Impin. In the later years of his profession, Sanggau had another dream:

In my dream I was chanting the *timbang* invocation for a *bilek*-family whose shrine was bedecked with a beautiful *ikat* fabric (*pua*). Beside it, hanging from the loft, was a bunch of trophy heads. While I was chanting the *timbang* Rarerioh and Burong

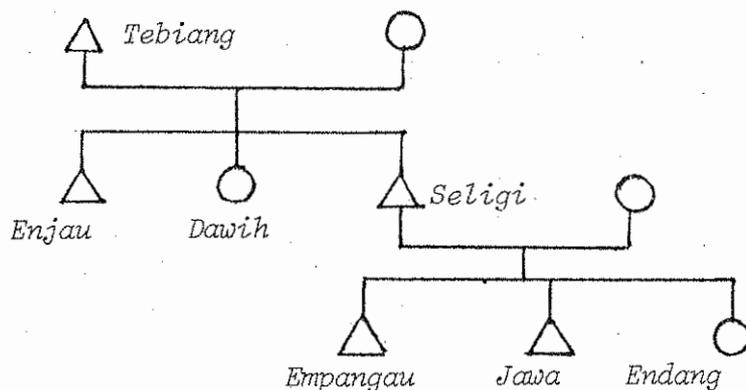
Malam (both are gods who inspire the bard in their work) came and commented on my skill, calling it 'remarkable'.

Iban version:

Dalam mimpi, aku di asoh bilek siti nimang ka ranyai ke di balun enggau pua kumbo. Lalu digantong semak ranyai nya mayoh amat antu pala. Leboh aku ke nimang Rareioh enggau Burong Malam datai lalu muji pepadas leka timang aku.

That dream, according to Sanggau, removed any doubt about his decision to become a *lemambang*, for the gods through a dream, had not only sanctioned his decision, but also had attested to his skill and ability. Sanggau's talents go well beyond *timang* invocation. He is also versed in *ensera* (sagas), *pantun* (songs), *besampi* (invocatory prayer), and *berua* (a kind of *timang* invocation involving only a *lemambang*). His remarkable talents and skills in Iban oral tradition were capped when he was commissioned in 1977 to chant the *timang gawai amat* to its ultimate stage – the *nempalai kasai* (the planting of cotton, cf. part IX). The knowledge required to do this is confined to only a very few. In fact, out of the nine *lemambang* that I have studied, only three were able to chant the *timang* to its ultimate stage.

Case 2: Seligi anak Tebiang



Seligi anak Tebiang was born in 1925. He lives in Rumah Jenggi in Sungai Majau, Seventh Division. Most of his time, however, is spent in his farm hut in the wet *padi* scheme in Tuno river, located at the headwaters of Melinau river. He, like Sanggau, developed an interest in *timbang* at an early age. He frequently participated in the *timbang* as a member of the chorus. It was during those early years that Pangiran had a dream about Seligi.

Long ago Pangiran was dreaming of chanting a *timbang* for a *gawai* ritual. While he was taking a rest he saw Seligi grasp his staff and start to chant in his place. An *antu* (spirit) came to Pangiran and asked: "Who is that man who chants in your place?" "Oh, that is Seligi, my cousin's son," replied Pangiran. To which the *antu* replied, "Now that Seligi has chanted on your behalf, his skill in chanting the *timbang* will eventually be equal to yours."

Iban version:

Munya Pangiran bemimpi nimang gawai Kayu Raya. Leboh iya besengah nimang iya meda Seligi nangkap tungkat iya lalu nimang. Antu lalu nanya Pangiran, "Sapa orang ke nimang aba endor nuan?" "Seligi nya, anak betunggal akau," ko saut Pangiran. "Nya Seligi udah nimang nyuror nuan iya ila meh pandai baka nuan," ko antu.

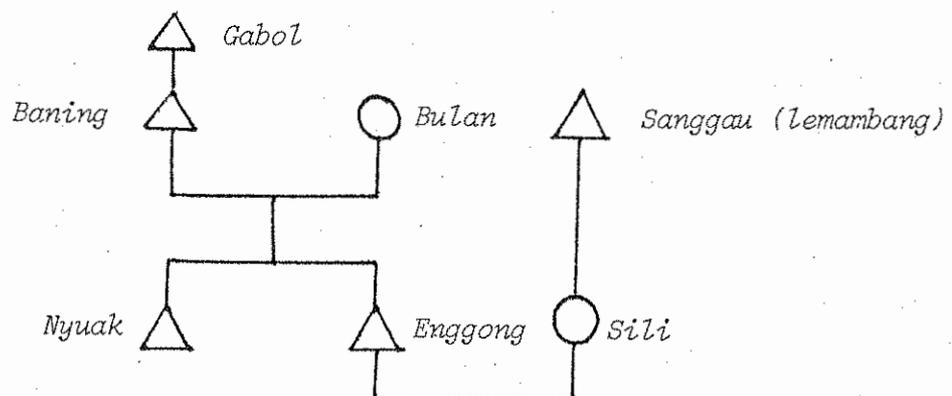
Pangiran later told others of his dream and added that should Seligi choose to become a *lemanbang* he would be successful.

After being informed of Pangiran's views, Seligi's relatives advised him to pursue his interest further by learning directly from Pangiran. This he did. He was under Pangiran's tutelage for only a few days, at the end of which he paid Pangiran: (i) 2 yards of black cloth; (ii) one big plate, or *pinggai tupai*; (iii) one black chicken; (iv) \$M2.00 in cash. To ensure that Seligi would have sound memory Pangiran let him mouth his *batu ilum pinang*, or betel-nut charm. After this brief and

formal period of instruction Seligi, like other young aspirants, pursued his interest on his own initiative. Among the many *lemambang* he talked to and learned from was Igoh. Seligi's interest was not confined only to *timbang* invocation, for in later years he adopted the role of shaman (*manang*). Without having gone through the proper initiation rites, or *bebangun*, he travelled to another Iban region proclaiming himself to be a fully initiated shaman. This he did, I was told, with immense success.

However, his being a shaman did not last, and today Seligi is recognized only as an accomplished *lemambang*. His repertoire of skills in oral tradition include: *ensera* (sagas), *pantun* (songs), *besampi* (invocatory prayer), *berenong* (a kind of chant), and ancient stories. His profession as an actively practising *lemambang* came to a tragic end in 1978 when he suffered a stroke which left him paralysed from his waist down. Fortunately, however, this disability did not affect his voice or his memory.

Case 3: Enggong anak Baning



Enggong anak Baning was born in 1954. He lives in Rumah Ansam, Sungai Majau, in the Seventh Division. He can read and write Iban fluently. At the age of six, Enggong attended the Methodist Primary School at Nanga Mujong. However, due to some financial difficulty, he had to leave school after completing Primary Six. It was during those early years that Enggong began to show special interest in *timbang*. He was often asked to perform *timbang* during the school's 'cultural show'.

This early interest was maintained and nourished by his participation in *timbang* as a member of the chorus during the years after he had left school. In his early twenties, Enggong went to Sanggau to learn the *timbang*. This action, he told me, was not prompted by any kind of dream. Early in 1978 he married Sanggau's daughter. Ever since he made his first debut as a leading chanter a few years back, Enggong has been constantly in demand. However, all of his performances have been confined to ritual chants associated with the small *gawa* rituals. Thus, in the strict definition of the term, Enggong is not a full *lemambang*. Judging from his personality, the interest and zeal he puts into his profession, it will not be long before he acquires the necessary skills qualifying him to be called a master *lemambang*.

I now turn to other salient features of the years of training to become a *lemambang*. First, I would emphasize the exceptional importance that the Iban attach to dream experience. Every one of the nine master *lemambang* that I studied attributed his having become a *lemambang* to a dream. Nobody, it is believed, can be successful in

realizing his aspiration to become a *lemambang* without the sanction of gods through his dreams. Without this, a person cannot hope to aspire beyond the status of a minor bard. The importance Iban attach to dreams in the successful pursuit of a *lemambang*'s profession is succinctly expressed by the words of one of my *lemambang* informants: '*Kitai nyadi lemambang ari tangkal mimpi ari asoh petara*' – 'We become bards because of our dreams and from the will of the gods'. This pronouncement echoes the Greek notion that it was possession by the Muses that gave their rhapsodes, or bards, their phenomenal skill.

When this seizes upon a gentle and virgin soul it rouses it to inspired expression in lyric and other sorts of poetry ...
But if a man comes to the door of poetry untouched by the madness of the Muses, believing that technique alone will make him a good poet, he and his sane compositions never reach perfection, but are utterly eclipsed by the performances of the inspired madman.

Plato (Phaedrus in trans. Hamilton, 1973:48)

The two deities who inspire Iban *lemambang* in their profession are Rareioh and Burong Malam. Rareioh takes the form of an insect with a high shrilling sound frequently heard at dawn, while Burong Malam (lit. 'Bird of the Night') is a cricket, the strident sound of which is commonly heard in the forest at dusk. Many Iban *lemambang* of well established reputation, including Pangiran and Igoh, are said to have been aided by these two deities. Many of the Iban *timbang* verses and innovations composed by these masters are believed to have been directly inspired by Rareioh and Burong Malam. I have in fact recorded three *timbang* 'stanzas' of Pangiran, given to him I was told by Rareioh in his dreams. The Greeks, once again, also attributed the songs of their singers to inspiration by

the gods. "I sing to the gods, and to human people, and I am taught by myself, but the gods have inspired in me the song-ways of every kind," cries Phemios, as he begs Odysseus for mercy (Lattimore, 1965: 330).

Another significant feature of the formal training of an Iban *lemambang* is its brief duration. The time an aspirant actually spends as a pupil with master *lemambang* is insignificant compared with the years he spends learning by himself. Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that a person could acquire all the skills of a *lemambang* without the benefit of those few days of formal training. Why then does every Iban aspirant go through this phase? First, it gives an aspirant direct access to an established master's knowledge and skill. Second, and perhaps even more importantly, an aspirant is thus able to obtain from the master his memory charm, or *ubat pengingat*. The Iban believe that without the aid of such a charm the learning of the *timbang* will be difficult, if not impossible. Many a time during my research I was told to obtain such a charm from my *lemambang* informants, which it was said was essential for my own work. To the dismay of some and the amusement of others, I kept forgetting to do this.

2. The Variations in the Text of the *Timang Gawai Amat*

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, an aspirant in his formal period of training, learns only the names of the gods, spirits, and places encountered on the *timbang* journey. In order to fill the gaps in his

knowledge, an aspirant, as well as a minor bard, learns from any available source. It is, therefore, not unusual for these two groups of people to be seen learning from another bard verses for a specific topic or scene before moving on to another informant for yet other verses describing a different topic or scene. Thus the repertoire an aspirant, or minor bard, accumulates is not a product of only one *lemambang*, but rather of many. The version that he finally presents is a compound derived from diverse sources, and arranged in accordance with his own choice. There is thus no such thing as a definitive version of the *timbang gawai amat*, rather, even though they vary but slightly, there are as many versions as there are *lemambang*. Finnegan (1970:10) in her studies of African oral literature sums up this point very nicely for this region: "There is not any concept of an 'authentic version', and when a particular literary piece is transmitted to an audience, the concepts of extemporization or elaboration are often more likely to be to the fore than that of memorization. A failure to realize this leads to many misconceptions, in particular the presentation of one version as the correct and authentic one." Very much the same is true for the Iban.

I shall, for the remainder of this section, give examples illustrating creativity and innovation by *lemambang* in composing *timbang* verses and routes. The text of the *timbang gawai amat* studied for this thesis, recorded in early 1950 has Bungai Nuing and Pungga as the messengers to summon Singalang Burong to the feast. The route these two messengers take is identical with that of the *timbang beneh* (seed ritual). However, since that time the form of this *timbang* has undergone

significance changes. My research carried out 30 years later reveals that Bungai Nuing and Pungga have refused to summon Lang to the feast (cf : Appendix A). This task, after anxious and frantic moments, falls on a young stranger named Kesulai. Later, when Kesulai, from exhaustion, fails to continue his journey, he asks Antu Ribut (the Spirit of the Wind) to perform his mission of inviting Singalang Burong to the feast. The length of these two versions is about the same, but the route of the former is more complex in that it involves more characters, while the latter is more straight forward and dramatic. The bard, or bards, responsible for this innovation are not known, but I would point out that this innovation has now been widely accepted, and is used in the Baleh region as well as by the Saribas and Skrang Iban of the Second Division (cf. Sandin, 1977).

There is also another significant innovation to the plot of *timbang gawai amat* since the 1950s. The route of Igoh's text, which is still being used, takes Lang and his entourage through the door of the sky, or *pintu langit*, down the 'ladder' of the rainbow, through the rain forest, and so into the longhouse holding the feast. The whole invocation for this particular part lasts until the early morning of the second day of the feast. If the ritual performed requires the presence of the deities who live across the sea, then the *lemambang* must also chant the *timbang* episode which narrates of such a voyage. The chanting of this episode lasts until the early morning of the third day. When these deities have arrived, and their magical offerings have been placed in the shrine (*ranyai*) parts of it are then dismantled (*di rebah*). Once this rite is performed, the guests may depart to their homes, but not

until then. What this really means in practical terms is that the host-families must have enough food to feed a large number of people for two days and nights. The new route, believed to have been created by penghulu Ugak of Ulu Mujong in his dreams, reduces the time of entertaining guests by about half. If, for instance, the ritual performed requires only items from the gods across the sea, then Lang, in this innovative version, instead of traversing the sky as he normally does, takes his party down the Nalan Lumpang river, and sails directly to the land across the sea (see diagram 3:4). In this way Lang and his host of supernatural beings arrive at the longhouse holding the feast early on the morning of the second day. This permits the guests to depart on the second day of the feast with a marked lessening of the pressure on the resources of the host-families.

When this route was first introduced in about 1950, the Iban populace in general were dubious about its legitimacy and efficacy. Many reasoned that such a voyage would subject the *igi ranyai*, or seed of the shrine (i.e. trophy head) to the hazard of a sea, possibly causing it to become wet (*basah*). The seed of the shrine, according to Iban belief, must on no account become wet and thus diminish in potency. This reasoning posed a real problem for the *lemambang*. The problem was solved some years later by Usau (the son of Rangiran) and Sigai, his cousin. When asked to justify their choice of the new route they answered that there was no danger of the seed of the shrine becoming wet, for Lang had put it securely in the cabin of the ship in which he was travelling. This answer was accepted when it was realized that the waves in this case would not reach and damage the magical potency of Lang's trophy head.

This new route indicates a change in Iban values. In the old days, a *bilek*-family prepared with great dedication for a *gawai* regardless of cost and time. In those days, rituals were the prime means through which divine aid could be invoked, material wealth procured, and prestige gained. However, with the advent of peace, the introduction of new cash crops, and the availability of salaried jobs the traditional means of obtaining wealth and prestige have lost their former importance. In consequence, the old ritual concerns have been forgotten as time and resources are directed to other ends. In short, the performing of *gawai* is now only one of numerous ways in which the contemporary Iban can achieve wealth and prestige.

Iban *lemambang* not only create new *timbang* routes to accommodate changing values, but update the duties of their gods and spirits to suit new needs. Igoh in his version, for instance, gives as the reason for the non-attendance of Se Kuang Kapong (Indian cuckoo), the deity who causes the trees of the forest to bear fruit:

Enda enggau gawa nempa buah ara pemakai ikan kali,
Gawa ngamboh buah engkeruroh buah laboh enda berenti.

He is not going to the feast for he is busy with the *ara*
and *engkeruroh* trees, on the fruit of which fish feed.

However, two *lemambang*, Seligi and Masing, thought that Se Kuang Kapong was thus engaging in a duty which had no immediate benefit to human beings, and introduced a new activity:

Enda eggau gawa ngerembai ka buah lelanggai bebungai
lebat tebelaling,
Gawa nenchang buah engkabang ngambi buah baketalang
mentor pating.

He is not going to the feast for he is busy inducing the
lelanggai and the *engkabang* trees to flower. [The fruits
of these trees are now of great commercial importance to
the Iban.]

These three examples succinctly illustrate the manner in which
an Iban *lemambang*'s creativity and imagination bring about changes in
the plot of the *timbang* and its verses, at the same time documenting
what prompted these changes. The frequency of changes in the plot
of *timbang gawai amat* from one bard to another, and from one generation
to the next are however variations that revolve around one central
concern — the cult of head-hunting. Thus innovations which occur from
within or without, and are then incorporated by one *lemambang* into his
timbang version have not undermined, or camouflaged this central theme.

3. The Characteristics of the *Lemambang*'s Work and Fees

Today there is a shortage of *lemambang* in all Iban communities
at any one time. For instance, in the Mamau and Melinau river basins
where I did a substantial part of my research, there are 12 longhouses
with only 3 practising *lemambang* and 11 minor ones. Each longhouse
on average consists of 20 *bilek*-families, totalling to 240 families
for the whole region. It is not hard to imagine the demand on these

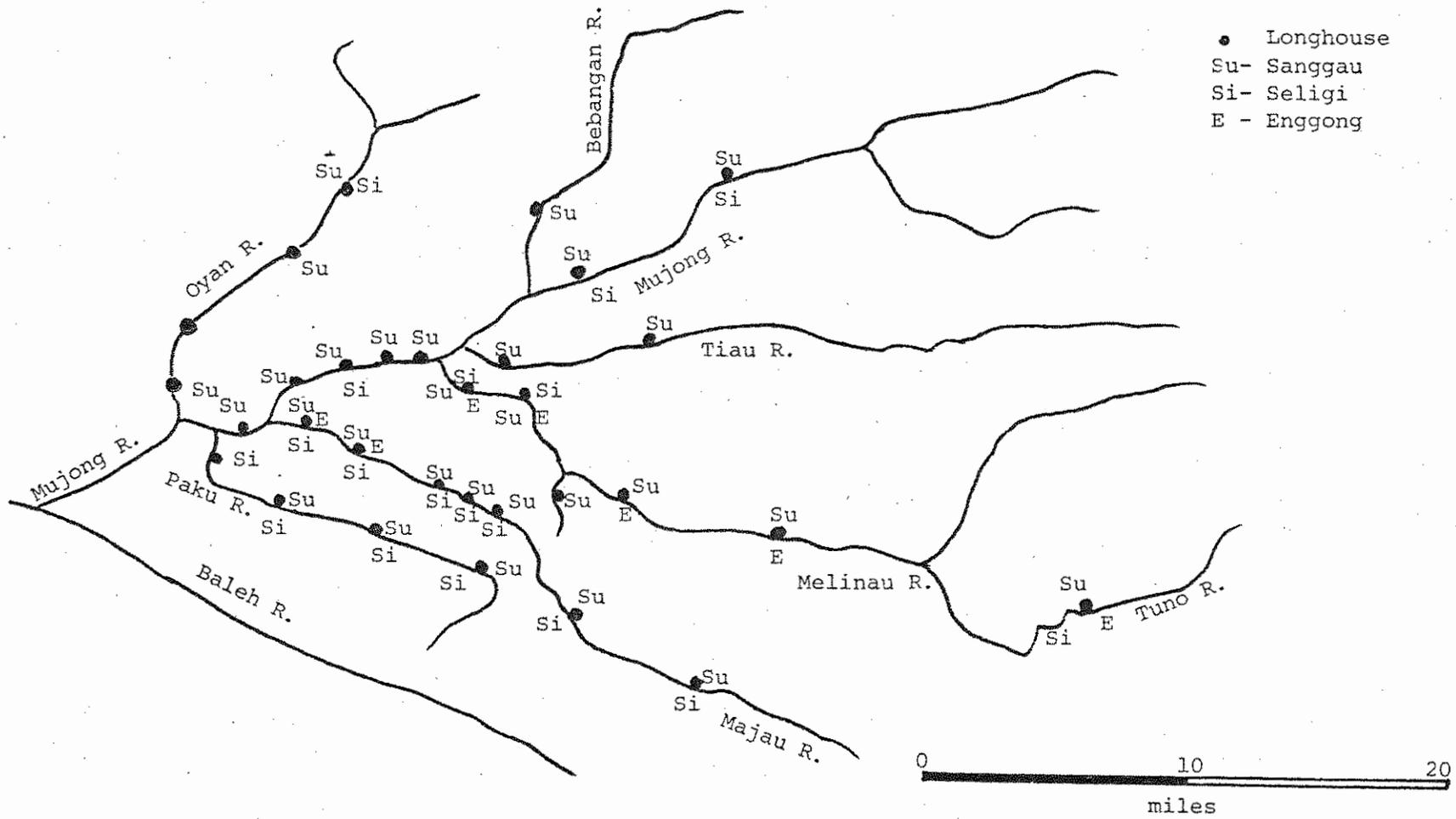
few bards during the peak of the ritual season from April to July each year. This is, in Iban community, the period when farming activity is at a stand still. As a result of this high demand on the few available *lemambang* there have arisen in Iban society, two important characteristics of Iban *lemambang*.

First, an Iban *lemambang* does not have a monopoly on any particular territory in which to practise his talents. Like his cultural counterparts, the *shaman* and the wailer of death dirges, he may perform the *timbang* invocation whenever and wherever he is commissioned to do so. The only consideration that deters a *lemambang* from accepting a commission is excessive travelling. Very rarely will a *lemambang* perform in a longhouse that entails more than one day's journey from his own place of residence. And it is equally rare for a *bilek*-family to ask a *lemambang* from afar; for such commission will incur high travelling expenses (cf. Chapter II). There is, therefore, a tendency for a *lemambang* to practise in a fairly confined area. Map 4:1 shows the longhouses in which two master *lemambang*, Seligi and Sanggau, and a minor bard, Enggong commonly perform.

Second, there is the way in which an Iban *lemambang* is ever ready to divulge *timbang* knowledge and information to any interested person. Despite the acclaimed potency of the *timbang* invocation, and the religious nature of its lyrics, a *lemambang* unless engrossed in some special activity, will usually recite a 'stanza' or two when requested. It has often been said of them that the words of the *timbang* are the rice (i.e. mental nourishment) of the bards (*leka timang nya asi lemambang*). During my research, both the *lemambang* and the Iban in

Map 4:1

Map showing the areas where Sanggau, Seligi and Enggong commonly perform



general registered pleasant surprise on discovering my intention to learn and record the *timbang*, and subsequently gave me every assistance. The great demand by Iban communities on the few available *lemambang* makes them, I suspect, eager to teach any Iban male interested in taking up their profession. The willingness of Iban *lemambang* to impart their knowledge and skills provides an ideal social milieu for the informal learning of the *timbang* repertoire.

In spite of the open way in which *lemambang* practise their skills, and their willingness to impart relevant information, there is, among Iban *lemambang* a strong undercurrent of rivalry. This rivalry which at times can be quite intense, very rarely erupts in the form of direct verbal exchanges. Iban *lemambang* however, pride themselves on their skills. This pride manifests itself quite clearly when they appraise their *timbang* verses. Despite the fact that their *timbang* verses are a compound derived from diverse sources, the *lemambang* will often claim them as his own composition, the quality of which he will claim to be without equal. Their criticisms of other *lemambang*'s verses even though reticent and limited to phrases like 'there is a slight mistake' or 'not quite right' are expressed in a patronizing fashion — as a master to his pupil. Such rivalry is expected in a society where the primary form of reward is public adulation and esteem.

The other form of a *lemambang*'s reward or fees (*upah*) consists of cash and symbolic objects. These material fees vary slightly from one bard to the next and from one ritual to another. The general rule which governs the *lemambang*'s fees in this: the amount of cash payable and the symbolic objects increase with the importance and length of

the ritual being performed (see table 4:2). The fees are divided among the chanters by the leading *lemambang* approximately in the ratio of 3:1 (*lemambang* : two-man chorus) in a *gawa* ritual, and 1½:1½:1 (*lemambang* : assistant : two-man chorus) in a *gawai* ritual. Below is an example of how *timbang* fees are divided. This data is based on a *gawa sukat* ritual performed on the 10th October, 1978 in Melinau river.

<u>Total fees or upah</u>	<u>Shares</u>
	<u><i>Lemambang</i>'s share</u>
1. Cash \$M14-00	1. Cash \$M8-00
2. One chicken or \$M3-00	2. \$M3-00 in lieu of chicken
3. One iron bar	3. One small jar
4. One small jar	4. One knife with sheath
5. 2 yards of white cloth	5. One plate
7. One bowl	<u>Two-man chorus' share</u>
8. One knife with sheath	1. Cash \$M6-00
	2. One iron bar
	3. 2 yards of white cloth
	4. One bowl

The monetary value of the *lemambang* and his chorus' fees as shown in table 4:2 compared to the time spent performing the task is insignificant. Iban chanters when seen in this light are perhaps the most inadequately paid workers in their society. However, to rate their fees (*upah*) in monetary value, or to regard it as payment for a job rendered is a major misunderstanding of the whole concept and idea that surrounds *timbang* invocations and their associated rites. An Iban *lemambang*, as already explained, is an agent who possesses, it is believed, the skills and power to mystically attack the enemies of the Iban. And like anyone who handles a dangerous weapon, an Iban *lemambang*, along

Table 4:1

Object	Symbolic importance
1. A jar	A sanctuary for the human soul, or <i>Kurong samengat</i> .
2. An iron bar	To strengthen human resistance against ill omens and dreams. In a <i>gawai</i> festival it is intended to symbolize the scaffolding used when felling trees (<i>tundai tebang</i>).
3. A knife	Used to clear obstacles from the path of humans.
4. A plate and a bowl	Used as a boat and a bailer (<i>penimba</i>) by the messengers who invite the gods to the feast.
5. A chicken	To drive away with the flutter of its wings the evil intentions of both humans and spirits. It is also used as a sacrificial animal during a ritual.
6. A piece of white cloth	Used as a mantle to protect human beings from physical and spiritual dangers (<i>tudong tuboh</i>).

Table 4:2

Category of Ritual	Items and cash payable	Approx. value in Malaysian currency	
1. <i>Gawa Beintu Intu</i> or The Ritual for Personal well-being	1. \$14-00	\$14-00	
	2. a chicken	3-00	
	3. an iron bar	1-50	
	4. one jar	15-00	
	5. 2 yards of white cloth	3-00	
	6. one plate	1-50	
	7. one bowl	1-20	
	8. a knife and sheath	6-00	\$45-20
2. <i>Gawa Tuah</i> or The Ritual for Good Fortune	1. \$30-00	\$30-00	
	2. 4 yards of white cloth	6-00	
	3. a knife and sheath	6-00	
	4. one plate	1-50	
	5. a bowl	1-20	
	6. a chicken	3-00	
	7. 2 bars of iron	3-00	
	8. a jar	15-00	\$65-70
3. <i>Gawai Boleh</i> or Seed Ritual	1. \$30-00	\$30-00	
	The rest of the items payable are similar to <i>gawa tuah</i>		35-70 \$65-70
4. <i>Gawai Amat</i> or Ritual Festival Proper	1. \$30-00 to \$80-00	\$30-00	
	2. 12 yards of cloth	18-00	
	3. 2 bars of iron	3-00	
	4. 4 jars	60-00	
	5. 3 plates	4-50	
	6. 3 bowls	3-60	
	7. a chicken	3-00	
	8. a knife and sheath	6-00	\$128-00 (minimum)

with his chorus, is exposed both to the radiated potency of their maledictions as well as possibly the magical retribution of their intended victims. And so, in order to protect themselves an Iban *Lemambang* and his chorus require, as fees, objects which are believed to protect them from these dangers. Thus for example, a jar is required as a sanctuary for the soul, iron bar to strengthen human resistance against ill omens and bad dreams, a knife to clear obstacles from the path of humans, and so on (see table 4:1). The main reward of the *Lemambang* and his chorus is public adulation and esteem. It is, therefore, essential to regard table 4:2 as an estimation of cost to commission a *Lemambang*, rather than a table of assessing a *Lemambang's* rewards.

Conclusion

Iban *Lemambang* not only inspired the courage and confidence needed by the Iban of former days, they also created and sustained with occasional genesis, the oral literature and traditions of the pagan Iban. Their repertoire of skills extended far beyond the scope of ritual chants (*timang*). These other skills included songs (*pantun*), legends (*ensera*), myths and ancient tales which have for successive generations been an invaluable means of transmitting traditional knowledge, and a source of much laughter and gaiety in Iban society. Even though substantial parts of the Iban oral literature have been recorded by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (The Institute for Language and Culture) formerly known as The Borneo Literature Bureau, detailed and systematic study of Iban *timang* has not previously been carried out. It my intention in this thesis

to make the text of at least the *timbang gawai amat* available to the Iban of the future, (as well as to mankind at large), in the hope that they may draw inspiration and enjoyment from this *timbang*, as those of the Western tradition do from epics like the Iliad and the Odyssey.

Footnotes

1. The word bard, which has been used to translate Iban *Lemambang*, is the Celtic term for a minstrel or poet. These bards were professional performers, organized into a highly trained group, and had degrees conferred upon them (cf. Jackson, 1951:227).
2. Ernest Renan was born on the 28th February, 1823 and died on the 2nd October, 1892. He was described by Chadbourne (1968:17ff) as a man who 'belonged to a superbly creative generation of French men who were born around 1820 and are called both the "generation of 1848" (since their coming to maturity coincided with the Revolution of 1848) and the "generation of the Second Empire" (since they produced many of their works between 1852 and 1870).'

Partis I-IX

TIMANG GAWAI AMAT

Chapter Five

PART I.

Tossing and turning from side to side like a log on the ocean,
The end of which, even before you tread on it, springs back
toward the place from whence it came:

My song I pour forth on to this beautifully patterned mat,
Before these treasured jars,
Before this offering with its five eggs and tasty morsels, 5
Before this crocodile so massive, these hens, so prolific,
Would that my song were like that of long-tailed parakeets as
they build their nests.

My song I pour forth on to this intricately patterned mat,
Before the most precious of jars,
Even in the farthest room it is heard, 10
Before this offering with its five eggs and delicious cakes
of rice,

L³ Cf. Chapter One, On the Translation of Iban into English, p.14.

L⁶ The 'crocodile' and 'hens' refer to the males and females of the family staging the ritual who are at this moment facing the *lemambang* in the family-room (*bilek*). The crocodile figures quite prominently in Iban rites of *padi* cultivation. An Iban who wishes to foster the growth of his crop or protect it from pests, may give offerings to a crocodile-shaped figure fashioned out of earth. It is believed that at night this figure will metamorphose into a live crocodile and devour all the *padi* destroying-pests and spirits (Boyle, 1865:205; Jensen, 1974:187). The use of the word 'prolific' when describing hens is a reflection of the Iban obsession with being prolific or fertile. This notion of fertility runs throughout the *timang*.

L⁹ 'Most precious of jars' refers to a *guchi* jar which is considered by the Iban as one of the most prized heirlooms (Gomes, 1911:91). There are numerous names given to different types of jars and each one of them is a treasured object, and reference to them in the *timang* is frequent. In the English translation they are referred to as precious, treasured, or prized jars.

Before this crocodile so massive, and a female kingfisher
laden with eggs,

Would that my voice were like the roar of the cooking stove,
Of Dayang Demi in her man-o-war.

It is got going with hands and fingers, 15
With pressing by little fingers, and with treading by the
soles of the feet,

For the brewing of arak and coffee,
For those who, at the break of day, go forth to worship.

The *engkilili* has fruited, and the chestnuts are ready
for felling:

And so, having thus begun our sacred chant we turn to the
approaching night. 20

From the branches of trees comes the din of cicadas
Foretelling the setting of the sun.

Into the pebbly shallows tiny fish are darting,
And the chicks, back in their cages, peck about them for
scraps;

Snorting and grunting the pigs return to their sties, 25
Fighting-cocks, white-feathered and proud, flap up to
their roosts.

The sky is multi-coloured like a mottled lizard,

L20 The *lemambang* and his party begin to chant the *timbang* at about 5:30 pm, on the evening when the *gawai* commences, and thus his reference to 'the approaching night' is a literal one.

Three bright stars, above the far horizon, glisten as do the
leaves of the sacred dracaena,
And the Pleides quiver as do the feathers of long-tailed
parakeets;

In the dusk the posts are silhouetted 30

As into the longhouse the night casts its darkness.

The oil lamps are lit and standing in rows,

Torch lights flash through the gloom,

At the entry ladder stand young men from afar, intent upon
courting;

As some, unseen, slip through the palisades. 35

The old kindle fires against the chill of the night,

L28-29

(a) Orion ('three bright stars') and the Pleides (L29) are the most important constellations in Iban astronomy. When the Pleides first appears above the horizon at dawn, it marks the beginning of the farming cycle. By the time it is seen on the Zenith (*perabong langit*) and Orion is about to reach it, the burning and planting of the swidden begins (cf. Freeman, 1970:72; Jensen, 1974:156)

(b) The dracaena plant (*sabang*) is a palm-like plant of the family of liliaceae. Its leaves are extensively used by the Iban on ritual occasions, especially to receive a pig's liver for divination. These leaves are believed to generate 'coolness' (*chelap*) and to protect the surroundings from harm by evil spirits. Because of this practice dracaena plants are commonly found growing beside the entry ladders of Iban longhouses (see Chai SMJ 7-12, 1975:43).

L34

(a) Literally this line should be translated as: 'Among the sacred dracaena plant stand young men from afar, intent upon courting.' However, the fact that these young men are standing among the dracaena plants has no symbolic importance other than to indicate that they are discretely awaiting by the entry ladder for the night to come to begin their courting (see L28-29n).

(b) The Iban have a system of courtship called *ngayap*, in which young men visit unmarried women in their sleeping quarters at night.

L35

In the old days the Iban built solid wooden palisades around their longhouses as a form of defence against their enemies (cf. Chapter I).

L36

In the old days old men slept on the longhouse gallery (*ruai*). And as night approached they would kindle fires on the stone slabs (*bedilang*) to warm themselves against the chill of the night.

While maidens, as yet unmarried, go off to their beds;
Mothers, most lovingly, nurse their infants,
And sorrowing widows, thinking of the After-World, mourn
the loss of their husbands.

As one who notches and feels a tree:

40

Having sung of the night, let us now prepare to depart;
Through that opening in the roof, so like a trap for
catching monkeys,

The abode of fire flies as they flicker at dusk,

Leaving the longhouse with its broad planks, bearing great
jars in double rows of eight,

The abode of the warrior Dendan Berujan, owner of slaves,

their arms tattooed with patterns like a squirrel's tail. 45

Leaving sleeping places perfumed by the fragrant fruits of
the mango,

The abode of the sensuous maiden Tingang Belangkah whose

lover flees not, even at the ominous falling of trees,

L42 The 'opening in the roof' in fact is a sky light located on the roof of each Iban *bilek* (living room) and gallery (*ruai*). The trap for catching monkeys works on the same principle. A small enclosure is built, usually in the swidden, with only one opening facing upward and to which a heavy wooden slab is attached. This slab should be slightly larger than the opening so it can, when lying horizontally, seal the outlet. To set the trap one end of the slab is pushed up at an angle and is supported by a wooden beam. In the enclosure bait such as corn is placed, and to one of these baits a string is fastened which controls the wooden beam. When a monkey grasps the bait, it pulls down the beam and becomes trapped.

L47

The falling of trees or branches just prior to or during an activity is very ominous in Iban belief. One must pay heed to such an omen and cease whatever activity one is engaged in or is about to engage in.

And whose bed is so profusely set about with flowers that
none remain to be gathered.

Leaving the hearth well-trodden by cats,

Leaving the firewood stacked layer on layer, just as is
driftwood,

50

Leaving the racks, horned like goats from which the water
gourds hang.

As one who fells and notches a tree:

Now that we are on our way, let us pause for refreshment;

Mouthing betel nuts, that when chewed have the taste of the
brain of a prawn;

Chewing gambier leaves, as sweet as honey,

55

Smoking tobacco, that looks like the fibrous roots of a fern.

Drinking liquids potent and sweet, mixed with rock salt,

L48 Iban women especially unmarried ones, love sweetly-scented plants (*bangkit*) and flowers which they gather in large quantities, dry in the sun and then put in their beds, thus giving their sleeping quarters a very pleasant aroma.

L49 Iban cats like to sleep or play about the hearth when cooking is not in progress.

L50 The firewood used for cooking is stacked in a neat pile on the frame above the hearth.

L54 'Betel nut', or *pinang*, a name given to a collection of ingredients consisting of a pepper-like leaf (*sireh*), gambier leaves (*sedie*), lime (*kapo*), areca nut, and a quid of tobacco. One pepper-like leaf smeared with lime is wrapped in a couple of gambier leaves, and is chewed along with a tiny piece of areca nut, while a quid of tobacco is placed beneath the upper lip.

Drinking the sweet juice of *padi*, as it washes over our
handsomely pointed teeth.

A tree severed at the roots; we rise and set forth on
my journey:

Opening the bark door, with hinges that sound like rumbling
thunder,

60

Opening the door of well-adzed wood, with hinges that creak
like the noise of a civet cat digging,

Stepping over the sill tightly lashed to the floor as
though embraced by a girl from Kanowit,

Stepping over the floor beams as huge as prey-bloated
pythons,

Treading coarse mats with their criss-cross patterns,

My body suddenly becoming weak like grass scorched in a fire,
I grasp, for support at length of bamboo in which rice has
been cooked;

65

My frail body is hardly aware of moving,

Clad in an *ikat* jacket,

L58 In former days Iban males used to serrate, file or drill holes in the middle of their teeth. Gomes (1911:38) describes Iban with teeth "filed to a point" which have the face of "a curious dog-like appearance"; "filed down to almost level with their gums", or with a "drilled hole (front teeth only) in the middle of each tooth" in which a brass stud was fixed.

L66 The *lemambang* do not literally use bamboo in which rice has been cooked as a staff. The insertion of such a hyperbolic phrase is for poetical effect, and the *lemambang* use it quite often in the *timang*. They, however, do use a species of small but tensile variety of bamboo which they cut down, dry and then engrave with flowery designs.

My head in a headdress resplendent with the feathers
of birds.

Bangles of brass around my arms

70

As over my head, in blessing, a fighting cock is waved,

This tasting task I do not really want

Having been prevailed upon by men who would have me
summon the gods,

And refurbish this shrine that has for too long been
god-deserted.

Not in haste do I walk,

75

Clad in an *ikat* jacket with its pattern of frogs,

In my hand a bard's staff of well-dried bamboo,

My head adorned with the tail feathers of the hornbill,

Bangles of brass around my arms,

This testing task I do not really want,

80

Having been prevailed upon by the wife of the man staging
the ritual

With an offering of puffed rice,

I revere this shrine, the earthly abode of the gods I

go to summon,

A shrine which these last days

Has been hung about with the dread accoutrements of war.

85

L73 The phrase '*bekuak bagak landai nibong*' in the Iban text which literally means 'lively or spirited thorny palms' refers to the man who performs the *gawai*.

L81 The phrase '*bekuak bagak indai tajai belangai*' in the Iban text, which literally means 'lively or spirited mother of a tailed-hornbill' refers to the wife of the man who performs the *gawai*.

A tree is felled, its roots severed:

Now that we have praised this shrine let us don our charms.

Charms to ward off curses we tie about our knees and feet

To keep us safe as we walk amid the thronging guests,

Charms made from rice grains we fasten to our teeth, 90

To protect us from those who may disdain the words we utter,

Charms to ward off maledictions we tie about our thighs,

As among parents-in-law we walk,

Special charms we put on our chests,

That coneract the 'evil eye' of strangers. 95

As a log drifts when its roots are severed:

With charms in place, we turn to the clearing of our way;

The Demon of misfortune we fling into the storm-tossed sea,

The Demon of Falsehood we immerse in the flowing tides,

The Demon of Disorder we throw into the swirling river, 100

The Demon of Madness we banish to the realms of misty death.

The song on my tongue is far from new, as I take as my guide

old grandfather Sandah, who never failed in battle;

My breath I draw as did the famed Rarioh as he sang in his

camp on the war path;

And my teeth rattle as did those of Tagi, nicknamed " The

Slayer of Bamboo Shoots";

L102-108

All of the names mentioned in these lines, except for that of Rarioh, are those of *lemambang* and famous warriors, of former days. Rarioh is a spirit whom the Iban believe to help and inspire *lemambang* (see Chapter IV).

My chant is like that of Nasat, whose feats of bravery

were as prolific as the fruit of some great tree,

105

And my images are those of Mambu whose mind was ever

whirling;

The track I follow is that of grandfather Tumbai, who was

ever helped on his way by the flourish of the tail

feathers of hornbills;

And the melody I chant is that of grandfather Suring, whose

voice was given him by an enchanting dryad of the forest.

Stand aside then, you, who like nestlings, are still young

and tender,

Lest by my bard's staff of hardened bamboo you be hurt,

110

Or by my warrior's jacket of flaming red;

Listen now to my chant.

When you were small, you were swung as in a cradle of rattan,

Deep in the womb of your mother;

When you were born your resting place was a dish beautifully

patterned with swallows on the wing;

115

L108 The dryads of the forest, or *antu entelanjing* are female spirits of exquisite beauty and a sweet-smelling aroma. They dwell in the forest and are said to entice unwary Iban males to their deaths. Despite their malign nature they are known to have helped Iban lost in the forest. The barking deer (*kijang*) is believed to metamorphose into these spirits.

L113 During pregnancy Iban women wear two plaited waist-bands made from rattan which they claim, prevents an expectant mother's abdomen from 'hanging down'; thus the phrase 'swung as in a cradle of rattan'.

L115 Immediately after birth an Iban baby is laid on a large plate, and not on a mat. A mat according to the Iban is not only dirty but magically dangerous, for untold numbers of charms may have been placed on it.

With yellow turmeric you were rubbed,
 And with the juice of betel;
 And when you cried or whimpered
 You were taken and bathed in the rippling water
 Of a reach of the river, stretching into the distance,
 further than eye can see. 120

In a deep wooden bowl you were bathed with the potent
 charms of the shaman Jelapi,
 Immersed in the rippling river your beauty captivated a fish
 From whose mouth issued a precious stone
 Which, glittering as do fire-flies at dusk,
 Drifted far along the vast expanse of the Rejang river 125
 Until found by wily Chinese and adroit Malays,
 Who chewed it with their teeth,
 Together with their rice.
 So that their lungs in their bodies now breathe freely,
 And their clever fingers can with ink write upon white paper. 130

L116 From birth until an infant is about 6 months old his or her body is regularly rubbed with grated turmeric (*chekor*) and sprinkled with the juice of the areca nut. Such treatment is believed to guard the child from stomach ailments and protect his or her feet from infection.

L121 An Iban child's first bath in the river is an auspicious occasion, usually accompanied by a rite that involves the giving of offerings, and sacrificing of a chicken, the uttering of prayers. Before the child is immersed in the river, he or she is first bathed in a wooden trough in which various charms have been rinsed in the hope that these charms will bestow upon the child special skills and power in days to come (cf. Sandin's *Iban Way of Life*, 1976, pp.10-11). Jelapi is a shaman spirit.

L130 To the Iban of the 19th and early 20 century the skills of writing and reading were very commendable feats, and those who showed skill in them were regarded with high esteem.

It is foretold of you, young maiden, that you will stun
 men as does the stupifying root of *tubai*
 Or the sap from which is made the poison of the blow-pipe dart,
 Or the unleached nuts of that forest tree
 From which burning fluids are pressed.
 Then, you come to the landing place of a longhouse, 135
 You will walk the well-trodden path,
 Up to the notched ladder of entry
 Where stands a towering post – the relic of past rituals,
 A platform at its centre,
 About which coils a gigantic cobra 140
 The familiar spirit of ghostly Sibat, who in life was brave
 beyond all measure,
 For when fighting the Uma-Kelap Kayans of Bugau
 He stormed their houses, killing four.

L131 *Tubai* (*Derris alleptica*) is the name of a creeper with poisonous roots which the Iban use in fishing.

L132 *Ipoh* (*Antioris toxicaria*) is a tree from which poisonous sap is tapped. The sap is thickened by heating it over a fire, and then the tips of blow-pipe darts are dipped in it. Its poison will kill birds, and animals, including man.

L133 *Kepayang* (*Pangium edule*) is a type of tree with large brown fruit from which oil is extracted. *Kepayang* nuts may be eaten if the poisonous juice has been unleached by a lengthy process which involves boiling and soaking the nuts in the water for a number of days.

L140 This is another example of hyperbole as used by Iban *Lemambang*. A cobra is not actually coiling around the 'towering post' (*sandong*). What this phrase does is to convey the Iban perception of such a post, or *sandong* as something potent, powerful and dangerous. It is believed that such posts may become monstrous serpents, dragons and spirits and attack and destroy the enemies of those who have made them.

L141 Sibat was an Iban war hero of former times who was believed to have been helped by a cobra spirit.

And even, though despite all this, you whimper still,
In your mother's eyes, my darling 145
You are the most beautiful of all the threads,
By which her loom is graced.

A dead branch falls, a tree, barren of fruit:
From the girls, we now turn to the boys.
Stand aside then you who though small are already the
kindred of heroes. 150

So that you will not be harmed by my richly worked warrior's
jacket,
Or my staff of tensile bamboo,
Should I fail to observe your diminutive selves.
Once, as though in a cradle of rattan,
You were carried deep in the womb of your mother 155
At birth, wonder-working infant that you were, you crawled
in the smallest of bowls;

Rubbed with the juice of betel,
And sprinkled with the grated root of yellow turmeric,
When you cried or whimpered,
Your doting mother, enfolding you as in a garment, 160
Likened you to a resplendent cobra,
His tail resting on an ornate mat
His body coiled about a priceless jar
His head rearing from a mountain peak

L150 'Ramuian Ranggong Tindit' in Iban text is an Iban culture hero.

As he assails with yawning jaws the azure skies.

165

As when its trunk has been split, a breadfruit tree is
felled:

From the innocent young, we turn to the impious old.
There is no danger at all in walking by parents-in-law
After we have travelled in that crimson country of the
dead where coffins hang;

There is no danger in walking by uncles-in-law,

170

After we have been to the land where noxious plants abound;
There is no danger in meeting with ogres in red cotton
turbans,

After we have shed in sacrifice, the blood of pigs, huge
and white;

There is no danger in swimming in front of crocodiles,

When their gaping jaws are wedged apart with stakes of wood;

175

There is no danger in walking by spotted bears,

While high in trees they forage for fruits.

L168 Walking in front of in-laws, as the *lemambang* and his party do when chanting the *timbang* on the gallery, is disrespectful, and they believe may cause misfortunes to befall the offenders (see Sandin, 1976:41-42).

L169-70 These lines refer to *Sabayan*, or the Land of the Dead. How the *lemambang* could visit *Sabayan* is obscure. My conjecture is that these lines refer to a ritual in which the souls of shamans are believed to visit the Land of the Dead to get charms. Gomes (1912:170) describes such a rite called *Nemuai ka Sabayan* (Making journey to the Land of the Dead). "Then *manangs*, with hats on their heads, march up and down the house singing their incantations. While their bodies are doing this, their souls are supposed to speed away to Hades and bring back all manner of medicinal charms and talismans, as well as the wandering soul of the sick man".

Look! even grandfather Baranyai, was not doomed with death
When, outrageously, he told of how to cross a river he had
resort to the carcass of a crocodile taken in adultery.

Look! even grandfather Naram escaped the bane of death, 180
When, deceiving us, he told of how a turtle had made its
burrow in the branches of a bread-fruit tree!

Look! even grandfather Kajup was not doomed to wither,
When, lying to his lady love,
He told her how a long-dead monkey, deep in the waters
of a river, drummed with his hands on submerged logs!

Look! even grandfather Langau did not pass away, 185
When, lying to his sweetheart,
He told her of how, when he opened up a fish he'd caught,
The river's banks were plastered thick enough with fat to
fry a great pile of cassava leaves.

Felling this tall tree from among these saplings:

Now that we've dealt with mendacious pretenders, we turn
to our invited guests. 190

Guests from the house of Ikau have arrived,

L178-185 These are the names of the past Ibans who were supposed to
have told tall tales.

L188 Cassava leaves and their tubers are much used by the Iban in
their cuisine.

L191 (a) Ikau and Kubu are two longhouse headmen (*tuai rumah*) who have
been invited to this particular *gawai*.

(footnote 191 continued on following page)

Together with those from Panggau where palm leaf
 decorations forever wave;
 Guests from the house of Kubu have arrived,
 Together with Pau, who hails from the headwaters of
 Gelong.
 Small wonder then at the breaking of notches from our
 ladder of entry, 195
 For these thronging guests have brought both axe charms
 and adze charms;
 Our longhouse shakes and trembles,
 For these thronging guests have brought charms that
 bring the boisterous winds;
 All the rattan lashing on our posts are undone,
 For these thronging guests have brought their
 knot-defying magic; 200
 The awnings on our houses are vibrating,
 For these thronging guests have brought their charms
 plucked from the swirling waves.

L191 (continued) (b) The Iban culture heroes, or *Orang Panggau* need no invitation to attend a ritual feast. They are forewarned of what is to come by hearing the beating of drums and gongs, the pounding of rice into flour, the popping of rice (*rendai*), and other sounds associated with the preparation of a ritual festival. When the day of the festival arrives they attend of their own accord with the other guests.

(c) The Iban split young shoots of jungle palms (*dawn isang*) and use them extensively for decorations during ritual occasions. Their presence usually indicates the staging of a *gawai*. *Gawai* in Iban culture are linked to wealth and prestige (Masing, 1978:14), and since *dawn isang* decorations are always associated with *gawai* they have become symbols of prestige and wealth. Thus if in any longhouse such decorations are 'forever waving' it indicates that the inhabitants are both wealthy and prestigious, since they are constantly staging ritual feasts.

Having notched the tree, we pluck its leaves:

Now that we've mentioned our guests, let's gather to
talk of our ultimate aims.

What, a meeting now that the year is gone?

205

Of what is there to talk that calls for any great
skill in the use of words?

We want to call a gathering to discuss the felling and
forming of the virgin forest,

Even though we've not long completed the storing
of *padi* in great bins of bark;

We want to call a gathering to discuss surprise attacks,

Even though we're not long done with the smoking of
trophy heads;

210

We want to call a gathering to discuss the setting of
traps,

Even though we've just come from the drugging and
stunning of fish;

We want to call a gathering to discuss hunting with
packs of dogs,

Even though we've not long come from the cutting up
of wild pigs.

And what, in this all-important gathering, will be the
part of women?

215

L205 'The year is gone' in the Iban calendar refers to the time of the year after harvest and before the next farming cycle begins (i.e. between March and June). This is the period of farming inactivity and thus an appropriate time for the staging of ritual feasts and raids.

We want to call a gathering to discuss the collecting
of bamboo,

Even though we've only just done with the making of
baskets;

We want to call a gathering to discuss the collecting
of ginger,

Even though we've only just done with the testing task
of dyeing;

We want to call a gathering to discuss the collecting
of fibres for *ikat* tying

220

Even though we've just done with our weaving of a
splendid fabric;

We want to call a gathering to discuss the setting up
of our looms,

Even though we've just completed one of our beautiful
fabrics.

Mother Karo, shows up, renowned for her skill at
divining,

Old Mother Aji, who is known to all.

225

L216 Bamboo lengths after being sliced into thin strips are used to make small baskets for carrying *padi* seed during sowing.

L219 Dyeing is a very arduous and complicated task. Precise amounts of ingredients (5 in all, including a large quantity of ginger) are pounded and mixed in a wooden trough (*dulang*). A slight mistake in the amount of ingredients used may result in an unsuccessful dyeing. Few women are skilled in this art, and those who are, are called '*orang tau ngar tau nakar*' (those who know how to dye and measure). This task is indeed very 'testing' and is fittingly called *Kayau indu*, or warpath of the women (Haddon and Start, 1937:21-22).

"You men," she declares, "though you may have livers,
lack gall,

And your cunning falls short of your vaunting ambition.

As we glance along this gallery many empty spaces we see,

Spaces in which there is no one at all

Like the gaps in the cobs of poorly grown maize,

230

Like a mouth lacking some of its teeth.

Among the guests I do not see the Mother of Animals?

Among those who are here, I do not see an elder, both

wise and resourceful?

Should we fail amongst ourselves who will settle our dispute,

And take his reward in the shape of a jar.

235

Nowhere can I see Lang, our fiery god of war,

Nowhere among us can be seen his headdress so resplendent."

L232 'The mother of animals' refers to the pygmy squirrel (*pukang*) measuring about 6 inches in length. As far as I know there is no cultural significance attached to the pygmy squirrel except that it is the smallest of all the arboreal animals known to the Iban.

L235 When a fine is imposed on an offender, Iban customary law bequeaths to the headman who settles the dispute a percentage of the fine (Richards, 1963:13-14). In the traditional days when a fine involved a jar, the judicator (usually the headman) would keep it.

PART II

As one who notches and fells a tree:

"Who then among us will tell the gods of our wish that
they should join us?

What about you, Lizard, who guards the pallisades
And swiftly darts about the rafters?"

"No, not I, I have no desire at all to fetch Lang the
god of war.

5

But if you want me to fetch some iron from the far away
coast,

That I will do, for I have long yearned to see the mud-
skipper there that are dressed, they say, like
maidens fair."

Next, we'll ask this fellow from Panggau where palm
leaf decorations ever wave

What about you Bungai Nuing, the famed champion of Kling?

What of you Pungga, our kinsman of the leaves of the
jungle palm?"

10

"How can we refuse, there being no one else,

How can we refuse, if all others have declined."

"If you are hard-working you will be praised,

If you are tireless you will become renowned."

"When people are sick, we two have fetched a shaman
from the skies.

15

^{L7} Mudskipper, or *temeka* (periophthalmus) is a small mud-fish of
muddy coastal beaches.

When great rituals are held, we two always fetched the
gods.

Our lightness is like that of a drifting feather,
Our softness is like that of well-moistened rice flour.
Once, when we were still young,
We were asked to fetch a shaman from the Škrang,
There we began to chew betel,
Here we spat out the reddened remains."

20

About their loins are black cloths striped with red,
And long enough to reach the skies in time of drought.
About the calves of their legs are countless ringlets
of palm-fibre gathered during distant wanderings.
About their arms are myriad slender bangles made from
the leaves of forest orchids,
From their waists they sling their long, swaying swords
The glittering blades of which can sever bones.

25

L24 The Iban in times of prolonged drought or during continuous wet weather stage certain rites in which they ask for or petition for rain (*mintā ujan*) or dry weather (*mintā panas*) respectively. There are procedural differences in the staging of these two rites (cf. Jensen, 1974:172-173, 188). A rite asking for rain which I witnessed (in 1976) involved the giving of offerings and slaughtering of chickens which the Iban then put in the entrance of a small cave known as *lubang antu* (lit. spirit cave). After a prayer had been uttered beseeching the gods to send down rain, a rattan length was stretched across the river on to which offerings in plaited bamboo containers were hung. This line in a hyperbolic phrase coined by the *Lembang*, is referred to a being "long enough in time of drought to reach the skies".

Leaving the longhouse that is like a trailing vine,
Leaving the longhouse that abounds with growing children, 30
Leaving the hearth where trophy heads are smoked,
Leaving the gallery with its bronze cannons, row upon row,
Leaving the carved boards against which warriors lounge.
They issue from beneath eaves of wooden shingles,
Move on to the platform where lie the poles to bear aloft
carved effigies of hornbills, 35
Descend the massive entry ladder with its evenly notched
steps,
To the place where guests pause before ascending,
Descend the ladder beside which grows a jack-fruit tree
thick with fruit.
They tread the path as wide as the frond of a fern,
Tread the path where huge millipeds lie crushed and dying, 40
They arrive at an old resting place set about with tree
stumps,

L29 As Bungai Nuing and Pungga are getting ready to fetch Lang, the *Lembang* and his party act out the story as if they were going to fetch Lang. The *Lembang* carries a small plaited bamboo container in which an offering is put, his assistant clutches a bottle of rice wine, while one of the chorus holds a live chicken. The first two items are things that Iban would give to a longhouse which has been invited to a *gawai*, while the third is optional. After holding on to these things for about 15 to 20 minutes, the offering and the bottle of rice wine are put near the shrine, while the chicken is put back in its cage.

L32 In the old days, guns and cannons were prized as weapons as well as items of wealth and symbols of bravery, and were prominently displayed on the gallery of a longhouse. These items were often the spoils of war taken during successful raids into enemy territories.

At a resting place where the soil is as fine as rice flour.

They arrive at a tree with sparse branches thick with
wild flowers,

At a clump of orchids where young civet cats dwell,

The domain of Tungkut Maut who says he cannot walk,

45

But who is forever wandering in foreign lands.

The abode of an old batchelor who says he cannot sing,

But who can always be heard serenading his love.

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with tassels
of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?"

50

"When the Balau are on the warpath, I will curse them with
ill-fortune,

When the Badang are on a raid, I will lead them astray."

Their feet move forward, their hands part the undergrowth,

They reach a clump of curling rattans stretched out like

the necks of wreathed hornbills,

L49-50 In the *timbang* Iban refer to trophy head as the seed of various species of the plant which abound in their environment. Because of the frequency in which the *lemambang* use seed as the metaphor for a trophy head, I have for clarity, referred to all seeds as the 'seed' in quotations.

L51-52 The Balau is one of the Iban groups located in the lower Batang Lupar river, who were hostile to the Saribas, Skrang and Ulu Ai Iban (cf. Pringle, 1970:52ff). Badang is a tribe found in the Kalimantan Borneo (Indonesia) whom the Iban often raided for heads.

From which jackets are hanging,

55

The domain of young Gamarang Lampong,

The abode of the potent cobra; the Spirit of the Knife.

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with
tassels of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?"

"No, but if you want me to cut open the womb of pregnant
women, that I can do,

60

Cutting down enemies at the palisades, that I can do."

They journey to the land where gigantic lilies intertwine,

To the people of the tightly woven lily stems,

The domain of Keling who soars through the air,

The abode of young Ulop; the Spirit of the Spear.

65

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with
tassels of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?"

"No, but blood I can make spurt like water from the spout
of a kettle,

Living flesh I can change to a pale and deathly hue."

They journey to precipitous cliffs,

70

To the sun scorched ridge,

The domain of a man ever on the alert,

The abode of young Rigai; the Spirit of the Shield.

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with
tassels of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?"

75

"No, but if I be fighting with a band of blowpipe-bearing
Ukits, I retreat not a foot,
If I be fighting with a horde of spear-bearing Kayans,
I do not budge from the vanguard."

They reach a ridge wrapped in threads of black,
And a valley thick with turmeric,
The domain of the young prince Aji,
The abode of the Spirit of Charms.

80

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with
tassels of human hair?
Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?"

"No, but a boat load of Malays has capsized, for I've
cursed them with my rice-grain charms,
A party of Kayans have drowned in the rapids, for I have
cursed them with my fish charm."

85

They journey to a people whose mats are fallen leaves,
Leaves that cluster like congregating tortoises,
The domain of Walimpa, who lives in a jar,
The abode of the Spirit of the Pouch.

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with
tassels of human hair?"

90

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?"

"No, but the seed of the wild palm is mine for but a night,
The seed of the shrine I keep, but not for long."

They reach a rift of white rocks where lizards dart in play,
The clashing stones around which cat-fish abound, 95
The domain of split bamboo sharpened into spikes,
The abode of the Spirit of the Calthrop.

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with
tassels of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?"

"No, but if you want me to bring up the rear of a war
party returning from a raid that I can do, 100

If you want me to guard the perimeter for Dubau's warriors
that I can do with my sharp sword."

Bungai Nuing, leading the way, steps on a tree trunk half
submerged in the water,

Pungga, following behind, comes upon an underwater cave
of empty shells,

The domain of Tedong, the water snake,

The abode of Beriak, father of the white lizard. 105

L100 Iban war party when withdrawing from a raid usually plant bamboo spikes (*tukak*) on their path of retreat to discourage the enemy from following them.

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with tassels
of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?"

"No, but if it is bellows you want I have them the size of
great jars,

With pistons I've made from a white cock's feathers."

They journey to a people who crawl about amid massive rocks, 110

To people who live in deep pools,

The domain of a gigantic crocodile,

The abode of a tailless crocodile with awesome jaws.

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with tassels
of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?" 115

No, but if the Malays fail to heed custom, I well know how
to seize them in my jaws,

If the Kayans are in breach of custom, I well know how to
devour them with my rows of teeth."

They journey to a bank with sand as fine as rice flour,

To a bank as big as a swidden,

The domain of a serpent coiled about a mountain, 120

The abode of a snake whose tail touches the sky.

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with tassels
of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?"

"No, but spikes I have like the tusks of a wild boar,
Fangs I have that curve like glistening, cock-fighting spurs
of steel."

125

They journey to the berried vines entwined like the meshes
of a net,

To the land of vines entwined like the knots in hand-rails,
The domain of a fish that lives in a lake,
The abode of a fish from beneath the betel palms.

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with tassels
of human hair?"

130

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?"

"No, for my work is guarding a *klampu* tree thick with
blossoms,

My task is to guard an *ensurai* tree that sways like a grass-
hopper in flight."

A tree with paired leaves is felled:

Bungai Nuing and Pungga emerge from the water,
They journey to shady trees with leaves like sun hats,
And on to the place where stars cluster like fruit on a
tree,

135

L132-133 The *klampu* and *ensurai* are trees on which fruits the fish
feed.

The domain of Marau who glides on the smooth sea,

The abode of the young Spirit of the War Canoe.

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with

tassels of human hair?

140

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming

flower?"

"No, but if you want me to ambush the enemy at a bend in

the river, that I can do,

If you want me to ambush the enemy with a sudden dash,

that I can do."

They journey to a ridge where a lone gigantic lily grows,

The domain of a bird that while it cannot talk is a skilled

whistler,

145

The abode of a dusky-grey heron down whose throat fish are

swallowed.

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with

tassels of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming

flower?"

"No, but I have rattan for the making of harvesting baskets,

I have rattan for the frames of bark bins."

150

They journey to a misty mountain,

To a valley overgrown with wild reeds,

The domain of Sintai Intau, the wanderer,

The abode of a bat shaman who is often away on visits,

Her husband is a shaman who travels alone,

155

Her loved one is a shaman who performs without being
asked.

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with
tassels of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?"

"I am not going to the ritual for I am occupied in making
a bark container for my charms,

I am not going to the feast for I am guarding the banana
plants used in constructing a shaman's shrine."

160

They journey to the plain where wild palms grow,

To an old house site overgrown with saplings,

The domain of a blowpipe made from a *tapang* tree,

The abode of a bone-handled knife, Apai Nendak,

His wife is Mendong, the custodian of building materials,

165

His loved one is a barking deer, the leader of people
who migrate,

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with
tassels of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?"

"No, but long bamboos I have cut and stored,

L163 The *tapang* (koompassia) is one of the Iban most majestic trees
under which branches wild bees usually build their hives.

And these I have made into containers for offerings."

170

They journey to a *tapang* tree with massive knots,
From which orchids hang like the tassels of a sword,
The domain of Enting with bone-hard strength,
The abode of Duyah, known also as Apai Ketupong;
His wife is the whittlings from the scabbard of a sword,
His loved one is a carrying basket slung from the neck.

175

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with
tassels of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?"

"No, but a *medang* tree I can adze into the main post of
a house,

Engkuni trees I can fetch as supporting posts."

180

They journey to a tree with massive knots,
To the land of red-coloured wild herbs,
The domain of Apai Beragai, the custodian of the bead
necklaces used in divining,
The abode of a young dracaena plant that grows beside
the palisade,
His wife is Jawai, the holder of shamanic quartz crystals,
His loved one, a maiden of the charms,

185

L190-180 The *medang* and *engkuni* trees from which house posts are
obtained (see also discussion of *gawa engkuni* ritual in Chapter II).

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with tassels
of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?"

"No, but the tassels of the wild palm I am the first to
hold,

The red-stemmed yam I am the first to behold." 190

They journey to a tree with a trunk like a coffin,

Upon the crown of which a civet cat dwells,

The domain of Aji, a young brave,

The abode of Apai Bejampong, renowned throughout the land,

His wife is a red hibiscus bud, 195

His loved one is the sacred dracaena plant.

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with tassels
of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming flower?"

"No, but the red hibiscus flower I am the first to hold,

The leaves of dracaena I am the first to behold." 200

They reach a hill which curves like a steel cock-fighting
spur,

To the people of the ridge that stretches into the distance,

The domain of Bumbun Bulan, who stands his ground as firmly
as dry rice stuck in a bamboo container,

L190 The red-stemmed yam (*klakuiang*) leaves were used to wrap freshly severed heads taken during a head hunting raid.

The abode of Apai Papau whose great bravery is like the
fluttering tassels of a sword,

His wife is the maiden of dried rice,

205

Whose face is smeared with blood,

His loved one is a war jacket woven by a spirit of the
forest,

Which has been worn in the destroying of enemy houses.

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with
tassels of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?"

210

"No, but the *kelapok* tree I was the first to make into a
boat,

The *lop* tree I was the first to fashion into planks."

They journey to a trailing vine on which a young man
treads,

To a tree with falling leaves,

The domain of a young man whose voice carries far into
the mountains,

215

The abode of Apai Pangkas whose call echoes from distant
skies,

His wife is Jawai, the raging tempest,

His loved one is a maiden whose countenance shines like
a mirror.

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with
tassels of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?"

220

"No, for I am at work guarding a hill covered with trees,
from which the shafts of war spears are made,
I am at work guarding a hill covered with saplings with
which we slaughter our enemies."

They reach a *pelai* tree with great buttress roots,
A great tree with a carved trunk,

The domain of a spirited young man,

225

The abode of Apai Membuas with a striped neck,

His wife is a chip of broken stone,

His loved one is the maiden of the betel nut.

"Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated with
tassels of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a blossoming
flower?"

230

"No, but rattan for making containers, I have in plenty
And for the frames from which trophy heads are hung."

They journey on to the Towering Ridge on which palm-leaf
decorations ever wave,

The domain of Lang Singalang Burong,

The abode of Lang of the resplendent headdress,

235

His wife is the maiden Mentaba, the wild tree orchid,

The maiden whose headdress is glittering with silver,

She begat Aji, the brave of heart,

Her daughters are Sulah, the dracaena frond,

The maiden of a red hibiscus bud;

240

Chempaka, the metal ingot,

That is easily fashioned;

The maiden of the single bracelet,

The ring of gold.

"It is the time for festivity, dear Uncle Lang,

245

Let us be off to attend the ritual."

"How can possibly go, when my sons-in-law are not here,

I want to summon them but I do not know their whereabouts,

I want to fetch them, but I cannot, alone, go down river

to do it."

The huge trunk of a palm:

250

The people of Lang's house ask for a drum.

"What of a drum made from the skin of a long-tailed monkey

for calling to Beragai?"

L247 Lang's sons-in-law are all away on *bejalai* (a journey to distant lands), a custom also eagerly followed by young Iban men. Not only does such a journey provide an opportunity to earn money and acquire items of value, "but the most powerful incentive of all is the very considerable social prestige which a much journeyed man can command" (Freeman, 1970:223). The action of the gods in this instance is thus a direct reflection of Iban behaviour and values.

L249 Lang is referring to a celestial river.

L252-254 Drums with heads made either from the skin of a long-tailed or pig-tailed monkey are used to summon the spirits of the dead to partake in the ritual called *gawai antu*, or *ngelumbong* (ritual feast for the dead), and therefore must not be used to summon the gods to a *gawai amat* (ritual of high significance).

"No, such a drum is used only to summon the insubstantial
dead."

"What of a drum made from the skin of a pig-tailed monkey
for calling to our loved ones?"

"No, such a drum reaches only to the sparse land of the
dead, where whispering bamboos abound."

255

"Where then, o father, is a drum of ear-splitting sound?
Where, o father, is a drum to beat without cease?"

"There is, of course, my children, our ancient drum
That was used when first we felled the forest of this land,
The ancient drum with which we first came to the Towering
Ridge whereon we live."

260

A hornbill calls from the forest:

"Who has the skill to lower this drum from the loft?"

And so Lang's ancient drum, released from its holder,
Swinging from lengths of rattan

Is gently lowered past huge bark bins as tall as a man,

265

As thunder rumbles and showers of rain begin to fall.

Then Lang, laying his drum on an ornate mat,

Covers it with cloth woven from raw cotton,

And with five eggs makes an offering,

And waves a cock in blessing,

270

And in sacrifice kills a huge pig.

Then the slack old skin of the drum is replaced with

that of a Kayan,

Tautened with toggles made from the bones of his fingers

And wedges made from his eyes.

The long flowing hair of this Kayan

275

Is about to be sheared off by Lang,

When he sees entwined within it a great python.

If you want a drummer who is better than Ulup, he of
the sharpened bamboo spikes,

There is that skilled drummer, young Ijau Jegalang.

This drum, fashioned from a human forehead, when
furiously beaten,

280

Is heard echoing along far-off shores.

This drum fashioned from a human skull, when furiously
beaten,

Is heard booming throughout foreign lands.

It is heard by Grandfather Ungga , fishing in the
headwaters of a distant stream,

Grandfather Akam, clad in the leaves of a wild palm,
is stricken with fear.

285

Then, as he wanders in foreign lands the drum is heard
by Ketupong, Lang's eldest son-in-law,

And heard by Beragai, as he wanders in Pulau Pinggai.

Sharp ears are quick to hear,

Keen eyes are quick to see.

"This sound comes from the Towering Ridge, and is surely
that of the drum of our father Lang.

290

L278-279 Ulup, who is also known as Ijau Jegalang, is a slave of Lang.

The sound of our father's drum from the land where
palm-drond decorations wave."

Ketupong rushes to his loved one,

Tripping over buttress roots, splitting them into
pieces as big as storage jars.

Beragai rushes to his beloved,

Tripping over and breaking buttress roots as big as
the door of the skies.

295

Some gaze forth from the tall tops of trees,

Others from slippery trunks while yet they climb.

"The roof of our longhouse, friend, is there still,

Still standing like the gnarled body of some transgressing
crocodile."

Leaping over the stumps of trees,

300

Crossing swiddens in a single stride,

Ketupong flying to his loved one ascends the notched
ladder

As, with his left hand, he scatters tinkling bells.

Beragai, speeding to his beloved, ascends the notched
ladder,

As, in his left hand, he holds a gong on which two grown
men might sit side by side.

305

"Why, my beloved, does the drumming not stop?

Why does the noise not lessen?"

L303-305 'Tinkling bells' and 'brass gongs' are items that Ketupong
and Beragai acquired during their journeys to distant lands.

"Because we've plans to go to a feast in the world below
where edible ferns grow in abundance,
To a feast on a ridge where jack-fruit trees are
prolifically in fruit."

"If that be so, then let us away, 310
Dressed in our best attire.
Since your beating has been so resonant,
Of this so willing drum."

"If we are to attend a feast in the land where red
clouds form,
I will not go, 315
Until I have seen brains spattered all over the jars,
Otherwise we'll be outwitted by the women of Panggau, where
deer abound."

"If you wish me to feast on fermented rice
In the land where waterfalls are found,
I will not go, 320
Until I have seen floating, amid the guests, ash from
the smoking of trophy heads,
Otherwise, we'll be outwitted by the clever women of
Gelong."

Entering the gallery, Ketupong enquires of his
father-in-law Lang:

"Why does my loved one, when intent on taking me along
to this feast of rice wine and cakes,

Speak to me in riddles?

325

Why does my beloved, asks Beragai

When intent on taking me to this feast make such a mystery
of it?"

"Your wife," says Lang, "does not refuse to go,
But she wants to take along the seed of a wild palm."

"Your wife," says Lang, "does not decline to go,
To drink ginger wine in the land drenched in thick
mists,

330

But she wants a sesame seed to take along with her."

"I am eager to go raiding by the mighty Rejang River braving
the turbulent white waters of the Trasa rapids,

But there is now a fort guarding Belaga;

I am eager to raid those who cultivate the sago palm by the
distant Kayan river,

335

But now they are within the realm of a Dutch King;

L325 What Ketupong says reflects one of the Iban most loved forms of oratory – to speak in riddles (*jako kelaung*). The Iban do not refer to any important subject directly, but instead approach it obliquely using similies and metaphors. Sandin's Iban Way of Life, 1976 (p.28) gives a good example of this craft of speaking.

L333 The fort of Belaga was built in 1884 (Rousseau, SMJ, 1974:17).

L336 The Kayan river, especially its upper reaches, known as Apo Kayan (apo = plateau) was inhabited by Kenyah, Kayan, and other tribes, all of whom were attacked by the Iban. Although the Apo Kayan area was within the Dutch sphere of influence from the early decades of the 19th century it was not until 1906 that a Dutch post was finally established there, at Long Nawang. It was established only after the inhabitants had sent out complaints of being harassed by the Iban, through a famous Dutch traveller and scholar Dr A.W. Niewenhuis (Smythies, SMJ, 1955, pp.492-509).

I am eager to march, by way of Lanja, to the Skrang,
But now the longhouse of Unau, border a main road;
I am eager to attack the Maloh by way of Pria,
But now they have become blood brothers;
I am eager to raid those of the Oya by way of Kemedong,
But now we are joined with them in peace."

340

A tall scaffolding on a tree:

L337 Lanja is a mountain on the range that divides the southern tributaries of the Rejang (Katibas, Ngemah, Kanowit) from those in the 2nd Division (Lupar, Engkari, Skrang and the Lemanak). Feuding Iban from both sides used to cross this range usually via the headwaters of the Kanowit river when raiding one another. However, on the 16th May, 1907 in Kapit a 'peace was made between Bantin etc. and Pengulu Dalam Munan and the other down river (Rejang) chiefs, the usual Dyak ceremony of peace-making was carried out' (S.G. Vol. XXXVII, No.499, p.193). This eased the hostility between the Iban of Rejang and the Iban of 2nd Division led by Bantin and Ngumbang (cf. Pringle, 1970:210-246).

L338 Unau was an Iban *tuai rumah* (headman) who resided in the headwaters of Kanowit river somewhere around Lanja mountain range at the turn of the 20th century. His name was mentioned by Charles Hose, then the Resident of 3rd Division, when he reported the numerous attacks made by a notorious Iban rebel Swang and his followers. "Jala, his (Sawang) son-in-law, then killed six people of Unau's house, and last October he killed four Dyaks in Bun river" (a tributary of Kanowit) S.G. 1905 Vol. XXXV, No.469, p.65.

L339 In 1888 a peacemaking ceremony was organized by the Dutch and Sarawak government between the Iban of Upper Batang Lupar and upper Rejang river, and the Maloh of upper Kapuas river at Kapit and Lubok Antu, and thus ending the feuding of many generations (Richards, SMJ, 1949, p.87).

L341 The coastal Melanaus around Igan, Oya and Mukah were so constantly attacked by Iban marauders that in 1845 emissaries from these settlements visited Kuching to complain to the Rajah about Iban headhunting, and ask for protection (Pringle, 1970:78). However, when the Iban did migrate into Melanau territories in Oya and Mukah in about 1870 it was 'a gentle and gradual affair' so that a 'very good understanding' came to exist between the two peoples (*ibid.*:265).

The men ask about their enemies.

"Who has hung a wild palm seed from this towering tree
over which two rainbows arch? 345

Who has dangled this thorny palm seed from this great
tree whose branches shade the land?"

"My father-in-law, dear sons, the begetter of my wife,
If I but utter his name I will be banished for ever
beyond the land of ghosts.

If I but mouth it I will be set adrift beyond the seas."

"You Kinsman Ketupong, who ask for a seed," says Lang's
beloved wife; 350

"One is owned by your grandfather Bengkong.

If you are seeking the seed of the thorny palm, Kinsman
Ketupong,

My father, Bengkong, the rattan casing of trophy
heads, has one.

If you strike Bengkong, my sons, you who are the fathers
of my grandchildren,

Do not sever the tendons of the heel, or smash the kneecaps. 355

If you beat the father that once protected me, my sons, you
who are the fathers of my grandchildren and the husbands
of my daughters,

L348 The Iban respect their in-laws, and will not utter their names for fear of being cursed with ills and misfortunes. Lang's refusal to say the name of his father-in-law is a reflection of this custom. However, such a custom among the gods, are not strictly adhered to, for immediately after (L354) Lang's wife does utter her son-in-law's name.

L351 *Bengkong* is the Iban word for a rattan casing in which a trophy head is put and hung on the gallery above the hearth (*bedilang*).

Do not break the neck or sever the throat."

"Not at all, dear Mother, I'll give him sugarcane juice,

And wine tapped from the spathe of a palm."

PART III

From a bamboo scaffolding a chestnut tree is swiftly
felled:

Their foes now known, the warriors dress for the fray.
In mantlets made from the skins of tigers, that roar from
their lairs,

In helmets resplendent with the tail feathers of the
hornbill,

About their waists, their long bone-shattering swords,
Incised blades on which red blood flows. 5

Issuing from beneath the eaves of wooden shingles,
They descend the ladder made from a tree trunk deeply
notched.

Walk along a path somewhat wider than a fern frond,

To a resting place swathed in the mists of morning, 10

And then, to another, that would take a day's walk to
encircle.

A knot in a tree, a log on the sea:

"Let us rest and harken to auguries."

Ketupong, the son-in-law of Lang, walking on the narrow
earth,

L² Part III of the *timang* is called *ngerampas* in Iban, which means to snatch or to take by force. During the chanting of this part the *lemambang* and his party are fully dressed in war attire with swords dangling at their sides as if they were going on a warpath.

Hears the sobbing of a Bhraminy kite. 15

Ketupong, the son-in-law of Lang, walking on sunken ground,

Hears the yawning of the infinite skies.

"Auguries like these are for the brave of heart who never
fail in battle;

Auguries like these mean the taking of enemy hair for the
hilts of our swords."

Moving through tracts where wood partridges skirmish, 20

And in a valley where tarsiers forge adzes of iron,

They come upon a stockade roofed with palm leaves,

The home of the Bamboo Spirit, ever tossed to left and right,

And his wife, the Spirit of Leftover Rice, who is everywhere.

Halting, Ketupong starts building a shelter, 25

While Papau works away at its roofing.

L15 Even though with the cessation of head-hunting 'the Iban do not use the Bhraminy kite in deliberate divination' (Freeman, in Smythies, 1960:79), it is probable that in the days when the cult of head-hunting was at its height the cry of Bhraminy kite (*sabut*) was sought and interpreted as an auspicious omen foretelling success in war or other major undertakings (cf. Howell in BLB, 1962:171).

L17 This is a hyperbolic phrase used by the *Lembang* to dramatize the immense power that Lang and his sons-in-law possess. Ketupong is depicted as employing the 'infinite skies' as an augury.

L20-21 The 'wood partridges' referred to are domestic fowls, while the 'tarsiers forging adzes' refer to human blacksmiths. These allusions indicate the proximity of Lang and his party to human settlement.

L23-24 The 'Bamboo Spirit' is a reference to the charred bamboo containers which have been thrown on the ground around the longhouse after the cooked rice has been removed. These discarded bamboo containers lie strewn about an Iban longhouse just before the performing of a ritual feast.

An aging tree by the lake, with leaves growing in pairs:
The shelter built, Lang calls for sentries.
"Beragai, you go off to yonder rapid where white waves tumble,
To check on the flaring of our fire. 30
And you, Papau, to the far side of that ridge
To check on the sound of our voices."

At the edge of the grass they begin to deploy.
First goes Kunchit, called "Clutcher of Sword Scabbards";
Followed by Empulo, called "Spool of Yarn", 35
And Enkerasak, called "Shaft of a Blowpipe Dart".

"Dear sons-in-law of Lang, pray leave the scouting of the
land to us,
For you're already famous, and leaders of the land."
Travelling on they reach slopes strewn with headless corpses,
And a valley thick with bones. 40

The log on which Bejampong treads remains quite motionless,
The fallen leaves on which Bejampong treads make no sound.
Empulu perches on a blower bud;
Engkajira on a notched log;
Engkerasak on the very tip of a rafter. 45

"O, what a splendid cowrie-shell jacket has grandfather
Bengkong
With stitches like bees clustering about a hive.

L28-32 These lines provide information about the precautions taken by Iban raiding parties when camping in enemy territory.

How beautiful are the teeth of grandfather Bengkong,
Like a wild palm's thorns that make the noise of crunching."
Now the enemy's pitiful crying is heard, 50
And in distress, the very 'seed' of tree looks down, and
weeps.

The split trunk of a tree, a clump of young saplings:
The head being hunted, having cried in fear, is to be nursed.
He is nursed by grandmother Atu, from the headwaters where
thunder rolls;

He is nursed by grandmother Unggam, from the resonant skies. 55

Holding him in her lap, wrapped in a woven skirt and in a
blue striped cloth,

Her tongue sings him a lullaby,

And the words of a playful song.

She points to a wild boar grunting beneath the Tonghouse,

And to the cage of a handsome fighting cock. 60

"Why won't you be comforted, and stop your crying?

If you anger me further, you'll be dashed against this

notched tree trunk and thrown to the floor,

To vanish in that stream of the Land of the Dead, where

fish spawn."

"I cry, grandmother dear,

Because last night, lying on my mat, 65

Asleep in my bed, I had a dream most strange;

A dream of following two women of Gelong, Luli and Lulong

as they went to their swiddens;

I dreamt of being bitten by a cobra,
And having my throbbing head dashed against the stump of
a tree."

"In that case, dear youngest child, you'll not survive to
see the next waning of the moon,

70

For you're certain to be taken by Beragai and Ketupong,
Your head will be put in a rattan basket,

Your side will be pierced by a wide-bladed spear,

You'll be put into the hands of Lang,

Thrust into his bark pouch,

75

And carried off to his landing place, long and winding
Of his house on the Towering Ridge;

From where he will take you to head-hunting rites in the
world below,

You will be there when he bursts through the door of the
boundless skies;

When you reach your destination, my dear child,

80

You'll be received by Kumang and Lulong,

Who, when they tire of fondling you, will hang you in the
shrine of their gods."

Hearing the pigs snorting, and the chickens squawking in
fright,

Bengkong, his head threatened, cries aloud in fear of ghosts.

L75 Each individual Iban when going on a raid takes with him a bark pouch in which to put a newly decapitated head.

L82 The Iban do hang trophy heads from the shrine (*ranyai*) during *gawai amat*.

At which, Kunchit flees to Empulo, "The Spool of Yarn"; 85
And Empulo to Engkerasak, "Shaft of the Blowpipe Dart";
And Engkerasak to Pangkas, called "Spear Ring of Brass";
And Pangkas to Galiga Tandang, also known as Bejampong;
And Bejampong to Beragai, the father of Chalega Lampong;
And Beragai to Ketupong, bird of speckled feathers; 90
And Ketupong to Embuas, bird of good omen;
And Embuas to Lang, the "Ever-Victorious Fighting Cock".
In safeguarding them, Lang, the god of war,
Stands immovable, like a monolith of stone;
Like a deep-rooted tree, he sways not. 95
"How irksome it is having to depend on sons-in-law so callow;
How distressing it is having to rely on sons-in-law whose ways
are not one's own;
Contrast them with my own son, Aji, brave of heart,
"Who once I hung with a thread from the crown of a lofty
tree yet he did not fall."
"Your son, did not fall because he has a squirrel charm, 100
And is helped by Raja Nyendia, the spirit of the melodious
bee trees."
"Once I threw him into a deep pool, but no crocodile
devoured him."

L98 Aji is the only son of Lang. He is married to the daughter of
Pulang Gana, Lang's brother.

"Your son was not devoured because he was magically protected,
Added to which giants stood ready to bring him to the shore."

"Once I left my son Aji at the edge of the farthest sky, 105
But no devouring giants gathered to feast on his flesh."

"But that, Uncle, was because you and those giants are of
common descent."

"Once when I had him climb a mountain for seven days on end,
not a drop of sweat was seen on his body."

"Your son, Uncle, did not sweat, as he has a swiftlet charm
whose feathers, even when plunged in water, remain
totally dry."

Lang and his sons-in-law now boast of their feats of bravery. 110

"For my part, Uncle," says Ketupong,

"I once went raiding with the now dead Temenggong Jarau,

L103 The key word in the Iban text is the word *puni*. *Puni* is a period of time (varying from 1 to 7 days) during which an Iban is believed to be vulnerable to misfortunes such as being taken by crocodiles, bitten by snakes, centipedes, insects, etc., and harmed by evil spirits, as the result of not eating or touching food which has been offered to him. Lang's son, Aji, is immune from this because he possesses a charm that protects him during such a time.

L112-125 Jarau (L112) is a relative of the famous Baleh Iban leader and warrior, Temenggong Koh, who died in 1956 (Freeman, 1970:141-150; MacDonald, 1956). Balang (L121) was a famous Iban warrior of the Katibas who participated in the great Kayan expedition 1863. Later he was accused by his rival Unggat of having conspired to murder Mr Cruickshank, Resident of 3rd Division, and was later caught and executed (Pringle, 1970:254). Ranggau (L121) was Balang's most trusted 'lieutenant', or *manok sabong* (lit. fighting cock). Langkau and Sentu were also Iban leaders.

These lines describe two important aspects of the Iban head-hunting raid: (i) a surprise attack is preferred; (ii) the heads of women and children, as well as of men, are taken (cf. Sarawak Gazette) "... Jani (the son of Bengulu Merom) with a following of 46 men attacked the Uma Lesums and killed 15 women and children" (1907:149 Vol.XXXVII).

Whose surprise attack found women still asleep in their mosquito nets."

"For my part, Uncle," says Beragai,

"I once went raiding with the now dead Langkau, also called Ringkai,

115

Whose attack surprised women as they went down in the morning to bathe in the river, laden down with water gourds."

"For my part, Uncle," says Papau,

"I once went raiding with Temenggong, and the now dead Langkau,

Whose attack surprised women who were in the loft getting *padi* for pounding."

"For my part, Uncle Lang," says Bejampong,

120

"I once went raiding with Ranggau, and the now dead Balang, Whose attack surprised women as they fed their pigs, while waving their arms to scare away chickens."

"For my part, Uncle Lang," says Embuas,

I once went raiding with Langkau, and the late Sentu, in the Katibas headwaters,

And attacked some hunters as, in the forest, they were roasting flying squirrels."

125

"It is a custom of ours to joke with the sons of our brothers, In walking, young kinsman, I still stumble; in speaking I still err."

A long and winding creeper:

Lang, having replied, asks about their dreams.

"What dreams have you had Ketupong, since we've been seeking the 'seed'?"

130

"I have dreamt, Uncle Lang, of clutching a cluster of rambutan fruits."

"What dreams have you had Beragai, since we've been seeking a seed for the shrine?"

"I have dreamt, Uncle Lang, of grabbing a fish as it swam in the river."

"What of you, Bejampong?"

"I have dreamt, Uncle Lang, of felling a huge tree, the home of a white-breasted hornbill."

135

"What of you, Pangkas?"

"I have dreamt, Uncle Lang, of thrusting my hand into the lair of a serpent."

The trunk is split, fell then the breadfruit tree:

The dreams of the followers have been told, we ask about those of the leader.

"What about you, Lang Singalang Burong?" asks Ketupong,

140

"Have you had dreams, since you we've been camping in this shelter in the forest?"

"I have, young kinsman, while sleeping on roots as big as bangles of brass,

While lying on fallen leaves the size of the feathers of a fighting cock,

I dreamt of digging up poisonous roots,

Which I pounded on river boulders, 145
 To poison a fish-eating fish with seven black stripes,
 That I put in my boat;
 Then, as I climbed to the old dwelling place of Balai and
 Balang,
 I came upon a massive fruit tree,
 Which, using my spear, I prodded for fruit, 150
 Those that fell to the ground
 I put in my pouch of tree bark;
 Walking on from there, I came upon your grandfather Rimong,
 Who took me along to capture a braceleted bear
 A fitting companion for our children as, in the streams,
 they fossick for snails." 155
 "In seeking for our seed, who better than my son-in-law,
 Ketupong,
 Whose piercing voice can snap vines, and split them into
 fibres from which string can be plaited;
 In seeking for our seed, who better than my son-in-law,
 Ketupong
 Whose powerful voice can shatter slabs of stone into flints,
 that when struck will start a fire."

A gigantic flowering lily, they continue their journey, 160
 To the ridge lit by the morning sun,
 A mountain teeming with gibbons,

L154 'A braceleted bear' is a metaphor for a war captive.

The land of Bengkong, keeper of rattan,
Known also as Kumpai Berendam.

A clump of saplings, they plan their attack: 165
Papau perches on a spinning wheel,
Beraga perches on a notched ladder,
Nendak perches on a roosting board,
Bejampong perches on verandah rail,
Ketupong, without demur, confronts Bengkong over his hearth. 170

A small glittering blade cuts a bunch of bananas:
Bengkong and Ketupong are now face to face.

"You look, my friend, like one who would filch from me my
oldest slave.

You look like one who wishes to snatch my jar with the
white lizard design."

"Not so, Grandfather, I only want to join you in the hunting
of civet cats; 175

I only want to join you in raids to the coast, to the sty of
boars with curling snouts;

I want you to join in the eating of this mixture of yeast,
Made by the Ranee, the Rajah's wife, who bathes in the
waters of Europe;

L172 As Ketupong confronts Bengkong in the *timbang*, the man who is performing the *gawai* dressed in the full splendour of a man going on a warpath, follow the *lemambang* and his party as they chant the *timbang* along the gallery.

L178 The word *Serani* in the Iban text is probably a corruption of the word *Ranee*, the title of Hindu queen. Ranee was the title given to the wife of the Rajah of Sarawak.

I want you to join me in the eating of this mixture of
yeast,

Made by Kumang, the wife of Tungki Ali, who bathes in the
waves of the sea." 180

"If you speak of rice wine, friend, my jar is filled with it;
If of sugar cane juice, it constantly flows from my wooden
wringer."

"But ours, Grandfather, tastes better than honey,

And is more palatable than the honeycomb of wild bees."

Then, Grandfather Bengkong dips in the rice wine his finger
nails, like small knives with bone handles, 185

Puts in his stretched-out index finger.

"Not, Grandfather, until I have praised this rice wine as

'The slicer of the lizard that clings to the fronds of
the Areca Palm';

Until this rice wine I have praised as 'A loin cloth that
suddenly tightens about one's waist';

Until this rice wine is praised as 'The string that strangles'."

"It would have been tragic, indeed, had I tried it with my
fingers, 190

For I would have expired in the valley of mucus,

Where Mother Jirak laments her long-lost friend.

And then there'd be no one to help my wife when farming in
the valley strewn with bones."

L193 The 'valley strewn with bones' is probably an old battle ground
where the bones of the dead still lie strewn on the ground.

"No, Grandfather, if you taste it your body will get
healthier;

If you eat it, you will grow bigger."

195

In the rice wine he dips his fingers,

And puts some on his teeth to taste,

At once Uncle Bengkong begins to sway like a palm in the
wind.

Having swallowed, he sprawls on the floor like a shaman in
a trance.

Then the seed of the bamboo falls, like a troop of pig-
tailed monkeys;

200

Then the seed of the jack-fruit slides down like a troop
of monkeys running down a branch.

First, Tuchok, with tattooed sides,

Fights with Kling, the deadly spear thrower.

Then Sandah, who kills two at a blow,

Fights with Nirau, of the resplendent sword tassel.

205

Then Beragai, the father of Chalegai Lampong,

Enters the fray, along with Bakubu, the speckled bird
called Ketupong,

And Embuas, the bird of good omen,

At which the sought-after 'seed' is snatched up by

Lang Singalong Burong,

L209 As Lang, in the *timang* snatches the trophy head and puts it in his bark pouch, the man who is performing the *gawai* breaks away from the *Lemambang*'s party and in ritual imitation of the actions of Lang, draws his sword, lets out a piercing war cry, severs the rattan which fastens the trophy head to the shrine, and 'runs away' with it. A short time later the trophy head is given to the women, who then sing to it as they walk up and down the gallery of the longhouse. That rite is called *naku antu pala*.

And thrust in his pouch of bark

210

Fell the breadfruit tree so laden with flowers:

After this brief skirmish, the drugged Bengkong revives.

"Why o friends do you rob us of our jar with the white
lizard design?

Why do you dispossess us of our oldest slave?"

"We want these things for our grandsons, Gringo and
Sumbang.

215

We want them for our grandsons, Jar and Mapang."

"Keep them then, kinsmen, as your precious possessions.

For the getting of them was not easy, look at the spear
blades still embedded in my back;

Look at my forehead, still pierced with the tips of
countless bronze darts."

A log on the sea, a long and winding creeper:

220

When Lang has done talking with Bengkong the raiders
prepare to withdraw.

At the rear is a warrior, young and short.

"Who is that? He was not with us before?"

"I am singing youthful Shield."

L213-214 Bengkong says that Lang and his party have robbed him of his valued jar and oldest slave, he is referring to their having taken one of his trophy heads. Heirloom jars and slaves both of which are items of great value, are used as metaphors for trophy heads.

L215-216 Gringo, Sumbang, Jar and Mapang were all Iban war heroes of former days.

Next to the rear comes a sharpened bamboo spike. 225

"Who is that? He was not with us before,"

"Of those spikes that are thrust in the ground to cover

a retreat, I am the spirit."

The retreating raiders leap over the tall stumps of trees;

A swidden they cross in a single stride;

Those in front, reaching the hill where palms grow, begin

the collecting of fronds, 230

And those at the headland, where bamboos grow, cut

Klakuiang leaves.

A knot on a tree, the party halts to rest:

"Why does not Grandfather Bengkong follow us with his shield?"

"How can he, friend, when his bones are weak,

And his eyes drowsy because of our excrement charms obtained

from out an anus." 235

"Why does he not strike us with a length of rattan?"

"How can he, friend, for he's unable to run,

And his mouth has lost the power of speech, because of our

charm found in an empty tortoise shell."

An aging tree by the lake, a log on the sea:

Lang and his party give voice to their war cries. 240

L227 It was an Iban tactic when retreating from a raid or battle, to plant sharpened bamboo spikes along their route of retreat so as to hinder their enemies progress should they give chase.

L230 The palm frond or *daun isang* is for use during the rite of receiving the trophy head upon arrival at the longhouse. The *klakuiang* leaves were used to wrap freshly taken trophy heads.

At Ketupong's piercing war cry the door of the moon is
shattered;

At Beragai's long drawn-out cry the drifting clouds begin
to fall;

"What is this that sounds like flies amid the flowering
maize?

Is it not like the war cries of our husbands when returning
from a raid?"

A log on the sea, a long and winding creeper:

245

When the war cries are heard, the women are in the middle
of telling their dreams.

"I dreamt of spinning on the gallery,

Which usually foretells the bringing of grain by my father
Lang.

I dreamt of sugar cane with luxuriant leaves,

Which usually foretells the splitting of palm fronds."

250

An aging tree by the lake, a plant with paired leaves:

Ketupong's party arrives, the women prepare for the rite
of receiving the trophy.

With one hand in the style of Gading the grandmother of Uli;

Held high in the style of Bintang the mother of Jeti;

L250 The making of *dawn isang* or the splitting of palm fronds among the Iban usually heralds the staging of a *gawai*. Refer notes in Part I:L191.

L252-259 The women referred to are Iban women of former days renowned for their skill in receiving trophy heads, and in *naku antu pala*.

With care, in the style of Seti, the wife of Bugi,

255

In ecstasy, the women repeat the rite.

Receiving the trophy held high, in the style of Bintang,

the mother of Nyawai,

With care, in the style of Seti, the mother of Dungai,

The women are in high spirits, their feet caressing the

house posts.

L259 The rituals and other paraphernalia that accompanied the receiving of the newly acquired heads are documented in L. Roth's *The Native of Sarawak and British Borneo*, 1896:167-;74, Vol.II; Howell, BLB, 1963: 136-7.

PART IV

Quickly fell the 'chestnut' tree:

Lang and his party, wishing to attend the ritual in the
world below, put on ceremonial dress.

The sons-in-law of Lang put on their loin cloths of hand-
spun cotton;

Put on black loin cloths striped with red, that in times
of drought may be used as a rope to reach the sky.

They put on bracelets made from the fibres of palms,

5

And around their legs rings of shining silver.

To their waists long swords are tied,

With glittering blades for the severing of bones.

From his waist, inside its sheath, hangs Ketupong's
quivering sword,

On his shoulder is a huge-bladed spear.

10

The descend the notched ladder, closely followed by Sulah,
spirit of the sacred dracaena, and of the wildflowers of
the forest.

"Do I look good, mother, on my way to the ritual in the Dome
of Bright Light?"

"You look most beautiful child, with your tapering fingers;

To your enfolding and protecting mother,

You are like a spirited fish

15

Leaping high over bamboo barricades put across a river.

L6 When the Iban fish by poisoning a river with *tubai* (Derris alleptica) roots, they build a bamboo barricade across a shallow part of the river to stop the fish from swimming down stream and thus avoiding the poison. However, some fish do escape by leaping over this barricade.

But since we've been going to the winding Baleh River, the
 home of Temmengong Koh,
 You're now likened to a splendid *batik* headcloth;
 To a superbly patterned shawl,
 And the *ikat* cloth that graces the shrine of the gods." 20
 Next come the attendant, called Horns of the Fleeting Deer,
 known also as Youth of the Transient Light,
 The carrier of Lang's treasures: his nest of tortoise shell;
 Those who care for his treasure, a hornbill's nest, complete
 with a hornbill's casque.
 Left hand holding a rail, right foot stepping on a tree trunk,
 His voice calling aloud for young Ijau Jagalang; 25
 Left hand holding a railing, right foot treading on a log,
 His voice is heard talking to Ulop, Spirit of the Bamboo
 Spikes,
 Whose wife is Anggu, she of the fibres from which hats are
 made,
 She who originates intricate patterns.
 "I'm not accompanying you, for if our house sways, who will
 stop it collapsing; 30
 I'm not going to this ritual in the cave of the blustering
 wind, for if our boat breaks loose, who will stop it
 from drifting."

L20 Iban woven fabrics or *pua kumbo* are used to provide the outer covering of a shrine (*ranyai*) (cf. discussion on shrine in Chapter II).

L21 & 25 Youth of Transient Light (Bujang Kamayang Panas), line 21, and Ijau Jagalang, line 25, are slaves of Lang. The former attends the *gawai* carrying the burden of Lang, while the latter stays behind looking after Lang's longhouse.

To the left the perch of a rooster with spurs curving
up to his knees,

To the right the muddy wallow of a boar with two great
curling tusks,

It is the land of Sampampang Parai,

The abode of Ulop, the long-tailed one.

35

His wife, the disease-ridden Sakuri, she of the
flowery tattoos;

The spotted woman whose body is covered with patterns.

A tree stump, a fallen log,

The land of Saganggang, spirit of the leaves of the sacred
dracaena, planted by Lang to protect the land,

His wife, a bird, who has charms against adultery,

His darling, a wrinkled hornbill who has charms for the
unknotting of knots.

A twirling orchid, coarse grass that when it rustles sounds
like the tapping of a shaman's knives,

The land of Sa Uton Uton, the carved effigy of a hornbill,
as large as roll of mosquito netting,

The abode of Sailang Ilang, with the striped and coloured
neck,

Who, in tears, pleads for the stump of a nipah palm,

45

And pitifully cries for a bunch of fruit from a wild palm.

L45-46 'The stump of a nipah palm' and 'fruit from a wild palm' are metaphors for trophy heads.

On to the forest where Grandmother Gendai is drying the
flowers of a creeper,

To the forest of areca palms, their trunks striped with
silver,

The land of Lang's brother, the shaman,

The abode of Jaban, born of the claws of the eagle,

50

Whose husband is Sedai, holder of a shaman's charms,

Whose beloved is Salunggang Sabang, of the enfeebled knees.

They come to the place of the plant from the leaves of
which awnings are made,

To the bank of the *pelai* tree, from whose roots Lang cuts
wood from which to carve hornbills.

To the hill of the indigo plant, from whose leaves come dye,

55

L49 Jaban is a brother of Lang. Myth has it that when Lang's wife was suffering from a mysterious malady, Lang initiated his brother to become a *manang bali*, or a male transvestite shaman, in order to cure his wife. Lang's plan worked, his wife was cured, and his brother from then on became known as Menjaya, or *Manang Menjaya* (see notes in Jensen, 1974:145). In all rituals involving healing his presence is invoked. He now resides at Lang's old residential site and on the junction where the route of *timbang gawai amat* branches off from the routes of other *timbang* (cf. discussion in Chapter III).

L52 The initiation of an Iban to become a *manang*, or shaman, involves certain rites which includes the ritual 'hammering' of 4 small spikes of *garu* (or aloes-wood) into the body of the initiate with an adze (*bliong*). One spike is 'hammered' into each of the initiate's knee-caps which is believed to prevent a *manang* from giddiness when circling the *pagar api* (see notes on Appendix A). Hence the phrase 'the enfeebled knees'. The other two spikes are 'hammered', each to the shoulder-joints. This is believed to enable a *manang* to fly when fetching the soul (*samengat*) of a patient (cf. Freeman, field-notes, Jan., 1950).

L54 *Pelai* tree is a soft wood, commonly used by the Iban, for the making of a hornbill effigy.

To the abandoned swidden where grow the *lamba* plants, whose
fibres are used in *ikat* weaving,
To the forest of the long-billed spider-hunters
to the rubber trees thick with creepers,
The land of Mas Manjan, with gold capping his pointed teeth;
The abode of a gigantic creeper with tendrils like kindred,
in double groups of eight, 60
Whose beloved wife is the blossoming Jawai Sakurai,
Whose sweetheart is Suri, beautiful as an *ikat* cloth.
"I am not attending the ritual, for my work is to block
up the hole from which the thunder issues;
My work is to see that the rain falls."

They come to a plain where bamboo in dense clusters is
growing, 65
To a headland where bamboo shoots sprout like the spurs
of a parakeet;
The land of Selempang Pait, the cricket, bird of the night,
The abode of grey-haired Lumau, the father of Gelau, the
blowfly,
His beloved wife is the frond of a jungle palm,
His sweetheart is the awning of a nomadic Punan. 70
"I am not attending the ritual, for my work is tending the
flowers planted by Ensengai Lulong;
My work is tending the flowers planted by Kinta Nalujong."

L56 In Ikat weaving the fibres from *lamba* (*curculigo*) plant leaves are used to tie the warp threads before dyeing (see Haddon and Start, 1936:10).

Those in front arrive at the ridge where forest palms
grow,

A place criss-crossed by rattan vines,

The land of Abang Gelau, the blowfly,

75

The abode of Ulap, diseased of skin,

His beloved wife being that part of Lang's domain on
which rests the ladder of the clouds.

"Gelau's not here, he's gone to visit his parents-in-law,
in the land where rattan is twined, like a ball of
cotton thread;

Gelau's not here he's gone to visit the parents of his
wife in the land where rattan entwines the tree trunks."

"Let us wait for a while for him, as long as it takes to
chew betel."

80

"For Gelau you cannot wait, for when he comes across women
he sets about courting them;

For Gelau, when he passes people that are using the
poisonous *tuba* root will join them in the catching
of fish."

Travelling on they come to the waters of Chalali Laling,
where the sacred dracaena grow.

L80 The chewing of betel nut can be a way of gauging the length of
time (see notes Chapter I:54).

L81-82 What Gelau's wife really means in these lines is that her
husband, who is a blowfly, cannot be counted upon to arrive on time
for he will stop to feed on any rotting carcass that he comes across.
Thus the references to 'courting women' (L81), and joining in *tubai*
fishing (L82) are to this blowfly feeding on rotting animals.

"Those amongst us making use of this plant will become
as brave as Keling."

They reach the place of sweetly perfumed flowers,

85

"Those amongst us who pluck one of these flowers will
become as attractive to men as is Kumang."

A knotted tree is felled:

"Let us stop a while and bathe."

They bathe in a river thick with water weeds,

Diving into the deepest of its pools.

90

Then out from the depths comes Ganali, the water snake,

"When you bathe in this water you must ask my permission,

When you dive you must seek my consent;

Those of you who have grown up may bathe at the entrance
to my door,

So that your bodies become sweetly scented;

95

Those of you who are fair in appearance may bathe at
yonder waterfall,

And so become even fairer still."

Leaving the waters that renew the flesh,

And the river that beautifies the face,

L92 *Ganali* is an Iban mythical water-snake that inhabits the watery depths. It is said to metamorphose into an incubus (a supernatural paramour of Iban females), take possession of a woman and then steal the 'soul' of her child. For further details on incubi (*antu buyu*) see Freeman, 1967:315-343; Sather in Bijdragen, 1978).

They reach the hill where dracaena and *klakuiang* plants
grow,

100

The ridge where Kumang composes her songs,

The Land of the Spirit who prevents failure,

The abode of he who ensures success.

His wife is the sweet aroma of lemon blossoms,

His beloved is a waving branch.

105

"I am not attending the ritual, for I'm seeing that the
longhouse does not become overgrown with cassava;

My work is to clear away the vines of the gourd plants."

This is the site of the old longhouse of Lang, and the
shaman Jaban,

When they were still of the same family;

This is the site of the old longhouse of Lang, and the
shaman Guiak,

110

When they were still of the same family;

In this old site with rambutan trees with trunks the
size of one's finger,

Yet laden down with fruit.

Arriving at the swamp where tree roots float, they walk
along the great pole of the hornbill ritual;

The land of Nirau of the abundant tassels;

115

His wife the waving branch of a tree,

His sweetheart is the spathe of the coconut palm.

"I am not going to the ritual, for I'm tending the charm
of the gecko,

Which clucks like a hen calling her chicks.

I am tending this ridge that curves like the tusk of
a boar, and fragments into numerous spurs."

120

The lofty pole from which palm frond decorations hang,
The ridge-like post for mounting the image of a stork,
The land of Sungkat Pandak, on which it rests,
The abode of Sepatah Lidi, the shaft of the blowpipe dart;
His wife is a broad-banded ring,
His beloved is a ring, intricate in design, worn on the
finger.

125

"I am not going to the ritual, for my work is measuring out
Kapayang oil,
My work is to filter sweet-scented oil into bottles."

They reach the point where shoots of bamboo reach up to
the dome of the sky,

And palm fronds reach to the ridge where stars cluster;

130

The land of the long-jawed shark

That feeds in the waters beside the cliffs;

His wife is Saur, sharpener of blades on which red blood
flows;

His darling is a fish hook on a vine with tangled hair and
twisted arms.

"I am not going to the ritual, for I tend the gun that is
held in the arms,

135

My young body is not going, for my work is the guarding
of bronze cannons."

A long and crooked headland stretching to the headwaters
of Tarusan Sandang,

A valley criss-crossed by hundreds of streams like the
clustering fruits of a palm,

The land of Suri Al, the rippling water by the rapids
whose waters never run dry,

The abode of Sebilit Langit, with the intricately patterned
headdress,

140

His wife is Seri, the Edge of the pebbly beach, and Kelukau,
the head of the pool,

His sweetheart is rain that falls in drops of ten at a time.

A knotted tree, a quid of chewing tobacco:

"Let us stop and sharpen our weapons

Sharpen our knives on a stone shaped like a snake from the
foam of swirling waters;

145

Sharpen our swords, with a twirling motion on a stone shaped
like the tusk of the pangolin,

That can curl itself up in an instant."

Then out from the water comes Tabor Sugi, the brave,

Out comes he who is venturesome like the mists of morning.

"You sharpen your knives on my whet stone or lead without
asking at all;

150

You grind away on my whet stone without even a word;

Those who are lazy must not use these whet stones to sharpen
their knives for they will make you lazier still and given
to sleeping;

Those who are liars must not use these stones to sharpen
their knives, for they will turn you into even greater
liars;

That four-sided whet stone over there, my friend Ketupong,
was the whet stone of the now dead Unggat,

And then of the now dead Sibat, who took it with him when
raiding the Bugau and the Uma-Kelap,

155

When, with one blow, he slew four foes while they were
plaiting rattan baskets in which to carry fruit."

"My sword I have sharpened on yonder whet stone," says
Beragai,

"On that stone with a hollow the size of a sword blade,
And a defect the size of the tooth of a man,

For I took it with me when snatching the seed of the shrine;

160

And used it when smashing through the door of the broad sky."

"It used to be, my friend, the whet stone of the now dead
Ringkai,

Which makes it good for the sharpening of knives for
slashing the branches of falling trees."

L54 Unggat was one of the Katibas Iban leaders who accused Balang of conspiring to murder Mr Cruickshank, Resident of 3rd Division. Balang was later arrested and executed, and Unggat subsequently enjoyed the Hajah's favour (Pringle, 1970:254).

A plain of towering trees,

A headland of mangroves,

165

The land of Malau the huge ant, the spirit of resin.

"Here we must get extra resin, lest the lashing of our spear
blades be broken;

Here we must get extra resin from the *entimau* tree, lest our
sword blades become loose in their hilts."

They reach a gun with an ivory barrel thick with scrolls,

The land of Guiak, the spirit of the frame of fish-traps;

170

The abode of Lambong, the whittled stick.

His wife is Sa Laja Lajan, the hot sun of the night;

His beloved the straightener of the shafts of blowpipe dart.

"I'm not going to the ritual, for I'm tending this cannon
of bronze,

I am not going to the feast, my work is tending jewellery
made by Chinese."

175

They come to the land of shamans, amid lilies, gigantic
and sweet-smelling,

The abode of Jaban, who smells like a burnt sour fruit,

Whose husband is Jubang, of the unmoving clusters of stars;

The spear with the vicious barb that will pierce the sleeves
of a war jacket.

L168 *Entimau* is a species of tree that produces resin.

A setting sun that glows like a turban embroidered with
gold,

180

The margin of the multi-coloured sky like a lovely *ikat*
pattern,

This is the land of Tambong, the diviner, who wears a
necklace of precious beads,

And of Jaban, who walks while in trance,

Her husband is Sigai, the solitary star, whose arms are
thick with bracelets.

A long and winding creeper:

185

They reach the land of whispering bamboos,

The abode of Jaban Sedendan, shaman of the clouds.

There is a sound like that of stringed instruments being
strummed

And of flutes being played.

Pangkas gets up to look,

190

While Papau leans forward anxiously.

"Do not go forward, friends, if you've not heard what
happened to the late Langi, who went to see the whispering

bamboos, and later died when his boat broke in two;

Have you not heard of Galau who died after seeing those
bamboos and emptied a longhouse of its jars?"

"If that be so, let us scatter as do animals and birds with
their young,

Let us move away from this hill,

195

Let us distance ourselves from it."

They come upon a solitary tree stump, a house all alone,
This is the land of Sempandai, the elder, from the great
mountains,

The abode of Sempetoh, from the land that grows like the
valuables manufactured by Chinese.

A cliff in the crimson sky the size of a great jar, 200

A shaft of glowing light, like a brightly striped turban,

This is the land of San-Gantong, who wears a cotton turban,

His wife is an insect that glides on the water,

His sweetheart is a giant squirrel.

They come upon Puyang, guardian of resting places, 205

And upon Jamit, leader of those of the sky.

They come upon Lawai Panggai, who lives on a verandah at
the door of the sky

And Lawai Panggah, who lives in the foothills;

His beloved is the maiden Ketupong, the fiery-leafed
dracaena;

His wife is Jawai, from whom sparks fly. 210

They come to an awning of wild palm fronds, a stockade
the height of a man,

This is the land of Renggi, brave of heart,

The abode of Laja, of cutting remarks,

His wife is Sudan, the waves upon the ocean,

His sweetheart is the maiden Seria, a clump of vegetation. 215

They come upon Jubang, who lives in the trunk of the *pelai*
tree,

And upon Manggie, who lives by the fiery-leafed dracaena,

And in the land of the white-striped stork,

Known as Jarah, whose house is at the crossroads.

To the left the way is blocked by the debris from an unfired
swidden, 200

To the right the thickets are too dense for even an animal's
track,

Right ahead is a huge and concave slab of rock.

"Our going to the ritual in the world below is all in vain,
like the fallen flowers of the guava.

Our wish to go to the feast in the Land of Bright Light has
come to naught, like the flowers on a barren tree."

A knot upon a tree, a log on the ocean: 225

While the party rests Bakubu rises to cut a way through.

Bakubu, the speckled bird, named Ketupong, rises,

His jacket of velvet he casts away,

His sword in its scabbard, swinging from his waist,

He walks right up to the door of the azure sky. 230

With his mighty and glittering spear, he strikes.

Behold, there is a shaft of flashing light, the size of
a huge and glistening jar,

L226 As in the *timang* Lang and his entourage arrive at the door of the
skies (*pintu langit*), the bard and his party return to the shrine,
armed with knives tied around their waists, while offerings are placed
near the shrine. The carrying of knives is to emulate Lang and his
sons-in-law who use their swords to cut their way through the door of
the skies.

The stars are shaken from their perches in the sky,
Fragments fly out changing into snakes to lurk at the
roadside.

Bolts scatter over the Lands of the Kayan and Kanto,
Causing havoc among the fish in distant headwaters,
But not even a hole, the size of a man's finger, has been
made,

"There is no way then, for us to attend the feast,
Carrying the seed of the shrine."

Ketupong pulls out his spear, which remains superbly sharp,
For it had been sharpened by the whet stone with a thousand
facets,

Given by the spirit of the cricket, called Bird of the Night.

Papau, his sheathed sword swinging from his waist,
His body wrapped in a jacket of gold,

Walks out on to the crimson sky,

With his mighty spear he thrusts,

Behold! there is a shaft of flashing light, the size of
an enormous jar,

And the distant crimson skies are torn,

Flying fragments turn into snakes with golden stripes,

Scattering over the lands of the Peng and the Kanto,

Crushing a Kayan chief and his followers in their huts,

But not even a hole the size of a man's finger has been made.

"There is no way then for us to attend the feast

Carrying the seed of the shrine."

235

245

250

Papau pulls out his spear which remains as sharp as ever,
Having been sharpened on a whet stone spat out by an
immense serpent.

255

"It is true that you are sharper than the edges of nine swords,
It is true that you men are brave, but only when urged on by
we women."

Then Lang speaks, taking note of the door of the gleaming sky.

"This is the place where a child can be turned into an
orphan, a wife into a widow."

260

"The door in the clouds", warns Lang, "is not the place for
urging men on."

"How fortunate that in carrying the seed of the shrine
We have with us our dear father Lang, called the leader of
leaders.

How fortunate it is that in bringing the 'seed'

We have with us our dear father Lang, who is called "King
of All Creatures."

265

A log on the sea, a quid of chewing tobacco:

Before breaking down the door, Lang tells his followers to
move aside.

"Move still further away, you, the husband of Buli,

For I want to push aside this dead tree with its nest of
wasps.

Watch out little argus pheasant,

270

L270 'Argus pheasant' is a metaphor for the female members of Lang's
entourage.

The stars are shaken from their perches in the sky,
Fragments fly out changing into snakes to lurk at the
roadside.

Bolts scatter over the Lands of the Kayan and Kanto,
Causing havoc among the fish in distant headwaters,
But not even a hole, the size of a man's finger, has been
made,

235

"There is no way then, for us to attend the feast,
Carrying the seed of the shrine."

Ketupong pulls out his spear, which remains superbly sharp,
For it had been sharpened by the whet stone with a thousand
facets,

Given by the spirit of the cricket, called Bird of the Night.

Papau, his sheathed sword swinging from his waist,

His body wrapped in a jacket of gold,

Walks out on to the crimson sky,

245

With his mighty spear he thrusts,

Behold! there is a shaft of flashing light, the size of
an enormous jar,

And the distant crimson skies are torn,

Flying fragments turn into snakes with golden stripes,

Scattering over the lands of the Peng and the Kanto,

250

Crushing a Kayan chief and his followers in their huts,

But not even a hole the size of a man's finger has been made.

"There is no way then for us to attend the feast

Carrying the seed of the shrine."

For I want to topple this towering tree with its hornets'
nests where two rainbows arch.

Lang feels the door of the primeval sky, it is thinner than
skin of a banana plant;

Lang touches the door of the glowing sky; it is thinner than
the skin of fruit of an egg plant;

Lang thrusts forward his bronze-shafted spear, and behold,
its piercing blade has made a small black hole;

Lang strikes again at the formidable door with his barbed
spear, from which dangle tassels of grey hair;

275

Lang thrusts at the door of the shining sky

With a spear the wooden shaft of which is as big as a
padi pestle,

And its shimmering blade all smeared with fat.

Behold, there is now a gap in the sky door, through which
two men might walk,

And all around it, the light is streaming, as through
loosely plaited sun hat.

280

"How resplendent are the splinters of the door of the
primeval sky, now that our father Lang has broken
through it,

Like the blowpipe darts used in hunting gibbons;

How awesome the fragments of the crimson sky broken away
by Lang, our father,

As sharp as the spikes of the Balau."

A tree beside a pool:

285

Now that the way is clear, Katupong prepares to leap.

Katupong leaps on to rock the size of a massive jar,

Its slopes are lit by the waxing moon,

Its base by the gleaming of myriad stars,

Its dark peak hidden in a canopy of trees.

290

Beragai leaps to the base of this huge rock, as big as a
farm house,

Its slopes are lit by the crescent moon,

Its base by the glimmering of distant stars,

Its peak flat, like the broad brim of a sun hat.

Bejampong leaps to the base of this white rock which is

bleached like a hank of cotton,

295

Its slopes are lit by the waning moon,

Its peak shining as if encrusted with polished lead.

Papau leaps to this tapering rock, a lake of mud about

its base,

Its slopes lit by the soft light of the moon,

Its base by the stars of the night,

300

Its peak bulges out like a lump of tobacco under the
upper lip of a shaman.

Having reached this huge rock,

They next come to a rapid, that roars like the thunder,

The land of the Tasier, who lives by the hole from which
thunder issues,

The abode of the Loris who lives by the hole into which
the sun sets.

305

From the clashing of bracelets come sparks of fire,
The ringing sound made by Lang's brass gongs is heard as
they clash against the gigantic tree spurs,
This is the land of Biku, amid sun exposed rocks,
The abode of Empong, goddess of the firmament,
Her husband is Utong Malana, skilled in calculation and
the getting of possessions,

310

A trader of immense success, also known as Ingg Raja Jawa.
"I am not going to the ritual in the land where stars cluster,
My work is to see that the log raft of Ranggong Tindit is not
swept into a whirlpool;
I am not going to the ritual,
For my work is to see that this young man does not, when
tree felling, cut himself with an adze."

315

They journey on to the edge of the gently curving sky, that
waves like the flag on a Malay boat,
On to the sky of the farthest firmament, that shakes like
the mast of a steamship,
The land of Likup whose fingernails are long like those of
sago-eating Melanaus,
The abode of the shaman whose arms stretch out like those
of Malays offering adzes for sale,
Her husband is Lanyu, expert in the setting of fish traps;
Her darling is Galuma, skilled in the casting of nets in
the rivers of Europe.

320

They reach the rock called Bedan, from which Lang surveys
their route to the ritual.

This is the mountain, also called Nyamangga Renjan, that
rears up like the edge of a sword,

This is the home of the young bard called Langgong,

The abode of Raja Manila, of long-lasting fame.

325

The party halts to survey the scene.

"What is that thing like the shell of a tortoise there
at sky's edge?"

"It is the land of Raja Nisit, whose heart was brave from
his youth, who would not retreat even a foot."

"What are those rays at the yellow sky's edge like the
stripes on the head of a hornbill?"

"It is the land of Sabubu Uling the son of the marauding
ogre Nising."

330

"What is that place criss-crossed by creepers that stretch
up to the sky?"

What is that place where a huge rock is forever swept by
the howling wind?"

"It is the land of the ogre with one arm and no feet."

"What is that there on the top of that uplifted plateau?"

"It is the land of an ancient spirit formed from a handful
of loose earth."

335

"What is that place swept by both rain and sunshine?"

"It is the land of Buga, the brother of the ogre Setua Tuie."

"What is that towering white rock adzed smooth by those tree-
dwelling frogs?"

"That is the land of Raja Dugas, whose back is so hot that
it glows like amber."

"What is that place which glows like the crimson flower of
the hibiscus?"

340

"That is the land which separates spirits from humans."

"What is that jutting rock on which young men hang their
swords,

Across river from which a notched ladder reaches up to the
skies?"

"It is the land of Raja Suka Sagadok, he who dwells by the
darkening sky from which rain begins to fall."

"What is that there at the edge of the shuddering sky?"

345

"It is the land of Grandfather Raja Saragadam, who can
divide night from day."

"What is that place where pebbles glint beside the
motionless sea?

And that rock shaped like a spur that juts out in the
expanse of water?"

"It is the land of the Water Rajah, who lives on that
lonely island, ever swept by the wash of oars."

"What is that place where sandy beaches look like mounds
of *padi*?"

350

"It is the land of Raja Sramugah who, owning the earth
egg, can create human settlements."

"What is that place with a hanging stone that sounds like
a brass gong being pounded?"

"It is the land of Mecca, where the Malay Lawai on
pilgrimage, prostrates himself in prayer."

"What is that, like a huge mango tree, adorned with bangles
of brass?"

"It is the land of the eagle Garuna Raja Bedali."

355

"What is that place at the mouth of Singapore river?"

"It is the land of the White Rajah who loves to stand on
the poop deck of his yacht."

"What is that at the mouth of the Batang Ai?"

"It is the land of Father Tane who though twice married
is still seeking wives."

"What is that place near Tanjong Datu where boats are
moored?"

360

"It is the land of the Chinese who trade in turtle eggs."

"What is that place at the mouth of the Sarawak river where
oil lamps gleam?"

"It is the land of Chinese, who are skilled in the working
of silver."

A huge wild lily, a long winding creeper:

After surveying all these lands Lang and his band kindle
a fire.

365

Ketupong strikes the flint stones,

Bejampong twirls the fire stick.

From a container, rice is taken out, just enough for one
meal, with a handful of rock salt.

"Should you be cold, then bask in the rays of the sun,

Should you be hot, then seek out the mists of the morning;

370

If you want pickled fish then go to the husband of Jaban,
whose bamboo containers are full of fish;

If you want pickled pork then go to grandmother Jelapi, who
is skilled in the trapping of pigs."

A knot upon a tree, a huge lily in flower:

Having rested they resume their journey.

They come upon a rock of diamond glistening like

molten iron;

375

Its base flashes like reflections in a mirror.

It is the land of Jadang, the wooden door, so admired

by the sons of kings,

The abode of Jadam, the door on which humans dote.

"Who has that name, father?"

"Your Grandfather Ungak, who sits hunched up,

380

He is a man of immense wealth,

Married to Utak, spirit of the brass box in which

silver implements are stored,

And to Sudan, spirit of the diamond box in which gold

is kept."

"Who has that name, mother?"

"Gagela, your grandmother, whose wealth is enormous,

385

And who is known as 'The mat on which the drowsy sleep'."

"I am not going to the ritual, for my work is preparing

fibre for the making of nets,

And the tying of fish hooks on to lines."

Journeying on they come to the cliffs of the red sky,

that tower like a massive jar,

L377-378, 'The door' referred to in these lines is the moon.

They come to the crags of the crimson sky, coloured like
a radiant turban,

390

The land of Chaling, with the yellow-striped jacket,
The abode of Nira clad in a many coloured jacket decorated
with the scented flowers of jungle vines.

His wife is Sudan, guardian of the ladder of the sky,
His darling is Kumang, about whose ladder clouds drift.

A knot upon a tree, a clump of saplings:

395

Lang and his party halt and ask if they can use the sky
ladder.

"We want to use your ladder, Uncle Bulan Blaka, our leader
of old."

"My rainbow ladder, young kinsmen, must not be used by
maidens who are seeking husbands;

My ladder of clouds must not be used by bachelors who are
searching for wives."

"No, Uncle, we want to descend your ladder to get to a feast;
No, Uncle, your ladder of clouds we want to use to go to a
ritual."

400

"If that be so, young kinsmen, then you may use it;
For this ladder is often descended by feast-goers."

Behold, the ladder of the moon is lowered to the land of
Samuyan, the spirit of boats with rearing bows and sterns,

The gleaming ladder of brass is lowered to the land of
Sagalah, the spirit of store houses;

405

Whose wife is the mottled sky that glows with yellow light,

A bowl of turmeric ornamented with ivory.

They arrive at the place of drifting clouds,

At the place from which the wind blows.

The land of Burong Undan, the wreathed hornbill,

410

The abode of Sepu Bara, the glowing ember;

Whose wife is a severed stem of bamboo,

Whose darling is the flesh of an egg plant,

The youngest sister of Kumang, whose cheeks are striped,

Of Singgar with the incised brow.

415

"I'm not going to the feast, my work is to dispense pads

of raw cotton for the drying up of tears,

I am not attending the ritual, my work is to deliver

baskets of rice."

They reach a stockade as high as a man,

A clump of palms as high as is a man's liver;

This forest is the border of our domain,

420

The land of Sa Iba Iba who lives where the road to the

After World begins;

Of Sudan, fancifully adorned with wild flowers.

"I am not going to the Cave of the Wind, my work is seeing

to the flow of the Limban River in the Land of the Dead;

I am not attending the feast, my work is tending the

fearsome bridge that leads to the After World."

They come to a long and winding ridge like a twisted piece

of palm frond,

425

A high mountain like the corner of a plaited basket,
The land of Nirok brave defender of the land,
The abode of the mythical bird Ara
Whose wife is Sudan, the embroider of cloth;
Whose darling is the bolt that locks the door of the sky.

430

"I am not going to the ritual for my work is seeing that
the sun shines down on the flowers of the forest;
"I am not going to the feast, for my work is caring for
the golden rays of the sun, as they beam down on the
flowers."

They reach the hollow trunk of a *mawang* tree that had
been hit by thunder;

A clump of palms, the fronds of which rustle with the sound
of a stringed instrument played by a Chinese Rajah;
The land of Babuling, who bathes by the muddy banks of
Brunei,

435

The abode of Maluda, the great Rajah,
Whose wife is Kanching, the tightly fitting door of the day,
His darling is the flower of the *padi*, every seed of which
grows.

"I am not going to the ritual, my work is looking after the
dry season which forms the ponds where fish spawn,
I am not going to the feast for my work is looking after
the dry season that makes the swiddens ready for firing."

440

A tree, with leaves the size of mosquito nets, in which
leaf-eating monkeys sleep,

The land of Sa-Kuang Kapong, the cuckoo,

The abode of Ulop, spirit of the cooking stand

Whose wife is the green leaf bird,

Whose darling is a collared owl.

445

I am not going, for my work is to look after the fig

tree on which fruits fish feed,

So that it may continuously bear abundant fruit.

Travelling on they come to a valley filled with strange
noises,

Overgrown with *rembai* trees from which fruit hang in
bunches,

The land of Marara, the king of the birds, who lives
deep in the forest,

450

His betrothed is Dayang Sludang, the fruit of the *Mawang*
tree,

Whose right arm is thick with shell bracelets,

His darling is Dara Sra, the flower of the *Kamatan* tree,

The maiden Beraria on whose chest hang necklaces of beads.

"I am not going to the ritual, my work is to keep creepers

from climbing into the house;

455

L449 *Rembai* is a species of tree with edible, yellow-coloured fruit resembling grapes.

L451 The *Mawang* tree is a gigantic species of mango with brown skin and yellow-coloured flesh which is somewhat fibrous. Its taste varies from sour to sweet.

L453 The *Kamatan* tree is a species of rambutan.

To care for the *rembai* tree with its flower like the tassels of swords."

The trunk of a *sengkajang* tree, that when hit has the sound of the drums of the Maloh,

A lofty branch of the *perawan* tree, on which a brief shower falls,

The Land of Laja, the spirit of a cicada, who tells of the coming night,

The abode of Sa Ilin Ilin, who plays about at sunset,

460

Whose wife is known as the shaman Manyaian,

Whose darling is the oil lamp of the night.

"I am not going to the feast for when darkness comes I must help a young man build a shelter for the night; And when night comes I must help the warriors to plant spikes of bamboo."

Coming to the tree from which knife handles are made,

465

They reach a tree still wet with the mists of morning,

The land of the cicada, Tarantang Bejit,

The abode of Rajah Malana, who may not be moved,

Whose wife is the roasted yam, who sings without tiring,

His darling is a grasshopper who chirps without getting

hoarse.

470

"I am not going to the ritual, but my voice foretells the successful holding of a ritual;

L457-458

Sengkajang and *perawan* trees provide commercial timber in Sarawak.

I am not going to the feast, but if you hear my voice at
noon it means that Kling has caught a huge white pig."

At the foot of the shifting tree where Rajah Nyendia calls
to his loved one,
And by the smoke enveloped mountain, where Aji, when hungry,
cooks his food;

The land of Father Ramba, loud of voice, 475

The abode of Tuan Atam, whose headdress is adorned with
tiny bells;

Whose wife is the glow from a flaring fire of resin,
His darling is the glow of twilight, as on the night of full
moon.

"I am not going to the ritual where the stars cluster, for
I am afraid of the dogs whose bodies are encircled with
stripes;

I am not coming with you Uncle Lang, for I am afraid of
the dogs with wooden collars." 480

They reach a red rock like the house of a Chinese Raja,
A white rock like a fort of Rajah Brooke,
The land of Laja Gila Kachuan, who lives in clay,
The abode of Remaung, the tiger spirit who dwells behind
stone doors;

Whose wife is Yak, a chip of quartz, 485

His darling is the branch of the *gansurai* tree.

L486 The *Gansurai* or *Ensurai* tree is commonly found growing by the
river bank. Fish feed on its fallen fruit.

"Yesterday, Uncle, I waited, but you did not come;
The day before yesterday, Uncle, I waited, at the crossroads;
I want to go with you to the feast, for I want to eat the
offerings in the shrine;
I want to go with you Uncle Lang, to eat the offerings on
the roof top."

490

Those in front reach the peak of Merebong Jawa that curves
upward like a gourd,
Those in the rear reach the hill of the threshing frame shaped
like a stork,
The land of Betuah, shaman of good fortune, whose shelves are
laden with gold;
The abode of Ngendai, possessor of countless jars,
Whose husband is Limbi, the sounding board of the *padi* mortar; 495
Whose betrothed is the head of a drum the sound of which
echoes to Rabong mountain.

"Yesterday I waited for you but you did not come,
The day before yesterday I waited for you at the crossroads;
Look, my possessions are still scattered on the gallery;
And my basket is still hanging in the loft." 500

They come to a valley showered with beads,
And a lowland that echoes like the gentle tapping of a jar;
The land of Antu Gayu, the spirit of long life,

L496 The Iban believe that when a *manang* dies he or she will go to Rabong mountain. This is an actual mountain in Borneo.

The abode of Antu Lama, the spirit of past ages;
Whose wife is skilled in the mixing of dyes, 505
Whose darling is Long, the shell bracelet, who bathes
in the water of love charms.

"The day before yesterday I waited for you at the
crossroads,
Yesterday I waited for you at the landing stage by the
river."

At Ringgit Mayang mountain on which rests a three notched
stone,

At Limbang where white waters flow, 510
The land of Biku, youngest of the gods,
The abode of Pantan Inan Jadia;
Her betrothed is Sepungga Rirang, the warrior, overturner
of lands;

Her husband is Datu Au Tuan Baginda.

"I am coming up with you to the feast, since I have
showered him with grated turmeric, 515
Since I have sprinkled him with betel nut juice."

They reach the valley of silver stones,
The place of flint stones and magnets,
The land of young Sampandai,
The abode of Sampetok, the blacksmith; 520

L515-516 See notes in Part I:L116.

Whose wife is a blanket of silk,
Whose betrothed is the blossoming clouds.
"I am coming to the ritual, since it was I who forged
its holder into a human;
Since it was I who fashioned the eyes of that young man."

They reach the pool of precious jars, 525
They come to its steep banks, with its steps of iron;
The land of Sa Ugan Ugan, the iron cooking stand,
The abode of Sa Angam Angam, the palms of whose hands are
most powerful;

Whose wife is the maiden, of black calico cloth,
Whose darling is a woman's corselet made from tiny rings
of silver. 530

"I am not going to the ritual, for my work is looking after
the whet stones,
Looking after the whet stones so smooth."

The place where bananas flourish,
A valley overgrown with *Menuang* trees,
Cascading water, falling like a shower of rain; 535
The land of Jembu, who lives on a boulder, and whose
fame as a trader has spread from the head of the
Lemanak river,

The abode of a trader, whose fame is heard from the head of
the Kanowit river and the mountain where Kumang sleeps;

L534 *Menuang* trees are commonly found growing on river banks. The
timber of the *menuang* is not of great commercial value.

Whose wife is Kumang Lemok who comes from a hollow rock
with an opening the size of a gimlet tip,

Whose darling is Kumang Giri, who comes from a tall pillar
of rock.

"I am not going to the ritual for I am purifying a slab of
gold that I found while digging;

540

I am not going to the feast to the region of clustering
stars, for I am purifying a slab of silver that I found
among the blossoms of areca palms."

A hollow in the earth, shaped like a plate,

A mound of earth shaped like a liver,

The land of Beta, the new rajah,

The abode of a newly found bard,

545

Whose wife is Lulong, the brass box in which the *padi*
spirit keeps his magical charms,

Kumang, the *padi* measure that people use in trading.

"I am joining you to eat at the feast,

I am going with you to the ritual."

The hill on which bark bins are made,

550

The plain where *padi* luxuriantly grows,

The land of the most renowned Sa Uga Uga,

The abode of Sa Umang, who is of immense wealth;

Whose wife is Kumang, the star that guides the *padi* farmer,

Sudan, the stone of the moon, on which the Iban dote.

555

"I am going with you so that we will together reach the
land of mortals,

I am going along so that I may feast on chicken."

Arriving at the hill, washed by rain, where young
bamboos grow,

At the ridge overgrown with the sacred plants that
safeguard *padi*,

The land of Pulang Gana,

560

The abode of the great leader, Merum

Whose wife is the sun hat, seen crossing the rice fields,

Sudan, the earth mound marking a boundary,

The daughter of Kling, the spirit of the river.

"Yesterday, I waited beside the rice field,

565

The day before yesterday, I waited at the cross-roads;

I am going to the feast, to take augural sticks on which
young men rest their harvesting baskets;

I am going to the ritual to take augural sticks used when
felling the virgin forest."

They reach a hollow that vibrates like beaten drums,

A place that has the sound of a shaman shaking a threshing
frame,

570

The land of Manyaiang, sister of Sapulang, cultivator of
flowers,

The abode of Manjaia, sister of Pulang Gana, whose
possessions are many,

Who is married to Patinggi Demang, keeper of slaves,

Sapati Paiang, who possesses many servants.

"Before I go to the ritual in the Place of Recurrent
Desire,

575

Wait, while I summon my Kanto slave,
Who has gone off walking on the ridge beyond yonder hill,
Whom I bought with sugar cane.

Before I go to the feast in the Land Below the Moon,

Wait, while I summon my Kayan slave,

580

Who has gone off to the ridge by the river flats,
Whom I bought with a packet of tobacco."

They reach a spreading plain,

A great river dredged out by a bowl made from a gourd,

The land of the Baketan called Manju, who is your affine

but my kinsman, his shoulders tattooed with lizards,

585

The abode of the Baketan called Manyam my kinsman, but

your affine, his arms profusely tattooed

Whose wife is a maiden who carries a pack with strange patterns,

Whose darling is Kumang Redut who carries a basket on

which are designs of grinning humans.

"I am going to the ritual, Papau, so that I may take along
a tobacco charm

Retrieved from a bamboo staff used during discussion in the
Government's fort;

590

L585-587 Freeman in Report on the Iban, 1970 writes: "A very significant feature of the Iban migrations into the Rejang basin, was the special relationship — symbiotic in character — which existed between the Iban and the Baketans" (p.134). Pringle in Rajans and Rebels, 1970 states "They (Baketans) tended to accommodate themselves to the more advance culture of the new comers (Iban) ... their leaders intermarried with the Ibans" (p.39).

I am going to the feast to the Cave of the Wind, so that
I may take along a sago charm
Plucked from a bark container for use in confronting Malay
elders and numbing their wits."

The red fronded fern that looks like an *ikat* pattern,
A climbing fern that curls like a bangle of brass,
The land of Enslua, who snatches anything in sight, 595
The abode of Chin Ulin, who is quick to hide,
Whose husband is Nyaing, with the slanting hair cut;
Sagungong, the master of the forge.

"You cannot go to the feast," says Lang, "for the possessions
of humans are everywhere scattered.

You cannot go to the ritual for the clothing of Ibans is
so carelessly cast about." 600

"Ketupong, on your return from the feast, bring me rice
cakes made with bananas;

Beragai, on your return from the feast, bring me puffed rice
that looks like a heap of white flowers."

The buttress roots of a towering tree, that are like the
fort of a Malay Rajah,

A fallen tree like a long dead bachelor,

The land of Abang Ranguang, the millipede, 605

601-602. When the guests return from a ritual festival, their hosts usually give them some rice cakes, food, drinks, and other delicacies to take home with them. Such action the Iban believe ensures that the spirits who were not able to attend the feast will at least get some of the food that was provided.

The abode of Ulop, who plugs the holes in areca palms,
Whose wife is Suli, the singing insect,
His darling is the magpie robin,
The youngest daughter of Jinap who heralds the dawn,
The maiden Kanching who cares for the hinges of the door
of the sun.

610

They come to the forest of interweaving branches,
To the forest where great trees grow,
There, the squirrels while playing on the branches of the
trees are stunned to silence,
On seeing the silver bracelets on the arms of Lang's
daughters.

Gibbons lose the power of motion,

615

On seeing the rings of Papau's wife that gleam like the
light reflected in the eyes of a river prawn.

Wild boars are unable to run from their wallows,

On seeing the skirts of Lang's daughters, profusely decorated
cowries as thickly as jungle fruit on a branch.

Deer are rooted to the ground,

On seeing the silver corselets of Lang's daughters that have
the rushing sound of a tidal wave.

The main route along the ridge has too many openings from
from which enemies might attack;

The route of those who hunt with dogs is glowing with embers;

The route of those who snare birds is strewn with the
fallen feathers of argus pheasants;

The route of those who hunt with blow pipes is strewn
with dead gibbons;

The route of those who set pig traps is blocked by newly
cut undergrowth;

625

The route of the brave is strewn with human jaws and
teeth;

The route of the wealthy is set about with jars of great
value;

The route of successful farmers is marked by bins full
of *padi*.

There is no wonder that the undergrowth is uprooted,
That the grass is trampled and withered,

630

For this is the wide way that most people travel,
Which is why the ground is always muddy.

Look, the leeches that travellers have severed are still
squirming;

The residue of chewed betel, is still red and wet with
saliva.

There are no dead leaves rearing up like the rustled
feathers of a rooster,

635

The branches no longer brush our brows.

"Why are there chips the size of serrated teeth broken
from these stones?

Why have trees been cleared from the path with adzes?

"Whose path is it, Father?" asks one of Lang's daughters.

"It is the path of Kling, the son of my brother Chananing
Langkang."

640

A towering tree by a solitary house,
The land of Selendik, the ant who lives on a dried bamboo,
The abode of Selenda, who lives at the crossroads,
Whose wife is the kettle for serving guests,
Whose darlings are prawns sitting two abreast. 645

They come to an old resting place from which the morning
mist never lifts,
A huge resting place that cannot be encircled in a day's walk.

A knot on a tree flowers along a ridge:
"Here let us stop and listen."
Listening to sounds from that ridge as far as the ledge
of yonder rock, 650

We hear no music or songs;
Listening to the headwaters of the Lemanak river,
We hear no sound of beaten gongs like the cry of the
helmeted hornbill when flying.

Listen now to the Amang river;
And harken to the sound of the drums that are beaten when
welcoming guests to a feast; 655

That is the land to which we are going to attend the ritual,
That is the longhouse where we will join in the feasting."

Great lilies are flowering:
Having listened, the party travels on.
Hearing the flapping of wings as mynas fly off, 660
Hearing the rapid tapping of wood-peckers on dead branches,

They come to an old rice field where the trunks of felled
trees are decaying,

To secondary growth, thick with saplings.

"How beautiful is the scorched forest around the *padi*
fields, like a colourfully striped turban;

How beautiful are the scaffoldings from which the trees
are felled like the framework of a hut, or of the house
of a European doctor;

665

How beautiful are the posts on which hornbill icons are
lifted high beyond the glare of human eyes;

How beautiful the rods of whittled wood that can be used
as the pounders for pulverizing poisonous roots;

How beautiful is this bathing place overhung by a tree that
leans out over the river like the upward flight of a
locust;

How beautiful is this well-shaded tree its fruit bunched
like clusters of tinkling bells;

How beautiful are the steep banks to which fishing lines
and traps are fastened;

670

How beautiful these eroded banks, smoother than the surface
of a shield;

How beautiful that rambutan tree with one great cluster
of fruit;

How beautiful is the ground rooted up by pigs, that looks
as though it has been hoed."

L666 This line refers to rows of hornbill icons fastened high on poles
(*sandong*) during a Hornbill Festival, or *Gawai Kenyalang*.

Those in the lead reach a tree knot on which green frogs
live,

And two fallen trees lying side by side; 675

The land of Pugai, the boat, who walks backward,

The abode of Guyu, who grazes the river boulders;

Whose wife is a bird with a white-striped tail,

His darling is a paddle with a curved blade.

With high scaffolding fell the knotted tree: 680

"Here we rest for water in which to bathe;

What about the end of this pool, Uncle Pugai, can we
dive and bathe in it?"

"No, my friends, not since we left the headwaters of the

Baleh, near the rock leapt over by Tijok,

Not since we retreated from the Gat river,

Not since we have gathered in the Mujong river, 685

Now that the Rejang river is uninhabited up to the

Tukok rapids.

Ever since we migrated to the Menuan river,

The Poi river has been deserted,

L684-685 In May, 1915 a large government force attacked and defeated the illegal Iban migrants led by Merum in the headwaters of Mjuong rivers, and forced them to settle below Kapit. Then in 1918 the government for the second time dispatched a punitive expedition against the Iban in Gat river. The expedition was a success and the Iban migrants were forced to settle in Menuan river below Kapit (Freeman 139: 140), cf. Chapter I.

L688 It is likely that during the 'land rush' to the Baleh from 1906 to 1918 the Poi river was deserted by the Iban who once lived there.

The people of Kanowit have migrated to the Delok river,
And longhouses no longer stand along the Mujok river, 690
Ever since we have migrated from the Katibas river,
Our maidens have been flirting with the soldiers of Rajah
Brooke;
Their mothers have become obsessed with charms for enticing
lovers.

The women no longer have rings on their fingers,
The men no longer wear loin cloths. 695
This pool at the head of this reach of the river, you
cannot bathe in
For I have thrown into it a handful of scented fruit
Together with charms given by an owl who laments for the
wailing moon."

L689 At the turn of the 20th century when the Iban settlers in the Kanowit region were caught between the hostilities of the Iban rebels led by Bantin and Ngumbang, and the government forces from lower Rejang, they either migrated further up the Rejang or went back to the Batang Lupar river and joined the rebels. H.S.B. Johnson reported of this migration: "On my way back I stopped at Kanowit and there received news that some eighty or ninety doors of the Dyaks living in Kanowit had moved up river and had gone either to Entimau hill or to join the rebels in Btg Lupar river" (S.G. Vol.XXXV, p.211). Delok river is a tributary of Batang Lupar.

L690 Mujok river is a tributary of the Kanowit river.

L691 The Iban migrants began settling in the main Rejang river in small numbers soon after the Kayan Expedition of 1863 when the Iban of Katibas joined forces with the Rajah that a huge influx of Iban migrants was seen along the Rejang and its tributaries.

L695 It is plausible to suppose that some Iban, especially those who were enlisted in the government regular force established in 1862 known as the Sarawak Rangers, discarded the traditional loin cloth as early as the second half of the 19th century. However, their number must have been quite small, for a substantial proportion of the Iban in the region wore loin cloths as late as the 1950s.

"Where are the sweet waters, Uncle Pugai, in which there
are fish without bones?

Where is the river of heads in which there are fish with
jaws sharply pointed?"

700

"There is the mouth of the river that's like a silver belt
flanked by huge, overhanging trees;

There is the long bed of stones at the river's mouth,
Said to have once been a gigantic hardwood ladder with
the circumference of a big bark bin.

Today it has been reduced by human feet to the size of
a gimlet;

It is the place where Kumang bathes and washes her silver
belts,

705

That she puts around her waist below her ribs."

Finding a bathing place they ask for scrubbers,

Made from the rind of the *ranggir* fruit which a young man
fathers, by climbing,

And for blocks of soap that adventurers bring from the
distant coasts.

A tree with paired leaves is falled:

710

Fibre scrubbers in hand they make ready to bathe.

L708 The dried rind of *ranggir* fruit after being pounded into small
pieces were commonly used by the Iban to wash their hair.

L709 In the old days soap was a very rare commodity, and could only
be obtained from distant coasts| towns (cf. Ward, 1966:42).

The sound made by the wife of Ketupong while plunging
in yonder pool,

Is like that of gong beaten in alarm;

The sound made by the wife of Beragai while swimming in
the rapids,

Is like that of a sudden shower of rain;

715

The sound made by the wife of Pangkas while splashing in
the swift current,

Is like that of wild ferns being cut;

The sound made by the wife of Kutok while bathing in the
pool,

Is like that of six maidens pounding *padi*.

A small frog swims at the river mouth:

720

Having bathed, they clamber on to the river bank to change.

Taking off their wet clothes they put on dry garments,

Their everyday clothes they replace with festive dress.

Plain calico is replaced by splendidly fringed loin cloths
purchased from the sale of gutta-percha;

Plain cotton is replaced by silken loin cloths, bought with
a prized bezoar stone.

725

How magnificane are the men's bright loin cloths woven from
cotton thread,

L724-725

In former days the principal means of obtaining cash open to the Iban was the collecting of jungle products such as gutta-percha, dammar resin, rattan, bezoar stones, and of late, timber. Such collecting led to Iban staying in the jungle for as long as three years. The cash obtained from such ventures was used to buy jars, brass gongs, silver ware, clothes, and other items which the Iban did not produce themselves (cf. also Austin, 1977:88-93).

Which are matched by the women's patterned skirts with
tinkling bells along their hems.

How beautiful are the men's brass ear-rings, gently swaying,
caressing their shoulders,

Which are matched by the graceful ear pendants of the
women.

How elegant are the calves of the men, adorned with the
plaited fibres of wild ferns,

730

Which are matched by the ivory bracelets of the women.

How handsome are the myriad black bands around the arms
of the men,

Which are matched by the shell bracelets of the women.

Quickly fell the tree while beside the waterfall fungus
quivers:

Having donned festive attire, the women style their hair.

735

"In styling our hair into buns, we must imitate no one

But Lulong, the woman of Gelong,

For her bun has a single twist in which there is a crimson
flower.

In styling our hair into buns, says the wife of Beragai,
we must imitate no one

But Jawai, the woman of Panggau,

740

For her bun has a single twist, in which there is a white
flower."

A quivering fungus beside a fall, the falling of leaves:

Having styled their hair, Lang offers his advice.

"Listen to me, you kinsmen who are still young and tender,"

says Singalang Burong,

"On our arrival at the landing place of this longhouse,

745

It is likely we'll be welcomed by many beautiful young
maidens,

Who will make merry and eagerly offer us rice wine,

So if some of us get finger marks and scratches on our
backs and sides,

Upon our return, do not show them to your wives and sweethearts,

But hide them under your garment and, should they become
known,

750

Say they are marks made when playing with children.

Put all the wet clothes in the house of mother Chamandah
Yang,

Put those but partly wet, in a basket, and take it to the
house of Dirak Kumpang.

From the room there comes a maiden who supposedly has never
worn a sunhat, yet there is one upon her head.

A celebrated woman who claims never to have been married,
yet who has been divorced sixteen times within a single
month.

755

L752 If an Iban longhouse has been suffering from frequent death, sickness and the like, this longhouse is considered to be *angat* (hot), and certain rites have to be performed to 'cool' it. This rite usually involves the construction of a small hut (*langkau sukul*) beside the entry ladder to the longhouse in which offerings are put. This small hut is not demolished when the rites are over, and it is here that 'mother Chamandah Yang' lives. She is, according to Iban myth, the sister of Lang's wife.

On seeing her beauty, Ketupong, kisses her on her nose,
which is scented like a mango.

Then Ketupong fondles her breasts, which are like
swellings on the trunk of tapang tree.

"Do not do that, kinsman, for I am without question your
mother-in-law,

I am, without doubt, the sister of your wife's mother.

Now, you are cursed, and won't know the way into enemy
territory."

760

"Not so, Aunt, in the future you will see that the head
that I take will fill a large carrying basket."

"If you go hunting with your blowpipe you'll be cursed
when the poison on your darts fails to kill."

"Not so, Aunt, in the future you will see that hundreds
of monkeys will fall when I shake the jungle creepers."

"If you go fishing with poisonous roots you will be
cursed with a flash flood."

"Not so, Aunt, in the future you will see me summon up a
dry season twice eight months in duration."

765

"If you go hunting with dogs you will be cursed by losing
your way."

"Not so, Aunt, for I have a charm from an animal that
never budes."

"Instead, you, Aunt, will be cursed when the dew fails to
fall on the cotton you've processed for weaving."

"Not so, young kinsman, for I have a charm for controlling
the weather."

"If you want to weave, Aunt, you won't be able to work
the loom."

770

"Not so, young kinsman, for I have a charm for refreshing
my spirits."

Fell the tree with the high scaffolding, a quid of chewing
tobacco:

Having put away their wet clothes, they look up at the
longhouse.

"What a remarkable longhouse," exclaim the children of Lang,

"Look at the turbans hanging from the loft,

775

As they do in the longhouse next to that of

The spirit with long ears and the horns of a deer, the
father of Kling.

How noisy are the people of this longhouse where soon we
shall be feasting,

As noisy as though they were, with their bare hands,
smashing up the skull of a wild boar.

How noisy are those there at the far end, like the sound
of fire flaring up in a swidden cut from the virgin
forest."

780

"Of course, it is so, dear children,

There are fifty-five men dressed in war jackets of cotton,

Who, in battle, are able to use, as shields, the palms of
their hands."

From the fronds of jungle palms the roof of a house is made:

Lang and Pulang Gana discuss who should first climb up to
the longhouse.

785

"Who other than you should go first, Uncle Lang?"

And so, Lang, in his magnificent headdress, leads the way,

Followed by Uncle Pulang Gana,

Followed by Se-Merum, the wealthy elder,

Followed by the speckled bird, Ketupong,

790

Followed by Beragai, the father of Chalegai Lampong,

Followed by Galiga Tandang: the gallant Bejampong,

Followed by Papau, the father of Tengkalang Pangkong, the gong.

After which come the women:

The first of them is Lang's wife, Dara Mentaba, the

flowering wild orchid,

795

Followed by Sulah, the wild lily,

Followed by the Bud of the Red Hibiscus,

The procession looks most beautiful, like the bracelets

arranged on a maiden's arm.

Around the palisade of the longhouse there are concealed

pits in plenty,

And the intervening ground is thick with spikes of sharpened

bamboo.

800

Also there are heaps of cakes made from rice and bananas,

L799-800

In the old days when wars and raids were frequent Iban long-houses were surrounded by wooden palisades around which numerous hidden pits (*engkelubang*) were dug in which sharpened bamboo spikes were planted. The intervening ground was thickly planted with sharpened bamboo spikes (cf. Chapter I).

L801-802

These are the remnants of offerings which the Iban have thrown to the ground for spirits to eat.

With mounds of puffed rice that has the appearance of
white blossoms.

Sprinkling water on the offered food, the guests arrive
at the foot of the notched ladder of entry.

For as long as it takes to chew a quid of betel, let us
turn to another aspect of this scene.

Let us see what is happening in his longhouse that
stretches like a vine.

805

Let us see what is happening in his house, so crowded
with children.

"What is that noise coming up into the longhouse?

What are those sounds of voices by the hundred coming
up from the river?

Alas! Our palisades are being assaulted by an enemy!

Alas! Burning torches will be thrown into our lofts!"

810

Pulau Ajau arises, with his keenly seeing eyes,

Standing on the verandah, beside a railing, he regards
the scene.

"Why, that is Lang and party come to join in our feast.

That is Lang and his followers, come in human form as
though they were Iban."

L814 The Ibans believe that when Lang, his sons-in-law, and other members of his entourage attend a *gawai* in the land of mortals, they come in human form, but are invisible to human eyes. There is, however, a story of Lang and his sons-in-law, being actually seen and entertained by their Iban hosts. The guests real identity was not known until Lang at the end of the *gawai* declared: "I am Singalang Burong, and these are my sons-in-law and their friends" (Gomes, 1911:159-160).

Ketupong and Lang, their glittering and quivering
swords at the sides, ascend the notched ladder of
entry.

815

Across their shoulders are big-bladed spears.

As their feet tread the notched ladder, their hands
grasp its bamboo railings.

They soon reach the top of the ladder, the place where
trophy heads are received.

"Go slowly, for Kumang and Lulong are still attending
to their hair and putting on their silver belts."

The two women now go towards treasured jars,
To fetch rice wine, which they put in large bowls and
then lift with two arms.

820

They walk out of the great wooden door of the room,
Looking up and down the longhouse,

They see a growing shadow cast by Lang and his throng
as they come up to partake in the feast.

Puyu walks up to Lang who stands like a massive stone,
Or like the roof of a house.

825

A great bowl brimming with rice wine is offered to him.

He puts the bowl to his lips and begins to drink,

Its contents recede like the drying up of a pool,

The rice wine disappears from the bowl.

830

"Don't you long for more, Uncle, as when interrupted
while *tuba* fishing by sudden flooding?"

Don't you feel left wanting, Uncle, like a loving widow
while she waits for the last of the death rituals?
If you want some more, Uncle, we will fetch another jar."

"Enough! for I am not like an *ipoh* tree from which sap
can be ceaselessly drawn;

Enough! I am not like a boat that you can go on loading; 835

Enough! I am not like a basket than can be stretched
for ever;

Lest I become unable to hold my head straight, and my
red turban falls like withered petals."

Then Lang, in a jesting mood, reaches out, touching their
nipples and fondling their breasts.

Jawai and Lulong at once retaliate by scratching his
sides, leaving bright red marks.

"Not so fast, ladies, wait until the basket on my back
in which there is a certain 'seed' has been laid on
the floor, 840

Then we shall besport ourselves like long-nosed monkeys."

Clinging to a branch the yellow-crowned bulbul speaks,
As does Rajah Kiro, who calls to the women to prepare
an offering in welcome.

L832 According to Iban customary law, for a period of at least 3 months after the death of a spouse the surviving partner is prohibited from remarriage. In the old days the widow or widower could not marry until she or he was formally released by the holding of a *gawai antu* (Festival of the Dead). This period of prohibition was 3 years (Richards, 1963: 37).

Kumang and Lulong hurriedly bring plates and bowls to
welcome the gods.

Kumang is holding a huge and treasured crackle-ware,
celadon plate.

845

A felled areca palm, its fronds in disarray:
Lang and fellows seat themselves on the floor,
Sugarcane juice they drink straight from the wooden wringer.
Gamuti palm wine they take straight from the trunk of the
palm.

They taste the deliciously sweet wine, whose maker must
not have touched anything sour for the previous seven
days.

850

Uncle Lang then drinks the potent sweet wine in which
some rock salt has been put.

Lang's fingers put in a plate the eggs of a red-feathered
hen,

His fingers then add to the offering tiny lumps of rice,
exquisitely wrapped in banana leaf;

His fingers add glutinous rice expertly enclosed in
plaited packets of palm frond;

L850 After the glutinous rice has been sprinkled with yeast and put
into jars, the makers or brewers were prohibited from handling any
sour fruits or vegetables for seven days. Such action, according to
the Iban, would cause the wine to become sour and horrible in taste.
Today this prohibition is not strictly enforced, nevertheless the
hands must be thoroughly washed before touching the content in the
jars.

With ceremonial aplomb Lang waves over the offering, a
prized fighting cock,

855

While uttering a prayer that sounds like a shaman calling
aloud to an incubus spirit.

A knot upon a tree, a long winding creeper:

The welcoming ceremony over, Lang looks about for an Iban
to sacrifice the pig.

"Would you, Galaian, accept my request to sacrifice this
huge boar?"

"Not me, Lang, for I am ashamed at having been branded as
loquacious."

860

"What about you, Gluma, will you sacrifice this well fed
pig?"

"Not me, Lang, for I am ashamed at having been called the
husband of a female shaman."

"What about you, young Tutong, will you sacrifice this
huge wild boar?"

"Not me, Lang, for I have already been asked to make an
offering to the main post of the longhouse."

"What about you, Pau, will you sacrifice this newly
offered pig?"

865

L856 The Iban believe that if an Iban woman has suffered frequent miscarriages she is likely to be possessed by *antu buyu* (incubus). To prevent further miscarriages a *manang* is called to slay the incubus. Briefly, the *manang* prepares some offerings and then invokes the spirit to come and eat. When the spirit comes the *manang* then slays him with his spear (cf. Freeman "Shaman and Incubus" in *The Psychoanalytic Study of Society*, 1967, PP.315-343.

"Not me Lang, for only yesterday you had me welcome the
marauding ogre Nulang."

"In the sacrificing of pigs who better than father Karong
Besi, spirit of the tongs of iron used in forging;
In the sacrificing of pigs who better than father Bujang
Tuai, the celebrated warrior."

"How can I refuse, when you all point towards me.
How can I decline, when you all mention my name."

870

The solitary branch of a tree quivering and trembling in
the wind:

Having found someone to sacrifice the pig, a woman to
receive its liver is sought.

"To receive the liver of this huge sow, who better than
that celestial lady, Sagado Telu Burong,
To receive the liver of this great white pig, who better
than Dayang Serengang, mistress of charms."

"How can I decline, if all others refuse.

875

It must, I suppose, be me, if there is just no one else."

"We want you, lady, for you have gentle fingers and graceful
hands."

L866 The ceremony of *Ngalu Antu* (lit. Welcoming the Spirits) to a *gawai* is held at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, on the day the *gawai* commences. For further details see Chapters II and III.

L867-870 When the *timbang* comes to the arrival of Lang and his party at the longhouse the time is about 5:30 am on the second day of the *gawai*. As Lang and his party perform the *piring* ceremony and the divination of the liver of the sacrificial pig, the Iban in the longhouse emulate Lang by performing these same actions. For further details see Chapter II.

L873 Sagado Telu Burong is a woman from the skies (*indu datai ari langit*). She is the daughter of Ini Andan, the wife of Aki Ungkok who lives on the moon.

A deep notch on a tree:

Lang and father Karong Besi prepare for the sacrifice.

Lang thrusts into the pig's neck the sharp blade of a

spear, that glistens like the fatty intestines of

a fish,

880

A jet of crimson blood spurts out,

With a deep incision, made with a small bone-handled knife,

He exposes the well-formed liver that Karong Besi then cuts

free, and spreads out on sacred dracaena leaves;

The gall bladder is auspiciously clear and plump;

The liver itself is a healthy red in colour, like that of

precious heirloom beads;

885

The liver is gleaming like gold dug up from the earth.

L884-885 Cf. Jensen, 1974:138-140.

PART V

A dead branch on a tree, wood that is easily split:
The pig having been sacrificed, the hosts round up the
guests for drinking.

"Arise, Gendang Rangaiong! you have been sitting alone
for too long, like a clouded leopard."

He is up in an instant, opening the cage of a prized
fighting cock,

Grasping its tail and its feet in his hands, 5

He strides down the gallery of the longhouse,

Until he sees Papau still up there in the loft,

And Ketupong still squatting on a *padi* mortar,

He at once waves the cock above their heads and tugs at
their hands.

"It's wrong that you, cousin, Ketupong, the eldest
son-in-law of Lang, from the Towering Ridge in the
skies, should be sitting here. 10

The guests move to the centre of the gallery,

Above which are displayed superbly patterned *ikat* fabrics;

They sit on plaited mats of the finest design and texture.

Before them are two brass boxes, well filled for those who
wish to chew betel,

To one side sits Lang 15

L9

It is an Iban custom to wave a cock over the head of a guest when
inviting him to partake in a drinking session during a ritual feast.

To the other Pulang Gana

In between sit Beragai and Ketupong;

They set about comparing their headdresses,

All of which are wonderfully impressive, like towering
mountain peaks overgrown with flowers.

In sidelong glances Kumang and Lulong, 20

Admire the strength and virility of Beragai and Ketupong,

Whose heads are adorned with waving plumes,

And the backs of whose hands are adorned with tattooing.

They are thrilled at the sight of these sons-in-law of Lang,

"If we were on the coast, dear friend, we would call them

traps of thorns for catching catfish. 25

Further inland we would call them great blades of iron,

For cutting the huge bamboos used in blocking a river to
catch fully grown fish.

Up river we would call them speckled fighting cocks,

Slayers of Uma Lesong Kayans, who now no longer cry for food."

Wood that is easily split, trees growing on a ridge: 30

With the guests assembled, they start playing at comparisons.

First we compare the guests from Gelong with those from
Panggau.

About their throats all have necklaces of coiling cobras;

As does Nunyan of Panggau, and Sibau Rumbau of Gelong;

About their arms all have bracelets of centipedes; 35

L23 In former times when an Iban took a head in a fight he earned the right to have the backs of his hands tattooed (MacDonald, 1956:85).

As does Datu Au of Panggau, and Kling Jalingau of Gelong,
All have ear pendants of buzzing hornets;
As does Bungai Nuing, and father Sabalu Nyantau,
All have sitting mats of tiger skin fastened about their
waists.

A solid wall is breached,

40

A shut door is opened;

"Let us dear friend of shared memories,

Bring this big and ancient bowl,

Brimming with rice wine,

So we may entertain Uncle Lang,

45

Called the *tapang* tree that felled by Jingan, crashes
down on the lands of the Badang.

A quid of tobacco, a tall tree:

The entertaining over, attention turns to those who have
arrived late.

"Why are you late in coming, you people from Panggau, where
palm frond decorations ever wave?

Why are you late in coming, you people from the land of
well-trodden tracks?

50

Why are you late, Rajah Galagih, in coming to this land
that streams with the dew of morning?"

"I'm not really late, for at first cock crow I was on my
way,

Skirting around the base of a rotating stone,

Following the track of the shaman, Mother Jareh.

There I met a giant with deformed elbows and spindly legs, 55

Who was returning from the headwaters of the Baleh and

Kanyau,

After slaying Yong Enggong, who now no longer sells

finely decorated headdresses."

A tall breadfruit tree:

They talk about the routes they have followed.

"On your way to our feast, Ketupong, 60

Did you come by way of the cataract with eight falls?"

"We did, and having suffered a sinking were exhausted in

bailing out our boat,

But we were at least fortunate in finding a charm in its

stern, to bring to this ritual."

"On your way to our feast, Beragai,

Did you come by way of the ridge that is scorched by the

blazing sun?" 65

"We did, and at first were overwhelmed with suffering,

But later, we were cheered on finding a sunhat charm."

"On your way to our feast, Bejampong,

Did you pass a promontory criss-crossed by countless

valleys?"

"We did, and became hopelessly lost in the undergrowth, 70

L57 Yong Enggong was probably a Maloh chief living in the headwaters of the Kanyau river.

Until things improved a little when we found a pig's snout charm."

"On your way to our feast, Pangkas,
Did you pass through the region that is shaded from the
beams of the moon?"

"We did, and at first were enveloped in absolute darkness,
But later we were cheered on finding a glowing ember charm
to bring to this ritual. 75

Our over land route to this feast is pleasant,
Much pleasanter than that from the Gat waters to the
Lubin river.

Our path to this feast is pleasant,
For it is much shorter than that which winds from
Sabatang to Sangin river,

Which makes it pleasant for us in bringing our womenfolk, 80
For there is enough time for them to bathe in the river.
It is pleasant for us to bring our women folk to this feast,
For there is enough time for them to beautify themselves
in the mirrors.

Next, they turn to the comparing of great crocodiles,
Whose bellies are laden down with stones. 85

L77 Lubin is a tributary of Kanyau river. The Iban from the Baleh used to cross over the border to the Kanyau region by way of the Gat headwaters.

L84 'Crocodiles, king cobras, pythons, fighting cocks' are metaphors for Lang, his sons-in-law, and Orang Panggau. The Iban frequently make use of these animals as symbolic of persons of exceptional courage and renown.

To appraising the smooth-skinned King Cobra,
In whose flaming head flashing diamonds are set.
To comparing python with python — those snakes
That lie in wait by animal tracks.

Comparing cobras, glistening black,
That hiss from within the debris of fallen trees.

90

Comparing cocks, striped with black,
The fighting cocks of father Ipak who challenge him to
 compete in swimming in the pool in the Alu river.

Comparing the speckled fighting cocks,
Of father Ngelambong, who in pleading tones urge him to
 lay siege to a fort.

95

Comparing the fighting cocks, their plumage speckled with
green,

Who, in ringing tones, urge Kanyan to raid the Uma-Lesong
 Kayan.

Comparing the fighting cocks, their green plumage flecked
with ashy gray,

Who in insistent tones, incite the late Kalat, to, from
 a rock, fend off the attack of enemies.

L95 A Balen Iban warrior of former times.

L97 Kanyan, or Kanian was one of the Baleh Iban leaders to become a pengulu, and he was later involved in a peacemaking ceremony with the Kayans in Kapit, 10 October, 1907 (SG. Vol.XXXVII, no.496).

L99 Kalat, the father of one of my informants, was one of the Iban rebels who fought the Rajah forces in the Gat river in the early decades of the 20th century (see notes Part IV:L684). In one of the clashes, he and other Iban rebels were forced to make their tragic stand on rock in the middle of Gat river. It is this clash that this line refers to.

Trees rustling on the hill, flowers profusely blooming: 100

Having compared the feats of warriors they seek news of
recent happenings.

Seeking news from those from Panggau where tall trees
flourish amid flowers;

Seeking news from the ridge of the creaking spinning
wheel.

"What tales have you brought to our feast, Karapa Nyangga,
our kinsman, you who have many trophy heads above your
hearth?"

"In quite recent days, Uncle Lang, within the past month, 105

I heard of a sap that is terribly poisonous to all kinds
of monkeys,

It belonged to my affinal relative, Nyaia, who is a
Baketan.

So in this sap I dipped my blowpipe darts.

At break of day, soon after first cock crow,

I descended the notched ladder of our longhouse, 110

Striding across the tract of land on which only the
rays of the setting sun shine,

Ascending a mountain shaped like the barb of a spear,

I ran with the utmost speed

Till I came to the Jawan and Bukau rivers, where Kayans are;

L107 Cf. Part IV:L585-587.

L114 Jawan and Bukau are tributaries of the Balui, or upper Rejang,
river inhabited by the Kayans and other inland tribes.

There I saw a huge tree swathed in creepers, 115

The knots on its trunk swarming with buzzing hornets,

Its branches thick with chattering monkeys.

From my hand-made blowpipe I expelled a dart

That flying straight to its mark, lodged in the skull of
my prey;

After a very short time, no longer than it takes to chew
a quid of betel, 120

There was a great noise as my victim crashed to the
ground beneath,

When, running forward, I grabbed it.

Though it may seem as though I am lying, Uncle Lang,

That monkey was most peculiar, for around its waist black
rattan girdles were fastened."

"Such is our news from Panggau, where palm leaf decorations
wave, 125

That is our news from the hollow tree that splits open
when felled.

Tell us, then, of your news from the Towering Ridge,

We long to hear your news from the ridge where the poles
of past rituals stand."

"I do have a story to tell you, my kinsmen,

On my way to this feast, with the seed of *padi*, 130

I met, on my way, a spirit with protruding buttocks

L124. What Kerapa Nyangga killed with his poisonous dart was in fact
a Kayan woman.

Who told me of how our enemies the Ukit,
Both big and small, have been plagued by death,
The young maidens being buried with heirloom jars."
"Driven out by the officers of Government, 135
Defeated in battle by spear and blowpipe,
How we suffer, we Ukit, from no longer being able to live
in your forests;
Though things are a little more pleasant
Since we moved to the mountains in the headwaters of the
Mahakam river."

"Do you have news that you've brought to our feast, 140
Cousin Bejampong, son-in-law of grey-haired Lang?"

"I have, my kinsmen, as I was on my way,
At the track leading to the right, beyond the crossroads
I met a spirit with knobbly elbows and twisted forearms
Who told me his news when returning from the headwaters of
Kayan river, 145

Where, so he heard, the grown-up Kayans are dying, night
by night,
As also are the young, growing children,
Their young maidens they have buried with most precious jars,
Having been disastrously defeated in attacks by both
government and Iban forces,

L135 This probably refers to the Great Kayan Expedition in 1863 in which the Kajang, Kayan, and other inland tribes along the Rejang river basin were disastrously defeated by the government's punitive forces.

Routed in a battle in which spears were used."

150

"If we suffer like this, we Kayans, can no longer live
here where rapids abound,

Though things are a little more pleasant

Now that we have moved much further up the Rejang river'."

A plant heavy with flowers, fell the tree beside the pool:

Having told their tales, they discuss their praise-names.

155

"What of your praise-names, you from Gelong, who strike
down lizards from the fronds of areca palms?

By what names are you called, you who on the bodies of
great white serpents hack pythons into pieces?

What of your praise-name, kinsman Pau?"

"Once I was called: 'The Unmovable Tree Stump',

But now I am known as 'The Perfume of Camphor on which
Maidens Dote'."

160

"What of your praise-name, kinsman Tutong?"

"Once I was called: 'He Who Brings Ill-Augury to Naught',

But now I am known as: 'Bellows of the Roaring Forge in
which Iron is Melted'."

"What of your praise-name, Murai Gading?"

"Once I was called 'The Mighty One Whose Bones Lack Marrow',

165

But now I am known as 'Iron Adze, Feller of Trees with
Bronze Trunks'."

"Now that we from Gelong have spoken, what of you men from

Panggau, where palm frond decorations wave?

What of your praise-name, kinsman Renggan?"

"Once I was called: 'Renggan, the Brave Planter of Bamboo Spikes',

But now I am known as: 'Young Bamboo Shoot, Rearguard of the Rajah's Army'."

170

"What of your praise-name, kinsman Pandak Sagatak?" says Uncle Lang.

"Once, Uncle, I was called" 'He of the Swaggering Gait and Stuck-up Shoulders',

But now I am known as" 'The Brass-Plated Pole of the Hornbill Icon'."

"What name, kinsman Pungga, do you bring to our ritual?"

"Once I was called: 'Fighting Cock with Red Plumage Speckled with Green',

175

But now I am known as: 'The Night Flying Bat that Braves the Murk of the Waning Moon'."

"What of your praise-name, kinsman Laja?"

"I have one, Uncle Lang,

Once I was called: 'The Great Steel Anchor Whose Flukes Rupture the Flanks of Adulterous Crocodiles',

But my name has changed since we were attacked by Ribai and Enseng Jara.

180

I ambushed them at the mouth of Panggau river, where a huge and jagged tree stump stands,

L180 Ribai and Enseng Jara are the two leaders of the people from across the sea, and bitter enemies of the Orang Panggau. Myth has it that Ribai, Enseng Jara, Orang Panggau, Lang, Sabit Bakait and the Iban once lived together in the earthly river basin until they quarrelled over an ownership of a certain fruit tree (cf. Chapter VII).

And so our longhouse was not sacked,
None of its posts were pulled down,
None of our brave fighting cocks were lost,
None of our pigs were killed; 185
And so I became known as: 'Laja, the Towering Palm
Fronde Canopy'."

"What praise-name have you brought to our ritual, kinsman
Kling?"

"I, Uncle, was once called: 'Strong as is a Mighty Pillar',
But my name has changed since we were attacked
By Ribai Chelaling from the shores of the storm-tossed
sea, 190

I ambushed them at the mouth of the Panggau river, where
the waters surge;

And so our house was not despoiled,
None of its posts were thrown down,
None of our pigs were killed,
None of our brave fighting cocks were lost; 195
And so I became known as: 'Mighty Giant, Brave Beyond
all Reckoning'."

"Now that you have heard the praise names of we of Panggau,
where palm frond decorations wave,
What of those of you from the Towering Ridge.
What of your praise-name, Kutok, that you have brought to
this ritual in the land where white clouds drift?"

"Once, cousins, I was called: 'The Spear with a Twisted
Blade, that Thrust into Ribs, makes Wounds that stay
Inflamed for a Year',

200

But since coming to this ritual carrying a seed in the
shape of a trophy head,

I have become known as: 'The Flaming Torch that put Fire
to the Port of Rajah Brooke Sending Smoke over All the
Land'."

"What praise-name have you brought to our ritual, cousin
Papau?"

"Once I was called: 'Bringer of the Dryness that Makes a
Swidden Ready to be Fired',

But since coming to this ritual with a 'seed',

205

I have become known as: 'The Flaming Torch that
Thrown into Lofts burns down Longhouses'."

"What praise-name have you brought to our ritual, cousin
Beragai, with the seed of our shrine?"

"Once I was known as" 'The Tassel that Hangs Down from
the Hairpins of a Maiden',

But since accompanying my father-in-law Lang to war,

I have taken a hundred heads,

210

Many of them lying about still unsmoked,

And taken captives whose wailing rends the air,

And so my father-in-law Lang now calls me:

'The Flaming Torch that Put Fire to a Resident's Fort,
Sending Smoke Billowing out like a Rainbow'."

"Do you, cousin Ketupong, have a priase-name that you've
brought to our ritual?"

215

"I have one that I've brought with our 'seed',
Once I was called: 'The Clouds on which Grandmother Ini
Rests her Bed',
But since going to war with Father Lang,
I have taken two hundred heads,
Captured numerous slaves, with many more to come, 220
With corpses, yet to be beheaded, strewn all about,
And so my father-in-law Lang now calls me:
'The War Canoe Filled with Looted Kettles of Brass'."

'Now that we from the skies have had our say,
What of the praise-names of you who come from the land
where bananas prolifically grow, 225
From the valleys where tall trees grow,
What of the praise-names of you from those well-watered
lands where showers of rain so often fall.
What of the praise-name of Pulang Gana, the Younger: 'He
Who Inspires the Padi Farmer',
And of Pulang Gana the Elder: 'He Who is Wise in All
Seasons'?"

"Once, it is true, I was so called, 230
But now I am known as: 'The Rattan Lashing of the Jars
in which Grain is Stored'."

L228-235 Pulang Gana, the younger; Pulang Gana the elder; Pulang Gana
Kayong; Pulang Gana Raja; are the various incarnation of Pulang Gana
the Iban god of agriculture.

"What of the praise-name of Pulang Gana Kayong: 'The
Owner of Twice Eight Granaries',

And of Pulang Gana Raja: 'He of Whome Humans Talk When
Going to a Feast'?"

"Once, it is true, I was so called,

But now I am known as: 'Malay-manufactured Chest, with Twice
Eight Compartments for the Storing of Gold Nuggets'." 235

"What of the praise-name of Chananun: 'The Elder from the
Stream Where Hornbills Nest'?

What of the praise-name of Maluda: 'The Great Rajah Whose
House is on a Sloping Mountain'?"

"Once, it is true, I was so called,

But now I am known as: 'The Seed-Basket Taken to the Swidden,
when the Stars Mark the Time of Sowing'."

"What of your praise-name Ribai" 'Long Flowing Hair Like the
Tail of a Squirrel in Flight'? 240

What of your praise-name Bundan: 'Long Arms for Measuring
Jungle Vines'?"

"Once, it is true, I was so called,

But now I am known as 'Rattan Threshing Frame'."

"What of your praise-name Ranguang, 'The Slave of Pulang Gana'?"

"Once I was called 'The Boss of the Brass Gong that Young Men
Love to Beat', 245

L244-263 All the personalities mentioned in these lines are slaves of
Pulang Gana, and the omen animals used by the Iban during farming. If
the sound of *ranguang* (a millipede), for instance, is heard at noon,
or an *ingkat* (a tarsier) is seen, the Iban should cease working on the
swidden and return home. But if a *blangkiyan* (a species of lizard)
is seen in, or in the vicinity of, a swidden it foretells a good
harvest.

But since I became an omen that humans use when felling in
the hope of brimful *padi* bins,

I am now known as: 'The Musical Instrument that Young Men
Love to Play'."

"What praise-name did you, Raong, the toad, bring to our
ritual?"

"Once I was called: 'Bundle of Poisonous Roots for a Lake
a Thousand Fathoms Deep',

But since I have become an omen used by humans in clearing
virgin forest in the hope of overflowing *padi* bins,

250

I am now known as: 'Ginger Roots Soaked in a Bowl for
Lulong to use in Safeguarding a Swidden'."

"What of your praise-name, Inkat, the tarsier?"

"Once I was called: 'Land Made Flat by a Lump of Turmeric',

But since I have become an omen that humans use when clearing
undergrowth in the hope of well-filled *padi* bins,

I am known as: 'The Drum, the Rapid Beat of which Summons
all Spirits'."

255

"What of your praise-name, Blangkiyan, the mottled lizard?"

"Once I was called: 'Wrist Watch that Tells the Darkness
from the Dusk',

But since I have been an omen used by humans when felling
tall trees in the hope of filling their bark bins with *padi*,

I am known as: 'The Winnowing Tray by which *Padi* Husks are
Fanned Away'."

"What of your praise-name, Tuchok, the gecko?"

260

"Once I was called: 'The Cough that is Heard from the Tree
Tops',

But since I became an omen used by humans when farming in
the hope of *padi* bins filled to overflowing,
I am known as: 'Young Abang Ladok, whose Insistant Voice
Points to the Whereabouts of Wild Rubber Trees'."

Having asked about the praise-names of those from the
land where bananas abound,

They enquire about the names of other guests.

265

"What about you Mas Manjan, the gold capping of serrated
teeth, known as 'Hanging Vine in Double Rows of Eight'?"

"Once I was so called,

But now I am known as 'He Who Rides in the Man o' War that
Patrols the Mouth of the Igan River',

And also as 'Thunder and Rain by Day and Night that Floods
Low-lying Land'."

"What about you Burong Malam: 'Aging father of Gelau, the
Blowfly'?"

270

"Once I was so called,

But now I am known as: 'He Who Rides in the Government
Man o' War at the Mouth of the Kanowit River',

And also as" 'Barbed Spear of Ukits who when Surprised
Cry Aloud'."

A tree by the pool, fell then the breadfruit tree:

After talking of praise-names they ask about the ages of
the guests.

275

"As between yourself, Uncle Lang, and Sramugah, who is
the older?"

"I, kinsmen, am much the older; Sramugah is still quite young,

But Sramugah is said to be old, because he knows how to divide a tract of land no bigger than a *mawang* fruit, Which is why today our land has hills and ridges."

"As between yourself Uncle Lang and Father Migu, who is the older?"

280

"Father Migu is still quite young; I am much the older, But Father Migu appears to be old, because he has given the trees a thousand different names, Which is why today we have branches and roots in such great variety."

"As between yourself, Uncle Lang, and Seragindit, who is the older?"

"I am the older; Seragindit is quite young, But he is said to be old because he knows how to stretch out the sky, like a cock's comb, Into a vast space in which the moon shows forth its beauty."

285

"As between yourself, Uncle Lang, and Segendi, who is the older?"

"O, young kinsmen, Segendi is still quite young, But he is said to be old, because he knows how to divide the waters into a thousand streams, Which is why, over the pebbles, the waters flow so gently."

290

"As between yourself, Uncle Lang, and Seraginong, who is
the older?"

"Oh, I am much the older, Seraginong is still quite young,
But Seraginong is said to be older because he knows how
to shape headlands as big as a pig's snout,
Which is why today there are headlands in such great variety." 295

"Who then, Uncle, has a bamboo, in which ginger is cooked,
the same as yours?

Who, then, shared the warmth of the backrest used after
your birth?"

"Your other uncle, Sepu Bara, the Glowing Ember,
Your other uncle, Sekulang Kasang, the wreathed hornbill,
Your grandfather Raja Biku is also of my age; 300
It is he who created the trees, and gives vigorous life
to the grasses;

Raja Mentala, was born at the same time as me,

It was he who created the Iban and made them so skilled
in talking;

Raja Mansor is of an age with me

It was he who created the waters that flow out from the
Kapuas river; 305

L296-297 An Iban woman, after having given birth sits with her back to
a fire for about one month, and cooked ginger is given as part of her
meagre and strict diet. Thus children whose mothers were doing these
two things at about the same time are considered by the Iban as being
of the same age.

L305 The Kapuas river basin in Kalimantan, Indonesia, was the ancient
home of the Iban before they migrated to Sarawak in about the middle
of the 16th century (Pringle, 1970:39; Sandin, 1968).

Raja Badam is of an age with me,
It is he who created the waxing and waning moon, to
at night take the place of the burning sun."

"You are most ancient, Uncle Lang,
Yet you are still full of life, like a still flourishing
banyan tree on whose fruits hornbills feast;
Your appearance, Grandfather, still has the freshness, of
youth, as does a forest sapling."

310

"Kinsmen there is just no one with whom I can be compared;
If I go into the forest, I get from some dryad a charm
that gives me youthfulness;
If I go to the skies, I get a moon charm from the youngest
Rajah of the Stars;
When among stones, young kinsmen, I get a king crab charm
from the youngest of the prawns.

Those were the folk with whom I divided out the stones of
this land,

315

Which is why today there are boulders everywhere;

Those were the folk with whom I divided out the fish of
this land,

Pouring those left over into a pool that is now abounding
with fish;

Those were the folk with whom I divided out the palm leaves,
throwing some into the Ngemah,

Which is why today the Ngemah abounds in wild palms;

320

L320 Ngemah is a tributary of the Rejang river well known for its abundance in *biro* plant (a species of wild palm for making sun hats, or *tanggi*).

Those were the folk with whom I divided out the trees
in the valley of the Kapuas, casting some into the
Merirai,

Which is why other branches touch the tops of the
bee trees.

The Rejang, young kinsmen, that I helped to make in former
times,

Was once, it is true, huge and wide, though now it is
outclassed by its other outlet, the Igan;

Klamuai pool in the Batang Ai, young kinsmen, I helped
to make in former times,

325

But now it is no longer large, having been reduced by
banks of stones;

The swirling Nyamok rapids, I helped to make in former times,
But now they are outclassed by a newer pool;

The Matup rapid of Pelagus, I helped to make in former times,
But today those turbulent waters have been outclassed by

even wilder ones."

330

"Your appearance, Grandfather, is like that of a still
growing youth,

L321 Merirai is a tributary of the Baleh river which was first settled
by the Iban, illegally, in the early years of the 20th century (Freeman,
1970:180 seq.).

L324 Igan river is one of the Rejang rivers' main outlet to the sea
(Map 1:2).

L327 Nyamok rapid is in the Menuan river, a tributary of the Rejang,
located just below Kapit.

L328 The Pelagus rapids of the Rejang river consist of many cataracts
and rails, and Matup is one of them.

Your vitality is like that of a banyan tree on which
birds feed."

"Kinsmen, there is just no one with whom I can be compared,
For I have a charm productive of well-being that I plucked
from amongst the fruit of the banana plant of the night."

Then other guests clamour to obtain some of this magical
power for themselves, offering their rings in exchange.

335

"I must decline, my kinsmen, for I do not wish to be like
Ngadit, also called Sarakup,

Who lost his charm that gave long life, when a guest, who
had sought to mouth that particular charm, deceitfully
swallowed it;

I must decline, my kinsmen, for I do not wish to be like
Apik the father of Sabuang,

Whose charm that bequeaths well-being, having been handed
around among the thronging guests was, naturally enough,
never recovered."

Squirrels at play in a clump of bamboo:

340

They all turn to revelry.

"Has the repast of coconut and beans been cooked?"

L336-339 The Iban believe that if one licks, mouths, rubs, or drinks
the water in which charms have been rinsed, some of the magical power
of these charms will be transmitted to oneself. But if one can actu-
ally gain possession of them this is even better. Thus many owners
of supposedly potent charms, my informant told me, have lost them
because some Ibans on the pretext of licking, or mouthing the charms
then swallow them. One of my informants has been a victim of such
deceit. Ngadit and Apil mentioned in these lines are actual people
of the Mujong river region.

If so, let us make merry by imitating the way that great
lizards have of clambering up the fronds of the areca
palm."

The ladies of the house bring out bowls brimful of rice wine,
At which, in mock surprise, Lang recoils, calling it
dogs' vomit.

345

"If the mixture of tender young corn and smoked fish has
been cooked,

Let us make merry by imitating the way in which the gibbons
swing from branch to branch."

The ladies of the longhouse bring out the fermented juice
of corn,

Uncle Lang, in mock surprise, backs away, calling it the
poisonous sap of the ipoh tree.

Squirrels at play in a clump of bamboo:

350

Together the elders joke with one another.

The beguiling voice of Lulong calls to her beloved Laja,
'The Towering Canopy';

The enticing voice of Kumang calls to her beloved Kling,
'The Treasure-Laden Loft'.

A log drifting on the water:

The guests having been summoned, the bowls of rice wine
are placed in line.

355

Kumung displays her age-old white bowl that is likened to
the silvery presence of a beautiful lady.

"These age-old heirlooms have been ours from the time of
our first coming to this land of rustling trees,
They were gotten by my brother Pandak Sagatak from a
demented female spirit,
Who, after seven adulteries, gave birth to a fatherless child."

Lulong and Kumang display an old and priceless bowl.

360

"An age-old heirloom from the time that first we came to
this land where the splintered stumps of fallen trees
reach into the air;

It was gotten by my grandmother Begiang who became the
shaman Menjaia,

When she was ministering to the King of the Crocodiles, a
wooden stake having become wedged in his gaping jaws."

A log on the waters, a tree beside a pool:

Having displayed them, the women recount the praise-names
of their bowls.

365

"This precious bowl of mine, Lang Singalang Burong,

When filled with intoxicating rice wine,

Is known, Uncle, as 'Lashings of Bark that Ever Tighten
their Grip',

This cracked bowl of mine, when filled with sweet rice wine,

Is without question, Uncle Lang, called: 'The Dangling

Loin Cloth that Binds Up the Thighs'."

370

A tree by a pool, a quid of chewing tobacco:

Having praised the bowls, the guests dance.

"Listen, Uncle Lang, the Wealthy One, I rejoice in you,

our leader from time immemorial,

And want to see you dance in the style of a Chinese towkey

gesticulating in a doorway;

Uncle Lang, I rejoice in you, our leader from of old,

375

And want to see you dance in the style of a Kayan with a

sword clenched between his teeth;

Uncle Lang I rejoice in you, our old leader, now grown

toothless,

And want to see you dance in the style of be-trousered

Malays;

Uncle Lang I rejoice in you, our leader from times past,

And want to see you dance in the style of a Kenyah with

his legs up in the air."

380

Kling leaps, and becomes a cucumber;

Laja springs up, and becomes a swordfish.

Kumang and Mother Karo bring out wine made from rice

pounded by women until their arms ached;

They take it straight to Lang.

While he drinks the potent wine,

385

His eyes are fixed on Kling, who has become a cucumber

the size of an enormous stone;

L383 After the first wine which is clear in colour has been extracted, the remains of the fermented rice is then put in plaited containers, which Iban women either wring or pound to express the residue. It is a very strenuous task, hence the phrase 'until their arms ached'.

His eyes are fixed on Laja, who has become a swordfish,
whose gaping jaws gulp in the foam of tumbling waves.
Lang's ever active fingers take off his *ikat* jacket that
the women have dextrously woven.

Lang then rises and dances, imitating the flight of bats
when swooping over fruit trees;

He dances, imitating the flight of a hornbill alighting
on a branch.

390

Lang's carrying basket falls from his back,
Plaited by a lady mischievous from dawn till dusk,
While her husband wanders in search of birds' nests;
Lang's intricately plaited carrying basket crashes to the
floor.

"What is it that has been hanging from the shoulders of
grey-headed Lang?

395

What is it, friend, that was being held just now by Uncle
Lang?"

Then the 'seed' crashes down on top of a brass gong;

Then the 'seed of the shrine' rolls out onto a superbly
patterned mat;

Then the 'seed' crashes down on to a beautiful *ikat* fabric;

Then the 'seed' rolls into a splendid plate, decorated
with flying swallows.

400

"What liars are men, in claiming that this seed glitters
like gold!

Why, it is hideously warped, like a worn-out scabbard!

What liars are men in claiming that this 'seed' is shining
and bright!

Why, it is quite ghastly like a bat cooked over an open fire
by Mother Mendai."

The seed, having been called white and ordinary, cries
aloud in shame;

405

The seed, having been called as red as a chilli, howls
aloud in shame.

The wood of a tree is easily split, so is that of saplings:
When the 'seed of the shrine' cries aloud, they seek someone
skilled in the nursing of infants.

"Who will be first to nurse this seed?"

"There is no other, but the lady of fleeting shadows."

410

"Who will care for this seed of the white pumpkin?"

"There is no other but, the maid of the lamp of the night."

"Who is called by that name?"

"She is the dream spirit from whom Raja Ninti derived his
bravery in war."

"Who shall be first to nurse this seed?"

415

"There is the maiden Igau who helps Raja Sanjau when he
goes off to war."

A long winding creeper; a quid of tobacco:

When the dream spirit fails to comfort the seed, the house
spirits take up the task.

It is nursed by the spirit of the jar in which charms are
kept — a maiden skilled in divining,

Who dwells in a notch in a house post.

420

In the middle of the day, thoughtfully,
She whispers to her darling the central post of the house,
about the holding up of the roof.

An adzed beam, the maiden cut from the twisted trunk of
a tree,

The rafter spirit, fastened there like the tail of a cobra.

At break of day, thoughtfully

425

She calls to her loved one the end beam, imploring him
not to move as she is not lashed in place.

The 'seed' is nursed by an adzed plank with rattan hinges,
She is the door spirit, who will open should her rattan
fastening be pulled.

As dusk approaches, in a ringing voice,

She calls to her loved one the padlock who has curling arms. 430

Lashed down lengths of bamboo, well fixed planks cut from
the trunks of jungle palms,

Spirit of the floors of rooms, so springy to the tread.

Before dawn, in thoughtful whispers,

She calls for her darling the mat, "Don't let them tread
on you for you are all torn and in need of repair."

The 'seed' is nursed by a maid on whom boiling soup often falls, 435

The spirit of the earthen hearth, over which a white cat, in
one bound, leaps.

Before dawn in a loud voice,

She calls to her darling the cooking stand to help her clear
away the ashes.

The 'seed' is nursed by a maid with twisted legs who sits with
folded arms,

Spirit of the cooking stand, whose squat is so conspicuous. 440
At the approach of dawn, in a ringing voice,
She calls to her darlings the neatly stacked firewood to
fill the pot with rice and begin the cooking.
A board scraped smooth by a knife,
Spirit of the window, like a passage in a river,
"Who are the guests in your room, dear friend?" 445
"I do not know, for I have not asked for their names."
A board scraped smooth with a knife,
Spirit of the planks, like those of a Malay boat;
Before dawn she relates her dream in which many massive
jars were placed upon her.
A knot of wood that yells aloud, in ear-splitting tones, 450
Spirit of the wooden *padi* mortar
In the middle of the day, in strident voice, she calls
to her darling, the short pestle,
To thrust down upon her chest.
Calls to the wood that has been adzed into shape
Spirit of the pestles that pound with such vigor. 455
In the middle of the day, in a high sounding voice,
She calls for her darlings, the young girls of the
house, so that together they can pound *padi*.
Calls to the maiden with protruding lips and arms akimbo,
Spirit of the winnowing tray, with a frame of rattan.
In the middle of the day, in a resounding voice 460
She calls to her darlings, the widows, so that together
they can blow away the ashes of the departed.

A lock, opening and shutting, the maiden of a small
brass box,

Spirit of an engraved container of brass;

In the middle of the day, in glad voice,

She calls to her darling, the betel nut,

465

That humans long for after a serious illness.

The welcome and much loved spirit of the betel nut,

In the middle of the day, in joyful tones,

Calls to her darling the betel nut cutter, with blades
like open thighs.

A quid of tobacco, a tree is felled:

470

The house spirits having failed to comfort the seed,
the spirits of Iban women take up the task.

It is nursed by Langasi, the last wife of Sagong Gumbang,

Who, alas, is no longer alive to help her husband in
the holding of rituals;

It is nursed by Ramayah; wife of Ambau who lived by
the riverside,

Who, alas, is dead so that there is now no one to lay out
mats for distinguished guests;

475

It is nursed by Bermabun, wife of Gima, woman of the
poisoned dart,

Who, alas, died in a tempest caused by Grandmother Jelapi
dressing a cat in sea-shell bracelets;

It is nursed by Lamina who refused to marry unless given
a gift of five trophy heads.

Alas, she died leaving many young female slaves;
It is nursed by Joburi, the last wife of Temenggong
Tawang,

480

Who died, alas, leaving behind a husband with a
grief-stricken face;
It is nursed by Embon, woman from a glittering pool,
Who, when she died, was buried with a precious jar.

As one notches and fells a tree:

The spirits of Iban women having failed to comfort the
'seed', the fish spirits take up the task.

485

It is nursed by Kanaiau Bejau, the maiden who dwells
where the palm fronds touch the water,

The spirit of the fish that spawns by the stony beach of
Sanggau Miang, a river in the After World;

It is nursed by a maiden who bathes in the turbulent,
thundering waves, Sudan who bathes in the falling rain;

The spirit of the small fish that feeds in the surging tide,
Who lives side by side with the king of the prawns who
parades about with raised arms;

490

It is nursed by a maiden who bathes in swirling waves
Jawai who bathes in sudden showers,

The spirit of a fish-eating fish with stripes across its
back,

That lives side by side with the fish that dwells in
the crevices of rocks;

It is nursed by a maiden who bathes in the morning dew,

The spirit of the shoals of tiny fish that are like a
tender youth tying on the steel spur of a fighting
cock;

495

It is nursed by the spirit of the *mawang* fruit
Youngest sister of Sang Gima, who lives in crocodile
infested waters,

Under the shade of drooping creepers that are like
reminiscing widows;

It is nursed by Berenai, a tobacco quid which water
serpents spit out,

The youngest sister of Jali, who dwells beneath water falls. 500

A young sapling that is easily split:

The fish spirits having failed to comfort the 'seed',
the snake spirits take up the task.

It is nursed by Ranawai, who stands by the feet of the
king of camels,

The youngest sister of a dragon, the brother of writhing
serpents,

A woman who, when fishing at Sabok Laka, 505

Found a diamond as large as a betel nut.

"Why are you so half-hearted in caring for the 'seed of
the shrine'?"

For you have clever hands and fingers,

For you have most keen eyes,

Being capable of weaving beautiful jackets, 510

And are fit to sit with Kling and Laja,

When, before the thronging guests, they construct a
shrine."

It is nursed by a woman striped as is cotton or rattan,
The spirit of a huge python, the brother of sinuous
serpents,

A woman who when gathering the pith of wild palms

515

Found the antlers of a deer with seven points.

"Why are you so half-hearted in caring for the 'seed of
the shrine'?

For you have clever hands and fingers,

For you have most keen eyes

Being capable of weaving jackets of cotton,

520

And have sat with Sempurai Gundai and Pungga,

When beside a track they wait in ambush.

A tree sheds its leaves, fungus on a rock:

The snake spirits having failed to comfort the 'seed'
other female spirits take up the task.

It is nursed by Jawai, female spirit of puffed rice,

in mounds

525

Like crowds of tiny tinkling bells,

A forest of red hibiscus flowers, like the mesh of a net;

It is nursed by Selipang Lipat, female spirit of stacked
driftwood

As when a river is blocked by a fallen tree;

It is nursed by the female spirits of the tree spurs that
twist like the wicks of oil lamps,

530

Who gave him a charm that makes possible the firing of
swiddens even in pouring rain.

It is nursed by Chambai, whose head is decked with
golden flowers,

550

She is the young female spirit of the bird Beragai,
known as 'Blowpipe Resting on the Shoulder',

Who lives in the stump of a tree felled from a high
scaffolding,

Which the late Ringkai passed when he dreamt of visiting
Panggau,

The Land swept by the hovering wings of long-tailed
parakeets,

Where he met the spirit Sempandai Tuai,

555

Who is huge in stature, and holds a bamboo staff in his
hand.

It is nursed by Riong, young female spirit of the bird
Bejampong who lives beneath a huge stone,

On which the tiger spirit roars when the moon is full,

Which the late Temmenggong passed when he dreamt
of visiting

Gelong, the land touched by the oars of sinking ships,

Where he met the spirit, Kumang Menyarong

Who gave him a charm, taken from the jaws of a serpent,
that makes one invincible in battle.

t is nursed by Dambak, young female spirit of the bird

Nendak, who is like a ring of silver,

Is clad in a patterned jacket of white,

And lives on a tree stump with many branches,

565

Which the late Sandah passed when he dreamt of

visiting Panggau;

He met young Sagatak Pandak,

Who gave him a charm for blunting the spines of wild

palms.

A log on the sea, a stump on the hill:

The spirits of the birds having failed to comfort the

'seed', the female spirits of the sky take up the task.

570

It is comforted by Languan, timepiece of the moon, who

awakens from nightmares with a sudden start,

She is the spirit of the thunder, whose bolts are

scattered everywhere,

And who reverberates with deafening noise;

It is nursed by one, white of waist, who drifts amid the

clouds,

A maiden, beloved of the stars,

575

The sister of young Simpang Ruat, the spirit of the

lightning

Who flashes across the darkening skies;

It is nursed by the fruit of the wild banana that grows

by night,

The spirit of the moon, whose gleaming surface is made of

precious beads;

It is nursed by clustering fruits, 580
The spirit of the sky whose pillars keep the dark storm
clouds from falling;

It is nursed by brass caskets and of silver corselets,
The spirit of the Pleiades, who sit without stirring, on
her lap, a bundle of ripe *padi*;

It is nursed by the diamond anvil and belts of silver,
The spirit of the stars, who ever keep their promise with
humans to watch over the coming of the day; 585

It is nursed by splendidly patterned *ikat* fabrics,
The spirit of the rainbow, that brightens the day;

It is nursed by one who glimmers like gold,

The spirit of the glittering stars

Whose forehead is wrapped in a resplendent cloth; 590

It is nursed by one whose fame is known far and wide,

The grandmother of the spirits of the distant rumbling
thunder;

It is nursed by Chang Kachawa, of the spinning wheel,

The spirit of Abang Sempada, sister of the crimson sunset,

Who waits beside the road, and pierces the heart; 595

It is nursed by Riti, who dwells amid the fruit of the
bananas of the sky,

The daughter of Lanchong, the brass bangle, sister of
Sabit Bakait,

Who inhabits the distant azure skies.

L597 Cf. Part V:L180.

A stump on a hill, a log on the sea:

The spirits of the sky having failed to comfort the

seed, the women of Gelong take up the task.

600

It is nursed by Mother Semalau Ijau, who says she is white,

Yet there is a black stripe up her back;

It is nursed by Mother Encherengga, who says she knows how

to hold children when they defecate,

Yet she always holds them head down;

It is nursed by Mother Lalawai, who says she has no interest

in having a lover,

Yet every night she stands about where the young men sleep;

It is nursed by Mother Tempurong Mas who says she is barren,

Yet she has two infants at her chest, and three on her back;

It is nursed by Mother, Balu Belinyu, who says she is shy

when singing,

Yet has to be pulled away from singing to all the guests;

610

It is nursed by she of the bead necklace that reaches down

to a woman's nipples,

She of the melodious Jew's harp, the gift of a lover,

that Kumang holds on awakening,

The sister of Rengayong, he of the shining headdress and

animal skin mantlet

Whose kick can uproot a huge tree;

And who lives amid pestle-like peaks

615

Where no leaves lie, the haunt of tiger spirits,

L612 The Iban in the past sometimes 'conversed' especially on secret matters by means of Jews' harps, or *ruding*.

Where there is a towering bee tree,
With branches that reach up to the waning moon,
With knots the size of huge jars,
Its trunk, drenched by morning dew, rising from the
river of long life,

620

The bathing place of a nymph who washes with sweet-smell-
ing rinds.

A log on the sea, branches chopped from a tree:

The women of Gelong having failed to comfort the 'seed',
the women of Panggau take up the task.

It is nursed by Maize Blossom, she of the stars that sleep
walk,

The youngest sister of Pulau Ajau, the bamboo stem;

625

It is nursed by Bean Blossom, she of the flower-patterned
mat,

The youngest sister of Pandak Sagatak, he who walks with
his shoulders thrust forward;

It is nursed by Gambier Leaf, she in whom betel nuts taken
from clusters of a thousand, are wrapped,

The youngest sister of father Jangkam Bulan, he who only
speaks when given sea-shell bangles;

It is nursed by Tual Ipal, she of the silver girdle,

630

The youngest sister of Pungga, he of the palm frond;

It is nursed by the spirit of a Chinese scarf trimmed
with beads,

The youngest sister of Laja, he of the towering palm
frond canopy;

It is nursed by Salindang, she of the twinkling stars
The youngest sister of Kling, the son of Chananing Langkang. 635

After the branches have been chopped, the tree by the lake
is felled:

The women of Panggau having failed to comfort the 'seed',
male transvestite shamans take up the task.

It is nursed by the Shaman Chundah who once, in jest,
waved a bird in flossing over a Kayan camp;

It is nursed by the Shaman Mother Benya, who although she
claims to have great wealth, has shell bangles on only
one arm;

It is nursed by Shaman Langkup whose husband has the
same name as herself; 640

It is nursed by the Shaman Tintili, who comes from a
river lit by fire.

The seed laughs with glee, when, while being nursed by
manang Nyara, it sees how loose are the rattan
girdles holding up 'her' skirt;

The seed is most glad, when, while being nursed by
Shaman Mambol, it sees 'her' barely formed breasts'

L637 A *Manang bali* (or male transvestite shaman) is an Iban male whom an *antu*, in a dream, has instructed to become a *manang bali*. Once he is initiated he assumes the role and dress of a female, and this new identity is not only accepted socially, but is also sanctioned in Iban customary law. Any member of the society who draws attention to his male attributes, or calls him by male kinship terms (e.g. father, uncle, etc.) is fined (Freeman, fieldnotes, 1950). According to Freeman's informants the last of the *manang bali* in the Baleh region was Langgong, who died in about 1870-80.

The seed is overjoyed, when, while being nursed by Jelapi,
the Shaman Lambong, it sees 'her' deformed penis loosely
dangling;

Laughing with such glee that it shows its teeth, 645

The 'seed' is most happy to be nursed by the Shaman Jelapi,
seeing her hideous face and dishevelled hair.

"Souls have beome lost we are able to catch and return
to their owners;

Ailments, we despised shamans, are able to cast out and
replace with health;

This 'seed', so it says, is not crying without reason, for
it has yet to find its beloved mother;

This 'seed', so it says, is sobbing inconsolably for it
has yet to greet its father." 650

And so Nguta, takes the 'seed', its tear-stained face
gleaming like the waning moon,

The 'seed' of the shrine

On recognizing its beloved mother, at once stops its sobbing.

"This 'seed'," explains Shaman Guyak,

"Says it is angry and crying, 655

As it wants to be planted as are young banana plants."

"This 'seed'," explains Shaman

"Wants to be harvested as are the yams that are planted
deep in the soil."

L651 Nguta is the wife of Pengulu Kulen who held the *gawai* in June, 1949 from which most of this *timang* text is taken. In every *gawai amat*, the wife of the man who performs the *gawai* assumed the role of 'mother' to the trophy head.

PART VI

Fell the tree around which a long winding creeper is
coiled:

The 'seed' having been comforted by the transvestite
shamans, Lang asks for iron with which to forge a
knife.

Lang turns first to the thronging guests;

First, he asks the warriors from Panggau, where palm frond
decorations wave,

Asks the warriors from the land protected by palisades, if
they have any iron.

5

"What of you, young Kling, most renowned of men,
Have you brought some iron, for making a swidden in which
to plant this 'seed'?"

"I have, Uncle Lang, it is lashed to the scabbard of my
sword,

To give me potency in talking,

But it is very small, the size of a turtle hook."

10

"What of you, Laja," asks Lang,

"Have you brought some iron, for making a swidden in
which to plant this 'seed'?"

"I have, Uncle Lang, it makes me brave and potent in war,
But it is very small, the size of a tiny areca nut."

Then the warriors from the Towering Peak in the skies,
the ridge of palms, are questioned.

15

"What of you, Ketupong,

Have you brought some iron for the making of a swidden in
which to plant this 'seed'?"

"I have some to add to the pieces from Panggau, where the
Brahminy kite flies,
But it is very small, the size of a crab's claw."

"What of you, Beragai,

20

Have you brought some iron, for the making of a swidden in
which to plant this 'seed'?"

"By chance, I have some to add to that from Panggau, where
huge tree stumps stand,

But it is very small, only the size of an areca nut."

"Kinsman Beragai, this then is all the iron we have;

In my estimation", says Lang, "a man unskilled in forging

25

Would not have enough to make the smallest of hand knives."

"What of yourself, Uncle Lang,

Have you brought any iron, for making a swidden in which
to plant this seed?"

"I have, fellow kinsmen, just been duping you

And the guests, by asking if anyone of you have any iron;

30

I have some in a piece of bamboo,

Which I put in my plaited carrying basket,

For on my way to this ritual I happened to visit the Malay,
Lawai,

Taking with me a bunch of bananas,

That I gave to him together with some sugar cane;

35

Then, in return, he gave me a bar of iron,

Which I lashed to the scabbard of my sword.

That I was taking to this ritual, bursting through the door
of the clouds,

And coming to the landing place of this longhouse."

"Well, Uncle Lang, bring it forth before we Iban and all
the guests."

40

On to a beautifully made mat, is placed the bar of iron
brought by Uncle Lang,

"Oh what an enormous bar of iron lying there like the
corpse of an enemy."

Lang looks at the iron bar: "Even if you lack skill in
forging

There is more than enough to make a hand knife;

Even those who are not blacksmiths

45

Will have more than enough to make a spear."

A long and winding creeper on bamboo scaffolding:

Having got the iron, a blacksmith is sought.

"In hammering iron who better than Uncle Nising, the
marauding ogre;

In forging iron who better than Uncle Setua Tuwi, the ogre."

50

"Uncle Lang, this task I must decline,

For my body can no longer endure the searing heat of a
fire;

Uncle Lang, this task of forging iron into a sword I
must refuse,

For my eyes cannot now recognize the sparks from red hot iron.

But today, I have a successor, as when an old sun hat is
given a new red covering, 55

Today, I have an offspring as do mushrooms growing in
clumps,

My successor is my son Sebata,

An industrious young man who never hurries unduly."

"How can I decline, Uncle Lang, there being no one else,

How can I refuse, Uncle Lang, if all others have declined." 60

From a bamboo scaffolding a tree with paired leaves is
felled:

A blacksmith having been found, someone to fan the furnace
is sought.

"Let's ask ogre Minggat, of the lightning's yellow flash,
And ogre Minggan of the brindled moon."

"My body is no longer able to twist and turn, 65

My hands, Uncle Lang, are no longer agile."

"Have you then a skilled successor"

An offspring, as have mushrooms growing in a clump?"

"My dear youngest son, Sayong, the decoration on a shrine,

My own dear son, Minggat, of the lightning that flashes
at twilight." 70

"How can I decline, Uncle Lang, for you are pointing to
my eyes.

How can I refuse, Uncle Lang, for a thousand of you have
uttered my name."

A tree with paired leaves is notched and felled:

Having found someone to fan the furnace, a voice calls
sloud for charcoal.

"What of charcoal from the jack-fruit tree, Uncle Lang,
can it be used to forge iron?"

75

"No, uncles and kinsmen, for its fruits are pulpy and
eaten by animals."

"What of the *janang* tree, Uncle Lang, can it be used in
the forging of a sword?"

"It is bad, kinsmen, for it burns too quickly."

"Then let's ask Lang for charcoal made from hard wood."

"Kinsmen, I have brought some with me to this ritual;

80

Before setting out I raided a Kayan longhouse at Belupai,
And gathered some charcoal from the charred remains of
the posts of these Uma-Kimai Kayan,

Which I put in my carrying basket at that time,

And brought it along with me to this ritual,

And so to the landing place of this longhouse."

85

"Where is it, Lang, bring it forth for us to see?"

He puts it on the magnificently patterned mat

While the thronging guests are still eagerly watching.

"Oh, what charcoal is this that Uncle Lang has brought,
joined up with human ribs and shoulder blades."

A tree is felled, a dead branch falls:

90

Having obtained charcoal, a knife handle for use in
forging is sought.

"What of the root of the *babai* tree, Uncle Lang,
Can it be used as a temporary handle during the forging
of our cutting sword?"

"No, Kinsman Beragai, it is slippery and hard to grasp."

"What of guava root, Uncle Lang,
Can it be used for the temporary handle of our glittering
new blade?"

95

"No, Kinsman Ketupong, it is not durable, and the blade
would easily slip out."

"What then, Uncle Lang, is fit for use?

What, Uncle Lang is usually used?"

"The root of the jack-fruit, Kinsman Beragai, is good to
use,

100

When joined to the palms of the hands of the Lepo Aga
Kayans, that are most adept at grasping;

The root of the *uchong* tree is good, when joined to the
knee joints of the Uma Lesong Kayans."

A dead branch falls, fell the chestnut tree:

Having found a temporary handle, they don their ceremonial
attire;

They put on their helmets, resplendent with parakeet
feathers,

105

They put on jackets woven by grandmother Lalawe whose arms
are tattooed,

L92-95 The root of a *babai* and guava tree is commonly used by Iban to
make the hilts of their knives, but not for the temporary handle (*pulo*)
used during forging.

Jackets woven by female spirits from the valley of bones.
Lang puts on a mantlet, made from the skins of tiger
spirits that roar from their lairs.

About Uncle Lang's waist a bunch of charms is tied,
Together with his sword, quivering in its scabbard, 110
On his shoulder rests a spear with a gleaming blade like
the head of a rearing cobra.

Fell the chestnut tree, slash the leaves:
Having donned their attire, they seek a torch for lighting
the forge.

"There is a torch of the bark of the *raro* tree," says Lang,
"standing there beside the house post."

"That is not a torch of *raro* bark, it is a Kanto woman." 115

"So be it, kinsmen; tear her skin from her head down to
her neck,

So that our flame will burn without subsiding."

"There is a torch of the bark of a *melapi* tree standing
beside the house post."

"That is not a torch of *melapi* bark, Uncle Lang, it is a
Kayan woman."

"Tear the skin from her feet so that our flame will burn
and need no fanning." 120

Excitement fills the men from the Towering Ridge in the
skies, where the winds of the dry season blow,
For they are to join Lang in the forging of iron.

"If our men be successful, my dearest of friends,
Then we'll see our loofah plants laden with fruit, like
clusters of tinkling bells;

The men with dibbling sticks making holes in the ground, 125
While we women, with baskets of seed,
Walking contentedly on the fertile soil of our hillsides
 sowing our rice,
Have time to trace genealogies and locate kinsfolk."

A tree is felled, the party prepares to move:
Leaving the planks, adzed smooth by heavy blows, 130
Leaving the sitting place of Lang with its rows of
 bronze cannons,
Issuing from beneath the eaves of wooden shingles,
Reaching the head of the ladder where trophy heads are
 received,
In single file they descend its notched steps.
Passing the platform where guests pause before final entry; 135
They walk along a path wider than the frond of a fern,
To an old resting place overgrown by saplings,
A resting place where the soil is like powdered rice.

A knot on a tree, a log on the sea:
They pause and listen for auguries. 140
While they walk the compact earth the sobbing cry of a
 Brahminy kite is heard;
While they walk the sunken earth, the far-off sky yawns.

A log on the sea, a chestnut tree is felled:
After listening to auguries they return to the resting place.

"While I was walking upriver, Uncle Lang, I heard the
ominous call of a marauding ogre;

145

While I was walking on the compact earth I heard the
sobbing cry of a Brahminy kite."

A log on the sea, a gigantic flowering lily:

Having listened for auguries, they continue on their way.

Cutting a stand for their anvil from the end of a log,

And, from another, a temporary handle;

150

Those in front now reach the hut of the forge,

Those who are to work the bellows of the furnace are
soon in place,

Those who will do the forging are ready by the anvil.

When they clean out the bellows, the sound of coughing
is heard;

When its tubes are shaken, the sound of raucous laughter
is heard.

155

Charcoal from a basket is piled on the ground,

The bar of iron, like the body of a cobra, is thrust
into the fire;

The iron of Uncle Lang, like the tail of a great fish,
is put into the furnace.

The slow puffing of the bellows sounds like someone sighing
for pickled fish;

L151 The hut of the forge, or *langkau paputan* is built away from, and usually on the downriver side of a longhouse.

The fast puffing of the bellows sounds like rapid
drumming;

160

The blast of the bellows scatters leaves as large as the
feathers of a cock.

"O, how the fire roars, with flames leaping up to the
height of the bellows;

O, what a forge has our Uncle Lang,
With its bellows of human bones;

Its vents roar without pause,

165

Its vents roar without cease."

An ageing tree by the lakeside, a clump of saplings:

When Lang's iron becomes red hot, there is a call for
the forging to begin.

Uncle Buga, also known as the Ogre Inong, arises,

His long hair he tucks beneath his turban,

170

The tail of his loin cloth he fastens about his waist,

His arms extending outward, his knees bent,

With grim determination his eyes flickering open and shut;

He grasps in one hand the handle that looks like the
tail of a fish,

Clutching, in the other, tongs like the front legs of a
mantis.

175

The iron is rested on an up-curving stone,

And then held on the anvil that glows like the full moon;

The mallet is like the snout of a wild boar.

Without being struck, the iron takes shape, growing in size;

The ends are beaten with a hammer made, in part, of human
shoulder blades;

180

The clanging is like the call of a lizard pleading for rain.

A bamboo scaffolding, a tree shedding its leaves:

Lang instructs the forgers.

"When hammering the iron, kinsman, stop it from getting
twisted like the body of a fish;

The hilt end should be pointed like a durian seed,

185

The groove on the blade should be drawn out like the liver
of an eel."

"Behold the twirling blade of Uncle Lang's sword like the
tail of an insect-eating bird,

After being forged so skilfully by Uncle Sabata;

"How splendid is the blade of Uncle Lang's sword,

You are indeed most expert at forging, Uncle Sabata,

190

Your fingers are skilled, your eyes are piercing,

Your hammering being so accurate there is no twisting
of blades;

When you first began to forge, you found a fungus charm
in the bark of a tree,

When you began to forge iron into blades, you found a rice
charm in a pile of bamboos,

Which is why the groove on this blade is without blemish,

195

L181 The Iban believe that whenever a voice of a skink, or *engkarong*
is heard rain will follow.

Like those made by Pago, the father of Bigam."

From a bamboo scaffolding a tree is felled:

The iron having been forged into a blade, it is plunged
into a wooden trough of water.

As one notches and fells a tree:

The blade having been immersed, the men undress to bathe. 200

Lang and Buga, who is also known as the Ogre Inong, take
off their beautiful jackets,

Shake the tails of their loin cloths,

And brush the ends of their turbans,

Casting fragments of red hot iron in all directions,

That become crocodiles lurking in the still waters of
rivers, 205

And glistening cobras, that lie in wait beside a path,

Against whose bites there is no recourse;

While other fragments become wasps and hornets that hover
about the posts of Kayan longhouses.

"No wonder that the infants of the Kayan perish,

That their maidens dying, are buried with precious jars, 210

While the women are all weak of limb, and their pigs left
unattended."

There is a shaman, skilled in the performing of rituals,

A Kayan shaman, who performs at night;

L196 Pago was an Iban from Majau river in 7th Division, who was well known for his skill in forging. He died in the 1950s.

"There is no sign," says Shaman Nyara, "of hurt from the
marauding demons of the forest,

But we die as dusk falls,

215

Because of the flying fragments of Uncle Lang's iron,
That Uncle Buga is now forging into a sword."

"No wonder the loved ones of the Uma-Lesong Kayans die,
And are no longer able to make their swiddens."

Young Ilang Ili, spirit of the whirlpool

220

Groping in the wooden trough, touches the sword,
And finds an unused piece of iron.

"Keep it, young man," says Lang

"One day you can forge a chisel for the making of a boat."

Groping in the wooden trough

225

His hands find an unused piece of Lang's iron.

"Why, this is not a piece of iron,

It is a young Ukit, caught while returning from hunting
wild birds with his blowpipe."

A clump of saplings; buttress roots are cut away:

The blade having been recovered a man is sought to file
it smooth.

230

"In filing the edge of the sword,

Who better than my brother's son, Pandak Sagatak, of the
great pole on which a hornbill effigy is set;

In filing a large bladed sword,

Who better than Tutong, spirit of the drum;

In filing the blade of a long sword,

235

Who better than Sabang Jurai, whose swaggering walk

causes feathers to fall from his headdress;

These are the men expert in using files with handles

of brass and of human bones;

These are the people who can use files with handles of

silver and of human spines."

The longhouse shakes and sways,

The lashings of its posts are torn apart.

240

"Why is the house shaking so?" the women ask one another.

"It is because our brother, Pandak Sagatak is filing the

sword of Uncle Lang;

If this is so, let us fetch our bowls,

To collect the filings from the sword;

One of them I'll give to my young brother,

245

Letting it become a leech charm for use when he raids

alien lands."

The buttresses and the roots of a tree are cut:

The filing done, someone is sought to temper the sword.

The sword is plunged vertically into the water in which

Bejampong bathes,

Basik laughs aloud on seeing its blade slashing hungrily

through bones.

250

The sword is thrust horizontally into the gushing venom

of a cobra,

Father Migol laughs aloud on seeing the new blade dripping

with blood and moist with human fat.

As one notches and fells a tree:

The tempering of the blade completed, Lang tests its edge.

"To test the edge of Lang's sword, 255

Why not try cutting into this tensile bar of iron left
over from the forging,

That is lying here beside this wooden trough,

The blade bites into the iron as though into bone."

Quickly fell the tree beside the fish trap set in a river:

After testing the edge of the blade, Lang's followers seek

a magical whet stone. 260

"What of the whet stone of the wild bees, Uncle Lang

Which lies under the peak of Sepali mountain?"

"No, my kinsman, Senggel Tinggi, though in the past it
was used to sharpen blades;

Now it may not be used, for the late Buge on it,

Has obtained, in exchange, the jacket of Rajah Sengkunang

that made him invulnerable." 265

"What of the whet stone of the serpent, Uncle Lang,

Which lies beneath the peak of Entimau mountain?"

"No, my kinsman, though in the past it was used to

sharpen blades,

Now it may not be used, for during the last waning moon,

L262 Sepali mountain is in the headwaters of Ngemah river in 7th Division.

L267 Entimau mountain is on the range that separates the Kanowit from Katibas river. In former days feuding Ibans from both sides crossed this range on their head-hunting raids.

It was trodden on by Tuan Low while on his expedition
against the Sanawang."

270

"What of the whet stone of the gecko, Uncle Lang,
Which lies beneath the peak of Sadok mountain?"

"No, my kinsman, though in the past it was used to
sharpen short-bladed swords,

Now it may not be used, for during the last full moon,
On it Rentap surrendered, abandoning his cannon known as
'The Lone Arm'."

275

"What of the whet stone of the lightning, Uncle Lang,
Which lies under the peak of Samayan mountain?"

"No, my kinsman, though in the past it was used to
sharpen many knives,

Now it may not be used, for during the last waning moon,
It was trodden by Chendan while raising a false alarm."

280

"Are all the whet stones of all rivers, Uncle Lang, beset
with prohibitions?

Are all the whet stones of the land forbidden to us?"

L270 *Tuan* is an Iban word originally refers to a white colonial officer, and the name Lau may be a corruption of the surname of H.B. Low, who was the Resident of the 3rd Division from 1875 to 1887. During his service with the Brooke government he was involved in many punitive expeditions (cf. Pringle, 1970:238).

L272 Sadok mountain, at the headwaters of Skrang river, was made famous by a famous Iban rebel, Rentap, who in defiance of Brooke rule built a fortress on its summit. It took the Brooke government three expeditions before Rentap finally surrendered on the 29th September, 1861. His famous brass cannon known as *Bujang Timpang Brang* (Lone-arm Bachelor), so called because it lacks one trunnion, is now in the Sarawak Museum (cf. Brooke, 1866, Vol.II, 114 seg.; Ward, 1966:45).

"You may sharpen your swords on the stone called Anggong,
that stands in the skies,

But first ask Tedong, the father of Ranggong, the waning
moon;

You may sharpen your new blade on a caterpillar stone, 285

For it will make your bodies light enough to hover,

When fastened to the waistbands of your swords;

A lecch stone, my kinsmen, is most valuable when raiding
enemy lands;

Do you have one, my kinsmen?"

"Uncle, there is one wedged into this sword scabbard; 290

Let us now ask Lang for his collection of charms

With which to sharpen our long swords."

"I have such a collection, my kinsmen, though it is still
in the bottom of my carrying basket."

"Show them to us then, as we sit here in rows."

Lang puts them down on a mat that is patterned with fishes, 295

Young Sepuntang Medang and Sabang Jurai behold them with
wonder,

While Kumbu Rayong, a lump in his throat, averts his gaze.

"In all my days, I have not seen anything like this,

Now for the very first time, I look upon the remarkable
charms of Uncle Lang,

That have made him renowned wherever he goes and a monarch
among men; 300

L283 Anggong is a huge rock on to which Lang and his entourage leap
after they have broken through the door of the skies. See note
Part IV:L287.

Here is his charm from the wild palm, with which one can
avoid being slashed by a sword;

To the left is his python charm, with which one can evade
the flying darts of a blowpipe;

Beneath is the charm which can ward off missiles from
Brunei cannons;

While in the centre is a great whet stone used when felling
the forest to make a swidden;

Ever since he has had this remarkable stone,

305

The Ukit led by Sirai have ceased to molest us, and have
joined us in all our endeavours."

The setting of fish trap, a quid of tobacco:

Having obtained a whet stone, the sharpening begins.

The sword is sharpened on pangalin tusks large enough to
encircle the waist of a man;

The glittering blade is sharpened on a snake stone, plucked
from the foam of flooding waters.

310

A quid of tobacco, fungus on a rock:

The sword having been sharpened, a hilt is sought.

"Are water buffalo horns good to use, Uncle Lang?"

L306 Ukit Sirai and his followers, according to my Iban informants, settled with the Iban at Nanga Seranau, a small stream across river Kapit. Page-Turner, the Resident of 3rd Division in his report from Upper Rejang, mentions Sirai's name: "On the 5th September, 1970, Alus, Nyunyieng, pengulu Narok, started on a visit to Sirai, an Ukit, who can give information concerning the murder of 3 Dyaks in Baleh" (SG, Vol.XXXVIII, 1908, p.12).

"No, kinsman Papau, for the buffalo is an animal given to
wandering aimlessly at night."

"What of the horns of oxen, Uncle Lang, can they be used to
make a hilt for our new sword?"

315

"No, kinsman Manggie, for oxen are dreadful beasts beloved
of Europeans."

"Have you, Uncle Lang, brought any deer antlers for the
hilt of the sword,

With which a swidden for planting the 'seed of the shrine'
is to be made?"

"I have some stored away, kinsmen."

"Then display them on this finely plaited mat."

320

Silence falls on the astonished guests,

As they behold the antlers brought by Lang,

Nothing could be more impressive than these antlers with
twice eight points.

Fungus on a rock, a buttress root is cut:

Having found the antlers, a man to carve it into shape
is sought.

325

"To carve the hilt of the sword of Lang,

Let us command Rajah Ilah who lives alone,

This Kayan, with a cowrie shell headdress."

"How can I refuse you Lang, he says, there being no one else,

How can I decline, Uncle Lang, when all others have refused."

330

The Kayan, with the colourful headdress,

Rajah Ilah, who dwells at the foot of the mountain, then arises;

Lang's blood-brother is far more expert than Anyi Mang,
of the Uma Kulit Kayan;

The pattern of the lashing on his hilt

Is like that of swarming bees.

350

A buttress root is cut, a log on the sea:

Having carved the hilt, wood for the scabbard is sought.

"What of the wood of the *pelai* tree, Uncle Lang, can it
be used for making a scabbard for our sword?"

"No, kinsmen, for that wood is soft and cannot be polished."

"What of the wood of the *gerunggang* tree, Uncle Lang, can
it be used for making a scabbard for our sword?"

355

"No, kinsmen, for that wood warps so easily."

What of that part of the *ubah* tree, Uncle Lang,

That long ago fell to the ground

And was left by Ambah and Gurah?

"No, kinsmen, for the wood of that tree was in their
possession when they were ambushed and killed when
looking for sugarcane."

360

"What of the wood of the *tekam* tree, Uncle Lang, that lies
at the edge of the upraised bank of the river,

Can it be used as a sheath in which to conceal our blade?"

"No, kinsmen, for that is wood left by Itan and Jingan,

After they were ambushed and slain by the sandy edge of
the river."

L364 This refers to an incident in April, 1916 when a large party of Gat rebels were ambushed by a Brooke force at Nanga Pila, above Pelagus rapids. About 200 of the rebels were killed (Pringle, 1970: 262-263).

"Do you, Uncle Lang, know of wood that can be used?"

365

"A *nyilu* tree, kinsmen, from the headwaters of the Kanto
river

Could be used for making the scabbard of our new sword;

A scabbard with luxuriant tassels made from the hair
of Uma Bau Kayans,

That curls like the tails of squirrels leaping over logs;

A *pelai* tree, kinsmen, from the lower reaches of the
Kanto river

370

Could be used for making the scabbard of the blade;

A scabbard with thick tassels of the hair of Kayans,

That is glossy like the tails of pigs just come from
their wallows."

"Show us, Uncle Lang, the wood of the *tapang* tree that
you've brought to our ritual,

Lay it on this finely plaited mat."

375

Lang takes the wood from his striped carrying basket.

"How beautiful is this piece of *tapang* wood brought by
Uncle Lang,

Looted from the Kayan, Anyi Mang, and the size of a human
body."

"I have just been duping you," says Lang,

"For it is the wood of the *mikai* tree that I have really
brought with me

380

In the bottom of my carrying basket,

I got it during a raid on the Kayans of the Blukai river."

L382 Blukai is a tributary of the Balui river.

"Where is it, Uncle Lang?

Put it on this fish-patterned mat,

So that all men can gaze upon it;

385

Oh, how enormous is this piece of *mikai* wood that

Lang has brought to our ritual;

Large enough for the making of a scabbard for our sword,

As it lies there like the corpse of a large-limbed monkey."

A log on the sea, a butress root is cut:

Having found the wood for the scabbard, someone to make

it is sought.

390

"For the making of the scabbard, let us enlist Basik, the

father of Sabua Anggai;

For the fashioning of the sheath of our sword, who better

than Jaol, spirit of the beams of the loft."

"How can I decline, Uncle Lang, when all others have

refused;

How can I refuse, Uncle Lang, there being no one else."

The hurtling of chips is like the floundering of fish

stricken with poison;

395

The shavings fly like fish leaping over the dam in a

river;

The whittlings are like the twigs with which squirrels

line their nests;

The joints of the scabbard fit so tightly that there is

not the slightest gap;

Its spiral patterns are those of the hornbill's casque,

Its carved surface depicts the capture of Ukit children.

400

A buttress root is cut, a breadfruit tree is felled:

The scabbard having been made, rattan to lash it is sought.

"What of this small-sized species of rattan, Uncle Lang,

Can it be used for the lashing of the scabbard of our sword?"

"No, it cannot be used, for it is from such rattan that
pregnant women make their girdles."

405

"What of this species, known as mouse rattan, Uncle Lang,

Can it be used for the lashing of the scabbard of our sword?"

"No, it cannot be used, for such rattan is used by women
in their weaving;

However, the rattan that grows in both the Kanto and Lemanak
headwaters may be used,

For it flourishes side by side with human hair to which it
can be joined;

410

The species known as mouse rattan that grows by the Uma
Kulit river may be used,

For the lashing of the scabbard, together with the anal
hair of Ukits."

As one who notches and fells a tree:

Having found rattan to lash the scabbard, a dye is sought.

"What of fingernail dye, Uncle Lang,

Can it be used to colour the scabbard of our sword?"

L405 See note part I:L113.

L415-418 Haddon and Start (1930:19-22) write of various types of Iban
dyes and their uses.

"No, it cannot be used, for it doesn't last and easily cracks."

"What of the dye from rattan berries, Uncle Lang,
Can this be used to colour the scabbard of our sword?"

"No, it cannot be used, kinsmen, for rattan dye is quite
useless because of the way it peels;

420

Pigments from the human brain, kinsman Pandak Sagatak,
Are durable and bright, for they come from within the
bones;

Pigment from human blood, kinsman Rendah,
May be used to colour the scabbard, for it comes in bright
crimson clots."

Fell the breadfruit tree, a log on the sea:

425

Uncle Lang wanting a waistband for the sword, calls
aloud for cotton.

The insistent voice of Uncle Lang calls aloud for finely
spun cotton;

First, from Kumang, the lady from the miraculous land
where *tapang* trees bear gutta-percha.

The resonant voice of Lang calls aloud for cotton,
From Lulong, the lady of Gelong, where two huge rocks
stand side by side.

430

L428 *Tapang* trees do not bear any gutta-percha (*nyatu*). However, in the Iban view of the world of supernatural beings, like the Orang Panngau, many things happen which do not occur in the world of mortals.

The women of Panggau, crowd out into the gallery,
Kumang and her young sister go up to Lang,
Perfumed with flowers and sweet-smelling herbs.
The women of Gelong, crowd together onto the gallery,
On hearing the call of Lang, 435

Carrying bunches of fragrant flowers;
On hearing Lang's call,
Kumang arrayed in her silver belts,
Accompanied by her sister-in-law, the youngest sister
of Pungga,

Hastily grasps her bamboo shuttle, 440

Opening the *bilek* door, made from a huge buttress root,
They reach the gallery and come face to face with Uncle Lang.

"Here I am, Uncle Lang, with balls of cotton thread as
big as the eggs of a dove."

They are observed by the two young men, Sepuntang Medang and
Kerapa Nyangga.

"How worthless are these women of ours from Panggau; 445

If courted on their sleeping mats,

They are only interested in braves who have taken a
trophy head,

And in the sons of wealthy men who come with a couple of
heirloom jars."

On hearing these words of Kerapa Nyangga, the women are
about to run away.

"Dont go, ladies," says Lang, 450

"For those are the words of resentful men with whom you
do not have to sleep."

"It is true, Uncle Lang, look at those threads as big as
rattan

That could be used in trapping deer playing on a swidden."

An ageing tree by the lake is felled:

Having asked the women from Panggau for cotton, the women
from Towering Ridge in the skies are asked.

455

"What of the cotton of the women from Towering Ridge
in the skies,

What of the finely spun cotton of the women from the land
where palm frond decoations wave;

What of the raw cotton thread of the wife of Lang, brought
from the land where all trees flourish."

"I have it with me, but it is still in the bamboo container,
That I brought with me to this feast."

460

"Lay it on the finely plaited mat, Aunt,

While the guests are still sitting about in such crowds."

Seeing it Kumbu Rayong clears his throat and Pungga smiles,

"Never have we seen anything like this raw cotton thread
that has been brought by Lang's wife,

How beautiful it looks, still teeming with youthful lice."

465

"You, Kumang, with your respendent silver belts," says Lang,

"I ask to weave the waistband of my newly-forged blade."

"Oh, I must refuse, Uncle Lang, I have not the skill, I
have never made such a thing."

"How she lies to you, Uncle Lang,

Only last month I saw her weaving a waistband for a sword."

470

"That was only because I was repaying my old lover Guang,
 Who I has asked to make me a weaving sword,
 Have completed this task my lover and comforter
 Asked me to weave a waistband for his sword,
 At which I untwined on to my loom the yellow thread
 that leaps about like tiny fish, 475
 Carefully fixed in place two lazy rods,
 Jerked down my weaving sword making a noise like the
 pecking of doves,
 Pulled down on my weaving sword, making the very walls shake,
 Weaving on even at night when the oil lamps were lit.
 Then my lover came and sat beside me on this finely
 plaited mat, 480
 Bringing with him the weaving sword he had made,
 Decorated with spiralling fern frond patterns,
 With carving of dogs swallowing their tails and snapping
 at their own heads.
 Such were the carvings on the weaving sword made by my
 love,
 With depictions of ravenous dogs waiting to slip indoors." 485
 "We here, Uncle Lang," says Kling
 "Are made miserable, by women unable to weave."
 "We here, Uncle Lang," says Laja,
 "Have miserable womenfolk, from out of the jungle."
 Kumang and Payu then say" "Uncle Lang, 490
 We are not entirely adverse to weaving a waistband for
 your sword,

But we are afraid of your scabbard that's still lying on
this mat of a thousand patterns,
For from it there come the threatening calls of marauding
orang-utans;
What you have asked us to do, Uncle Lang, is no little thing;
What you have asked us to handle is beyond our comprehension." 495
"How," says Benih Lela, "Could I do this weaving for you,
Uncle Lang
For look, lice as big as orang-utan are clinging to these
warp threads."

From a high scaffolding a breadfruit tree is felled:
While Uncle Lang is still seeking someone to weave the
waistband of his sword, a stranger arrives.
The stranger has a back like a roughly adzed door, 500
Her belly hangs down like a basket full of *padi* husks,
And her forehead is indented like a wooden mallet
for pounding bark cloth.

As one who notches and fells a tree:
With the arrival of this stranger, Kumang and her friends
resort to their nicknames.
"Where are you, my friend: 'Who in Vain Decorates Herself
with Flowers'?" 505
Where are you my friend; 'Who Wearies of Laying Down a
Sleeping Mat for a Lover who Comes Not as to Embrace'?"

A tree rich in blossoms is felled:

While the women, by the use of nicknames, jeer at the
stranger, Uncle Lang asks for her name.

"What is your old name, young maiden, given by your mother?

What is the name given to you by Menyaia, the shaman
Gendai?"

510

"My name, Uncle Lang, is Serenu, the lonely one whom no
one feeds;

My name, Lang, is Serenau, who lives all by herself;

My new name, Uncle Lang, is Kachelau, the stupid one;

My new name, Lang, is Kachelah, the flirtatious one."

From high bamboo scaffolding the leaves of a tree are
plucked:

515

Uncle Lang asks the stranger to do the weaving.

"How could you, Uncle Lang, ask her to prepare cotton
for weaving,

Look at her, as unimportant as those who are given the
job of conducting shamans back to their homes;

How could you, Uncle Lang, ask her to set up this red
cotton,

She looks as stupid as Lanau, the daughter of Dang."

520

L509-510 The Iban believe that ill-health is caused by evil spirits, and one of the ways in which a person's health may be restored is by changing his or her name. The rite of changing a person's name is done either by a shaman or a *lemambang* (cf. Chapter II). It is, therefore, common for an Iban to have more than one name during his or her lifetime.

L518 The Iban send out persons of importance to fetch a shaman, and any abled-bodied men to send him back.

"You cannot always tell a good bitch by the position of
her nipples," says Lang,
"Nor good cocks by the colour of their feathers."
"How can I decline, Uncle Lang, for you have all pointed
at my eyes;
How could it be anyone other than me, Uncle Lang as you
have uttered my name."

The leaves on a tree are picked: 525

The stranger makes haste to start her weaving.
She picks up a ball of cotton, like the egg of a bird,
Pulls out the white thread that leaps about like a
small fish,

With care she inserts two laze rods.

She presses against the back-strap of the loom, 530
She throws her shuttle, like a fish darting through
still-waters,

She slams down her weaving sword with the sound of a
bird pecking on wood;

As she uses it the whole house, right up to the loft,
shakes.

Before the assembled guests can see what has happened,

The cotton waistband of Uncle Lang 535

Is lying there, stretched out like a cobra.

Pungga and Tutong are about to try it out,

L521-522 The Iban claim to be able to tell a good bitch, by the position
of her nipples, or a good fighting cock by the colour of its feathers.

In a traditional display before the shrine,
When the women of Panggau, which adjoins Gelong, exclaim
to the stranger:

"You are indeed clever, Lupai, for you are not copying
the weaving of your mother;

540

Truly, Ngenang, you have lungs that breathe most freely;
Weave away then, Repan, before the coming of the enveloping
night,

If night does fall oil lamps will be lit,
Lest a little, no more than the length of a finger, remains
to be done;

We shall help you with the final sewing,

545

Help you in stitching with needles of brass,

So that Gendang Rangayong can fasten his charms of
pangolin tusks and cobra horns to this waistband,

Together with his charm, from out the mouth of a cobra,
preventing failure in combat,

That he uses both in battle and in displays before the
shrine of Lang."

Lang's waistband having been completed,

550

The gifted stranger lets down her hair;

Unfolding, it waves as do the swaying leaves of orchids
growing on a tree.

Now that the belt of Uncle Lang's sword has been woven,
The stranger's face, in its beauty, like the bite of a
mosquito, cannot be ignored.

Alas, the women of our land where a huge vibrating rock
is encoiled by a white serpent, have been tricked; 555

Alas, the women of our land where flowering plants are
thick with vines, have been outwitted;

This stranger is Mene, the bearer of charms,

This stranger is Menti, the spirit of young women."

"When Kling our loved one, raids

Lanchong at the margin of the crimson sky, 560

We women of Panggau set about the making of a boat
from the feathers of birds,

But until the coming of the enchanting Mene,

They did not turn into a war canoe;

When our loved one Kling hurriedly raids

Lanchong and Ribai at the margin of the sloping skies, 565

We women of Gelong set about making a boat from the
feathers of the hornbill,

But until the coming of wonder-working Mene

They did not turn into a war canoe."

Fell the breadfruit tree, sever its roots:

The waistband having been woven, the women set about
fastening it to the scabbard. 570

They fasten it to Uncle Lang's scabbard,

With durable red thread and the tusks of a wild boar,

Together with the horns of a tusked mosquito;

L557 Mene is a goddess who lives under the water. She is the only one
in Iban legend to rival Kumang both in beauty as well as in skill.

The onlookers blink in wonder at their handiwork.

"How impressive is the waistband of Uncle Lang's scabbard, 575
To which it clings like a lizard to the trunk of a tree."

Cut the roots of the tree, the lashings of the scaffolding:
The waistband having been fastened to the scabbard, a toggle
is sought for it.

"What of a *panggal belut* seed, Uncle Lang,
Could that be used as a toggle for this glittering sword?" 580

"A *panggal belut* seed should not be used, my kinsmen, for
it is slippery and easily lost."

"What of this bit of broken china, Uncle Lang,
Could that be used as a toggle on this decorated waistband?"

"No, my kinsmen, for it has been so often used by us while
sitting eating."

"Where then, Uncle Lang, is there something beautiful
from which a toggle might be made?" 585

Where, Uncle Lang, is something suitable, that you are
accustomed to using?"

"This piece of a coconut shell bowl, kinsman Papau, would
be fine for making a toggle for our sword,

Joined to the jawbones of the Kanto,

Who are so stricken that they no longer eat sugarcane;

This piece of pottery, kinsman Ketupong, would be fine

for making a toggle for our waistband, 590

L579 *Panggal belut* is a disc-shaped nut about 1 to 2 inches in diameter
of a dark-brown colour.

Joined to collar bones of Uma Lesong Kayan,
How sad that when so stricken they will no longer eat
their wild sago.

The lashings of the scaffolding, fell the chestnut tree:
The toggle having been made, a tassel with a bell is
sought for fastening to the scabbard.

"This bell, kinsman Ketupong, is a common thing to use
for decorating a sword,

595

Together with bunch of human hands.

This rare bead together with some human teeth can be
used to ornament a sword."

A tree is notched and felled:

The tassel having been made, grey-haired Uncle Lang, seeks
a hook on which to hang the sword.

"What of this deer antler, Uncle Lang,

600

Could it be used to make a hook from which to hang this
newly forged sword?"

"No, it could not, my kinsmen, for it comes from a trouble-
some animal that is forever eating."

"What of this water buffalo horn, Uncle Lang,

Could it be used as a hook from which to hand the
scabbard of this sword?"

"No, kinsmen, for it comes from an animal that forever
wanders about at night."

605

They ask Gentup the giant with the huge and sagging abdomen;

They ask Salanja Lanjau, the father of Salingau the fighting
cock.

"Have you brought with you the spreading antlers of a deer,
From which the scabbard of this sword might hang?"

"I have, Uncle Lang,

610

Some time ago before setting out for this feast,

I was wandering in a valley in the remote headwaters of
the Rejang river,

When I saw the tracks of a deer in knee-deep mud;

Then I made from saplings a spring trap

Which I lashed in position with two lengths of rattan,

615

The fibre that triggers the trap came from a fern,

And its blade I fashioned from bamboo,

Then I returned to the landing place of our longhouse.

Next morning at first cock crow,

Calling to my dogs to follow, I set off to visit my trap,

620

Down the great entry ladder,

Across the mountain shaped like a barbed spear,

I came to the scorched edge of a swidden,

Where I heard the barking of my dog Majak;

Then I saw my trap, sprung and lying on the ground,

625

I saw its bamboo blade biting deep into the shoulder
of a huge animal,

Held at bay by my dogs amid the forest ferns;

I thrust at it with my big-bladed spear

Severing the liver and ripping open the intestines.

It fell into a hollow in the ground,

630

The head I hacked off at the neck,
Thrust it in my pouch of bark,
And took it back to the landing-place of our longhouse.
During this moon that is still waxing,
You, Uncle Lang, invited me along to this ritual,
And when I showed you questioned me about the hip bone
of the animal I'd trapped."

635

"Display it then on this finely plaited mat
Before the eyes of these crowds of Iban."
He takes it from his plaited rattan carrying basket;
Kumbu Rayong is stunned into silence while Kumpang Pali
stares in amazement.

640

"Never have I seen a thing such as this,
Brought by the ogre Buga, also known as Inong, for it is
joined to the hip bones of Uma Lesong Kayans,
On whom the boisterous winds still blow although their
breath is fading fast,
For Lang has taken their skulls together with their hip
bones from which to hang his sword.

How then can these Kayans avoid being stricken,
No more will they listen to the birds as they work their
swiddens."

645

"Uncle Lang, may we hang your well dried hook here at the
edge of the gallery?"

"Not there, kinsman Beragai, for it is there that visitors
pass when coming to engage shamans."

"Uncle Lang, may we hang your brass hook here in the middle
of the gallery?"

"Not there, kinsman Ketupong, for it is there that shrines
are erected."

650

"Where, Uncle Lang, is the place to hang your hook of bone?"

"Why there, my kinsman from the rafters at the edge of the
gallery."

A tree by the lake is felled:

After it has been hung in place the guests are spellbound.

"Nothing could excel this resplendent sword of Uncle Lang,

655

As it hangs from its huge shoulder-bone hook,

With its scabbard stained brightly red,

And decorated by finely plaited rattan binding,

With its waistband of bleached cotton,

And its beautiful tassel, from which dangles a human eye.

660

Were I to use this weapon in circling and confronting

the shrines of the gods,

While flourishing a symbolic shield of shredded palm frond,

and parading the whole length of the longhouse,

It would be such a spectacle as that of shamans, at

initiation, being ritually kicked and beaten."

An ageing tree by the lake is felled:

The guests having seen the sword, want to plant the 'seed'.

665

"How, Uncle Lang, are we to sow this seed that is still

all of a piece?

How, Uncle Lang, are we to sow this singular seed of the

shrine, as we do our *padi*?"

L663 *Besipat* (to whip) is part of the initiation ceremony, in which an Iban becomes shaman. This involves the initiate in being ritually whipped with the blossoms of an areca nut.

PART VII

A tree with dead branch is felled:

"If we are to split open this 'seed'," says Lang,

"We must enquire among the guests for a knife."

"Where, kinsman Bungai Nuing," asks Lang, "is your
glittering sword,

For me to use to split open this 'seed'?"

"I cannot agree to my sword being used,

5

Its blade has a flaw as big as a pointed tooth,

And a crack as large as the barb of a spear

From my having used it to hack up a raft."

"Show us your long sword, Uncle Lang, with which you
chop up shells;

Where, Uncle Lang, is your glittering bone-shattering

sword for us to use in splitting open this 'seed'?"

10

A tree is notched and felled:

Lang making ready to split open the 'seed' puts on
ceremonial dress.

He puts on a jacket woven by a female spirit from
headwaters set about with stakes of bone;

He dons the skin of the tiger that roars from its lair;

His head is resplendent with the tail feathers of birds.

15

A tree is notched and felled:

Having put on his finery, Lang turns to the splitting
of the 'seed'.

Lang hacks at the mango-like seed, but there is not the
slightest sign of a cut;

Lang slashes again at the soft-looking seed but is
quite unable to split it.

"If I become angered in splitting this 'seed' 20

There will, for sure, be none left to be gathered;

If I become enraged in splitting the seed of the shrine

Hitting it with all my might, there will be none left
to share with all these Iban."

"If I become maddened," says Lang, "in splitting of
this 'seed',

I will, for sure, cut it into tiny pieces." 25

"If I become exasperated," says Lang, "in the splitting
of this 'seed',

I will, for sure, shatter it into fragments."

Then his wife, Dara Mentaba, 'The Wild Tree Orchid' speaks:

"You, my love, have become like someone old and senile;

How stupid is Lang and lacking in common sense; 30

The 'seed', my beloved, cannot be split with your old sword

That you brought from the land of lofty trees in the skies;

This 'seed' cannot be split with the big-bladed sword

That you brought from our home on the Towering Ridge."

"Don't you remember," says Pungga, "the blade 35

That we have just made with the unpunctual Sabata."

"Don't you recollect," says Sempuntang Medang,

The young 'batchelor' who has yet to marry."

From a tall bamboo scaffolding a tree is felled:

Having taken up the new sword, Uncle Lang rubs his
charms on the 'seed'. 40

He places the 'seed' of the shrine on a folded *ikat* fabric;

The forehead of the 'seed' is turned towards the rays of
the setting sun;

Lang then rubs it with a water snake charm

That he plucked from the foam of a whirlpool;

A charm used by Lang in leading an attack by boat
against his enemies. 45

When Lang so touches the 'seed' it becomes exceedingly soft,

Like a ripe jack-fruit that has fallen to the ground;

When Lang feels the 'seed' of the shrine,

It has become soft and tender like the flesh of a ripe
durian.

A tree is felled, a quid of chewing tobacco: 50

Before Lang turns to the splitting of the 'seed' he
asks the guests to stand aside.

"You who are old," says Lang, "should not, staff in
hand, walk to and fro;

L40 As Lang splits open (*nge lampang*) the trophy head, the Iban in the longhouse emulate his actions on the open platform (*tanju*), using a husked coconut instead of an actual trophy head. Iban men of renown are invited to split open the coconut in the *nge lampang* rite. The successful splitting of a coconut is taken to be a sign of prowess in head-hunting.

And you who are young should not wail and cry;
 You of Panggau and Gelau sit down together,
 For I am about to split open this 'seed'; 55
 Lest you be overcome by the splendour of my woven jacket,
 Harmed by my mantlet of tiger skin resplendent with the
 feathers of birds;
 Or be buffeted by the scabbard of my shining sword;
 Perhaps the 'seed' will mock me again, so that I'll
 lash out in anger;
 Perhaps the 'seed' will refuse to be split, and savage
 at heart, my face will redden with anger; 60
 Perhaps the 'seed' will refuse to be split, and leap
 madly about."

Then, Bungai Nuing, in the middle of attacking the walls
 of the longhouse and tying a tortoise to the floor,
 gives all his attention to Lang;
 As does Pungga, while pulling apart the frame of a cooking
 hearth from which smoked monkeys hang;
 Father Abang, sitting at the back, does not budge;
 Kling gazes forth with intense concentration; 65
 Laja, with unblinking eyes surveys the scene;
 Puntang Medang, leaps to his feet with a breech-loading
 gun;
 Pulau Ajau, slowly rises, with an enormous spear;
 Bungai Nuing, dips his blowpipe darts in a poisonous sap.
 "If the task be beyond you, Uncle Lang, we will join you
 in slashing; 70

It is embarrassing to tell of our bravery and heroic
deeds in front of so many guests.

Once, Uncle Lang, we brothers, in anger at those down
river, trampled down their lands;

Once, Uncle Lang, in anger we ascended Raya mountain and
dreamt of reversing the Sukat rapid;

Once to test our bravery and strength,

We hacked our way through a huge rock leaving fragments
as big as a hornbill's tongue." 75

Then, Lulong brings out an offering containing griddle
cakes and rice wine;

Kumang brings out an offering containing puffed rice and
tiny, leaf-wrapped, rice cakes.

Lang tucks his hair in his turban from the tumbling waves;

He twists up his long hair in which are the horns of a
reeking water monster.

Lang puts the 'seed' of shrine on the end of an *ikat*
fabric spread out on a rattan mat; 80

Lang places the seed on a winnowing tray patterned like
a headdress.

Lang rises to his feet and strides slowly forward;

In his hands the sharp-edged sword made by the son
of Sapita Daie;

Lang clutches the glittering, keen-edged blade

L73 Raya mountain is a few miles below Pelagus rapids, and Sukat is
one of its waterfalls.

Sharpened on the whet stone of the lightning that
splits the threatening skies asunder; 85

A sword once used by Jingan, the brother of Unchat,
When searching, in the Anap headwaters, for a war plane
from Japan lost from cape Kedurong.

Lifting his arm Lang hits the 'seed' with the sound of
a knife slicing through a ripe *mawang* fruit;

Lang cuts deeply into the 'seed' as when the casing of
a durian is split;

Lang hits the 'seed' with all his might with the sound
of bamboo shoot being sliced. 90

The stricken 'seed' falls on to its face, and then
rolls on its back,

Its knees are broken, as though pierced by a barbed spear.

Lulong and Mother Terong Ramenat are stunned

To see the 'seed' quite unable to rise to its feet,
Unable to control its flailing arms, 95

Howling in agony, its eyes turned up until their
whites show.

A tree is felled; a clump of saplings:

Jawai, the mat with bean flower patterns, comes in haste,

Having heard that Lang has split open the 'seed',

L87 This refers to a campaign, during the later part of the second world war, against the Japanese around Cape Kedurong, near Bintulu in which many Balen Iban took part. Jingan and his three sons, all of whom were from Mujong river, were among the participants.

She has brought both plates and bowls.

100

"Let one of its eyes be mine, Uncle Lang,
To become the bean seed that I'll plant close to the
fallen trees of my swidden;
Its pod will be large enough to be used in shooting rapids."

Kumang and Mother Karo come,

Having heard that Uncle Lang has split open the 'seed'
of shrine,

105

They have brought both plates and wooden bowls.

"Let that glinting eye be ours, Uncle Lang,
To become the cucumber seed that we shall plant by the
fallen trees of our swidden,
Its fruit will be abundant and as big as boulders."

Next come Kumang and Tibo Ranjing,

110

Having heard that Lang has split open the 'seed'.
They have brought both plates and decorated bowls.
"Give us, Uncle Lang, those two far-seeing eyes of
the seed of the shrine

To become the 'seed' of our precious sacred *padi*,
That, in our swiddens, will so luxuriantly grow."

115

Then come Lulong and Kalinah,

Having heard that Lang has split open the 'seed'
They have hurriedly brought both plates and broken bowls.
"Give to us, your favourites, those incisor teeth

To become the 'seed' of the quick ripening *padi* that
we first of all plant."

120

A long winding creeper, a tree is felled:
Having obtained the *padi* seed, a person to winnow the
seed is sought.

"To winnow the seed of Lang's sacred *padi*
Who better than Singgar, with the cleft forehead;
To winnow the seed of Lang's sacred *padi*
Who better than the wreathed hornbill, the maiden
with striped cheeks."

125

"How can I decline, Uncle Lang,
For you have all pointed at my eyes," says Singgar with
the cleft forehead.

"How can I decline, Uncle Lang,
For a thousand of you have called my name," says the
maiden with striped cheeks.

130

"The one to assist me winnowing the *padi* is Sedu,
the wailer of death dirge.
The one to assist me winnowing the *padi* is Sudan of the
bunched flowers."

From a high bamboo scaffolding a tree is felled:
The winnowers begin their work.
Winnowing the seed of the sacred *padi*,
Winnowing in the wooden shields of warriors,
Winnowing while wearing *ikat* jackets;

135

The sharp husks we shall ward off with the feathers of
owls;

The chaff we shall put in a mat of reeds.

"This, Uncle Lang, is not sacred *padi*, 140

These are the eye balls of those of the Kanto tribe,

Whose bodies have become frail from our curses;

Though the boisterous wind still blows on their bodies,

The light has gone from their eyes;

They quail in the mountain where cocks crow, 145

And perish on the ridge from which the baying of dogs

echoes over the land."

A tree is felled, a long winding creeper:

The *padi* having been winnowed, they make ready to sun it.

The seed is laid out on a mat by Lang's wife;

As she spreads it out on the rattan mat, 150

She pulls out young Ukits, who have become lost when

hunting in the forest with their blow-pipes;

The seed is laid out on the mat by Lang's wife,

As she moves the seed to and fro she pulls out young

Melanaus from Oya as they return from collecting sago.

A tree by the lake; leaves fall:

The *padi* seed having been spread out to dry, a pole with

which to ward away pests, is sought. 155

"Uncle Lang, what of the tall bamboos growing at the
edge of the river?"

"No, my kinsmen, those are not good for they are so often used as the shafts of fishing spears."

"Uncle Lang, what of the bamboo from the hills?"

"No, kinsmen, for it is from those that we so often make containers."

"Where then, Uncle Lang, is the right and proper thing to use?"

160

Where, Uncle Lang, is the thing to which you are accustomed?"

"A long pole of light and tensile bamboo is the thing,

Ketupong,

Especially when lashed to it is a barbed spear;

A long pole of slender bamboo is the thing, Bejampong

Especially together with a gun that is ready for firing."

165

Fallen leaves at the edge of the undergrowth:

Having found a pole, they seek the heat of the sun.

"What, Uncle Lang, of the dry season of the war leader

Mancho,

Could that be used to dry the seed of our sacred *padi*?"

"No, kinsman Papau, for it causes wild banana plants to

infest the swidden."

170

"What, Uncle Lang, of the dry season of the war leader

Malang,

Could that be used to dry of our sacred *padi*?"

L168-173 Both Mancho and Malang were Iban warriors of former days whose head-hunting raids were foiled when their bands were ambushed by the enemies, i.e. like their swiddens, which even before firing, were overgrown with wild bananas and dampened by rain, so were their raids — unsuccessful.

"No, kinsman Bejampong, for it is followed by rain when
the last *tapang* trees of the swidden have been felled;
The long dry season, kinsman Beragai, will dry the *padi*
seed,

The long dry season of the late Ringkai, that buckles
the boards of the loft."

175

"Scorching heat, kinsman Ketupong," says Lang, 'will
dry the *padi* seed,

The heat of the late Unchat that singes the palm frond
awnings."

The edge of the undergrowth, a tree beside a pool:
Having found a drying heat, they ward away the foraging
chickens.

"Be gone, you green-speckled cocks,

180

That so wantonly devour these *padi* seeds;

I will strike you with this long bamboo pole,

And shoot at you with my flashing gun."

"Why, those are not cocks, Uncle Lang,

They are writhing maggots eating into bones."

185

A tree by a pool, a breadfruit tree is felled:

L175-177 Ringkai was a very successful war leader, and so was Unchat. One of Unchat's raids into enemy territories was reported by H.S.B. Johnson (SG VOL.XXXIII, 1903,:243). "On arrival (at Kapit) I heard from Mr Blaydes that Unchat's *bala* (war party) had returned having killed twenty-one of the Lanans in Balulok Sabong's (a Kayan chief) house and taken ten captives and that about 500 upriver Dyaks had taken part in the expedition.

The chickens having been chased away, the dryness of the
padi seed is tested.

"Test the dryness by biting a seed between your teeth."

"It is well dried, Uncle Lang, and far into the future
it will not deteriorate, or rot."

A breadfruit tree is felled, a log by the sea:

190

After being tested for dryness, the *padi* is stored in
bark bins.

The *padi* seed of Uncle Lang is stored in great bins made
from bark of the *ara* tree.

"Why these are not bark bins, Uncle Lang,

These are the circular frames of rattan from which trophy
heads are hung."

Quickly fell the chestnut tree; a quid of chewing tobacco:

195

The *padi* having been stored, land in which it might be
sown is sought.

"If we are tardy in cultivating the seed of the shrine,
Uncle Lang,

The stars by which we mark the planting season will have
sunk beneath the horizon;

If we are tardy in cultivating our sacred *padi*, Uncle Lang,

The year is already at the eighth moon."

200

"Let us ask for hilly land from Mother Jabua, the mouse;

L198 Cf. Part I:L28-29.

Let us ask for spacious land from Mother Nyamba, the
cockroach."

"I have not seen hilly land, Uncle Lang," says the mouse,
"For I've been gnawing away in the bottom of storage bins."

"I have seen no spacious land, Uncle Lang," says the
cockroach,

205

"For I have been building a nest inside a shaman's basket."

"Who then has seen gently sloping land," says Lang,

"Like the brim of a sun hat,

Where we can cultivate the seed of the shrine?

Who then has seen soft land," says Lang,

210

Shaped like a ceramic bowl,

Where we can plant this 'seed'?"

Then, the men from the mountain peaks, where the dry winds
blow, give the answer.

Then, the men from the land where ferns curl like the rattan
rim of a storage bin, speak.

Then Lang asks for gently sloping land,

215

In which to cultivate the seed of the shrine, from
Punga, of the palm frond.

"I have found some, Uncle Lang, not long ago;

It was when I went raiding with Jarau and Imba,

To the distant Jawan and Bukau rivers;

There I found this gently sloping land, most suitable for
cultivating the seed of the shrine.

220

L218-219 Jarau (see Part III, lines 112 - 125) and Imba were Baleh Iban
leaders.

Yet it is so far that I wonder whether or not it would
really do;

Moreover, the entry ladder to the Lepo Kayan house that
stands there is thickly decorated with human teeth."

A quid of tobacco; quickly fell the breadfruit tree:

Having heard of this land, they ask about the way to reach it.

"What, kinsman Glayan Sigat, of going by way of the
headwaters of the Gat,

225

Is it a good way to get to that gently sloping land?"

"No, Uncle Lang, not by the headwaters of the Gat lest
we get lost in an alien land."

"What, kinsman Kumbo Rayong, of going by way of the
headwaters of the Mujong,

Is it a good way to get to that flat land?"

"No, Uncle Lang, not by the headwaters of the Mujong, lest
we waste valuable time."

230

"There is no need, kinsman Papau, for haste in cultivating
the seed of our shrine,

Look at Inggum, the father of Mambo, when he went to
cultivate the seed of the shrine,

He certainly waited for the year to be right before
donning a warrior's clothes."

L225-228 The maps of Sarawak and Kalimantan will show that the Gat
headwaters offer a convenient overland route to Kanyau river, a Maloh
territory, while the Mujong headwaters provide access to Kayan terri-
tory in the Balui region.

L232 Inggum was an Iban of former days.

"If we are tardy, Uncle Lang, in beginning our cultivation,"

says Manggie,

"Our *padi* crop will fail and be devoured by pests."

235

A quid of tobacco; quickly fell the breadfruit tree:

Before they spy out the land, Lang indicates the way.

"If we are in haste, kinsman Renggan," says Lang;

"Let us ride on the moon beams,

Following the warpath of Kanyan,

240

To the land of the Kayans of the Mentulang headwaters."

"If we are to cultivate the seed of the shrine,

Kinsman Bungai Nuing," says Lang,

"Let us ride on the drifting moon,

Following the warpath of Budit in his attack on the

Kelabit."

245

Quickly fell the breadfruit tree, a log on the sea:

After the way has been indicated, they collect

augural sticks.

"Collect an augural stick," says Uncle Lang,

A stick to commemorate the cry of a Ketupong,

Notching it with your knife,

250

And tying it with a cotton thread."

L240 Cf. Part V:L97.

L241 Mentulang is a tributary of the Kayan river, in Kalimantan.

L245 Budit was a Iban warrior of former times.

"Why this is not a Ketupong stick Uncle Lang," says

Senggal Tinggi,

It is a male snake!"

"So it is, kinsman, put it at the bathing place of

the Temusun Tase Kayan,

To ambush them when they go down to the river to bathe."

255

A log on the sea; quickly fell the chestnut tree:

After collecting an augural stick, the party dress for

the warpath.

Uncle Lang puts on the jacket woven by his grandmother

Lalawe with bizarre patterns and twisted sleeves;

Uncle Lang puts on his mantlet made from the skin of the

tiger that roars from its lair.

Uncle Lang puts on his helmet adorned with the tail

feathers of hornbills.

260

As one notches and fells a tree:

Having dressed for the warpath, Lang rises to leave.

Leaving the carved board against which warriors lounge,

Leaving the gallery with its bronze cannons, row upon row,

From Uncle Lang's waist hangs his long glittering sword,

265

The spear on his shoulder sways to and fro like the head

of a rearing cobra;

Issuing from beneath the eaves of wooden shingles,

L262 As Lang prepares to leave on his expedition a *piring* ceremony is performed on the verandah of the man who is holding the *gawai*.

From the top of the ladder where trophy heads are received,
They descend its steps in single file,
And stride along the path wider than the frond of a fern, 270
A path on which huge millipedes lie crushed and dying,
They reach one of Uncle Lang's old resting places thickly
swathed in morning mist,
A resting place it would take more than a day's walk
to encircle.

A knot on a tree, a log on the sea:
"Here we will pause to listen for auguries." 275
Ketupong walking over the sunken ground
Hears the yawning of the infinite skies.
Ketupong walking over the narrow ground,
Hears the sobbing of a dying brahminy kite.

"If these are the auguries for our expedition kinsman
Papau," says Lang, 280
"They foretell deeds of bravery and of certain success."
If these are the auguries for our foray into enemy
territory, kinsman Rendah,"
Says Lang, who is always taking heads,
"They foretell the getting of human hair to decorate
the hilts of our war swords."

A log on the sea, a gigantic flowering lily: 285
Having taken auguries, they resume their journey.
Passing the ogre Ganuling, with eight ears on each side
of his head,

Who sits by a defile awaiting travellers;
Passing a quick-moving barking deer,
Who sits on an earth mound on which birds fall. 290

Those in the van reach the valley where the darts
of blowpipe fall,
And then, a high ridge swept by both sunshine and rain,
The land where the ogre Kamba lurks,
The abode of the ogre Selda Lupai.

"I am going with you, Uncle Lang, 295
For I long to seize some Kayan children and devour them
with my pointed teeth;

I am going with you on your expedition, Uncle Lang,
For it is a long time since my deft fingers took
to pilfering."

They journey on to a mound of earth shaped like a
broad-brimmed sun hat,
To a ridge like the upturned stern of a boat, 300
The land of white-backed Galiga Tandang, the ogre
who gobbles up human brains,

The land of the ogre Rimong, to whose deformed knees
leeches cling.

"I am going with you, Uncle Lang,
For too long have my teeth not eaten;
I am going with you, Uncle Lang, 305

For too long the palms of my hands have not been caked
with dried blood."

From there they journey on to a banyan tree with aerial
roots like rattan fastenings,
An enormous tree covering all of the surrounding land.
The land of the ogre Junti with a solitary tooth as
big as a wild banana;
The abode of the ogre Jemaing, with long feet the
shape of bellows.

310

His wife is Uding, who resembles the rays of the sun that
shines at night,

His beloved Jawai, who resembles a downpour of rain.

"I am coming with you, Uncle Lang,

For I long to take along my mouth that remains thickly
smeared with filth;

I am coming with you, Uncle Lang,

315

For I long to bring my hands from which blood is still
dripping."

From there they journey on to a banyan tree with
far-reaching branches,
To an immense tree shading all of the surrounding land.
The land of the ogre Demp, i,
The abode of the ogre Abo, with the hauntingly fearsome
voice;

320

His wife is Sudan, the chopping block on which shoulder
blades are cut,

His other wife is the mat on which lungs and livers are
stacked.

"I am coming with you, Uncle Lang,
For I long to bring my teeth, between which food is
still sticking;

I am coming with you, Uncle Lang,

325

For I long to bring my hands which remain thick with
filth."

"How superb are those who have joined Uncle Lang on
his expedition,

For they are both fierce and brave;

How superb are those who have joined Uncle Land on
his campaign,

For they are all sharp and resourceful."

330

They reach an awning of wild palm fronds,

The land where old bamboo containers are strewn
to left and right.

Whose wife is the scattered remains of uneaten rice.

"The land is not far distant," says Lang,

"Where we shall sow our 'seed'

335

For the ferns on that hill have been scorched by

our potent poles upon which hornbill icons rest,

The level land is not far distant," says Lang,

"Where we shall sow our 'seed',

For, look, the fish are dying in the pool beyond this
rapid."

A quid of tobacco; a tree sheds its leaves: 340

Before exploring further, Lang instructs his followers.

"When passing rattan, kinsman Pandak Sagatak, do not pull

it down for the making of harvesting baskets,

For fear that swarms of locust will devour our *padi*;

When passing a *pudu* tree do not strip off its bark

for lashings,

Lest worms destroy our yams."

345

A quid of chewing tobacco, a dead branch on a tree:

Lang asks who should lead in treading the land.

"In treading this land, Uncle Lang, others should not lead,

I must go first," says Tuchok, the gecko with tattooed sides.

"In treading this land, Uncle Lang,

350

I should lead the way," says Sandah, who never fails in

battle.

"The reason why I can lead the way, Uncle Lang,

Is because I have, tied about my waist a charm plucked

from a tortoise shell,

That will make our enemies empty-headed and cowardly;

The reason why I can lead the way, Uncle Lang,

355

Is because I have tied about my waist, an excrement

charm plucked out of an anus,

That will make our enemies weak at the knees."

L342-345 These are actual prohibitions which Iban observe when going to clear their swiddens.

A dead branch on a tree, a breadfruit tree is felled:
Having decided on who should go first, they resume
their journey.

Those in the van come to a hill thick with rattan, 360

And trees, growing where canoes had been cut into shape.

"Whose secondary jungle is that Uncle Lang?"

"It is the secondary jungle of Kling, the father of Rando,
dating from the time of his planting of the 'seed'
of the cucumber,

Which is why there is in this Indai Ulo river no sound
of gourds being filled with water,

And why the land there beyond that hill is still strewn
with sago flour and heaps of ashes."

365

"How beautiful is that hill criss-crossed by rattan,

And that river bank thick with ferns, and the left-overs
of foragers;

Whose secondary jungle is that Uncle Lang?"

"It is the secondary jungle of Merum and Kanyan dating
from the time of their planting of the 'seed',

L363 Kling was the son of pengulu Unggat, a Katibas Iban who accused Balang of plotting to murder Mr Cruickshank (cf. Part III:L112-125). Kling along with his contemporaries (e.g. Mata Ari, Merum, Kayan, Unchat, etc.) often raided neighbouring enemy tribes with devastating effects (cf. SG XXXV, 1905, no.477; Pringle, 1970:261). Later Kling became a loyal supporter of the Brooke regime and was given a penguluship. Indai Ulo is a tributary of Mahakam river.

L369 Merum was a famous Baleh Iban rebel. In spite of being a government appointee, he led Iban settlers to migrate illegally into the Baleh river basin and its tributaries. His challenge to Brooke's rule was put to an end by a government punitive expedition in 1915, and he was stripped of his penguluship (Freeman, 1970:136 seq.; Pringle, 1970: 258-262). Babeyong is a tributary of the Mahakam river.

Which is why this part of the Babeyong is so silent, 370
Why to this day the trees hereabout are still scarred."

"How beautiful is that hill covered with creepers,
And that secondary jungle that has grown where people
once made huts,

Whose secondary jungle is that Uncle Lang?"

"It is the secondary jungle of Ubong, also called Unchat,
dating from the time of his planting of the 'seed'; 375

Which is why there was a battle at Kerangan Nyabong,
And why the trees thereabout as still so heavily scarred."

"How beautiful is that flat land with its towering trees,
And that hill, thick with rattan, left by people who
have been plaiting mats;

Whose secondary jungle is that Uncle Lang?" 380

"It is the secondary jungle of Unggang, also called Mata
Ari, dating from the time when he planted the 'seed',
Which is why the settlement of the Kayan Chief, Belulok
Sabong, is so deserted,

Which is why that iron-wood tree is still askew after
having been cut into by adzes.

L375-376 Cf. Part VII:L175-177. Kerangan Nyabong is a place in Balui river where the Iban, my informants told me, had successfully fought the Kayan.

L381-382 Mata Ari was a cousin of Kling, and a son of Gerinang who was a famous Katibas Iban pioneer. It is probable that Mata Ari might have been with Unchat when the latter attacked Balulok Sabong's longhouse. Mata Ari was later given the penguluship (Freeman, 1970:132).

That patch of virgin forest," says Lang, "where there are
tall trees still to be felled, belongs to us;
That large hill," says Lang, "scorched by fire is ours."

385

Quickly fell a tree:

Lang clears a place at which to rest.

A place for the fierce and the brave to lounge,

A place for those who are truly courageous may hang
their loin cloths.

Quickly fell the chestnut tree, a quid of chewing tobacco:

390

Lang remains to guard the resting place,

While Tuchok and Sandah scout the land.

Kinsman Tuchok intently stalks across the land,

Along a terrace covered with lilies,

Through a valley of huge trees

395

With branches full of white-fronted honey bears;

He hears the crying and wailing of children,

Whose mothers cannot quieten them,

Mothers who in desperation shout: "May your eyes be

pierced and your ears be smitten, may you be carried

off by Ketupong!"

A quid of tobacco, a chestnut tree is felled:

400

After scouting the land, they return to their resting place.

"Are you back, kinsman Tuchok, my appointed scout?"

"I am, Uncle Lang,

I scouted the hills as far as the eye can see,
I scouted upriver past countless bends, 405
I scouted down-river Uncle Lang, past countless headlands,
But I was seized with fear and foreboding
On hearing the sound of the pounding of many pestles."

A quid of tobacco, a tree thick with blossoms:
Having scouted the land, they gather to demarcate
territory. 410

The voice of the ogre Siu, or the hurtling waves, is heard.
"In demarcating this new land, let yonder rock mark the
boundary."

"If you go first, ogre Abo," says Lang,
Do not fell beyond that mark by as much as the length
of a knife,

Do not go beyond it by as much as the blade of a spear; 415
But that towering *tapang* tree,
Which is immensely hard and knotted,

That you may fell with your newly made adze,
For you are skilled at hunting by night;
The hill upriver from that marker 420

Is reserved for the husband of Nguta the fish of gold,
Who has staged this ritual,

Perhaps he will have a dream while sleeping on the wooden floor,
Lying on a mat with a thousand patterns,
So there will be a place for him to try out his charms 425

Given by helping spirits in the broad light of day.

PART VIII

A fungus quivering by a fall, a quid of chewing tobacco:
Before inaugurating the new swidden, Lang casts away
unwanted earth.

Lang takes up a handful of loose earth

In the capacious palm of his hand.

This impure earth he hurls up river on to far off lands. 5

It rattles against the walls of the Peng Kayans, knocking
down their brass gongs,

Sending precious jars crashing through the floor

To crush the pigs beneath,

Destroying prized cocks as they roost on their perches,

And killing their chief Setukan Tajai so leaving them

leaderless. 10

A quid of chewing tobacco, a log by the sea:

Having cast away this impure earth, the augural sticks
are thrust into the ground.

"Bring here, Uncle Lang, your augural stick of Ketupong,"
says Papau.

With his palm and fingers Lang hands it to him.

"Why, this is not the augural stick of the Ketupong,

Uncle Lang, 15

L2-21 This section deals with *manggol* rites which mark the inauguration of the farming cycle. For detailed discussion on Iban farming cycle refer to Freeman, 1970:171:218; Jensen, 1974:157-194.

This is a barbed spear
With a bronze-coated shaft,
Adorned with the name of a crimson horse."
"So it is my kinsman, fathers of my grandchildren,
Drive it into the base of that tree,
Thrust it deep into the necks of the Uma Dàro Kayan
to rend and tear their throats."

20

A log by the sea, a tree by a lake:
Having thrust their augural sticks into the ground
they gather to discuss the clearing of the undergrowth.

"Let kinsman Bakubu clear the upriver section
For he knows the boundaries of the forest;
Let kinsman Bejampong clear the downriver section,
For he knows the boundaries of the rivers and headlands;
Kinsman Pangkas, you clear upward, further than the eye
can see;
Kinsman Bakubu, you clear upriver for as far as there is
water for *tubai* fishing."

25

The sons-in-law of Lang clear down river for as far as
a young man would go fishing with a cast net;
Kinsman Papau clears the undergrowth together with
Nyanau, who is always foremost in battle.

30

Bejampong clears the undergrowth at the valley's end,
Together with Rundang whose praise-name is 'The Fruit-
bearing *Tapang* Tree'.

L31-32 Nyanau and Rundang were Iban of former days.

"That *bait* tree is mine," says Kunchit,
For it has so many branches." 35

"That *enting* tree is mine," says Engkijira,
"For it can be felled without scaffolding."

"That *melebo* tree is mine," says Empulo,
"For it has a soft core."

"That *tapang* tree is mine," says Beragai, 40
"For it is the dwelling place of wild bees."

"That *nyelutong* tree is mine," says Ketupong
"For its great height calls for the use of scaffolding."

A dead branch falls, a gigantic palm crashes to the ground:

The trees to be felled having been claimed, Lang asks
that the rites of felling be performed. 45

A bamboo is cut through to make the trees 'hollow' and
easy to fell;

The holes in the lower parts of the trees are plugged
with earth so that stinging insects will not emerge
to swarm over the backs of the fellers;

Puffed rice is scattered to stop the weeds from growing;

A felled sapling is pushed down the slope so that when
the swidden is fired the felled trees will not likewise.

A tree shedding its leaves, a tree is felled: 50

L46-49 These are rites that Iban actually perform before clearing the swidden. While Lang is doing the *manggol* rite, the Iban perform a *piring* ceremony on the gallery of the Iban who is holding the *gawai*.

After having been instructed they line up to begin
felling.

Kinsman Kutok fells a great *pelepok* tree,
With his hafted adze, it falls with an enormous crash;
Its base pierced by woodpeckers, its crown is full of
holes,

Kinsman Bakubu fells a great *melatu* tree, 55
With his big-bladed newly made adze;
Its branches are all twisted, its buttress roots cast
great shadows;

Kinsman Bejampong fells a towering *tapang* tree,
With his big-bladed adze,
Its trunk is thick with trailing vines; 60

Kinsman Papau fells a great *kelansau* tree,
With his big-bladed adze,
It crashes down bringing with it the lofts of houses;
Kinsman Papau fells a great *raro* tree,
With his big-bladed adze, 65
It crashes down bringing mosquito nets with it;

Kinsman Beragai fells a great *bacha* tree,
With his adze of iron,
It crashes down bringing with it shelves and beds.

"Why, kinsman Bungai Nuing, is that huge banyan tree
still standing," says Lang, 70
"Fell it with your barbed spear,
Fell it with your adze and your charm of the horns
of a sandfly."

The vast banyan tree sways and crashes down upon the
lands of the Uma Kulit and other Kayans.

"Part of that *kedemba* tree is still standing," says
Lang,

"Demolish it at once, kinsman Beragai,

75

Chop it down with your adze and the charm you got
from a hornbill."

The *kedemba* tree crashes down bringing with it a
headdress of hornbill plumes.

A tree by the lake is felled:

After surveying the scene, they discuss the trees
that remain.

"A towering *paji* tree is still standing there
kinsman Senggal Tinggi," says Lang.

80

"Let us, my brother, work together on this scaffolding
of spears,

With its cross-beams of rifles and cannons
Tied with coloured cotton thread."

"I'll notch it with a single blow," says Manggie.

"I'll chop it until it hangs like the neck of a dove,"
says Ketupong.

85

The rapid blows of Glayan Sigat sound like waves
slapping against a barricade across a river;
From the centre of the tree comes a sound like the
reloading of a cannon;

Its neck remains intact like that of a crocodile;

They chop at it with their powerful adzes and with
their charms of mosquito horns and bees,
They slash at it again with their adzes and with charms
obtained from a hornbill icon.

90

Behold! the *paji* tree begins to sway,
Bejampong and Senggal Tinggi glance upwards,
"This *paji* tree, Uncle Lang, is most peculiar,
It has a human smell,
Its mouth emits bad breath,
Its farts stink of long pickled pork,
Its branches still have shell bracelets,
Its outcrops still have bead necklaces."

95

As the *paji* tree falls it brings down sleeping places,
While in its branches there are bears and leopards.
"If that be so, Kumbo Rayong and Ketupong, then capture
them,
Tie their arms with coloured thread,
Carry them off to our women
So that they may one day join in our festivities."

100

A tree beside a lake, a tree thick with blossoms:
Having felled the remaining trees, they identify omen
animals.

105

L101-104 The Iban did take war captives who became their slaves. Even though slaves as Gomes (1911:94-95) points out were fairly well treated, and "in many cases children who have been captive ... are adopted, and intermarry with sons and daughters of the inhabitants of the village," they were, nevertheless, still very much the social outcast in Iban society.

Kinsman Pandak Sagatak glances up and exclaims: "There's
a monitor lizard!"

"Not a monitor lizard," says Lang, "a gecko in the rafters."

"There's a long-tailed monkey!" exclaims Pungga.

"Not a long-tailed monkey, a cat on the roof top." 110

"There's a squirrel!" exclaims kinsman Sempurai Gundai.

"Not a squirrel, a cockroach nesting in a shaman's
basket of charms."

"There, Uncle Lang, is a leaf-eating monkey!" exclaims
Bungai Nuing.

"Not a leaf-eating monkey, kinsman, but a mouse gnawing
the bottom of a bark bin."

A tree thick with blossoms, a clump of saplings: 115

Having identified the omen animals, they begin to
clear away the branches of the felled trees.

"You two, kinsmen Pungga and Beragai, clear away the
branches of that banyan tree in yonder valley."

In clearing the branches they also slash at the stacked
firewood of the Kayan, Taman Nyipa, that is neatly
arranged in six tiers.

"Bungai Nuing," says Lang, "you clear away the branches
of the iron-wood tree on that ridge."

L107-114 All the animals seen here are animals found in human dwellings,
and not jungle animals as they first thought. In other words Lang and
his followers have not been felling trees but cutting down enemy houses
and attacking their inhabitants.

But Bungai Nuing only cuts in to the walls of Peng
longhouses.

120

A clump of saplings, a tree beside a lake:
Having cleared away the branches of the felled trees,
they ask about dry weather.

"What, Uncle Lang, of the long hot season of Malang,
the war leader,

Could that be used to dry the felled trees of our swidden?"

"No, kinsman Bejampong,

125

For after the *tapang* trees had been felled, there was a
deluge of rain."

"What, Uncle Lang, of the fiercely hot season of the
late Samat, the warrior,

Could that be used for the firing of our swidden?"

"No, my kinsmen for the fiercely hot season of the
late Samat

was in fact very cold and soaking wet."

130

Then, at last, Uncle Lang speaks:

"Kinsman Ketupong, if you are wanting a scorching heat
to dry our swidden,

There is nothing better than the dry season of the late
war leader Unggat,

L127 Samat was Iban warrior of former days whose head-hunting raid was ambushed by his enemies.

L133 Cf. Part III:L112-125.

For our fire will then blaze up to consume the roof
of the entire longhouse."

A tree by a lake, a breadfruit tree is felled:

135

Having asked about dry weather, Lang tells them to
test the dryness of the swidden.

"Bejampong, would you test the dryness of the swidden
at the end of yonder valley?"

Behold, the trees, lying in such confusion are cracking
in the heat.

"Kinsman Pandak Sangatak, would you test the dryness
of the swidden there in the valley?"

Behold, the bark of the trees is scattered all over
the ground.

140

As one notches and fells a tree:

Having tested the dryness of the swidden they return
to their resting place.

"Kinsman Papau, how dry is that swidden of ours that
we first felled?"

"It is very dry indeed, Uncle Lang,

The felled trees are warped and twisted like dried fish."

145

Then Uncle Lang says to his kinsman Beragai,

"You who have come from testing the dryness of our swidden,
How dry is that part of it that we first felled?"

"It is dry beyond all doubt, Uncle Lang

On the end of the fallen banyan tree ants are building a
nest."

150

Fell the breadfruit tree, pick its leaves:

Having asked about the dryness of the swidden they
turn to the making of torches.

"Kinsman Papau try peeling off the bark of that *raro*
tree for making torches to fire our swidden."

"This is not the bark of a *raro* tree, Uncle Lang
It is the skin of the neck of an Uma Daro Kayan." 155

"It is indeed, kinsman, tear it from the neck
So that our fire will burn and need no fanning."

"That, kinsman Manggie, is the back of the *melapi* tree
for the making of torches to fire our swidden."

"This is not the bark of a *melapi* tree, Uncle Lang,
But the skin of the palms of an Uma Mali Kayan." 160

"It is indeed, kinsman, peel it from the hands
So that our fire will burn without cease."

The leaves are picked, those of the breadfruit tree
are prickly:

Having conferred about torches, Lang summons his kinsmen.

The resounding voice of Lang 165

Calls to the ogre Nyemangga with blood-shot eyes,

The gobbler of cannon balls from Brunei,

On whose mouth are glowing embers.

Uncle Lang wishing to fire the swidden

Calls to the ogre Lasu with the distorted face 170

And dishevelled hair, who blows away the fallen leaves
and trampled grass,

The brother of Nyaru, the tempest.

Uncle Lang calls to the ogre Bundak,

From whose partly shaved head hang a few locks,

Left behind after trimming.

175

Uncle Lang calls to a young ogre,

The long-striding giant,

The brother of the ogre of the flickering twilight.

A tree beside the lake, a long and winding creeper:

Lang having summoned his kinsmen, they turn to the making

of fire.

180

Iron is struck on a flint held in tinder as by a Baketan;

A fire drill is rapidly rotated in a well-dried tinder.

A long and winding creeper, leaves are picked:

Fire having been made Lang lights the torches.

Uncle Lang lights his torch,

185

Which is the ladle of Ini Andan;

Uncle Lang lights his ancient torch,

A torch made from the burning log by which women sit

having given birth.

Leaves are picked, a fungus on a rock:

L180 Ling Roth (1896, Vol.L, pp.371-379) gives a detailed description of fire making among the natives of the interior of Borneo.

L188 Cf. Part V:L296-297.

Having lit their torches, Lang and his followers

line up to fire the swidden.

190

Uncle Lang hurls his 'torch'

Which is a rifle cocked and ready to fire;

Lang attacks with his sharp-pointed 'torch'

Striking the walls of a Peng longhouse;

Uncle Lang lets fly with his burning torch

195

Striking the roof of an Uma Kelap house, scattering

two rows of shingles;

Uncle Lang hurls his bomb-like torch

There is a deafening noise as when a cannon is fired.

A fungus quivering by a waterfall, a tree with paired

leaves:

Having set fire to the swidden, Lang invokes the wind.

200

He calls to the wind that comes from the seas of

far-off lands;

He calls to the whirling wind that blows without cease.

The roar of Lang's fire can be heard from the edge

of the primordial sky;

The roar of the burning of the swidden felled by Lang

can be heard from the Land of the Dead;

Lang's swidden is burnt to a cinder,

205

L190 As Lang and his followers fire the swidden, the Iban in the long-house emulate Lang's action by burning dry leaves on the open platform, while on the gallery (*ruai*) a *piring* ceremony is performed.

L200 When firing their swiddens the Iban invoke the spirit of the wind (*antu ribut*) praying that he will cause their swiddens to burn well.

Not a single tree trunk remains to be cleared;
Lang's swidden is completely burnt,
The tree stumps are no bigger than the tips of
spinning tops.

"Where, dear Father Lang, is the clump of *kamayau* trees?"

"Oh do not talk of those *kamayau* trees, my dear young
child,

210

For they have been utterly devoured by the fire that has
devastated the lands of the Uma Kulit Kayan."

"Where, dear Father Lang, is the clump of rambutan trees?"

"Oh, my beloved first-born child, do not talk of those
rambutan trees,

For their leaves and branches have all been consumed by
the raging fire,

That swept through the swiddens and destroyed the longhouse
of Langiyau,

215

Which is why father Langiyau has become as senseless as
a blind bear."

A breadfruit tree is felled, its leaves are picked:

Having surveyed the state of the burnt swidden, Lang
and his followers point out the charred remains of
dead animals.

"How thick kinsman Senggal Tinggi are the rotting remains
of tadpoles." says Lang.

L209 *Kamayau* is a species of edible fruit that looks somewhat like an
olive, and is commonly found growing around longhouses (cf. Chapter I).

"Those are not the remains of tadpoles, Uncle Lang,
Those are grains of rice left by these people of the
headwaters."

220

"How huge, kinsman Papau, are the charred remains of
the fish at the head of that reach of the river."

"Those are not the remains of a fish, Uncle Lang,
That are carrying baskets belonging to followers of
the Kayan chief Langiyau that were lost on a
journey."

"The rotting remains of a fish are lying there by
those river boulders, kinsman Renggan."

225

"That is not a rotting fish, Uncle Lang,
It is the wrist watch of the Kayan Duan Pingan,
With which, alas, he can no longer tell night from day."

Leaves are picked, roots are severed:

Having identified the dead animals lying on the burnt
swidden, Lang turns to the first rites of planting.

230

"To plant the seed of this glutinous rice, let us ask the
earth worms that twine together like a ball of cotton;
To plant the seed of our sacred *padi*, let us ask the monitor
lizards that scavenge about with out-stretched necks."

L227 This is an anachronistic innovation in this particular text, for wrist-watches are relatively new among the natives of Sarawak. Its inclusion in this *timang* text (circa 1949) shows how new events, people and things are actively incorporated into traditional *timang*.

L230 As Lang performs the first rite of planting, the Iban in the long-house emulate Lang by performing a *piring* ceremony.

The seeds of Lang's cucumbers are planted at the swidden's
edge beyond the hill,

The earth is pierced with sharp-edged knives,

The seeds are pushed in with their fingers;

235

Even before the waxing moon has begun to wane,

The wife of the Kayan chief Laki Bo, complains of
painful cheeks,

As the cucumber seeds sprout, her sleep is disturbed by
nightmares, and each morning, she crouches by the fire,

Supposing that her sickness has come from the eating of
pickled bamboo shoots."

Lang's quick-ripening *padi* is planted near the stump
of an *ubah* tree,

240

The earth is pierced with the glistening blade of a
fearsome spear,

Before the new moon has half-formed

The wife of the Kayan chief Tukang Tajah complains of
pain in her thighs,

Her sleep is broken by nightmares, and she faints
at mid-day,

For the *padi* has taken root in the ground,

245

At which she blames the pain in her thighs on an
internal sickness.

L237 Laki Bo is a Kayan chief of the Balui river. His photograph can be seen in Hose and McDougall, 1912, Vol.1, plate 23.

L243 Tukang Tajah, in fact, was a Badang chief, but the Iban tend to refer to all of the tribes of the interior of Borneo as Kayan (cf. S.G. XXVIII, 1898).

The roots of a tree are severed, a log on the sea:
 The first planting completed Lang in readiness for
 dibbling, turns to the rite of the sowing basket.
 For the rite of siting our sowing basket let us call
 on our kinsman Jelalong, the carrier of the rice bag;
 For the rite of siting of the seed of our glistening *padi*
 let us call on Tungku Lembing, who comes from Brunei. 250
 Then Uncle Lang's ancient sowing basket is put in place,
 On a thunder-bolt charm, gathered from the palisade of
 the primordial sky,
 And fixed with the teeth of boars and the antlers of deer.
 Earth is taken up and held in the palm of the hand,
 "May our *padi* seed be long-lasting and the swidden to be
 planted grow ever less." 255
 How fitting is this site on the trunk of a banyan tree,
 And in front of the lintel of the Kayan Taman Nyipa,
 From which he is always putting out offerings of food
 for the dead.

 A log on the sea, a tree sheds its leaves:
 After the rite of siting the sowing basket, they line
 up for dibbling. 260

L248 Cf. Jensen, 1974:177-183.

L260 An Iban dibbling stick is made of hardwood, usually about 5 to 6 feet in length, with circular cross-section. "Often it is notched at the top to afford a better grip, and flares out slightly at the base, before tapering away to a point" (Freeman, 1970:183-190).

Kinsman Ketupong thrusts in his dibbling stick of brass,
Swaggering across the swidden like a fighting cock just
before a fight;

Behind him his wife, bearing a decorated basket,
sows the glistening *padi* seed,

A conical sun hat on her head,

Her graceful walk is like that of myna birds building
a nest.

265

Kinsman Beragai walks as he thrusts in his wooden
dibbling stick,

His proud walk is like the flight of a wreathed hornbill;

Behind him his beloved wife bears a plaited basket full
of *padi* seed,

A broad-brimmed hat on her head,

Her elegant walk is like the swaying tail feathers of
an Argus pheasant.

270

A tree sheds its leaves, a breadfruit tree is felled:

Having completed the sowing, Lang discusses the ritual
protection of the swidden.

Turmeric root, together with the tusks of a diminutive boar,
Are rinsed in a small bowl,

L272 The rite of *ngemali wmai* (lit. prohibition on a swidden) is performed after planting. This rite is to foster the growth of crops and to protect them from pests (cf. Jensen, 1974:183-186).

And the fluid sprinkled over the swidden

275

So that monkeys are unable to maintain their grasp,

When they smell this aromatic liquid;

Our crop of *padi* will become light and easy to reap

After having been sprinkled with fluid from the

failure-preventing charms,

Of the late Jarau, the gift of a white serpent, plucked

from the centre of a whirlpool.

280

A breadfruit tree is felled, a gigantic lily:

The ritual sprinkling of the swidden having been completed,

a many-pointed bamboo stake is put in place.

Lang's many-pointed bamboo stake is thrust into the ground,

Decorated with wild palm fronds and the tusks of a huge

boar;

At its base is a charm from the ogre Abo that makes its

owner invisible to enemies.

285

"Thrust it here," says Lang, "to guard against the clashing
shields of invading enemies."

A gigantic lily, the leaves of a tree are picked:

The bamboo stake in place, Lang's daughters make ready
to weed the swidden.

"Pull out those troublesome weeds my dear daughters,"
says Lang,

"So that our *padi* can grow without restriction;

290

Pluck out these weeds with the tips of your fingers."

"These are not weeds, dearest father Lang,
Why these are hairs of the Uma Bau Kayans."
Indeed they are my children, they will be good to
decorate the headdress of your husbands."

Leaves are picked, a tree beside a lake: 295

The weeding done, Lang asks for a hut to be built.

"Seek out a suitable piece of land up on the hill,
kinsman Pungga;

Seek out a really spacious piece of ground

Large enough for us to use when we come to share out
our trophy heads.

Go kinsman Papau, and seek out a place where we can
build our hut,

300

Large enough for us to gather our hibiscus buds together.

Set out on your search kinsman Kumbo Rayong, do not
just stand there!"

He walks out on to the rolling land, and returns with
some posts.

"Set out on your search, Beragai and Sempurai Gundai."

They walk out on to the gently sloping land to cut
the rafters.

305

Lang's hut is erected by Pandak Sagatak and Bungai Nuing.

The ridge is of iron wood,

The roof shingles are fastened, and the wall planks are
so tightly lashed,

That no blow pipe dart can penetrate them.

A tree by the lake is quickly felled: 310

The hut having been built, Lang surveys the growing *padi*.

Lang sings and dances as he moves about the swidden, on

the trunks of fallen trees,

His body is clad in a magnificent jacket,

His head is adorned in a helmet resplendent with the

feathers of birds,

In his hands is a rifle with a steel bayonet. 315

He surveys the scene with piercing eyes,

He sees the luxuriant growth of the *padi*,

He sees the *padi* growing thickly to the very edge of

the distant mountains,

Upwards in the clearings made by the fire,

And towards the river to the brink of swirling whirlpools. 320

The last of the 'seeds' to be planted are sitting passing

a lighted cigarette from hand to hand;

The 'seeds' that were planted first are lounging about

with infants in their laps.

"How strange is this crop of *padi*,

Why those are Uma Mali Kayan women walking in file,

With rattan bands about their heads and intricate

tattooing on their hands." 325

A chestnut tree is quickly felled, a fungus on a rock:

Having surveyed the growing *padi*, Lang asks for lengths

of rattan for the scaring away of pests to be suspended

over the swidden.

"Would you kinsman Bungai Nuing suspend a length of rattan
to scare away the black rice sparrows?"

He stretches out a length of slender rattan joined to
cotton threads,

To its ends are fastened the tusks of a small boar,

330

To its centre a potent charm, and the whiskers of sandflies.

It is coiled around mountain peaks, stretched out to the
land of Uma Kulit,

And tied to the carrying basket of father Abit, the

Kayan, and to the walls of the gallery of his longhouse.

A fungus on a rock, a banana plant in bud on a hill:

The lines having been suspended, Lang keeps watch for
sparrows.

335

Watching for fluttering sparrows, Uncle Lang

Tugs on the lines, at which the earth trembles and
shakes,

And thunder explodes with a deafening roar,

Rain falls in a sudden downpour.

Beragai and Ketupong look on with keen eyes,

340

"Those are not sparrows, Uncle Lang,

They are the ghostly carriers of a deadly plague."

A banana plant in bud on a hill, a tree beside a lake:

The sparrows having been scared away, Lang asks about the
ripeness of the *padi*.

"Would you go, dear children, and see if our *padi* is ripe,"

says Lang.

345

This they do, carrying their reaping baskets with them.

"Some of it is ripe, dearest father and comforter."

"The part that is ripe, dear children, you should reap
at once,

So that the deer will not devour it.

The parts that are still unripe, leave until later."

350

A clump of saplings, a tree beside a pool:

The early ripening *padi* having been reaped, Lang seeks
some one to taste it.

Lang calls to the mountain from whence the lightning
strikes,

To Nising, the ogre of scorching heat, with but a single
short lock of hair.

"How could you, Uncle Lang, ask such a one to taste our
new *padi*?"

355

"Can you not see, kinsman Ketupong, his four fingered
hands,

It is he who makes it his business to strike at the fully
pregnant wombs of Uma Kelap women to bring about
abortion."

A voice is heard calling to a dog that has a log of wood
about its neck;

A voice is heard calling for a dog with a striped pelt.

Rain falls as Nising, the ogre of the dark rays of the
end of day,

360

Calls to his dog, Mansai, about whose loins a cobra is
coiled,

Who is to join him in tasting the new *padi*.

With his fingernails he plucks some grains from a winnowing
tray,

Puts them between his jaws that are as large as the ribs of
a flat bottomed boat,

Tastes them with his teeth as big as wild bananas. 365

His chewing sounds like the scraping of bamboo;

The crunching is as loud as the sound of a great drum.

"O it is true, that Uncle Nising, most rapidly devours
our *padi*,

For his pastime is to press down with the ends of his
fingers on pregnant wombs of Uma Lesong Kayans to bring
about abortion."

A knot on a tree, a breadfruit tree is felled: 370

The new *padi* having been tasted, a voice calls for a
mat on which to rest the freshly reaped crop.

"Our *padi*, Uncle Lang, is ripe, its dropping panicles
are ready for reaping;

Our *padi*, Uncle Lang, is ripe, the whole swidden is
glowing red.

Where Uncle Lang shall we lay out this mat made from
the bark of the *ara* tree?"

"Put it on that level land up there." 375

An offering of five eggs is made,

L376 As Lang performs a *piring* ceremony, so do the Iban in the longhouse. The ritual of *nganjong penyedai* (lit. bringing the mat) is described in Freeman's Report on the Iban, 1970:205-206.

And sprinkled with rice wine,
Over it a green-speckled cock is waved,
And Lang sacrifices an enormous pig.
A leech charm is placed on the mat together with the
whiskers of an ant.

380

"Oh Uncle Lang, how spacious is our mat, woven from
red thread,
There will be room enough when we come to share out
our trophy heads."

A tree by a lake is felled:
The mat in place, they line up for the reaping.
On the upriver side is Bekubu, the speckled bird,
called Ketupong,
Side by side with his wife, the Lady of the Finger Ring
of Brass;
Towards the ridge is kinsman Beragai, the father of
Chalegai Lampong,
Side by side with his wife, the Lady of the Hibiscus
blossom;
In the valley is Unggat, the great talker and prized
fighting cock,
Side by side with his wife Rentong, mother of Tibong,
the blowpipe of bronze;
On the edge is Ijau whose praise-name is "Sprinkled by
the Swooping Swallow,"
Side by side with his wife Karatu, who is helped in her
work by the spirit of the gods.

385

390

A tree by the lake is felled:

Having arranged themselves in a row, they all begin
to reap.

"Reap at the edge of the swidden, for there all of the
padi is completely ripe,

395

Yet easy to lift and pleasant to reap;

Pleasant to pack into baskets both large and small;

How could it be otherwise, for Uncle Lang has scattered
Fluid from his failure-averting charm that he was given
by an ornate white serpent."

Reaping upriver, further than the eye can see,

400

Listen to the noise they make, like that of rocks
crashing down a hillside;

Reaping up the slope beyond the reach of human voice,

Listen to the noise they make, like that of the felling
of areca palms.

A tree beside a lake, a dead branch falls:

The reaping completed, they make ready to tread the *padi*.

405

As kinsman Nendak vigorously treads the freshly reaped *padi*,

Behold! brains ooze out along with layers of fat;

As kinsman Glayan Sigat forcefully treads the *padi*,

Behold! lumps of human flesh are strewn on the mat;

As kinsman Bakubu energetically treads the glistening *padi*,

410

Behold! hair from human arms is everywhere scattered.

"Oh, how strange are the stalks of Uncle Lang's *padi*,

Which are mixed with hair from the heads of humans."

A dead branch falls, a chestnut tree is felled:

After the treading of the *padi*, the women make ready to
separate the grain from the stalks.

415

"Come," say Jawai and Beneh Lela, "let us together separate
the stalks from the grain of Uncle Lang's *padi*;

Let us sort them out together with our delicate fingers,

How strange are the stalks of Uncle Lang's *padi*,

Why these, Uncle Lang, are darts from a blow-pipe!"

"Come," say Kumang and Tibo Awan, "let us together

420

Separate the stalks from the grain of Uncle Lang's *padi*;

How strange are the stalks of Uncle Lang's *padi*,

For they are mixed with the barbed blades of spears."

As one who notches and fells a tree:

The grain having been separated from the stalks,

someone to do the winnowing is sought.

425

"To winnow the seed of our sacred *padi*," says Lang,

"Who better than Yak, Fragment of the Anggong Rock, the
daughter of my brother;

To winnow the seed of our sacred *padi*," says Lang,

"Who better than the 'Lady of the Branches Used for
Divining', the daughter of my brother."

"The one to assist me in winnowing this *padi* Uncle Lang,

430

Is the demon Bubut for she knows the flow of Limban, the
river of death;

The one to assist me in winnowing this *padi*, Uncle Lang,

Is the maiden Samiba, for she recognizes the shores of
Sabayan, the Land of the Dead."

A tree by the lake is felled:

The winnowers having been found, they begin their work. 435

They winnow the *padi* seed, clad in protective *ikat* jackets;

The sharp husks they ward off with wreathed hornbill plumes;

The chaff they put in a plainly patterned mat.

"How strange is this *padi* of yours, Uncle Lang,

For these are the eyeballs and teeth of Tamsun Tase Kayans, 440

Palsied by our curses;

Though stormy winds still blow upon them,

The light has gone from their eyes into the waters of the

Land of the Dead,

Where bamboos grow even thicker than in barricade across
a river."

A breadfruit tree by the lake is felled: 445

The *padi* having been winnowed, they seek a big mat
on which to sun it.

"There, kinsman Ketupong," says Uncle Lang,

Is a long mat on which to dry the 'seed' of the shrine,

A long mat that is a warrior's mantlet thick with feathers;

There, kinsman Beragai," says Lang, "is a large mat, 450

A large mat that is a warrior's shield with a handsome
handle."

A breadfruit tree by the lake is felled:

A mat having been found, they make ready to sun the seed.

The *padi* of Uncle Lang is spread out on the mat,

In great heaps like a mountain.

455

"Spread out the mat, if it be not big enough, join it to
woven and embroidered fabrics."

As they spread out the seed they find Ukit children returning
with their blowpipes from the empty forest.

A tree by the lake, the edge of the undergrowth:

The *padi* having been spread, they seek the drying heat of
the sun.

"What, Uncle Lang, of the dry season of the late Samat,

460

Could that be used to dry the seed of our *padi*?"

"No kinsman Ketupong, for it makes the weeds grow."

"What, Uncle Lang, of the burning heat of the late Malang,

Could that be used to dry the seed of our *padi*?"

"No, kinsman Bejampong, for it is followed by rain when

the last tall trees of the swidden have been felled."

465

"If you want to dry our *padi*, kinsman Ketupong," says Lang,

"What is better than the scorching heat of the late Unchat,
that splits wooden shingles;

If you want a long dry season to dry our *padi*, kinsman

Ketupong," says Lang,

"What is better than the long dry season of the late Temenggong
that burns up roofs and consumes house posts."

L453 Before Lang's wife spreads out the *padi* to dry, the Iban in the
longhouse perform a *piring* ceremony.

L469 Cf. Part III:L112-125; Part V:L123.

The sun's heat is fiery like glowing charcoal,

470

The sun's heat is as fierce as a fire of glowing logs.

At the edge of the undergrowth, a tree sheds its leaves:

With the sun shining, a pole to ward away pests is sought.

"What of the *lop* tree, Uncle Lang,

Could that be used to ward chicken away from our *padi*?"

475

"No, kinsman, for the *lop* tree is often used by women
in making their looms."

"What, Uncle Lang, of those tall bamboos growing at the
river's edge,

Could they be used to ward cocks away from our *padi*?"

"No, my kinsman Senggal Tinggi, for they are so often used
by young folk for making fishing spears;

A long pole of slender bamboo is the thing, Bejampong,"
says Lang,

480

"Especially together with a barbed spear;

A long pole of tensile bamboo is the thing, young kinsman,"
says Lang,

"Especially together with a Baketan blowpipe."

Leaves fall, a tree by a pool:

Having found a pole, they make ready to ward off foraging
chickens.

485

"Be gone, green-speckled cocks,

I will strike you with a long bamboo pole,

And shoot at you with my flashing gun."

There is a crash on the open verandah as the cocks
scamper away.

"Why those are not green-speckled cocks, Uncle Lang,
They are writhing maggots eating away at the layers of
fat."

490

A tree by a pool, a breadfruit tree is felled:

The chickens having been chased away, the dryness of the
padi is tested.

"Test the dryness of our *padi*, dear children," says Lang,

"By biting a seed between your teeth."

495

"It is well dried, dearest father and protector,

And far into the future will not deteriorate or rot."

As one who notches and fells a tree:

After testing the dryness of the *padi*, bark bins are sought.

"What, Uncle Lang, of the bark of the *entile* tree,"

says Manggie,

500

"Could it be used for the bins in which to store our *padi*?"

"No, it is quite useless, being often used by the shaman

Menani to make a container for his charms."

"What, Uncle Lang, of the bark of the *pudo* tree,"

says Papau,

"Could that be used for the bins in which to store our *padi*?"

"No, the bark of the *pudo* tree is so often used for making
quite ordinary containers."

505

"Where, Uncle Lang, is the thing we are accustomed to using?"

Where Uncle Lang, is the bark of a tree that we can properly use?"

"The bark of the *ara* tree, kinsman Beragai, can be used."

"Why, Uncle Lang, this is not the bark of the *ara* tree, says Pungga,

"Why, this is a rattan frame from which trophy heads are hung."

510

As one notches and fells a tree:

Having found a bark bin, they make ready to store the *padi*.

"To store our *padi* let us ask the bird, Semelayong,

Whose long drawn-out call, alarms the heart;

To store our seed who better than the bird, Ara,

With its red eyes and a high-sounding voice."

515

The glistening seed of Uncle Lang's *padi* is ladled into rattan baskets,

The 'seed' is seen to be people sitting and talking widely together;

The 'seed' of Uncle Lang's *padi* is poured into rattan baskets,

The 'seed' is seen to be people standing together and reminiscing in ringing voices.

520

A tree by a pool, the sharp leaves of a breadfruit tree:

L513 Semelayong is a bird, the cry of which is associated with death, by the Iban.

L515 Ara is a sea-bird viewed by the Iban as a *burong badas* (good bird).

Having poured the seed into rattan baskets, they make ready
to store it in bark bins.

As the *padi* of Uncle Lang is poured in the bark bin,

An offering of five eggs is made,

Over which an ash-coloured cock is waved,

525

At which the voices of the new *padi* can be heard,

Greeting their protecting mother who has long been

stored there.

"How pleasant, dear mother, has living here been for you?"

"Oh, very pleasant indeed, dear first born child.

For whenever I cry at my lot these people give me rice wine;

530

Whenever I become resentful of my fate these people give me

offerings of rice and eggs."

A chestnut tree is felled, the leaves fall:

The 'seed' having been stored, a covering for the bin is sought.

"What Uncle Lang, of a mat of lily fibres,

Could that be used as a covering for our bin?"

535

"No, kinsmen, for such fibres are so often used by women

for plaiting quite ordinary mats."

"What, Uncle Lang, of the bark of the *tekalong* tree,

Could that be used as a covering for our bin?"

L523 As the female members of Lang's entourage prepare to store the *padi* in the bark bins the Iban in the longhouse perform a *piring* ceremony.

L531 The Iban believe that trophy heads have a malign nature and must, from time to time, be propitiated with offerings, otherwise as Howell puts it: "its ghost will eat them" (Howell, BLB, 1963:136-138). Cf. McKinley, in Appel (ed.), 1976:92-123.

"No, kinsman Ketupong, for it is so often pounded by men
for use in making coarse mats."

"The things of the earth, Uncle Lang, you have surrounded
with countless prohibitions;

540

Every thing in the waters about which we have asked you,

Uncle Lang, you have set about with numerous taboos.

Where is the thing, Uncle Lang, that it is right to use?

Where is the thing, Uncle Lang, that you usually use?"

"For the covering of our bin, Bejampong," says Lang,

"What better than the leaves of *Klakuiang*, the red-stemmed
yam.

545

For the covering of the bin in which our sacred *padi* is
stored," says Lang,

"What better than the striped leaves of the *beting* plant,
which are just large enough.

Those are the fitting things, Bungai Nuing,

As a covering for our great bin of bark,

For then rats will not be able to gnaw their way in to
devour the precious contents."

550

L545

The *klakuiang* leaves were commonly used by the Iban in former days to wrap freshly severed heads.

PART IX

A tree sheds its leaves, a high bamboo scaffolding:
Having found a covering, Lang rinses his charms.
Lang rises to rinse in water a piece of turmeric root,
Together with his magical stone hook, given him by the
tiger spirit, Limibit,
In a coconut shell cup, in a tiny ceramic bowl, 5
The fluid is then sprinkled over the bark bin
So that mice will not devour the sacred *padi*.

A tree by the lake, its roots are severed:
Having sprinkled the magical fluid, Lang asks about a 'cat'.
"What about you, kinsman Bungai Nuing," says Lang, 10
"Have you, in coming to this feast where there is rice wine
in plenty,
Brought with you a white-striped cat?"
"We who have come to this feast, Uncle Lang
Most certainly did not bring a cat to guard the *padi*."
"Even though I did ask you kinsman Puntang Medang, 15
I have, indeed, brought one myself;
If a striped cat is sought to keep watch on our bin of
sacred *padi*,
I have one there in my carrying basket."

L9 The cat is a reference to *Remaung* (a mythical flying tiger). The need to have such a powerful spirit as the *Remaung* to guard their '*padi*' or trophy heads, reflects, I would suggest, the Iban fear of retaliation.

Lang rises and takes out a female cat.

"Listen to me, female cat," says Lang,

20

"Keep guard over the sacred *padi* in this bark bin;

Let your body remain here while your chin rests on the

verandah of a Kanto longhouse with its posts of iron-wood."

Lang's wife, Kachendai Lawai, 'The Antique Kettle', speaks,

Lang's beloved, Dara Mentaba, speaks:

"What my love of your work that remains to be completed?

25

What of your promise of this very moon?

If we are to recultivate our swidden beloved Lang, to

plant some cotton seed,

Now is the time when the bright stars are hanging in the

skies like well-ripened fruits."

A small part of the swidden is to be cleared, the undergrowth
is to be cut.

"Where, my beloved Lang, shall we put our clearing for
the planting of these cotton seeds?"

30

"Why look, elsewhere than the Mahakam river, where the
Peng live,

And where white rocks line the banks."

"While the scaffoldings still standing like swallow's
wings,

L27 Immediately after harvest, Iban of former days, would clear an area in their last swiddens for the planting of cotton. The crop would be ready for picking before the next farming cycle began. Before the availability of ready made cloth, the Iban depended on hand grown cotton for clothing.

L28 This refers to Orion and the Peliades after they have passed the zenith (cf. Part I:L28-29).

" While their cross-beams still hanging from the stumps
of the trees."

The leaves are picked, a clump of saplings: 35
Lang and his wife, wishing to prepare their clearing,
ask for cotton seed.

"Have we in coming to this ritual,
Brought with us my love, any cotton seed?
Have we put any in our small carrying baskets?
If in attending this ritual we have not brought any
cotton seed with us, 40
Then there is surely none to be planted."

Then, Uncle Lang says to his wife, 'The Antique Kettle',
"If you are wanting cotton seed, why not ask the wife of
ogre Jemaing whose feet are no larger than the bellows;
Why not ask the wife of ogre Dempri, whose one remaining
tooth is as big as a wild banana."

"Have you got any cotton seed? 45
Have you stored away as much as a single seed?"

"I indeed have some cotton seed, Uncle Lang,
But it is old and about to sprout.
Some sliced-up seed of cotton I have here, Uncle Lang,
They are the arm and finger bones of Badang, and of
the children of Kayans and Kantos, 50

But very little remains for the monitor lizards have been
digging them up."

A clump of spalings, a chestnut tree is felled:

Having found some cotton seed they dress for the warpath.

Uncle Lang rises,

He is clad in an *ikat* war jacket,

55

His sword scabbard quivers,

Across his chest tigers teeth are strung,

War charms are tied about his waist with cotton,

On his shoulder rests a spear, its blade like a
rearing cobra,

On his head is a helmet from which hornbill plumes wave,

60

His voice is that of tiger spirit roaring from a cave,

As he goes to plant their single seed of cotton,

A bent hoe used when this land was first settled is
pulled out,

Killing a 'Kayan' at the mouth of the Belaga river.

How sad that he will never again lead his followers

65

In the ritual burial of the bones of the dead.

A chestnut tree is felled, the leaves are picked:

Lang having donned his war attire, they make ready to leave.

Lang, going to cultivate his swidden, leaves the longhouse
that trails like a vine,

L66 This is a reference to one of the interior tribes of Borneo burial custom in which the bones of a chief, after the corpse has been kept in the longhouse for a period up to 3 to 4 months, are removed and then put in a huge wooden pillar, and raised about 10 to 20 feet off the ground. The top end is then sealed with a wooden, or stone slab (cf. Ling Roth, 1896 Vol.L:148-149; Hose and McDougall, 1912:28 seq.).

Leaves the boards made smooth by bone-shattering adzes

where warriors lounge,

70

Issues from beneath eaves of wooden shingles,

Crosses the open verandah lit by the waning moon,

To the head of the ladder of entry where trophy heads
are received,

Descends the evenly notched steps,

Touching with his right hand the sacred dracaena

growing at its foot,

75

Comes to the main path that is wider than the frond
of fern,

A path where the ground is like the flour from which
rice cakes are made,

And walks on to an old resting place overgrown with banyans.

They tread the land that curves up like the stern of a boat,

And a towering peak that rises like the dome of a sun hat.

80

The land where the ogre Kamba lurks,

The abode of the ogre Selda Lupai.

"Uncle Lang, if you are going to plant that cotton seed,

Then I am coming with you,

For I want to take for the woman who has been your host,

85

A young civet cat with a wonderful jacket about its neck."

A breadfruit tree is felled, the leaves are picked:

Lang and his party on the way to prepare their clearing,

comment on the secondary growth.

L86 "Young civet cat", in this instance, is a metaphor for a slave.

"How beautiful is that hill criss-crossed by rattan,
That secondary jungle where once canoes were cut into shape. 90
Whose secondary jungle is that, Uncle Lang?"

"This is the secondary jungle of Kling, the father of Rando,
of the time his planting of the 'seed' of the cucumber,
Which is why in this Indai Ulo river, there is no sound
of gourds being filled with water,
And why the land beyond that hill, is still strewn with
sago flour and heaps of ashes.

"Kinsmen Sapeling Ruat and Gelayan Sigat," says Lang, 95
For our planting of the seed of this prolific cotton,
Here is a suitable place beside this secondary growth."

"Kinsman Marekubu," says Lang, "you who are also known as
Laja and Antu Siu,
Here is a suitable place where the chips from the last
felling are just beginning to rot."

A quid of tobacco, quickly fell the chestnut tree: 100
Having reached the place for recultivation,
Lang asks for a temporary platform to be made.
Bejampong, followed by Laja and Sapuntang Medang, rise
and chop down a *purang* tree.

"Why, Uncle Lang, do you call this a *purang* tree,
Why this is the remains of a Badang house destroyed by
fire." 105

Renggan rises to make a platform from a *purang* tree
Only to find, instead, the fence posts of a Kayan pig sty.

A chestnut is felled, a log on the sea:

Having made a platform on which to rest, they make ready
to thrust augural sticks into the ground.

Lang rises to thrust into the ground the augural stick
of a ketupong,

110

At its base is an ogre's charm that makes its owner
invisible to others,

Its other end is adorned with tassels made from the hair
of an Ukit called Jelui,

While coiled around its middle is a centipede and a snake.

As he is about to thrust it into a muddy patch of earth,
Bungai Nuing and young Sekumpang Pali look on;

115

"Uncle Lang, that is not the augural stick of a ketupong,
Why, that is the barbed spear of Raja Nanti,
That has pierced the liver of a Kayan named Tingang Kui."

A huge palm log at the edge of the undergrowth:

Lang having placed the augural stick, makes ready
to clear the undergrowth.

120

Clearing the hillside their loud voices are heard in
harmony.

Clearing up to the boundary their melodious voices
are heard singing.

"If the clearing is still small then make it larger."

As they clear down river the sound is like that of men
boisterously fishing in a pool.

"Clear up the slope and if that is not enough then
go beyond the ridge."

125

The edge of the undergrowth, a clump of saplings:
Having cleared part of the swidden for recultivation,
they set about heaping slashed undergrowth for
burning.

"When you heap the undergrowth," says Lang,

"In the place where we are to plant our cotton seeds,

If you chop the ends of felled trees,

130

Do not cut them from the middle to the end;

If there be ground on which the slashed undergrowth

has not been heaped,

Then cover it with Kayan mats."

A clump of saplings, an ageing tree by the lake:

Having heaped the undergrowth, they ask for dry weather.

135

"Uncle Lang," say Papau and Bungai Nuing,

"What of the dry season of Mancho, could it be used for
the planting of our cotton seed?"

"It used to be favourable, kinsmen Ketupong and Papau,"
says Lang,

"But now the dry season of Mancho cannot be used,

Why, even before the felling is complete the swidden
would be overgrown with wild bananas."

140

"If we are to dry this clearing for planting the seeds
of our cotton," says Lang,

"Why look elsewhere, for there is the dry season of Jingan
who gave battle at Cape Kedurong."

L142 Cf. Part VII:L87.

A tree branch is cut, a breadfruit tree is felled:
Having sought hot weather they test the dryness of
their clearing.

Ketupong and a man from Panggau, where tall bamboos
arch, speak:

145

"Uncle Lang, we have climbed up just now,
And surveyed the small clearing where we are to plant
our cotton seed,
The skins on the stems of the slashed banana plants have
opened up like the skirts of the women who live down river."
"If that be so," says Lang, "then our clearing is really dry
and can be fired."

A knot on a barren tree:

150

Having tested the dryness of the clearing, they turn to
the making of fire.
Tinder from a Baketan is held in place as iron is struck
on a flint;
The smouldering tinder is put into a torch of sun-dried
wood;
The torch is well alight,
The torch of barbed spear is lit;
The torch, a gun with its trigger ceaselessly firing
is thrust forth;
The torch, a slashing sword, destroys both roof and
rafters;
The fire flares as smoke endlessly pours forth.

155

The fire burns fiercely, smoke darkens the land.

A knot on a tree, the tangled creepers are parted: 160

Having fired the clearing, they make ready for fibbling.

Lang dabbles the soft earth for the planting of the hard
cotton seed,

Piercing the ground with his well-sharpened dibbling stick,

His beloved wife holds the hard seeds in her finger tips,

Even before she has sown the seeds, 165

Earthworms clustering like the threads in a ball of cotton,

have sucked at them.

Lang and Pandak Sagatak dabble in the spongy earth,

Dibbling with both their spears and their guns,

While their beloved wives grasp the split open

cotton seeds,

Which even while still in the tips of their fingers, 170

Are grabbed by wandering monitor lizards that often

drift on rivers.

The wood is easily split, a high bamboo scaffolding:

Having planted the cotton seeds they watch their growth.

"Our cotton seeds, Uncle Lang," says his loving wife

and Beragai,

"Which are growing over there have reached the height

of young children." 175

"Our cotton seeds, Uncle Lang

Are, I see, in flower.

Our cotton seeds, Uncle Lang,
Are truly beautiful, and bearing prolifically."

A quid of chewing tobacco, an ageing tree by a lake: 180
Having seen that the cotton plants were in bearing,
they examine their ripeness.

"Our solitary cotton pod, Uncle Lang,
Is now ripe and ready for picking."

A tree by the lake, a quid of chewing tobacco: 185
Having examined the ripeness, they begin the picking.

"Listen, my ancient love," says Uncle Lang,

"As also you two, Beragai and Pungga,

When picking these cotton pods,

If you break them with your fingers do not scatter
them anywhere,

But store them in your beautifully plaited baskets." 190

"Kinsman Kutok," says Uncle Lang, "when picking a
handful of cotton pods,

Do not break them and just put them away,

Bring the pieces with care and place them in a gourd,

And then cover them with a hat plaited from lily fibres."

A quid of chewing tobacco, the edge of the undergrowth: 195

L193 If a trophy head has been accidentally cut into pieces, it is Iban custom to put all the pieces in a gourd (*genok*) and cover the contents with a hat made from lily fibre.

Having arrived back at the longhouse, they seek the heat
of the sun.

"Kinsman Bejampong," says Lang,

"If you are seeking the heat of the sun to dry your
bundle of cotton pods,

Do not seek other than the scorching heat

Of the late Balang when he invaded the Penuan river."

200

A barren tree at the edge of the undergrowth:

Having sought the heat of the sun, they make ready
for drying the cotton.

Dry it with heat like that of logs burning in a hearth;

Dry it with heat like that of glowing embers.

A tree without fruit is felled:

205

Having dried the pods of cotton, someone to remove the
seeds is sought.

Uncle Lang, striding to and fro on the floor of split
bamboo,

Calls to the women of Panggau, the neighbour of Gelong.

"Would you, Lulong, agree to my request to remove the
seeds from these pods?

"It is not so much that I refuse,

210

L200 This refers to Balang's participation in the Great Kayan Expedition, 1863 (Brooke, Vol.II:230-232). Penuan is a tributary of the Balui, or upper Rejang river.

L206 Haddon and Start (1936:6) have drawings of three different types of cotton gin, or *pemigi* used by the Iban.

Uncle Lang, to remove the seeds from these pods,

My keen eyes see that your cotton pods

Are still joined to human noses and jaws."

"Uncle Lang," says Siu, the hideous ogre,

"If you are seeking someone to remove your cotton seeds,

215

Why be so foolish as to look any further

Than Grandfather Ungga, from the mouth of the Niga river."

"Grandmother ogress from the forest of swaying *tapang* trees,

Would you be willing," says Lang, "to remove the seeds

from my cotton pods?"

"How can I refuse, for you have pointed at my eyes.

220

How can I decline, Uncle Lang, for you have mentioned

my name."

A high bamboo scaffolding, the rustling of wild flowers:

The seeds having been removed, the women spin the cotton.

Grandmother Indai Enchabi spins a bundle of cotton,

Turning the spinning wheel with finger and palm

225

And lo, an insistent voice is heard calling

For the tiger spirit to attack the Badang of Merasai.

"You are indeed very skilful Grandmother Indai Enchabi,"

says Lang,

"In spinning this cotton from a single plant,

For some of it has become red thread mounted on a

loom for weaving."

230

L223 *ibid.*:7 figures a drawing of Iban spinning wheel, or *gasing*.

L227 Merasai is a tributary of Upper Mahakam river, Kalimantan.

The rustling sound of wild flowers, leaves are picked:

The cotton having been spun, Lang seeks a weaver.

"Listen Mother Semalau Ijau," says Lang,

"Would you be willing to weave a jacket,

For our host Father Menteri Manggau, to use when he goes

to war?"

235

"I am not really refusing to weave the jacket, Uncle Lang,

I am fully occupied in completing this *ikat* pattern,

Of which only a finger length remains to be done;

Perhaps in days to come, during the remainder of this year,

Perhaps, Father Menteri Manggau may go off to war,

240

On his return he may want to hold a *Sandong liau* ritual,

And there might be no beautiful *ikat* fabrics for him to

use when welcoming the guests."

"Uncle Lang," says a young war leader,

"For weaving a war jacket with long arms,

Who better than those who make mats out of dry leaves,

245

And who live in holes in the trunks of trees;

Who better than the snake spirit, sister of the writhing

python;

Those are the people with knowing eyes

And with clever fingers,

And her brother, brave and expert in war,

250

Was accustomed to helping Belayong, Iba and Ngumbang

when they raided the Badang,

L241 *Sandong liau* is a variant of *gawai amat*. Refer to discussion in Chapter II.

Testing their war charms plucked from the nests of
stinging hornets,
Given to them by the spirit of the iron that incites
attack."

The undergrowth is cut, a cluster of coiling vines:

The snake spirit, having heard Lang's call, speaks in reply. 255

"Uncle Lang, if you ask us, myself, Nangi and our friend
Ensikok,

To weave a war jacket for your host, Father Tekam Tandok,

For him to use when on the warpath,

It is not that we three, myself, Nangi and our friend Ensikok
are unskilled,

For we have keen and knowing eyes, 260

And have clever hands and fingers;

Once when we were still living in Batang Ai, near the
mouth of the Delok,

We tried by ourselves to weave a war jacket,

We wove from morning until the last sounds of *padi* pounding;

Together, we three, myself, Nangi and Ensikok beat down

with our weaving sword; 265

Together we tied and embroidered as we worked the cloth,

Towards morning before the pounding of *padi* had begun

L251 Belayong and Iba were former Iban leaders, while Ngumbang was a famous Iban rebel from the Upper Batang Lupar river who "led innumerable war paries against Maloh Dayaks and Kantu Iban in Dutch Borneo, as well as fighting the Rajah of Sarawak" (Pringle, 1970:216n). His defiance of Brooke rule was put to an end by a punitive expedition in March, 1886. He died in 1914 (*ibid.*216 seq.).

The weaving of the ear jacket was completed;

On that very day, Uncle Lang

Ngumbang held a *Kalingkang*, and Kanyan, a *Baketan*

effigy ritual;

270

Then we took the cloths we had woven to these rituals,

Arriving at the landing place of the curving longhouse,

We were presented with an offering containing five eggs,

A huge pig was killed in sacrifice,

An ash-coloured cock was waved over our heads;

275

One of our *ikat* cloths we gave to father Suka Tandok,

Another we gave to the late Sumok;

The one we gave to Uncle Suka Tandok he used when

constructing a shrine.

The late Sumok used his in a raid,

In which he killed three, while a fourth he captured at the

edge of the gallery."

280

A cluster of coiling vines, a knot on a tree:

Having asked the snake spirit to weave a war jacket,

Lang next asks the ogresses.

Lang asks these women to weave a crimson-coloured jacket,

L262 A substantial number of Iban in the Baleh river basin migrated from the headwaters of the Batang Ai river during the early decades of the 19th century (Freeman, 1970:131-134).

L270 *Kalingkang* is a variant of *gawai amat* (cf. Chapter II). The *Baketan* effigy ritual, or *gawai Baketan tunggal*, was a type of *gawai amat* ritual in which a wooden effigy of a man, believed to be a *Baketan*, was mounted on a pole and was credited with possessing supernatural powers to attack the enemies of the Iban. The magical importance of *Baketan* effigy is very similar to that of the hornbill icon used in the hornbill festival (Freeman, in Smythies, 1960:99-102).

Asks the ogress from the headwaters thick with bones.
Lang asks her to weave a jacket patterned with frogs, 285

Asks Samembai, from the ridge of gigantic lilies.
"Would you, the ogress Salipalipat," says Lang
Be willing to weave a war jacket,
For my host, Father Apai Bungai Nuing Sigat
To use while on the warpath under the brightly shining
stars?" 290

"Uncle Lang," says the ogress Samambai,
"You have asked me to weave a frog-patterned war jacket,
How can I refuse as you have asked so strongly."

From a high bamboo scaffolding leaves are picked:
After Lang had secured the agreement of the ogress,
she makes ready to begin weaving. 295

The youngest ogress Panggit arises,
And sits on a beautifully plaited mat,
Before her are two brass boxes containing betel,
And an offering with five eggs;
She pulls out some cotton threads with their curling
ends striped with colour, 300

The handsome ball of cotton is the size of a parakeet's egg;
Laze rods made from a wild palm are inserted.
She pulls back on the back-strap of the loom,

L298-299 The 'brass' boxes containing betel' and 'offering with five eggs' are for Kumang and Kling whom the Iban believe to attend the inauguration of the weaving of the *ikat* fabric (*pua kumbo*).

Sweeps across the warp threads with a porcupine quill,
Raises the heddle with a sound like the hissing of a snake, 305
Throws the bamboo shuttle between the threads,
Slams down the weaving sword with a sound like the crowing
of a green-speckled cock;

As the *tapang* wood weaving sword slams down
The posts of the longhouse shake.

"Weave with all haste," says Tibo Awan and mother
Menteri Manchit. 310

Repan and her friend Ensingit call out:

"If any part of the cloth remains to be woven,
We, Lengau and the rest of us will help you with our
snake charm plucked from foaming waves."

Before the guests sitting in the gallery can see what
is happening,

Before those who are holding the ritual have properly
looked, 315

The embroidered war jacket of Raja Tindit is completed.

It is slid from the warp beam of the loom,

And placed about the body of its owner.

As it is paraded up and down the quivering floor
of the longhouse,

And displayed in front of Uncle Lang. 320

L316 Raja Tindit is a name given to the man who holds the ritual. From this point onwards all of the different names (e.g. Remaung Lubang; Lalau Lamba, Bungai Nuing Panggit, etc.) associated with the *ikat* fabric jacket, or with the activities of the ritual are those of the Iban who is performing the *gawai*.

It is admired by Sula Limban and Sebelit Langit.

"How splendid is the embroidered war jacket of Raja

Tindit,

Woven by the youngest of the ogresses,

It could be used in an attack on the Ukit

With its beautiful black patterns and stripes like

the pelt of a coloured leopard."

325

Leaves are picked, a tree by a pool:

The war jacket having been woven, it is tried on.

Father Lalau Lamba puts on the cotton war jacket,

Woven by Samembai from a clearing in the ferns,

It is ready to be tried out in an attack on alien

territory,

330

As by those warriors who have even used the palms

of their hands as shields in war.

A tree is felled from a high bamboo scaffolding:

Having put on the jacket, charms are tied in place.

Raja Natu ties about his waist a charm with a

thousand folds,

Given to him by the youngest of the crickets, Bunsu

Burong Malam,

335

For trying out in a raid upon the Teluju Punan

As protection against throwing spears with barbed blades.

Next Remaung Lubang tied about his waist a hornet charm,

Plucked from a nest high in a tree,

For use in attacking and conquering other lands.

340

From a high bamboo scaffolding a tree is felled:

Having tied on his charms, he dresses for the warpath.

Then father Remaung Manggai goes on a hurried raid,

He ties a long and glittering sword about his waist,

An awesome blade on which blood flows,

345

Clad in the pelt of a tiger that once roared from
its lair,

And wearing a helmet resplendent with hornbill plumes.

A chestnut tree is felled, a tree by the lake:

Having dressed, he goes on the warpath.

Leaving the adzed boards where warriors lounge,

350

Issuing from beneath the eaves of wooden shingles,

Walking across the verandah in the shadow of the

waning moon,

Descending the evenly notched ladder,

To the place where the sacred dracaena grow.

Treading a resting place where ground is like flour

from which rice cakes are made,

355

An old resting place overgrown by banyan trees.

L342 At this stage of the *timbang*, the man who holds the *gawai*, put on his warrior's dress and other accoutrements of war and follows the *lemambang* and his chorus. At the same time a *piring* ceremony is performed on the gallery.

L349-356 The *lemambang* and his chorus followed by the Iban who is performing the ritual, chant the *timbang* as they descend the entry ladder on to the ground below.

An ageing tree by a lake, a clump of saplings:

Father Remaung Lubang having set out on the warpath
calls to his spirit helper;

Father Bungai Nuing Panggit calls to his spirit helper
in the shape of a male snake.

"Where are you, my spirit helper, the male snake

360

To guide and protect me on this raid,

So that dry leaves when I tread on them will not rear
up like the ruffled feathers of a cock,

So that trees that I touch will not give off a
snapping sound,

So that grass on which I tread will be pressed down
without too much movement.

And should I creep past the bathing place of the Uma
Kulit Kayans,

365

Where their children are fishing and playing with
blowpipes,

Let their eyes not see me,

As you used to help Belayong and grandfather Bajit,

Give to me a blowpipe charm from the mountain where
Kumang sleeps."

A clump of saplings, a breadfruit tree is felled:

370

Having called on his helping spirit, he continues
on his journey.

Then father Remaung Lubang strides,

Into the valley of mantles thick with the feathers of birds;

Raja Sabai, the father of Sempurai Gundai heading
forward on this hurried raid,

Treads the ridge of shields with well-made handles; 375

His right foot treads a tributary of Kayan river where
bamboos abound,

The route of the late Alam when raiding Kayan territory.

Father Selalau Lamba unsheathes his glittering sword,

Shakes his well-made shield,

Thrusts with his newly-forged spear, 380

He slashes off the 'seed' of the trees,

Severing collar bones and jaws.

A clump of saplings, a breadfruit tree is felled:

Father Menteri Manggau having taken a trophy head
turns for home.

The returning warriors cross the ridge of shields with

well-made handles; 385

They cross the valley of mantles thick with the feathers
of birds.

A quid of chewing tobacco, a tree with paired leaves:

L378-382 The man who is performing the *gawai* unsheathes his sword, and with a loud war cry, slashes at the trophy head mounted on a small pole on the ground in front of the longhouse. Having done this the man and the *timang* party return into the longhouse.

The warriors having arrived back at their longhouse,

the women make ready to receive the trophy heads.

"Listen, Sandak Biak,

Who among you was first in severing two heads from bodies
stricken and shuddering?

390

Listen, Senggal Tinggi,

Who among you was first in taking heads amid uproar like
the exploding of seeds of maize when heated in a pan?

Who among you was first in making blood spurt forth as
does water from the spout of a kettle?

Who among you was first to make a headless body go-a-crawling,
as the sun at the end of day was dying?

Who among you was first to cause corpses to lie about
like logs?

395

Who among you, Senggal Tinggi, was first during the fighting
to inflict wounds and sever heads from bodies?

Who among you during the fighting was the first to pluck
off 'seeds',

For presenting to myself and my woman friends?

We will give you the praise-name of 'Lang, With the Gaping
Mouth, who Seizes his Prey amid Smoke and Flame'.

Who among you was first in plucking a branch of succulent
fruit?

400

We, myself and my friends,

L388 On arriving at the longhouse, the trophy is received by the women, while the bard and his party continue with the *timang* around the shrine. The Iban concerned is now seated on a brass gong beside the shrine.

Will give you the praise-name of 'Lang with the All-Engulfing
Mouth, who Ruthlessly Preys on Prized Fighting Cocks'.

A tree with paired leaves, a high bamboo scaffolding:

The women having received the trophy heads, Lang gives out
charms.

He leaves a rubber charm, given by Jingan, 405

Plucked out of a wooden block,

A safe-guard against failure when head-hunting;

He leaves a dried bamboo charm, given by kinsman

Gendang Menyawai,

Plucked from a clump of whispering bamboos,

To make one's bones light in all one's activities; 410

He leaves a water charm for Landai Mandi, the wife of
his host,

Plucked from the centre of a whirlpool,

For use in the cooking of rice;

He leaves a spider charm for the wife of his host,

Plucked from a house post, 415

For use in the plaiting of finely-patterned baskets.

"After I have gone," says Uncle Lang,

"You will, in hunting, be blessed with excellent dogs,

L404 During the concluding parts of the *timbang* the bard and his chorus are in the *bilek*, or family-room, and a *piring* ceremony is performed. The bard, like Lang, shares his charms with the members of the family who are holding the *gawai* by sprinkling on them, the water in which his charms have been rinsed. After these rites have been performed, the *timbang* party, while still in family-room, conclude the *timbang*.

So that your family will ever be chopping up the flesh
of wild boars;

After I have gone," says Uncle Lang,

420

"You will, in making swiddens, fell virgin forest with
ease,

So that your bark bins will always be full;

After I have gone," says Uncle Lang,

"You will, in hunting with blowpipes, make darts
with ease,

And so take many gibbons;

425

After I have gone," says Lang,

"Your family, young man, when fishing,

Will always catch fish most bountifully."

A huge bamboo scaffolding, a tree heavy with blossoms:

Lang having given out charms, the bards summon wondering
souls.

430

"Come back to the forest that was scorched when swiddens
were fired;

Come back to the bathing place, walk up the well-trodden
path;

Climb the great entry ladder, on to the open verandah
in the glimmering light of the waxing moon;

Enter beneath the palm frond eaves right up to the
central post of the house,

On to the door, decorated with drawings of Chinese children,
together we two shall go,

435

To our much loved mother and father,

To be enclosed in an heirloom jar,

That is topped with a brass gong,

Fastened in place with steel wire,

Wave a cock over it in blessing,

440

Come face to face with Kumang, also called Lenya,

Meet with the gods, with the spirit of Sempandai

Who declare, 'No misfortune will come'!

"Long life," says the spirit, shaman Gendai.

Grasp the palisades of Panggau,

445

Scale the three bright stars,

Climb through the shadows to the waxing moon,

Ascending through face-moistening mists,

"Long life," says Biku, the spirit of the gods,

"Freed of all misfortune, may good health ever be

yours."

450

Chapter Six

Gawai Amat and Timang in Traditional Iban Society¹

In order to understand the significance of *gawai amat* and its *timang* in the general context of Iban traditional society we must first appreciate the role of religion in pagan Iban society. Freeman (1955:28) who did his research among the Baleh Iban in the early 1950s observes: "The vast majority of the Iban are still 'pagan', but they are, nonetheless, an extremely religious people', and ritual pervades every aspect of their lives ... if the Iban are to be understood this fundamental fact must be faced." Jensen (1974:55) remarks that "one of the most remarkable aspects of Iban existence is the way in which religion is almost synonymous with an ordered life and ritual enters into most activities." I would add from my own observations that religious beliefs do indeed dictate the way in which the traditional Iban live.² During my field research in 1978-1979, among the Mujong Iban, I often heard individuals declaring: *Enti mimpi kena, burong badas, pedara di intu, nadai utai enda olih* (If dreams are right, auguries be good, rituals observed, there is nothing that cannot be achieved). This statement clearly indicates the role of religious belief among pagan Iban, and more importantly, it reflects their belief that there must be supernatural assistance if success is to come their way.

Iban believe that humans with their own powers alone can never rise to great achievements. It is only with the aid and guidance of

supernatural forces that humans can excel in their tasks. Thus, there were in Iban traditional society, numerous ways by which an Iban might invoke divine aid and guidance. It was, for instance, a common practice among Iban before undertaking any major task, be it head-hunting, migration, or a *bejalai* (journey), for the leader of those involved to sleep on the *ruai* accompanied by an offering, in the hope of having the appropriate dreams. Once such a dream had been dreamt, the party could set off on whatever task they had chosen to undertake, in the knowledge that the gods had sanctioned their activity, and would guide them to its successful completion. Others, under similar circumstances, might seek divine aid through deliberate augury, the process Iban called *beburong*³ (cf. Freeman, 1960; Jensen, 1974:134-138). This process required intimate knowledge of the various calls and flights of the augural birds, and of their possible meanings. This task fell on the *tuai burong* (chief augur), or in his absence, the most knowledgeable man of the group. Normally the person responsible would get up early in the morning and walk through a chosen tract in the forest. When the desired augury was heard he pulled a small sapling, or cut one of its branches, while at the same time uttering a few dedicatory words. This sapling termed a *Kayu burong* (augural stick) was then taken as a material symbol of what he had heard, and from then on was regarded by the group as a kind of talisman in which the potency of the augury was stored. Others might perform *nampok* in seeking supernatural power for the purpose of healing chronic illness, or to get valuable *pengaroh* (charms). This rite required a person to stay overnight, alone, in an isolated place (e.g. hill top, burial ground, river pool, or caves)

believed to be frequented by spirits (*antu*; cf. Jensen, 1974:121-124). A few participants of *nampok* rite claim to have actually met a spirit in person and to have been given the desired *pengaroh*, while others reported having 'confronted' these beings in dreams. Whatever the mode of confrontation, a successful performer of *nampok* was regarded as a man of courage and determination. And indeed, in a society where spirits (*antu*) were generally the object of fear, only those who were brave would have the nerve to participate in such a rite.

The notion that humans cannot achieve renown without the aid and guidance of divine beings is further reflected in the importance Iban attach to their *pengaroh* (charms). Every Iban *bilek*-family has its own collection of *pengaroh*, in most cases, handed down from the preceding generation. These items are the most precious possessions of a *bilek*-family, for it is believed that these magical objects safeguard its members from harm, and assist them in their tasks. Usually some *pengaroh* are said to have been directly 'given' by the gods or spirits, while others have been found by accident. It is not unusual for an Iban to keep any strange object, or any object found in unusual circumstances; then, if in the following days, the finder, or someone else concerned has a dream attesting to the magical power of a particular object, then it is kept as a *pengaroh*. In this way the family collection of charms grows. Because of the power these objects are believed to possess, Iban, I was told, will resort to deceit and trickery, as in the fashion depicted in the *timbang* (part VI:L299-304) to procure these objects. When Lang is asked by a guest for permission to hold some of his *pengaroh*, he replies:

I must decline, my kinsmen, for I do not wish to
be like Ngadit, also called Serakup,
Who lost his charms that gave him long life, when
a guest, who had sought the charms deceitfully
swallowed it.

The performance of ritual activities like the *gawa* and *gawai* are examples of two of the most important traditional means by which pagan Iban ritually invoke divine help so ensuring its presence. As I pointed out in Chapter II, whenever an Iban feels he is 'threatened' by evil spirits (*antu*), or when his attempts to better his life have met with little success, he may perform a *gawa* ritual. By performing this ritual feast, an Iban believes that, through the words of the *timbang*, he is certain to secure divine help. The dedication shown by the Iban, and their willingness to bear the expense incurred are evidence of the eagerness with which divine assistance is sought.

The *gawai amat* in which warfare and head-hunting are the central themes, is the most elaborate and prestigious ritual feast of the Iban, at least in the Baleh region. Singalang Burong, the principal guest, is the Iban high god of war. And it is the martial prowess of Singalang Burong that the performer of *gawai amat* is hoping to emulate. This being so, two questions follow: Why is the most important god of the Iban a god of war? And why should a ritual feast which deals primarily with warfare and head-hunting be the most important religious activity of the Iban? To answer these questions we must refer to the social and historical realities of which *gawai amat* and its *timbang* were once integral parts. I would suggest that this particular version of the

timbang became especially prominent in the 19th century, when the Iban began to infiltrate into the Rejang basin being associated with the need for effective warriors for the conquest and holding of new land.

The pagan Iban were swidden cultivators first and foremost. The vast expanse of the primeval rain forest of Borneo was the invaluable resource upon which their existence depended. It not only provided the Iban with an environment in which successful cultivation of their crops was possible, but also with materials for their daily needs, and with a good and varied supply of food. As Freeman (1970:283) points out, "the whole material culture of the Iban is based on the rain forest," and upon its holdings of forest land depended the prosperity and indeed, the very subsistence of a *bilek*-family. The pagan Iban, it might be said, were *mangeurs de bois*.⁴ And so their predilection for virgin forest, and, to a large extent, their head-hunting and warfare must be seen in the context of their desire for fresh tracts of virgin forest.

Hill rice (*padi bukit*), the main crop of the Iban, if abundant harvests were to be obtained, required unrestricted access to fresh land. This striving for maximum returns from hitherto uncultivated land led to the prodigal farming practices which have been described by Freeman (1955 and 1970).

The Iban also planted a large variety of catch-crops, interspersed in the same swidden with their hill rice. The most important of these were: maize (*lingkau*), cucumber (*buah rampu*), pumpkin (*buah entikai*), luffa (*buah empusut*), gourds (*buah labu*), and a kind of mustard, the leaves of which were eaten (*ensabi*). Around the edges of the swidden

other plants like cassava (*buah empasa*) and sweet potato (*buah belaut* or *abok*) were grown, while on humus rich soil around the burnt tree stumps and logs tobacco was planted for local consumption. These crops matured at different times, and thus provided a steady supply of vegetables while the *padi* was ripening. For instance the *ensabi* would be ready just after planting (*nugal*), maize prior to harvest, and cucumbers and pumpkins during harvest (*ngetau*). Once the harvest was completed, an area on the previous swidden was cleared for the planting of cotton (*taya*), which was used in weaving. The cotton was ready for picking before the next farming cycle began, and therefore, its cultivation did not interfere with the planting of hill *padi*.

The cultivation of virgin forest provided the Iban with innumerable advantages. Within easy reach from their settlements were timber for their houses and boats, rattan for their mats and baskets, and a large variety of other jungle produce needed to make other implements. Also in the nearby forest, rivers and streams, was wild game and fish in plenty. It might be said that pagan Iban living in the virgin forest of Borneo led a life of relative abundance and self sufficiency. However, after settling in an area for a number of years, the ease in which food and materials could be gathered changed. Virgin jungle for swiddens became more distant, the materials required for domestic needs were more difficult to find, and the forest and rivers no longer yielded their former abundance. At this stage a longhouse might break into two or more groups, and migrate to new areas. Charles Brooke (1866, i:37) has described the Iban migration into the Rejang valley as follows:

... exoduses took place overland between one river and another. Such parties would do their four or five days march, then build their houses, and proceed to farm for one or two years, after which they would recommence their march, and so on, until they arrived at their final destination.

In this manner, swidden by swidden, the pagan Iban migrated from the Kapuas river valley from the 16th and 17th century onwards into what is now called Sarawak.

It is a mistake to suggest as some students of Iban culture have done,⁵ that Iban migration was prompted by the lack of suitable land for the successful cultivation of their hill *padi*. Freeman (1970:305) in his detailed study on Iban agriculture points out that if the "resulting secondary jungle (*domun*) is brought into cultivation at sufficiently rare intervals (i.e. 12-15 years), and never for more than one season, the land may be utilized virtually indefinitely without serious degradation taking place," and still produce a reasonably good harvest. Taking into account that the average *bilek*-family usually cleared an area of about 4-5 acres annually, there was, in former days, an adequate amount of land to enable fallowed areas to sufficiently recover before the next felling.

Besides the desire to have abundant food and materials within easy reach of their settlements, there were other motives for Iban migration. One of these was the social prestige that was attached to pioneers and successful cultivators of *padi*. Among the pagan Iban, pioneers were highly esteemed, and "like a successful warrior he is a figure of tremendous prestige in Iban society," (Pringle in Sandin, 1968:xv). Even today the descendants of these ancient pioneers may be heard declaring, with tremendous pride: *menoa tu di perumpang bala aki ini aku* (this land was first settled by my ancestors).

In most cases, pioneers were individuals who, when migrating from their old residential site led a group of *bilek*-families into a new territory. These individuals, whom Freeman (1870:77) terms the founding group,⁶ usually consisted of not more than about ten *bilek*-families, and moved in the manner described by Charles Brooke (p.452 *supra*) into an area of virgin forest. After settling in an area for a few years, *bilek*-families from other parts might attach themselves to the founding group's longhouse. It should be emphasized that the number of *bilek*-families joining the group depended largely on the reputation of the leaders of the founding group. In a society where choosing the location of its abode depended entirely on a *bilek*-family, the founding group, if they were to attract followers, had to be persons of proven qualities. The ease with which Iban *bilek*-families separated from their original group, either to join an established longhouse, or to start a new group of their own, was in accord with the ethos of Iban culture. In an 'egalitarian and classless' society, where individual esteem and prestige was achieved through personal merit and prowess, the loose manner in which Iban formed residential groups, allowed ambitious individuals to exploit their potential as leaders. Participating in, or leading a group into a territory was an opportunity for these individuals to prove their abilities. Consequently, we have in traditional Iban society, numerous groups of Iban pressing forward, clearing tracts of virgin forest as they went.

Another social factor bearing on the Iban predilection for migrating into virgin forest was the prestige given to individuals who regularly managed to harvest abundant crops of *padi*. These individuals

were described as *tau padi* (able to procure rice), were believed to possess potent charms (*pengaruh*), and were said to have the gods on their side. A more practical advantage of having abundant *padi* was that its surplus could be exchanged for goods like jars (*tajau*) and bronze gongs (*tawak*), which were so prized in Iban communities as items of wealth.

Thus, taking into account the practical advantages of cultivating primeval rain forest, plus the social prestige attached to pioneers and to successful cultivators of hill rice, it is understandable that the Iban rapidly infiltrated into and occupied regions where virgin forest was readily available, for vast expanses of virgin forest was, in Freeman's words, "a shifting cultivator's paradise".

However infiltration into these parts of Sarawak was by no means easy. Some of the areas were occupied, even if only sparsely by local inhabitants who were threatened by invasion by the Iban. Consequently there was, as pointed out in Chapter I, often sharp and bitter fighting between the Iban and the local inhabitants. The outcome of such conflict depended on the effectiveness of the Iban as warriors. It was such effectiveness in warfare that the Iban sought from their powerful god of war, Lang Singalang Burong. In their *gawai amat* the Iban were assured, by the words of the *timbang*, that Lang would bestow on them his own martial prowess. Furthermore, the *timbang* maledictions uttered by the *lemanbang* along with other rites (e.g. the erecting of the hornbill icon during a *gawai kenyalang*) were believed to weaken an enemies' resistance prior to an actual attack. The combination of these religious beliefs gave the pagan Iban a feeling of tremendous

confidence when invading new territory. Charles Brooke understood the importance Iban attached to these rituals, and therefore, when planning any punitive expedition in which Iban help was required, he usually told them well in advance of his intention, thus giving those who might be interested in joining him, time to perform the necessary *gawai*. This gesture of understanding helped to secure, for Charles Brooke, the support of his Iban subjects. Without their support, the Brooke government could not have survived the numerous rebellions against it.⁷

I shall discuss the dynamics of Iban society with reference to one of the *timang*'s central themes, the cult of head-hunting. To a pagan Iban a human head taken in a raid or war meant basically three things: (i) *tanda brani* (sign of bravery), (ii) *antu pala* (ghost or spirit head), (iii) *igi ranya* (seed of the shrine). Let me now discuss each of these meanings in turn.

In a society like that of the pagan Iban which conspicuously lacked hereditary ranking, any ambitious person who sought social esteem had to earn it through personal merit and prowess. No individual in Iban society was accorded high prestige simply because he was the son of illustrious parents. Every individual was esteemed in relation to his proven qualities.⁸ Therefore, there was in traditional Iban society a keen spirit of competition in all activities through which esteem could be obtained. One of the ways in which an ambitious individual might achieve this esteem was by participating in a head-hunting raid. A successful head-hunter, upon his return, was received with acclaim and ceremony, the head or heads that he had taken being

regarded as unequivocal proof (*tanda brani*) of his bravery and fighting prowess. Thus whenever a successful and renowned head-hunter made it known that he was organizing a raid into enemy territory, he would have no difficulty in mustering a large and effective force (*bala*) of fighting men. A successful raid would reinforce the community's belief in this leader's martial prowess, which in turn, increased his prestige even further. Brooke Low (Ling Roth, 1869, ii:100) who participated in numerous expeditions with Iban warriors, had this to say about the effectiveness of an Iban fighting force when capably led:

Sea Dayak warfare is far from dispicable, although it is undisciplined, and when command is assumed by a person of sufficient influence ... the force at his disposal becomes more formidable than it otherwise would be.

Thus for a successful and highly esteemed head-hunter who could attract a large following of fighting men, the possibilities appeared to be immense. These seemingly endless possibilities were open to every Iban who had courage and ambition. As a result the pagan Iban took to head-hunting with tremendous fervour, unmindful at times, of the 'dangers' involved.

It is to these 'dangers' that I now turn. A severed human head is commonly referred to as an *antu pala*, which literally means ghost or spirit head. The Iban in general believe that when a person dies his soul becomes an *antu Sabayan* (spirit or ghost of the After-world). This spirit of the After-world may sometimes return to the land of the living (cf. Uchibori, 1978:215ff). In former days when a person was killed in a fight, and his head taken, the ghost (*antu*) of the victim, it was believed, might haunt and so endanger the life of the beheader, and of those closely associated with him. Therefore, to placate the

ghost of the victim, a freshly taken trophy head was received with appropriate rites and offerings, before it was brought into the longhouse.¹⁰ Once in the longhouse, it was hung with other trophy heads above the hearth (*bedilang*) on the gallery (*ruai*), and when a fire was lit on chilly nights it was said that this would keep the *antu pala* warm. Again, during a ritual feast, the trophy heads were placated by being ritually fed with cakes and rice wine. The following excerpt of the *timbang* (part VIII:L528-531) reveals the way in which Iban treated their trophy heads, and also represents an assuaging of the anxiety associated with the taking of heads. The newly taken head is depicted as conversing with previously taken *antu pala*:

"How pleasant, dear mother, has living been
for you?"

"O, very pleasant indeed, dear first born child.
Whenever I cry at my lot, these people give me
rice wine.

Whenever I become resentful of my fate, these
people give me offerings of rice and egg."

There was, however, another danger posed by an *antu pala* which, in my view, was of real concern to any successful head-hunter: the danger of retaliation by the victim's relatives. The history of Sarawak (oral and written) contains numerous accounts of retaliatory raids, some with devastating effects to both property and human lives. The head-hunters were acutely aware of this danger, and had, among other practical precautions, (cf. Chapter I) incorporated into their

rituals the rite of *nikau ka brau kuning* (the scattering of yellow rice). Iban believed that once yellow rice was scattered by a ritual officiant, accompanied by the uttering of some incantations, it would act as a ritual barrier against the curses (*sumpah*) uttered by the relatives of the victim. The rice was also believed to become calthrops (*nyadi tukak*) to impede the advance of their enemies. Despite the dangers (both from the spirit of an *antu pala* and the victim's relatives) pagan Iban were still willing to risk them all for the renown they would acquire if they became successful head-hunters.

On the third meaning of a severed human head, the text of the *timbang gawai amat* is quite explicit. The *timbang* refers to it either as seed of the shrine (*igi ranyai*), seed of the sacred *padi* (*igi padi pun*), or seeds of various kinds of fruit (e.g. jackfruit, pumpkins, manggo etc.). Thus seed is plainly the most common metaphor for a severed head. This raises a fundamental question: Why should a severed head be equated with seed which conspicuously symbolizes fertility and life? Freeman (1979) in his paper Severed Heads that Germinate discusses this question. It is not my intention to repeat Freeman's analysis here, but it is important to reiterate that the human head is widely associated with virility and fertility. The ancient Greeks and Romans, for instance, believed seed or semen to be enclosed in the human skull (Onians, 1954: 93ff). The Hindus regard the head as the source of the generative force of procreation, and Freud equates the head with the male genital.

Many societies throughout Southeast Asia associate the human head with virility and fertility in various rites. Spencer St John (1863, i: 204) had described how among the Land Dayaks (*Bidayuh*) of Sarawak, a

trophy head newly taken, was believed 'to make their rice grow well, to cause the forest to abound with wild animals, to ensure their dogs and snares to be successful in securing game, to have streams swarm with fish, to give health and activity to the people themselves, and to ensure the fertility of their women'. . . Although the Iban of Sarawak do not practise directly comparable rites with a trophy head, they nevertheless associate it with fertility and life. The words of the *timbang* not only repeatedly refer to a severed head as some kind of seed, but spell out quite clearly that it contains seed which, when planted, will grow into abundant crops of *padi*.

To what extent the Iban predilection for head-hunting was influenced by the belief that human heads were associated with fertility and life, is hard to determine. There are no reports made by earlier writers documenting evidence to suggest that traditional Iban used trophy heads in rites similar to those performed by the Land Dayaks of Sarawak. There is also no evidence to suggest that Iban went on a head-hunting raid primarily to procure trophy heads for use in fertility rites, and contemporary Iban were not of much help in this line of enquiry. Sir Hugh Low (Ling Roth, 1896, vol.II:142ff) and a few other writers reported that a human head was required on some occasions, by the Iban before the termination of a mourning period, but he did not elaborate on why a human head was used. There is however, evidence that once a human head was obtained, it was sometimes used by Iban in the rite of *muja menoa* (ritual cleansing of the land). In former days, when an incestuous union was committed, the Iban during the performance of this rite, used to rub or touch the trophy head with their whetstone

(*batu panggol*). This act was believed to cleanse away any evil or harmful consequence of such a union on their swiddens and so help to ensure an abundant crop of *padi*.

Whatever might be the demerits of the Iban's head-hunting practice, it nevertheless provided individual Iban males with a means by which they could make a name for themselves. In a masculine-oriented society like that of the traditional Iban, where personal bravery and martial prowess were measured in terms of the number of defeated enemies, every man, if he aspired to be known as a man of valour, had to become a successful head-hunter. In a highly competitive society in which the dictum *enggai alah ari pangan diri* (not wishing to be outdone by one's peers) was commonplace, it was understandable that Iban males participated in head-hunting raids or war expeditions with enthusiasm. The Malays who came in contact with the pagan Iban along the coast of Sarawak in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, realized the latter's bellicose nature, and their obsession for trophy heads, and so recruited Iban men on the following terms: "The Malay princes received two-thirds of the spoil, and their Dayak subjects, whom they had trained to be pirates, were granted one-third of the plunder and all the heads they could take" (Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, 1909:52). Later the Brooke government, despite its abhorrence of head-hunting, and its attempt to curb the practice, permitted the Iban to take heads when taking part in the government organized war expeditions. The Brooke Rajahs knew, as did the Malay princes, of the Iban predilection for human heads, and thus by granting such permission the government was assured of getting Iban support. And such a method of massing support proved for the

Brooke government, time and time again, to be most effective. For instance, when the Brooke government in 1863 launched the Great Kayan Expedition, there were about 15,000 Iban warriors, from all parts of Sarawak, taking part.

The Iban predilection for human heads not only served the need of the Brooke government, but it also facilitated the ease with which Iban leaders could raise an effective fighting force, with or without the government's knowledge. Some Iban raids into the territory of neighbouring tribes were carried out with devastating consequences. In 1900, the whole left bank of the Kayan river was deserted because of rumours that Iban were on the war path in revenge for five Iban who had been earlier killed in this region (Smythies, SMJ, 1955:507). The interior tribes of Borneo residing, at the end of the 19th century, in the upper reaches of the Rejang river, complained bitterly to the Rajah about Iban raids. According to reports published in the Sarawak Gazettes at that time, some even talked of 'removing from the Rejang' for 'fear of attacks from the Dayaks'. While others like the Baketan, realizing the futility of opposing the Iban, came to terms with them. It was thus, to a large extent, due to their fighting prowess, that the Iban, within a period of slightly more than 100 years, effectively established themselves in a region that extends all the way from the Ulu Batang Ai to the upper reaches of the Baleh river in the Rejang valley.

When so much Iban expansion and their way of life depended upon their fighting ability it is fully understandable that warfare and head-hunting were incorporated in their most prestigious and important

ritual feast, the *gawai amat*, as individual Iban invoked Lang and his followers to come to their assistance.

There is also another aspect of Iban ritual activity that deserves special mention. This is what the Iban term *nunda petara* (emulating the gods). The Iban believe that by emulating actions of their gods and culture heroes, they may be able to procure some of the powers of these supernatural beings. This belief is evident in Iban myths, rituals and invocatory chants (*timbang*). There is, for instance, a myth of an Iban named Beji, whose desire to be with the gods failed, when the ladder (*tangga*) he built collapsed before it reached the abodes of the gods in the skies (cf. Howell, BLB, 1963:167). In Chapter II I described variants of the *gawai amat* in which the notched ladder (*tangga*) is placed beside the shrine with its top part resting on the loft. During one of the ritual proceedings, all the male members of the *bilek*-family holding the feast, are asked to climb the ladder, one at a time, into the loft (*sadau*). The climbing of the ladder into the loft is, in Iban belief, symbolic of humans' ascent to the world of the gods in the skies which, in this instance, is represented by the *sadau*.

Also the *piring*-ceremony and rites performed during a *gawai* are held in emulation of the actions of the gods as they occur in the *timbang* plot. For example, when Lang and his sons-in-law are preparing for their head-hunting raid (part III), the *lemambang*, his chorus of singers and the man who holds the *gawai* are dressed in war attire, as if they are going to the warpath. Later, when Lang takes the trophy head, as depicted in the *timbang*, the man who is holding the *gawai*, in a ritual imitation of Lang's action, draws his sword, and with a piercing war

cry, severs the rattan which fastens the coconut (a symbolism for a trophy head), and runs away with it. Table 2:4 illustrates the *piring*-ceremonies and the rites performed imitating the actions of the gods as depicted in the *timbang* plot.

There are also instances in the *timbang* plot itself which reveal or reflect Iban desire to possess the powers of their supernatural beings. The first example of such a desire appears quite early in the text. Prior to the gathering of guests for a meeting (part I) all events take place in the Iban longhouse where the *gawai* is being held. However, during and after the meeting the scene changes, and we are told, without any explanation, that the events are now taking place in the longhouse of the Iban culture heroes (*orang panggau*). For the rest of the *timbang* plot, there are constant and imperceptible shifts of scene from the Iban longhouse to that of their culture heroes. The ease with which the Iban world is equated with the world of the supernatural beings reflects the fundamental desire of the Iban to acquire the characteristics of their culture heroes.

The culminating point of a man's action in emulating the gods, especially Lang, appears in the last episode of the *timbang* (part IX). Here we are told in the words of the *timbang* that the man who performs the *gawai*, after being given a war jacket, woven by an ogress, leads, what later turns out to be, a very successful head-hunting raid. Upon his return, he and his party (who in the *timbang* plot are disguised by various pseudonyms) are received by the following words:

Listen, Sandak Biak,

Who among you was first in severing two heads from
bodies stricken and shuddering?

Listen Senggal Tinggi,

Who among you was first in taking heads amid roars
like the exploding of seeds of maize when
heated in a pan?

Who among you was first in making blood spurt forth
as does water from the spout of a kettle?

Who among you was first to make a headless body
go-a-crawling as the sun at the end of the day
was dying?

We will give you the praise name of 'Lang, with the
Gaping Mouth who Seizes his Prey amid Smoke and
Flame'.

Who among you was first in plucking a branch of
succulent fruit?

We, myself and my friends,

Will give you the praise name of 'Lang with the All-
Engulfing Mouth, who Ruthlessly Preys on Prized
Fighting Cocks'.

(Part IX:L389-402)

It is crucial to our understanding of Iban *gawai* to realize that this
praise-name is given only to those Iban who are performing the final
stage of the *timbang gawai amat*. If we recall the events in the

earlier episodes, the man who performs the *gawai* has not been depicted as directly involved in the *timbang* plot. In the *ngerampas* episode (the head-hunting raid to Bengkong, part III), for instance, the Iban concerned only emulates the action of Lang and his sons-in-law. During the felling of the swidden (the action of which symbolizes a battle), Lang expresses, quite plainly, that the Iban who performs the *gawai* is not taking part in the activity:

The hill upriver from that marker
Is reserved for the husband of Budi, the fish of
gold,
Who has staged this ritual,
Perhaps he will have a dream while sleeping on the
wooden floor,
Lying on a mat with a thousand patterns,
So there will be a place for him to try out his charms,
Given by helping spirits in the broad light of day.

In short, all the activities prior to the final episode (the planting of cotton) focus around Lang. However, in this final stage of the *timbang*, the focus turns away from Lang to a person who is referred to as Remaung Manggai, Bungai Nuing Panggit, Sandak Biak, Lalau Lamba. These names are pseudonyms for the man who performs the *gawai*. The cotton is planted so that a war jacket may be woven from its thread, not for Lang to use, but for the Iban concerned. The raid into alien territory is led, not by Lang, but by this man. And finally, when the successful war party returns, the esteem of the community, as depicted by the *timbang* is focused on the Iban who leads this raid. This man, from his close association

with Lang, has acquired the capacity to be a leader of a raid himself.

It is fitting that he is given the praise-name of:

... Lang, with the Gaping Mouth, who Seizes his Prey
amid Smoke and Flame.

... Lang, with the All-Engulfing Mouth, who Ruthlessly
Preys on Prized Fighting Cocks.

It should be borne in mind that the conferring of a praise-name in the *timbang* is not the same as the conferring of a praise-name on an individual for his actual actions. In the latter case a man is commonly referred to by his praise-name (e.g. Unggang was known by his praise-name, *Mata Ari* (sun), cf. Freeman, 1970:132). In the case of a praise-name conferred during a *gawai* however, it is limited to this context.

Another feature of the Iban *gawai* that I would like to discuss is the participation in its activities by large numbers of Iban from other longhouses. During the period immediately after the harvest and before the next clearing of the swidden commences, there is, in Iban society, periodical gathering of large masses of Iban into one place as part of their ritual commitments. This gathering, though religious in its prime objective, can and does facilitate a high degree of social interaction among the participants. As I mentioned in earlier chapters, new friends are made and old acquaintances renewed. But more important, it provides an ideal arena where Iban can discuss and exchange their ideas, and for information to be communicated in the least amount of time to a large number of people throughout a region. In former days the occasion of a *gawai* was often used by various Iban leaders to make known their intended activities, a head-hunting raid, migration to a

new area, or other activities which might involve people within the surrounding region. "It is customary" (Ling Roth, 1896, ii:100-102) "to announce a coming war expedition for such and such a season at one of the great feasts, when a village is thronged with guests from the country far and near, and when there is sure to be an unusual gathering of powerful chiefs." On such occasions an accurate assessment of an individual's ability and character can be made. Thus, should an Iban decide to organize a venture, his peers have some idea of his character and ability, and can make their decisions accordingly. So, despite the physical isolation of each longhouse, and its autonomy, the inhabitants of different longhouses are in touch with each other through their attendance at ritual activities. These attendances breed friendship and understanding, which in turn, creates a basis for co-operation. In a society like that of the Iban, with no formal social structure beyond the longhouse, the *gawai* provides, as it has been in the past, the occasion for the development of social cohesiveness.

To conclude let me reiterate that *timbang gawai amat* is integral to the Iban cult of warfare and head-hunting. The ritual feast in which it is chanted is an activity that encourages such practices. The rites and methods of hill *padi* farming, depicted in the *timbang* plot, are a graphic allegory of activities of warfare. Iban *lemambang* and well informed Iban adults fully recognized that hill *padi* is being referred to specifically for this purpose. In former days when Iban were moving into land occupied by tribes who were hostile to their advance, qualities like courage, confidence and fighting prowess were nurtured and encouraged. The *timbang* and its associated rituals played an important role in doing

this. Whether these religious activities which have outlived their historical milieu, will continue to play an important part in shaping contemporary Iban society, is discussed in the next chapter. And finally, it must be borne in mind that although *gawai* involve participants beyond the *bilek*-family, it is basically an individual activity. Its performance is thought of and initiated by one or more individuals within a *bilek*-family. This is consistent with the fact that in Iban society, the *bilek*-family is the basic social unit. Thus, the Iban system of *gawai*, enables an individual, to seek divine help whenever he chooses to do so. In other words, the opportunity to try to become like the gods, is open to any Iban male of spirit and ambition.

Footnotes

1. when discussing traditional Iban society I shall use the past tense. It should be noted, however, that some of the meanings the traditional Iban attached to things or ideas are still to be found of contemporary Iban.
2. On the 20th December 1978, while on field work, I accompanied four other Iban on an overnight hunting trip. After establishing our camp, we set off into the forest in two separate groups. After walking in the forest for some distance, my companion said that he had just heard a call of a *membuas* (banded kingfisher), one of the seven omen birds. Whereupon, he stopped, constructed a miniature *raran* (a rough wooden frame work for cooking), collected a few dry twigs, and lit a fire under the *raran*. While the fire was burning he uttered the following prayer:

Tu kami udah ngaga raran endor nunu jelu, enti kami nadai bulih utai, dek di tunu kami ditu. Tang enti kami bulih, dek sigi amat Raja mensia.

(Now that we have constructed this 'hearth' for cooking the game, should we be unsuccessful, you will be cooked on this place. But should we be successful, you are indeed the ruler of us humans.)

A short distance from that place we shot a barking-deer (*kijang*). On our way back the man explained that *membuas* is a kind of augural bird (*burong nelap*); but for its call to be of any benefit to humans, a relevant rite must be performed immediately after hearing its call. The other group returned empty-handed saying they had *jai burong* (bad omen). Success and failure in the Iban world are often justified in terms of auguries and dreams.
3. During my field work I witnessed one instance of deliberate augury. This incident was occasioned by a flight of a *bejampong* (crested jay) into a longhouse. The *bejampong* is associated with dryness and fire, and thus its flight into a house foretells a fire. As one of the measures to invalidate this ominous event was to find an augural stick of a *nendak* (white-rumped shama) as this omen bird is associated with 'coolness' (*chelap*).
4. G. Condominas' We Have Eaten the Forest (transl. by A. Foulke, 1975) deals with a group of swidden cultivators, the Mnong Gar, (or Phii Bree — the men of the forest), found in the highlands of central Vietnam. They remembered past events in the following terms: that event took place 'the year when we ate (i.e. cultivated) the forest of such and such'.

5. Refer, Vayda (1969) The Study of the Causes of War with Special Reference to Head-hunting in Borneo: Ethnohistory vol.16, U. Wagner (1972) Colonialism and Iban Warfare.
6. There was one person among the members of the founding group who possessed the *penchelap rumah* (lit. 'that which "cools" a longhouse') the charms believed by Iban to keep the house ritually 'cool', and thus safe to live in. Invariably, other *bilek*-families would attach themselves to the person who possessed these charms, and consequently he became the *pun rumah* (the originator of a longhouse).
7. On the 18th February, 1857, the Chinese rebels successfully took over Kutching, and James Brooke, then the Rajah of Sarawak only narrowly escaped death (Runciman, 1960:125-133). The rebellion was quickly defeated by Charles Brooke (then the Tuan Muda) with the help of Iban warriors. The fear of the Iban felt by the Chinese rebels soon after their victory has been described by Spencer St. John (1862, ii:350-351), as follows:

At the mention of Mr Johnson's (Charles Brooke) name there was a pause, a blankness came over all their faces, and they looked at each other, as they now remembered apparently for the first time that he, the Rajah's nephew, was the Governor of the Sea Dayaks, and could let loose at least 10,000 wild warriors upon them.
8. Despite the masculine-oriented values of Iban traditional society, the females were highly esteemed by males for their skills in weaving *ikat* blankets, jackets, skirts, mats, baskets, and their general domestic abilities. A man tended to choose as a partner in marriage, a female skilled in these tasks.
9. Iban society has always recognized material symbols or signs (*tanda*) of success or achievement. A man who aspires recognition must be able to offer material proof of his achievements. Thus a successful farmer has his bark-bins (*tibang*) full of *padi*, a successful adventurer returns with numerous jars and bronze gongs, a successful head-hunter with a trophy head.
10. Rev. W. Howell (BLB, 1963:136-137) in discussing Iban head-hunting writes:

The new head is not allowed to enter the village or houses without a ceremony ... the object is to feed the newly-taken head, and to get it to drink, chew and smoke. To those who do not understand, the head appears to be received with the utmost respect, though in reality the greatest ridicule is being heaped upon it and the feelings of the people towards it are those of revenge and hatred.

Chapter Seven

CONCLUSION

1. The Mythical Origin of *Timang*

The Iban ascribed the origin of the *timang* to a myth.¹ According to this myth the Iban were once living together with the supernatural beings, Singalang Burong, and the fathers of Kling, Ribai and Sabit Bekait. However, when a bitter dispute arose between the fathers of Kling, Ribai and Sabit Bekait over the ownership of one fruit tree called *tandan rian melunjong* (a species of durian tree) from which hung all kinds of fruit, the group split up as follows: (a) Kling's father migrated to the Panggau river; (b) Ribai's father migrated to lands across the sea; (c) Sabit Bekait's father migrated up to the skies; (d) Singalang Burong migrated to Tuchong Sanjong Basinjang (the Towering Bridge) in the skies; (e) the Iban migrated to the Batang Ai river. However, before the groups went their separate ways, the Iban's supernatural neighbours instructed them about the routes to their new homes, in case the Iban might wish to seek their assistance, through an invocatory *timang*, and have them partake of their ritual feasts. And from these instructions, the Iban claim, the various *timang* routes (*jalai timang*) originated.

Singalang Burong and the Iban, who had been neutral in the dispute, remained on friendly terms with their former neighbours and still mix freely with them on ritual occasions. This relationship is described by the Iban as *bedau sa-pengabang* (those who freely attend the same ritual feast). However, the three other groups became resentful enemies.

Numerous sagas are told of clashes between these three hostile groups, and one of the clashes is depicted in the *timbang* here being studied (see part V:L177-196). If the *Orang Panggau* and the followers of Ribai, for instance, are to attend the same *gawai*, then certain ritual procedures must first be observed to pacify their hostile feelings toward each other. Briefly, the procedure called *betemu ka Kling enggau Ribai* (introducing Kling and Ribai) involves dividing off the *ruai* of the *bilek*-family holding the feast with a *pua kumbo* (woven blanket), with a *lemambang* on each side of this partition. These *lemambang* represent either Kling or Ribai. During the ensuing chanting which is called *berenong*, the *lemambang* in succession speaks on behalf of Ribai or Kling, instructs his followers to be prepared for hostilities as their enemies are among the guests. On seeing the mounting tension between Kling and Ribai, Lang, through the words of one of the *lemambang*, stands up and exhorts them to cease all enmity as they are kinsmen. Then Lang tells them of the ancient dispute over a fruit tree which resulted in their alienation. After hearing this Kling and Ribai are reconciled, and this particular rite is at an end.

This myth, as far as the Iban are concerned, answers the question of how the *timbang* came into their culture. It does not, however, tell when this happened. None of my Iban informants were able to supply me with a precise answer to this question. My inquiries along this line always ended with the same response: *timbang tu ari asal aki ini* (the *timbang* has been handed down to us from our ancestors). This response, unsatisfactory as it may seem, is an indication, in my view, of the antiquity of oral literature in human societies (cf. Carpenter, 1956:3-9).

2. The *Timang* as an Historical Source

The *timang* is oral tradition, and like other oral traditions, it is performed for an audience. This being so, the *lemambang* has to present his *timang* in a style that is both intelligible and interesting, and in a form to which his audience can easily relate. One of the ways of achieving this is by incorporating in his chant current and well-known historical events couched in the traditional style of the *timang*.

For example, in part IV, lines 680 to 697, Antu Pugai (Spirit of the Boat) explains why Lang and his entourage cannot bathe in his waters.

No, my friends, not since we left the headwaters of
the Baleh, near the rock leapt by Tijok;

Not since we retreated from the Gat river,

Not since we have gathered in the Mujong river,

Now that the Rejang river is uninhabited up to
the Tukok rapids.

Ever since we migrated to the Menuan river,

The Poi river has been deserted,

The people of Kanowit have migrated to the Delok
river ...

Here, the *lemambang* is recounting actual historical events. The Iban rebels who gathered in the Mujong and the Gat rivers were defeated by government expeditions in 1915 and 1918 respectively. After surrendering they were required to settle in the Menuan river just below Kapit bazaar. At the turn of the 20th century some of the Iban living in the Kanowit river valley, caught between the hostilities of the Iban rebels led by

Bantin and Ngumbang and the government forces from the lower Rejang, migrated back to the Batang Lupar headwaters (cf. SG, vol. xxxv, p.211).

Again in part V, lines 149 to 153 the Kayan are depicted as bewailing their state after being constantly harassed by the Iban, in these terms:

If we suffer like this, we Kayan, can no longer live
here where rapids abound.

Though things are a little more pleasant

Now that we have moved much further up the Rejang river.

The phrase 'where rapids abound' most probably refers to the Pelagus rapids which have many falls. According to H.B. Low (SG, July, 1882, pp.53-54) there were, in 1882, Kayan settlements a few miles up river from the Pelagus rapids. Today this region is predominantly settled by the Iban, while the Kayan are found in the upper reaches of the Rejang river. The latter have in the words of the *timang*, indeed 'moved much further up the Rejang river'.

In part VII, lines 360-383, the *timang* mentions five of the Baleh Iban war leaders (Kling, Kanyan, Unchat, Merum and Mata Ari), and relates their martial exploits in the enemy territories, as, for example, in the following excerpt:

"How beautiful is that hill criss-crossed by rattan,
And that river bank thick with ferns, and the leftovers
of foragers;

Whose secondary jungle is that Uncle Lang?"

"It is the secondary jungle of Merum and Kanyan dating
from the time of their planting of the 'seed',
Which is why this part of the Babeyong is so silent,
Why to this day the trees hereabouts are still scarred."

The Babeyong is a tributary of the Mahakam river in Indonesian Borneo. There are numerous accounts of raids carried out by the Iban of the Rejang-Baleh region on this and other enemy territories in the late 19th and 20th centuries. The raid led by Unchat as depicted in the text, for instance, can be fully substantiated in the extant historical documents (cf. part VII:L363n). It is then reasonable to assume that the martial exploits of other Iban leaders mentioned in this *timbang* are also based on actual events.

Igoh, the *lemambang* responsible for the main part of this *timbang* version was born some time between the years 1905-1910. Most of the historical events contained in his *timbang* happened in the period from the latter part of the 19th century to the early decades of the 20th century. For most members of Igoh's audience in the 1940s and 1950s, these events occurred in the lifetime of their parents who, no doubt, would have described these martial feats to their children many times over. Finally, there are instances depicted in the *timbang* (e.g. reference to the Japanese occupation, part VII:L86-87) which occurred well into the 20th century. By including well remembered events in this fashion, the singers, chanters or narrators of oral traditions are able to relate their arts to their audience, so capturing and sustaining their interest.

In a pre-literate society, like that of the traditional Iban, events, values and skills are conspicuously embedded in oral tradition. When these traditions are sung, chanted or narrated, knowledge is being transmitted to the listeners.² Although the Iban have incorporated in their traditions actual events, the details of these events must always be regarded with a critical eye. Firstly, events in the *timbang* are couched in a form made suitable for oral transmission by the use of rhyme and

other devices for linking material together. Secondly, the accuracy of these events depend wholly on the power of memory, and subsequently during the process of transmission from one person to another, or from one generation to the next, the contents become inexact and blurred. Thirdly, oral traditions in general have specific functions in a society. The *timbang gawai amat*, for instance, is, among other things, a means by which the traditional Iban reinforced their beliefs that gods were on their side, and therefore, no enemy could stand against them. Consequently, incorporated into the plot of the *timbang* are events which selectively emphasize the martial prowess of the Iban. This biased selection of events must be appreciated before oral traditions can be used as historical sources. Fourthly, the traditional Iban, as in most pre-literate societies, do not attach dates to events and happenings, thus making the construction of a reliable chronology exceedingly difficult to achieve. Vansina (1965:1-2) points out that oral traditions are 'historical sources of a special nature' which must be corroborated by auxiliary source materials like archaeological findings, before they can be of real use. Nonetheless, oral traditions, I would claim, can often provide valuable information about a society ancillary to that contained in historical documents.

3. Gawai and Timang in Contemporary Iban Society

With the demise of warfare and head-hunting the rituals associated with these practices might be expected to decline drastically in importance. But this has not yet happened; at least, not among the Iban in the Baleh region. The *gawai amat* is still their most important and prestigious ritual feast, and the *timbang* along with its maledictions is still chanted

by *lemambang* as in the days of active head-hunting. During my field work among the Iban of the Baleh-Mujong river basins in 1978-1979, I witnessed two performances of the *gawai amat*: (i) a *Gawai Ijok Pumpong* (Decapitating of the Gamuti Palm Ritual); (ii) a *Gawai Tansang Kenyalang* (Ritual of the Hornbill's Nest). Both of these are Iban head-hunting rituals which have survived into the final quarter of the 20th century (cf. Howell and Bailey, 1900:47-48; Ling Roth, 1896, i:242ff). In the hope of reaching a better understanding of these ancient rituals and their relevance in the contemporary Iban society, I shall briefly discuss each of them.

(i) The *Gawai Tansang Kenyalang*

This *gawai* was performed by Pemancha Jinggut anak Attan,³ commencing on 7th January, 1979. This ritual was the second of the two *gawai* that Pemancha Jinggut was asked by the gods to perform in his dreams. The first was a *gawai kenyalang* (hornbill ritual) held from 12th to 19th December, 1976 which I also witnessed. Prior to his dream, three of his relatives dreamt that Jinggut should hold a *gawai kenyalang*. He, however, dismissed their dreams, saying: *Enti antu amak deka ngasoh aku gawai kenyalang, lapa kabuah mesau aba orang bukai enda aba aku empu? Kitai bela tindok.* (If the gods wish me to hold a hornbill ritual, why convey the message through someone else and not through me? We all sleep.) Not long afterward he had the following dream, here recounted in his own words.

In my dream I was asked by a stranger to attend a *gawai kenyalang* with him. We went up a river which was most beautiful, and came to the longhouse which held the *gawai*. That longhouse was extremely long. The stranger told me that it was the longhouse of Semputang Medang (an *Orang Panggau*). Upon our arrival at the longhouse's bathing place (*pendai*), the stranger disappeared. Before long a crowd of men dressed in Iban traditional costume descended the notched-ladder and invited me to join their feast. On the way into

the longhouse these people informed me that I had been commissioned to be the *orang nanam* (the man who erects the shrine). I declined, saying that I had no experience in this, but the people assured me that they would tell me what to do.

The festivity lasted for 8 days, and on the 8th day the hornbill icon was brought down, and sent adrift on the river. After this the people who held the *gawai* invited me to see the nest of the hornbill which they had built on the roof. It measured about two feet square, inside of which were fibres of *tepus* (a species of gigantic lily). Placed on the *tepus* fibres were untold amounts of money and other riches.

After showing me the hornbill's nest the man who performed the *gawai* then said: "Now that you have witnessed and participated in our *gawai* you should yourself hold a hornbill ritual. If you don't you'll become just an ordinary Iban, and your life will be short. About one year after holding the hornbill ritual you should perform the ritual of the hornbill's nest (*gawai tansang kenyalang*), for the spirit of your hornbill icon after searching for riches in far-off lands will then come back to lay her eggs."

Shortly after his dream, Pemancha Jinggut performed a *gawai kenyalang*, commencing on the 12th December. The ritual proceedings of his *gawai* followed closely with those given to him in his dream, many of which were quite unorthodox. It was, for example, the convention either to leave the hornbill icon standing on the pole (*sandong*), or to store it away in the longhouse after the *gawai* had ended. However, in his dream Jinggut was explicitly told not to leave the hornbill icon on the pole, for it would subject the spirit of the hornbill to rain and shine; nor to store it away in the longhouse, for its spirit might harm its owner after being confined. Thus, on the 8th day of the ritual feast, in emulation of the *gawai* seen in his dream, the hornbill icon was brought down and set adrift. The *gawai kenyalang* was his second *gawai amat* performance, and the *timang* was chanted up to *nyingka* (the end of forging, part VI:L668).

Then commencing on the 7th January 1979, he performed a *gawai tansang kenyalang*. The *timang* was chanted up to *bedua antara* (dividing the land for clearing, part VII:L416). The innovation was in the items

included in the shrine. In addition to the usual items (e.g. the various accoutrements of war), enclosed inside the shrine was the nest of the hornbill and a ladder. The nest was made of wood measuring two square feet, and placed on the top of the *tepus* fibres inside the nest were 30 eggs, an offering to the gods in anticipation of their bequeathing of great riches. At the completion of the *gawai*, the hornbill's nest was hauled up into the loft (*sadau*), to which the male members of Jinggut's family climbed by the ladder.

(ii) The *Gawai Ijok Pumpong*

This *gawai* was held by Baning who, since 1977 has resided in Rumah Ansam, Sungai Majau, and commenced on the 19th June 1979. It was held because of the dream of Rimong, a man of Rumah Luyoh (a former longhouse of Baning) also in Sungai Majau, again recounted in his own words:

I saw a boisterous wind sweep through our longhouse. After a while I saw that the shingles on the roof of Baning's *bilek* (family apartment) had blown away. When the wind ceased, a stranger came to me and said, "Now that Baning's roof has been blown away by the wind, if they do not hold a *gawai*, they will not be blessed with success."

The dream was then told to the *bilek*-family concerned. However, Baning's intention of holding the *gawai* was thwarted year after year, by bad harvests, and for every year the *gawai* was deferred, offerings were placed on a tall bamboo receptacle (*tresang*), accompanied by dedicatory words explaining the delay to the gods. Finally, in 1979, ten years after the dream had occurred, Baning and his *bilek*-family were in a position to hold the *gawai*. (This *gawai*, it should be noted, was not the first that this *bilek*-family had performed.) The *timang* was chanted up to *ninjau belayan* (surveying the growing *padi*, part VIII:L325).

The dreams which resulted in the performance of these two rituals provide us with information as to why the *gawai amat* and its *timbang* are still being performed. The spirit of Pemancha Jinggut's hornbill icon was commissioned by the *Lemambang* to seek riches and wealth in far-off lands, not to attack his enemies as it would have been in the past. The performance of Baning's *gawai* was to invoke the powers of Singalang Burong, the high god of war, to assist his *bilek*-family in achieving wealth and prosperity, not to procure trophy heads. The actual rites performed in these feasts have not changed in any radical way, but today these rites have been given different meanings and purposes, in accord with the changing needs and values of the contemporary Iban. When I asked one of my *Lemambang* informants about the relevance of the *gawai amat* in their world today, this was his reply:

Gawai tu jalai Iban meri petara enggau antu makai awak ka sida nulong kitai dalam pengawa. Munya timang amat di kena kitai ngelaban munsoh, tang diatu kena ngulih ka pemansang. Gawai tu meh jalai Iban ngiga pengidup enggau pengeraja.

These rituals are ways in which Iban nourish the gods and spirits so they may assist us in our endeavours. In the past it was true that the *timbang* was directed against our enemies, but today it is used to achieve prosperity. The rituals are indeed the ways to procure livelihood and wealth.

The contemporary Iban believe that the powers of Lang and his sons-in-law are still relevant today, as they were in the past, to assist them in achieving renown. For Iban males such renown may now be achieved through successful participation in a *bejalai* (journey), business, politics, education and other masculine-oriented activities. The traditional sign (*tanda*) of prowess, the trophy head (*antu pala*), is being replaced by material goods, money, academic qualifications, and other signs associated with success and achievement. The ease with which the goal of prowess has changed and been accepted by the Iban suggests, in my view,

that their former predilection for head-hunting was primarily prompted by a desire for renown on the part of individuals.

Despite the new meanings and purposes attached to the *timbang*, the contents are still traditional (i.e. maledictions are still directed against the former enemies of the Iban). When I pointed this out to the *Lemambang*, they replied by saying that it did not matter. The traditional enemies, the Kayan, Ukit, Kajang and others depicted in the *timbang*, they argue, are merely representations of modern day obstacles and challenges. And the rite of splitting (*ngeLampang*) the trophy head, for instance, is an act symbolic of successful participation in today's activities. It appears then that the *timbang gawai amat*, although virtually unchanged in its ancient rites and contents, has been successfully modified in meaning to create in contemporary Iban a confidence in their own powers and abilities to meet modern challenges. Many Iban that I met during my field work attested to the efficacy of the *timbang* and its associated rites in assisting them in improving their position in life.

The Iban *Lemambang* who have always been characterized by their desire to innovate and their skill in composing new *timbang* lines remain content, it seems, to use the traditional *timbang* text and rites to achieve their goals. This apparent contentment of the *Lemambang*, I would suggest, is brought about by their rapidly changing situation. Because of circumstances beyond their control, the Iban suddenly find themselves in a transformed world, facing new challenges and problems which at times are alien and bewildering. Caught in a perplexing and uncertain gap between an old and new world, the Iban sustain their sense of identity by clinging to their *gawai* and *timbang*, which embody their past achievements and glory.

Thus today, the elements of head-hunting and warfare are still strongly evident in their *gawai* and *timbang*.

How much longer the *timbang gawai amat* continues to exist in Iban society will depend, to a large extent, on the progress of education. During my field work, I found that girls and boys who have not been to school, or have only been to school for a few years, and are living in the longhouse are very much aware of their oral traditions. A few of these girls, though still in their teens, possess a large repertoire of poetically structured songs called *pantun*.⁴ I have seen them sing with immense confidence and dignity for 10 minutes or more, before a large crowd, without forgetting their lines. The learning of *timbang* is also, it seems, confined to those youths who have little or no education. Those who are at school do not appear to show much interest in learning the oral traditions. The alienation of these educated youths from their traditions is, in part, facilitated by the belief, learned in school, that to go forward one must discard old ideas, concepts and traditions.

There is, however, a much deeper and more widespread consequence of education on oral traditions in general. Carpenter (1956:3) points out that the spread of literacy tends to undermine the growth and vitality of oral traditions. In many parts of the world he says, where "once it flourished it is all but extinct today." Human memory, Carpenter writes, "which once perforce kept all human records, relinquished its powers to the newcomers and grew proportionately enfeebled with this cession of her strength." The skills of reading and writing have thus, among the Iban, turned attention away from the memorizing of oral traditions.

Consequently, in Iban society today, Iban youth are increasingly unwilling to undertake the task of becoming a *lemambang*. With the decline in the number of fully-fledged *lemambang*, added to by the lack of interest shown by young Iban in learning and maintaining such traditions, the *lemambang* profession and the human skills associated with it will tend to lose their former significance. If this happens, the *gawai*, which has been the hallmark of the Iban's unique and complex culture, will also decline. As Pemancha Jinggut, an Iban leader, said to me: *Enti timang nadai adat gawai Iban punas* (If the *timbang* is gone, Iban *gawai* will disappear.) However, it is quite possible given the ingenuity of their *lemambang*, that the *gawai* and its *timbang* will be so modified as to gain new significance in the radically changed circumstances of the Iban people.

4. Concluding Remarks

The traditional Iban of Sarawak were swidden cultivators, egalitarian and highly religious. The success of their economy, based on hill rice (*padi bukit*), depended upon the availability of the virgin forest. The egalitarian nature of their society allowed individuals (other than slaves) to compete for the same goal and gain social recognition based on their personal merits and achievements. Their religious beliefs pervaded every aspect of their lives, and religion became a principal medium in which social and moral behaviour found expression. These facets of Iban society and culture must be appreciated if a proper understanding of their history is to be attained.

The cultivation of hill rice was the main occupation of the pagan Iban. Other activities were arranged and carried out to fit in with the farming cycle, and not the reverse. To ensure an abundant harvest, the Iban whenever possible felled a section of the virgin forest, and after planting on it for two consecutive years, left the field fallow and cleared another area of forest. When the land within the proximity of their settlement had been cleared, and its produce and game had become less abundant, the settlement would break up and move in one or more groups into a new territory. It was in this manner that the traditional Iban came into conflict with the other tribes of Borneo, such as the Kayan, Kajang, Ukit and other minor groups. Naturally some of these groups who, like the Iban, depended upon the forest for their livelihood, strongly resisted the latter's incursions. Raids and counter-raids were carried out by both groups with devastating consequences.

In this situation, the pagan Iban took to warfare and head-hunting with great enthusiasm. This enthusiasm may be ascribed to two basic causes. First, it was necessitated by the insatiable desire of the Iban to acquire virgin forest for the cultivation of their crops; hence the need to fight. Second, effective warriors and head-hunters were highly esteemed in Iban society. Thus for the pagan Iban, warfare and head-hunting became the means through which they could acquire prestige and renown. The heads they took during a war expedition or raid were regarded as *tanda*, or material signs of the warriors' dominance over their enemies, and as trophies of valour and gallantry. Consequently, the cult of head-hunting flourished in traditional Iban society.

Success, be it in warfare, farming, journey (*bejalai*) or other

activities, is attributed by the Iban to the benign powers of their gods. Any man, in Iban belief, can be the recipient of divine assistance, provided that he has performed the appropriate rites and propitiation. Because the Iban pantheon is segmented, with each god or group of gods having a specific duty to fulfil in the world of man, the Iban have created in their religion a complex ritual system through which the powers of these supernatural beings can be invoked. The existence of various forms of ritual feasts (*gawa* and *gawai*) and invocatory chants (*timbang*) are the main features of this complex system. During the *gawa* and *gawai* the gods, as portrayed in the words of the *timbang*, journey to the world of the Iban and bestow on them their supernatural gifts. The *timbang* chanted in the Iban's most important and prestigious ritual feast, the *gawai amat*, was used to invoke the martial prowess of their most honoured god of war, Singalang Burong, and the importance attached to this ritual feast, as already indicated, was generated by the Iban's need to be effective warriors as they migrated into territories occupied by groups opposed to their advance.

The *timbang gawai amat* is a complex and lengthy text. To learn and memorize it can be a formidable task. Fortunately, however, there are two things which, to a certain extent, lessen the formidability of the task. First, as Milman Parry (1971) discusses in his study of the Homeric verse, oral traditions contain certain formulas in which scenes, sentences and phrases are often repeated. The same is true with the Iban *timbang*, and this makes it much easier for an aspirant to learn the text. Second, Iban *lemambang* have invented a device called *papan turai* (mnemonic board) to assist a beginner in memorizing certain parts of the *timbang*.

Although the learning of the *timbang* and other traditions in Iban society is basically by rote learning, it is important not to over-emphasize the role of memory in mastering them. The mnemonic board, for instance, has its limitations. First, it can be used by a limited few. Second, the engravings on it represent only the images of the gods, spirits and places. The exact words and phrases describing these engravings have to be composed by the *lemambang* themselves. To achieve the poetical style evident in the *timbang* verses, and to develop a complex plot into one coherent epic, more than the mere power of memory is required. A vivid and colourful imagination is needed. For the *lemambang*, it should be borne in mind, is dealing with the supernatural characters, who are unseen, and through his imagination he has to create an epic which to the Iban is real. Moreover, if he is to excel in his profession, he must be able to incorporate into his version popular and important events couched in a style that is both poetically intelligible and interesting. It is, I would suggest, the power of his imagination, not his memory, that a *lemambang*'s reputation rests.

Finally, in any pre-literate society where oral traditions flourish, the mental ability of its members is constantly called upon. For the growth and continuation of oral traditions demand extensive use of memory, imagination and creativity, together with the sensitivity of its people to their environment. A singer, or narrator has to exercise almost all aspects of his sensibility in order to observe and be cognizant of not only the physical things around him, but also the ideas and beliefs, past and present, of his people, and then to incorporate all of these into his art (cf. Bowra, 1962:232-233). In these terms,

the Iban *lemambang* excelled; for, using materials and ideas from their spirit and physical environment, they composed, over the years, a highly elaborate and complex invocatory chant which helped to mould the pagan Iban into a flourishing people, confident in their powers, and those of their ever helpful and invincible gods.

Footnotes

1. There are numerous versions to this myth; nonetheless, all appear to agree on the basic points:

- (i) that the Iban were once living together with supernatural beings;

- (ii) that a dispute over a fruit tree caused the separation.

This myth also explains why the Iban perceived their gods and culture heroes as anthropomorphic.

2. Vansina in Oral Tradition (1965:xi) writes, "the listeners, motionless and intent, follow every word that is spoken, and there can be no doubt that to them these words bring the past to life, for they are venerable words that provide the key to the storehouse of wisdom ..."
3. Pemancha is a government title a step higher than a penghulu. Pemancha Jinggut anak Attan is a great grandson of penghulu Mata Ari. He was among the first Baleh Iban to be converted to Christianity when the Methodist Mission was established soon after World War II. Today Pemancha Jinggut is not only a prominent Iban leader of the Baleh, but also a successful timber merchant.
4. It may be noted that the learning of *pantun* is not confined to the female members of the Iban community. The males may, and do, learn this variant of oral traditions. But in general, more females than males learn the skill of singing the *pantun*.

GLOSSARY

<i>adat</i>	customary law
<i>antu</i>	a spirit, or ghost
<i>antu pala</i>	a trophy head
<i>ayu</i>	a soul-substitute
<i>bedara</i>	a simple ritual ceremony involving the making of an offering
<i>bejalai</i>	to go on a journey, usually with the intention of acquiring wealth and social prestige
<i>bilek</i>	the living room of a family's apartment
<i>beneh</i>	the seed of rice, or any other plant
<i>berenong</i>	a category of chanting involving only the <i>lemambang</i>
<i>daun isang</i>	the young leaves of wild palm used during ritual activities
<i>gawa</i>	to be busy; a category of ritual feast
<i>gawai</i>	an elaborate and prestigious ritual feast
<i>gawai amat</i>	the most elaborate and prestigious of all Baleh Iban <i>gawai</i>
<i>genteran</i>	a stanza
<i>igi ranyai</i>	lit. 'seed of the shrine', a ritual term for a trophy head
<i>kayu burong</i>	an augural stick
<i>lemambang</i>	an Iban bard
<i>manang</i>	a shaman
<i>nanam</i>	to plant
<i>nampok</i>	to go to an isolated place for the purpose of obtaining assistance and charms from the spirits
<i>nempalai</i>	to make a subsidiary farm
<i>orang panggau</i>	Iban culture heroes
<i>padi</i>	unhusked rice; the growing rice plant
<i>pantun</i>	a poetically structured song sung on ritual occasions
<i>papan turai</i>	a mnemonic board
<i>pengaruh</i>	a magical charm

<i>penghulu</i>	a government-appointed district leader
<i>petara</i>	a god
<i>piring</i>	an offering
<i>ruai</i>	the gallery of a longhouse
<i>ranyai</i>	a temporary shrine for the gods while participating in a ritual feast
<i>sungai</i>	a stream, or river
<i>sadau</i>	the loft of a longhouse
<i>samengat</i>	a soul
<i>sandong</i>	a pole on which a hornbill icon is erected on ritual occasions
<i>tajau</i>	a large pottery jar
<i>tangga</i>	a notched-ladder
<i>tanju</i>	the open platform of a longhouse
<i>tawak</i>	a bronze gong
<i>taya</i>	a cotton plant
<i>tibang</i>	a bark-bin in which <i>padi</i> grain is stored
<i>timang</i>	a ritual, or invocatory chant
<i>timang gawai amat</i>	the invocation chanted during the most prestigious ritual feast of the Iban
<i>tresang</i>	a bamboo receptacle on the top of which an offering is placed
<i>tuah</i>	good fortune
<i>tuai rumah</i>	a longhouse headman
<i>tuak</i>	rice wine
<i>tukak</i>	a sharpened bamboo spike
<i>tungkat</i>	the staff used by a <i>lemambang</i>

APPENDIX A

An Alternative Route of Inviting Singalang Burong
to the *Gawai Amat*¹

As one who notches and fells a tree:

"Who then among us will tell the gods of our wish that
they should join us?

What about you Lizard, who guards the palisades

And swiftly darts about the rafters?"

"No, not I. I have no desire at all to fetch Lang, the
god of war.

5

But if you want me to fetch some iron from the far away
coast,

That I will do, for I have long yearned to see the mud-
skippers there that are dressed, they say, like
maidens fair."

"Next we will ask this fellow from Panggau, where palm-
leaf decoration is forever waving,

What about you kinsman Bungai Nuing — the famed champion
of Kling,

Will you go forth to the Ridge of Bright Light to summon
Lang?"

10

¹This part of the *timbang gawai amat* was collected by me during my field work in Sarawak in 1978-1979. This route is commonly being used by the *lemambang* of the Baleh region to invite Lang to the *gawai*.

"No, not I, for I lack the skill to ride breaths of wind
no bigger than the toe nails of a tortoise,
I lack the skill to mount rain drops no larger than
shavings of wood.
But if you want me to brandish my sword,
In the land of the Pongs, that I will gladly do,
And on my return, strut, trophy head in hand, about your
shrine."

15

"What about you kinsman Pungga, will you go forth to the
land of co-mingled rain and sunshine to summon Lang
to our feast?"

"No, not I; for I lack the skill to ride breaths of wind
no bigger than a turtle's toes,
I lack the skill to mount rain drops no larger than filings
of bronze,
But if you want me to flourish my sword,
In the land of Uma Nyipa Kayan that I will readily do,
So that I may return with iron sufficient to forge,
each morning, small-bladed knives."

20

"Alas! Where in Panggau are men with desires as sharp as
a gimlet?
Well, if that is the way things are, we must seek out the
deft and probing fingers
Of some spirited young fellow, who is prepared to brave
even the jaws of a tempest."

As a great tree is bereft of blossoms:

25

While the others search for a suitable messenger,

A newly arrived guest is spied by Lulong and Kumang.

"Why," they ask, "are you breathless?

Why is your coming in such great haste?"

"It is because of the way you were crowding together,

30

Your voices sounding like those of demons in the undergrowth."

"Will you then, there being no other, go forth to summon

Lang?

If you will, then deck yourself out, young man;

For you, strong of limb, and handsome, are the very one

we'd like to send."

"Whatever my feelings, as there is no one else, how can I

refuse?"

35

As the chestnut tree is felled:

Kesulai, who is to summon the gods, now begins to don his

finery.

About his loin is black cloth striped with red,

And long enough to reach the skies in time of drought.

L22 These lines indicate that it was the practice of the Iban to loot iron in the course of raids on Kayan communities. Charles Brooke (1866: 50) remarks: "(Iban) forges and ability to manufacture weapons for warfare, are superior quality; and some tribes in the interior of Rejang are even able to smelt their own iron which is second to none for making arms." (Cf. Hose and McDougall, 1912, vol.I, pp.193-194.)

L37 Kesulai is an Iban name for a species of brown butterfly. This butterfly has especial significance in Iban society in that its presence in a longhouse is believed to foretell the imminent arrival of a stranger or guest.

L39 Cf. part II:L24n.

About the calves of his legs are countless ringlets of
palm-fibre gathered during distant wanderings, 40
About his arms are a myriad of slender bangles made from
the leaves of forest orchids,
From his waist he slings his long, swaying sword
The glittering blade of which can sever bones.
Leaving the longhouse that is like a trailing vine,
Leaving the longhouse that abounds with growing children, 45
Leaving the hearth where trophy heads are smoked,
Leaving the gallery with its bronze cannons, row upon row,
Leaving the carved boards against which warriors lounge,
He issues from beneath the eaves of wooden shingles,
Moves on to the platform where lie the poles to bear
aloft carved effigies of hornbills, 50
Descends the massive entry ladder with its evenly notched
steps,
To the place where guests pause before ascending,
Descends the ladder beside which grows a jack-fruit tree
thick with fruit.
He treads the path as wide as the frond of a fern,
Treads the path where huge millipeds lie crushed and dying, 55
And on to a resting place where the soil is as fine as rice
flour,
At last, the way forward is reached.

L47 In the old days, guns and cannons were prized as weapons as well as items of wealth and symbols of bravery, and were prominently displayed on the gallery of a longhouse. These items were often the spoils of war taken during successful raids into enemy territories.

As he glides over the grass, no disturbance does Kesulai
make, for he knows the ways of snakes.

The surging river rapids he ascends in a single bound,
for he knows the ways of leaping fish.

As he glances up river he spies a huge fish ready for the
taking.

60

Reaching the ridge he sees before him wild pigs slain in
the hunt.

As right foot follows left he steps into an alien land,
To the country of those that dwell amid glinting white rocks.

Quicker than eye can see or lips give voice, he reaches a
limestone ledge that is perched high like a watch-tower
of warriors,

It is the place of Badu Beduro, the Spirit of the Wind,
who ceaselessly blows over the land.

65

As a knife glitters when it cuts off a banana bunch:

Kesulai, on his way to summon the gods, arrives,

Falls to the floor exhausted, and sprawls on the mat.

Fish could frisk in the pool of sweat on his forehead,

And swim in the rivulets that run down his back,

70

While in the sweat on his chest a child might be plunged.

Waving a fighting cock over poor Kesulai's head, the

Spirit of the Wind,

Brandishing a head-dress attempts to revive him.

"Why so breathless, young kinsman?"

What brings you here with such tremendous haste?"

75

"Alas, I'm exhausted, streaming with sweat, and longing
for rest.

I feel like an adze-head that longs to be lashed to its
handle,

I feel like a knife that wants to be mended."

"If the task is beyond you young Kesulai, then, how can
I decline,

For there are no other people at all to be found."

80

Having cut a bunch of bananas, let this shining knife now
slash the undergrowth:

Now that Kesulai is face to face with the Spirit of the Wind

He instructs him in his task.

"Listen, grandfather Spirit of the Wind,

If you pass by valley streams, do not blow them dry.

85

Listen, grandfather Spirit of the Wind,

If you pass by mountain peaks do not kick them level.

If you pass trees in which wild bees have built their hives
do not scatter them far and wide."

Wood is split, and undergrowth slashed down:

When Kesulai had spoken, the Spirit of the Wind made reply.

90

"If you pass the spur of a tree, young Kesulai, do not
for a moment alight,

Lest a sudden gust should blow your frail body to the far-off
ocean.

If you pass a jutting branch, young Kesulai, do not for
a moment rest there,
Lest your tender body be swept into a river directly
through its stony bed."

Wood is split, and saplings felled:

95

With this exchange of well-meaning words

The Spirit of the Wind makes ready to blow.

As he unfurls his strength, the waves grow higher,

Then suddenly unleashing his might, he blows

Over the mountain ranges where crocodiles sleep like

great mounds of reaped *padi*.

100

Then the wind sweeps over a peak, about which is coiled

a dragon coloured like the sky at sunset.

Then the wind slams into a towering bee tree from which

flaming torches fall.

Then the wind sweeps on to the Towering Ridge, the dwelling

place of Lang.

Then the wind, at dusk, shakes the ridge where palm leaf

decorations gaily wave.

L102 Wild bees usually build their hives on *tapang* (koompassia) trees. The Iban, in order to get the honey, climb a *tapang* tree at night when the bees are less active, taking with them containers for honeycomb and smouldering torches to ward off the bees. The phrase 'from which flaming torches fall' refers to the torches that the climbers take with them.

Then the wind at night roars among the great durian
trees of Lang,

105

Which instead of tumbling down become thickly laden with
luscious fruit.

Then the wind blows again, roaring among Lang's other fruit
trees,

Which instead of being stripped bare become clustered with
fruit like huge swarms of flies.

Then the howling wind strikes Lang's tall areca palms,

Which instead of toppling over become hung about with nuts
like flocks of birds.

110

And now, the boisterous winds startle Bujang Pedang who,
while weeding dracaena plants, has fallen asleep.

Then the mighty wind swirls all around him as, at the foot
of the entry ladder, he tends the plants.

"What can this be?" Bujang Pedang exclaims,

"It cannot be wasps, for I see none clinging to the durian
trees.

It cannot be hornets, for I see none hovering as they
build their pendant nests."

115

L105 A durian (*durio zibethinus*) is a large fruit with thorny skin and characterized by a strong smell.

L111 Bujang Pedang is one of Lang's slaves whose principal duties are to guard Lang's house and to tend his dracaena plants. The wood statues (*engkeramba*) placed near the entry ladders of Iban longhouses are representations of Bujang Pedang. The Iban believe him to be guarding the house from evil spirits and other dangers.

The fruit tree is barren:

Bujang Pedang, in great fear, ready to flee,
Scampers not into his own house but into that of Lang,
the fiery god of war.

Then again the mighty wind swirls about him as he tends
the dracaena plants,

Fleeing in haste, he rushes not into his house, but into
that of Lang, the ash-coloured hornbill.

120

"Why do you come in such haste, Bujang Pedang?

Why are you so breathless?"

"O Uncle Lang, there is a strange sound,

Plunging down on me from the skies, beyond the stony
river bed.

O Uncle Lang, there's a sound strange beyond reckoning

125

Welling up from the water, beyond the moon.

Maybe, Uncle Lang, it's an invading horde of Malohs!"

"You flagrantly lie, as did Sumpa, the father of Naja.

You grossly deceive, as did Bitai, the father of Bia.

L124 & 126 Bujang Pedang is in such fright and confusion as to be incoherent in telling what he has just heard. Instead of saying "plunging down on me from the skies, beyond the moon," he says "... beyond the stony river bed," and instead of "welling up from the water, beyond the stony river bed," he says "... beyond the moon." Thus Lang dismisses him as a flagrant liar.

L127 "Maloh or Memaloh is the Iban name of a complex of peoples numbering about 11,000 souls, who have a broadly similar language, culture and social structure, and who inhabit the upper reaches of the Kapuas river," in south-west Kalimantan, Indonesia (King, SMJ, 1974:203).

L129 Sumpa and Bitai were two Iban of former days notorious for their lying.

Where are these invading hordes? With my sword I shall
cut them down.

130

Where are those from far inland who would attack us?
with spears I shall repel them."

"If I join in the fight, Uncle Lang, my spear would not
be thrown aimlessly.

In thrusting, Uncle Lang, my spear does not miss its mark."

Now once again the gale-like wind roars,

Surging into the longhouse of Lang which was decked out
as always for a festival.

135

Now once again the mighty winds,

Whirls into the longhouse of Lang, built high on
the Towering Ridge.

"Why do things keep falling?

Why does the house shiver and shake?"

Now placing a pestle on the open verandah,

140

Lang takes and burns the reddish hair of an orang-utan.

Then Mother Bidok drums away on an earthen pot.

Then the agitated Lang rises

L131 'Those from inland' refers to tribes of the interior Borneo such as Kayans, Punans, Ukits, and others.

L140-142 The placing of a pestle on the open verandah, the burning of orang-utan hair, the drumming of an earthenware pot, are rites that the Iban perform during violent wind and storm. Such actions according to Iban, pacify the gods, who in their anger at humans for dressing animals as humans and then laughing at them have let a violent storm to occur.

And paces, from end to end, the gallery of his longhouse.

"Why does the wind not stop blowing," he asks,

145

Scolding the girls, poking fun at their genitals.

Now Lang springs to his feet,

And paces from end to end of his longhouse.

"Why does this wind refuse to stop," he asks,

Scolding the boys, poking fun at their penes.

150

"Who among us here," he asks, "has committed the sin of
decking out a squirrel with hornbill feathers?

Who has fed tadpoles with the fruit of trees?

Who has attired a lowly snail in red cotton?

If he's a slave we will sacrifice him ritually on a
stone to cleanse the land,

If his intentions be bad, we'll pluck out his eyes."

155

"If you wish to bring us to trial, Uncle Lang, pray
proceed,

For no tadpole have we fed with fruit of trees to cause
this raging tempest."

Yet another tree is ready for felling:

Having stormed along the gallery

L151-153 Cf. notes L140-142.

L154 If the Iban believe that their territory has been defiled by incestuous acts, they perform a rite called *mujā menoa* (the cleansing of the land). There is no documented evidence that Iban used human sacrifices in such rites. Lang is here speaking in extreme anger.

The wind spirit charges into Lang's room; 160

Then the wind smashes into the opening in the roof
shaped like a trap for catching monkeys,
And crashes into the wall of the very room where Jelapi
was initiated as a shaman.

Lang's beloved wife is now alarmed
As during the harvest when flocks of devouring birds
arrive.

"Why has my weaving sword lost its power?" she cries. 165

Then Lang's wife takes out the telescope, made of gold
given to her by Manggau, a spirit of the tree trunk.

Dara Mentaba takes out her telescope of silver,
by which the whole land is brightened.

She takes out her telescope, the darling of her eye,
through which the whole world may be seen.

Pointing it at Singapore she sees chattering Chinese
at worship in their temples.

Pointing it at Kapit she sees men making fast great
rafts of logs. 170

Through her telescope of gold she scans first Panggau
where palm leaf decorations ever wave.

L166 In Sandin's *Gawai Burong* (1977:68) Lang's wife looks into a jar. The using of a telescope, I would suppose, must have crept into Iban *timbang* after European sailors had been seen with such instruments in the 19th century.

L170 Kapit is a town on the Rejang river. The main bulk of its trade is in rubber, timber, and of late, pepper.

Then Dara Mentaba looks through her huge telescope onto
Runjai the solitary land,
But not a soul is in sight, all having gone to some ritual
feast.

Then on to Gelong, but no women can be seen
Busily weaving at their looms.

175

Her gaze then fixes on the Amang river,
Festooned with sticks whittled like heads of swimming
crocodiles;

And there are banners, made by the holders of the rituals,
fluttering in the breeze;

The gurgling of the water gourds as they are filled at
the river's edge is like the warbling cry of the gibbons;

The clattering of lengths of bamboo as they are bundled
together sounds like slashing of undergrowth;

180

The folding of fronds sounds like the swish of the wind
when the weather is hot and dry.

"Come here, my dear husband," calls Lang's wife, "you to
whom I brought brass gongs most precious.

L176 The Amang river is the home of Penghulu Kuleh who, in June, 1949 performed a *gawai amat* ritual.

L182 Iban marriage custom involves the exchange of dowry between the bride's and the bridegroom's parents. The items are exchanged more for their symbolic and social significance than as items of wealth (cf. Sandin, 1976:35).

Come to me my love one, to whom I brought most treasured
jars."

But Lang, still aggrieved, makes no move,
Uttering not one word in reply.

185

"Come, husband, let me groom your flowing locks that hang
like the leaves of wild orchids.

I want to rid your hair of creatures the size of orang-utans,
And of their eggs as big as the nuts of wild trees.

Still ignored by her husband, Lang's wife at once talks
of divorce.

"Let us separate then, as did Yak and his wife;

190

Let us leave one another, my beloved, as a cock leaves his
cage when killed in a fight.

If we share out our slaves

You have the women and I'll have the men.

If we part, Lang, my beloved,

You have this rice bin that is empty, while I'll have the
one that is full."

195

"If I have a dream of divorcing," says Lang,

"The following morning I'll fetch shaman Guyak to brush
it away;

If I dream of our parting by death, my dearest love,

L186-187 The Iban like to groom each other in order to rid their hair of lice and nits. Such action is not considered as improper, nor is the presence of lice and nits in one's hair regarded with abhorrence.

I will summon a shaman to right things with his potent
rituals.

It was not, my beloved, that I was rejecting your call, 200

I was intent on wrapping a mushroom charm that I plucked
from the lightning as at dusk it flickered and flashed.

It was not, my love, that I was neglecting your call,

I was intent on slicing a sago flour charm that I happened
to find in a breadfruit."

At this Lang, the war god, arises,

His head adorned in a reddish turban. 205

With measured steps his feet move forward,

He opens the great wooden door, from which a huge jar is
suspended,

And beholds his dearest beloved

As she reclines against an antique jar.

"You are resplendent still in your beauty, my love, 210

Like a glistening new sword;

You are still young and tender, my love,

Like fruit just ripe on the bough,

L199 *Bepagar api* in Iban text, literally a 'fence of fire', is said to be a bridge that a shaman uses when pursuing the soul of his patient into the After-world (*Sabayan*).

L207 The door is usually kept closed by means of a heavy weight (usually a block of wood) suspended from a length of rattan. The use of a brass gong for Lang's door gives emphasis to his image as a man of immense wealth.

You are so attractive, my love,
That young men find pleasure in exchanging their rings
with yours.

215

If you were to travel inland, my love,
Your beauty would match that of Long Satepong Bulan,
The wife of Kayan Lake Kam, who when collecting wild rubber,
Walks past rapids and by slippery stones,
And along banks beside tumbling waters.

220

Why do you call to me, woman of the rocks?

Why do you call to me, woman of the haunts of the argus
pheasant?

Why do you whistle for me, woman of the spiked bamboo?"

"Don't you remember, dear husband, a copper coated ring,
a symbol of intimate talk?"

Don't you remember your promise to go down to the world
below?"

225

"O indeed, I do!" exclaims Lang.

Quickly fell the chestnut tree:

Lang dons his festive attire.

Wrapping himself in a calico loin cloth,

And hanging from his waist a long sword for severing bones,

230

L217 My informants told me that Long Satepong Bulan was a real Kayan woman of upper Rejang river, who was renowned for her beauty.

L225

The phrase 'the world below' refers to the place where the ritual is held (cf. Appendix A, L176n).

Cold steel to hack down palisades of wood.

His head is bedecked in a turban, red as the reddest
of leaves,

And there are pendants swinging in his ear lobes reaching
down to his shoulders.

On seeing Lang, his wife, Dara Mentaba, exclaims:

"While at the feast, my beloved, will you manage alone
to eat all the rice?"

235

Can you, using poisoned roots, manage alone to fish a
river?

Your son-in-law, Ketupong, is not here
Having gone to the far-off Sadong river,

To get for you a booming gong of brass.

Your son-in-law, Beragai is not here,

240

Having gone to far-off Pulau Pinggai,

To get you a long-sleeved coat to wear when you gaze at
the moon while strolling at night.

Your son-in-law, Bejampong is not here,

Having gone to a bazaar in distant Brunei,

To get a mantlet made from the pelt of a huge tiger."

245

"I want to call them, my love, but they may not hear my
summons;

I want to beat the drum, but they may not recognize its
sound."

L247

The narration continues on to Part II from line 250.

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