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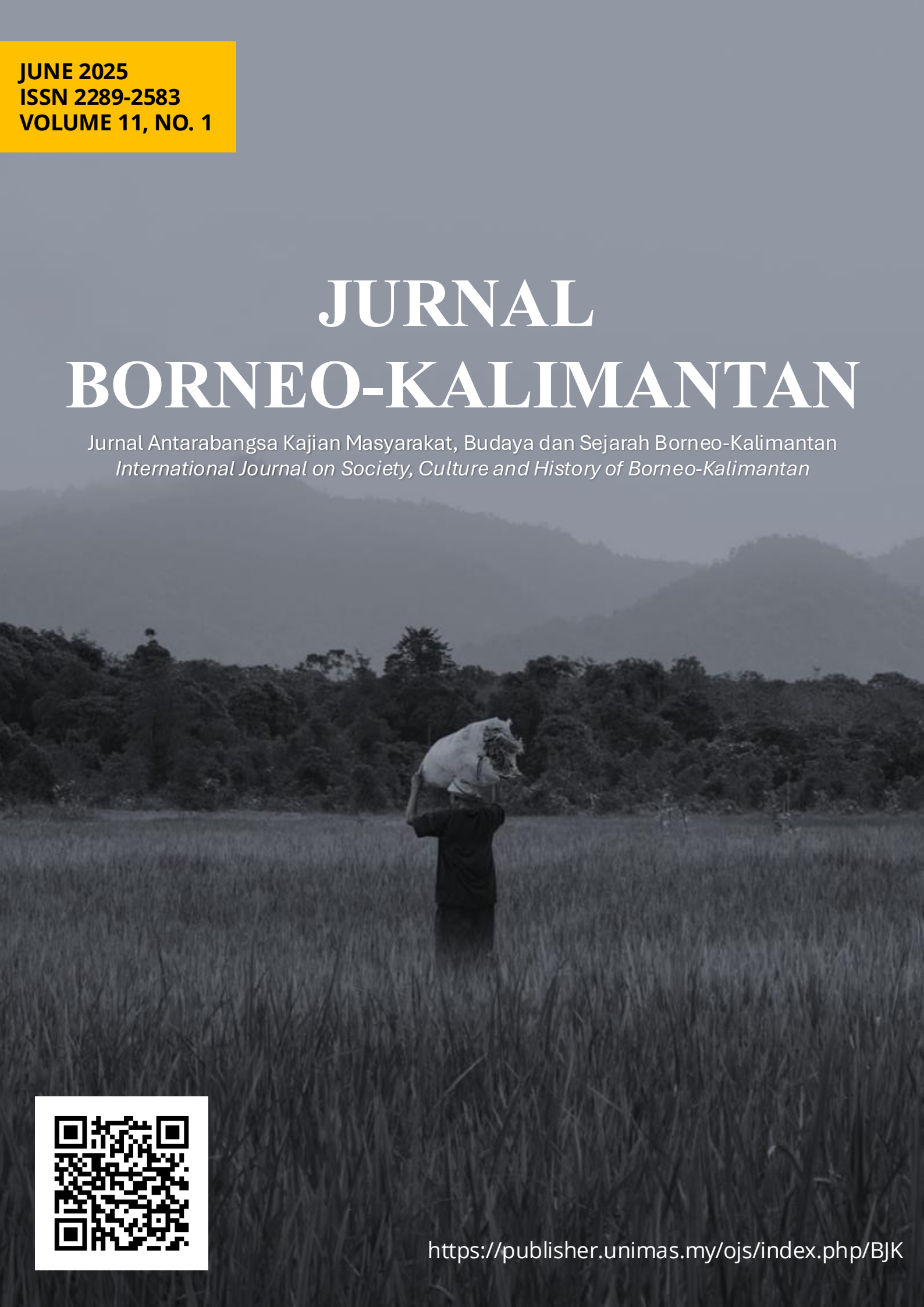

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ERRATUM

The Chief Editor has been notified of a correction for an article published in Volume 9, No. 1, 2023. Professor Bernard Sellato has written the notice as follows:

"Mr. Etienne QUINN is the author of the original English translation of my article in French first published as "Forêts tropicales et sociétés traditionnelles à Bornéo : Vers une histoire régionale 'en continu' de l'environnement et des systèmes de subsistance" in 1994 in the French journal *Ecologie Humaine* 12 (2). This English translation I later revised and updated into an extended version for publication under the title "Tropical Rainforests, Traditional Societies, and Dynamic Continuums. Toward a Regional History of Ethnicity in Borneo" in 2023 in the *Jurnal Borneo-Kalimantan* 9 (1). Bernard Sellato.

Photo credit: Pat Whelen (2020)

Chief Editor
Jurnal Borneo-Kalimantan

Welcome to the latest issue of Jurnal Borneo-Kalimantan!

I am pleased to welcome you to yet another exciting issue of Jurnal Borneo-Kalimantan (JBK). JBK publishes articles represent diverse writing format from research article, thinking piece and reflective practice. Being located in Borneo means that JBK celebrates heterogeneity as a way of life and also in the writings on society, experience and concerns.

There are ten articles in this issue. Dayang Hajyrayati starts off the current issue with a methodological appraisal of anthropology in her research into the statelessness in Sarawak. A paper by Juna Liau describes the context and the use of incantation by the Kenyah communities in Belaga has shed light on the continuing tradition of sacred knowledge amidst the pressure of modernization and rationalization. In a piece by Mohd Shazani the co-existence of sacred tradition in modern life is presented as a forgotten, understated, a residual sentiment not given a proper place as of other forms of material and physical development. Valerie Mashman revisits the Long Jawe' peace-making and drawn from community memory constructs the significance of the process to the cross-border interactions and relationships. Jay Langubdocuments the significance of river to the Penan livelihood and collective existence, a lesson which he persuasively made to communicate the importance of clean, safe and free access to ecology for the community whose life and sustenance depends on it. There are two articles from political science which drive home the value of sustainable thinking in public policy. Hisyam Basabah analyses the role Malaysia, as a chair of ASEAN in 2025, in advancing the global agenda of sustainability at the home-front and regional. Dick Lembang looks at the political thinking permeating at every level of decision-making in the use of public funds for development purpose. A study of the compilation of Berawan language by Jurgen Burkhardt highlights preservation work in the field of linguistic. Aisyah Pratiwi, et al. documents the method of paddy planting by the Kenyah community and the continuing relevance of traditional knowledge. Bernard Sellato's article on the palaces of the sultans in Kalimantan offered an insight into how the symbolic attachment of the sultanates rejuvenated through conservation work in museology and tourism.

I invite you to read the special contribution by Professor Victor King relating to his correspondence with the late Professor Rodney Needham. The letters were introduced, annotated and referenced by Professor King especially for JBK readers who will find the communication a window into the progressive history of Borneo Studies and the prolific contributions that Professor Needham played in nurturing generation of scholars researching and writing for Borneo.

Our JBK team is happy to receive your response. Do write to myself or my colleagues and share us your thought about the articles published.

Professor Dr Poline Bala
Institute of Borneo Studies
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Jurnal Borneo – Kalimantan

Walking the Invisible Lines: Ethnographic Reflections on Statelessness Among Indigenous Communities in Rural Sarawak

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ABSTRACT

This article reflects on the ethnographic journey undertaken to explore the lived realities of statelessness among rural indigenous communities in Sarawak, Malaysia. The objective of the study is to examine how legal invisibility intersects with historical marginalization, administrative barriers, and everyday precarity to shape the experiences of indigenous individuals who remain excluded from formal citizenship. Utilizing a qualitative ethnographic methodology, the research draws upon in-depth interviews, participant observations, and case studies conducted between 2021 and 2023 across selected stateless individuals and stakeholders in Kota Samarahan, Lundu, Sibu, and Kuching. The findings reveal that statelessness is not merely a legal anomaly but a structurally produced and socially lived condition, perpetuated through unrecognized customary marriages, intergenerational documentation gaps, religious conversion complexities, and rigid bureaucratic systems. Everyday life for stateless individuals is characterized by restricted access to education, healthcare, and employment, compounded by emotional distress and societal invisibility. This reflection highlights the methodological challenges and ethical considerations encountered during fieldwork, particularly in negotiating trust and representing vulnerable communities with dignity. The article concludes that addressing statelessness among Sarawak's indigenous peoples demands a critical rethinking of citizenship frameworks, emphasizing historical justice, cultural sensitivity, and the amplification of indigenous voices in policymaking processes.

Keywords*:* statelessness, fieldwork, reflection, Sarawak, Malaysia, indigenous people

INTRODUCTION

Fieldwork is often described as the heart of anthropology, a space where theory meets lived realities. Yet during my study of statelessness among rural indigenous communities in Sarawak, I found that the 'field' was not merely a physical site, but a deeply emotional and political terrain. Statelessness in Sarawak is not a distant or abstract issue; it is a lived crisis rooted in colonial legacies, administrative marginalization, and geographical isolation. Many indigenous individuals particularly from the Iban, Bidayuh, and Orang Ulu communities are born into legal invisibility, often through unregistered births, customary marriages not recognized by the state, or administrative errors compounded by poverty and remoteness (Awang Kassim & Mohd Noor, 2024; Liew, 2019; Berma et.al, 2006; Jayasooria, 2014).

The landscape of Sarawak, with its vast rural interiors and dispersed longhouse settlements, presents both a literal and metaphorical distance from the centres of legal recognition. Fieldwork thus became an encounter with lives suspended between existence and erasure, where citizenship was not an assured right but a fragile, often unattainable aspiration. The consequences of statelessness such as restricted access to education, healthcare, mobility, and employment were not mere statistics; they unfolded vividly through personal narratives of struggle, frustration, and resilience.

Malaysia, as a postcolonial nation-state, officially guarantees citizenship rights under its Federal Constitution (Federal Constitution under Articles 14-22, Part I and II of the Second Schedule). However, the realities on the ground expose significant gaps between legal promises and lived experiences, particularly among indigenous communities in Sarawak. Statelessness among these populations is often invisible within national discourses, overshadowed by urban-centric narratives and assumptions that documentation processes are accessible and neutral. In reality, historical neglect of rural regions, cultural mismatches between adat practices and state legal frameworks, and ongoing administrative rigidities have combined to exclude entire generations from legal recognition.

This article reflects on my ethnographic engagement with stateless individuals, focusing on the emotional, methodological, and ethical challenges encountered during fieldwork. In addition, it incorporates insights from several key stakeholders including non-governmental organization (NGO) founders and activists, government servants, and researchers whose perspectives were crucial for understanding the structural barriers, policy gaps, and institutional practices that shape the everyday realities of statelessness. Through qualitative narratives gathered between 2021 and 2023, it explores how indigenous individuals dealt with the fragile spaces of legal invisibility while constructing alternative forms of belonging and resilience. It also examines how broader structural forces, including colonial histories, bureaucratic discretion, and rural poverty shape the everyday experiences of statelessness.

In sharing these reflections, I argue that fieldwork on statelessness cannot remain a purely academic exercise. Rather, it demands a critical and empathetic engagement that acknowledges the historical injustices underpinning legal exclusion. Anthropology must move beyond documentation toward recognition, recognizing the human cost of state-produced invisibility and amplifying the voices of those whose existence challenges dominant definitions of citizenship and nationhood.

METHOD AND APPROACHES

This study employed a qualitative methodology using a narrative approach to explore the lived experiences of stateless individuals and the perspectives of key stakeholders. Narrative inquiry, as emphasized by Bernard (2011), enables the researcher to understand how individuals make sense of their experiences. It is especially valuable for research involving marginalized communities, such as the stateless, because it captures the complexity, diversity, and subjectivity of their lives

A total of ten informants participated in the study: five were stateless individuals and their families, and the remaining five were stakeholders such as NGO representatives, activists, and local academics. Participants were identified through purposive and snowball sampling, beginning with contacts among local NGOs and activists. This approach was crucial given the sensitivity of the topic and the lack of official data on stateless populations in Sarawak. To protect the anonymity and safety of all participants, pseudonyms are used throughout the article.

From June 2021 to September 2023**,** data were gathered through a mix of online and face-to-face in-depth interviews**,** along with participant observation and document analysis. Early fieldwork was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which restricted travel to rural longhouses in Serian, Tebedu, and Lubok Antu due to Enhanced Movement Control Orders (EMCO). Consequently, field sites were relocated to Kuching, Kota Samarahan, Lundu, and Sibu**.** Online platforms, such as Zoom, became an essential means of interviewing stakeholders when in-person access was impossible.

Entering the Field: Invisible Lives, Visible Barriers

From the outset, accessing communities affected by statelessness was fraught with difficulty. The COVID-19 pandemic layered additional barriers over already remote geographies. Longhouses in Serian, Tebedu, and Lubok Antu were under Enhanced Movement Control Orders, forcing a shift in my field sites to Kuching, Kota Samarahan, Lundu, and Sibu. The pandemic taught me that fieldwork plans are aspirational, not absolute. Travel restrictions, movement control orders, and social stigma against outsiders entering villages meant that I had to constantly rework research strategies. Online interviews became an unexpected bridge, allowing me to hear the voices of NGO workers and activists even when physical borders closed.

As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) emphasize, ethnography is not a rigid blueprint, but an emergent practice shaped by continuously renegotiated relationships and contexts (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This methodological flexibility challenges the assumption that the "field" is a fixed location, instead rendering it a dynamic intersection of physical journeys and virtual encounters. In this respect, Tim Ingold's idea of anthropology as "an act of walking", tracing social lines across landscapes rather than mapping static territories resonates deeply with the adaptive pathways my research followed (Ingold, 2007).

Yet even as restrictions lifted, I had to learn to let go of rigid notions of 'completeness'. Not every village could be reached; not every participant could be found. Fieldwork became an exercise in humility, acceptance, and gratitude for whatever stories were shared with me. Even after physical access became possible, legal invisibility remained the real barrier. Many participants hesitated to speak, mainly not from disinterest, but from fear. Without citizenship

documents, they lived precariously under the shadow of potential legal repercussions. Their hesitations were reminders that I was working not just with vulnerable communities, but with people whose very existence was precariously negotiated every day.

DISCUSSION

Negotiating Trust, Positionality, and Reflexivity in Ethical Fieldwork

Building trust was a slow and delicate process. My positionality as a Sarawakian Malay, fluent in local dialects and familiar with indigenous customs, opened some doors. Yet my identity as a university researcher also carried associations with authority, a reminder of the very systems participants had learned to distrust. As noted by England (1994), positionality is not a static attribute, but a dynamic relationship shaped by power, identity, and context, requiring ongoing self-reflection and sensitivity throughout the research process.

I often found that conversations about daily life surrounding financial hardships, family struggles, and personal crises are needed to precede discussions about citizenship status. Informality, empathy, and patience became essential tools. Participants had to feel seen as full human beings before they could open up about the painful bureaucratic barriers that shaped their lives. Reflexivity, as noted by Pillow (2003), involves not only acknowledging the researcher's influence on the field but also embracing discomfort and uncertainty as integral to ethical ethnographic engagement.

Ethically, I was constantly aware that my research could not and should not offer false hopes of legal assistance. Hence, managing expectations while offering dignity and respect became central to my field practice. Recognizing the uneven power dynamics inherent in ethnographic encounters was crucial for ensuring that the act of documentation did not reproduce the very forms of marginalization that the research sought to expose.

Emotional Landscapes of Statelessness

There were days when interviews would end in heavy emotional silences, a shared weight carried by both the participants and myself. There were moments when informants would pause and say, “I don't know what else to hope for.” Such moments made it clear that statelessness is not merely a legal condition but a psychic wound, a form of slow violence that erodes dreams, aspirations, and a sense of belonging over time.

The consequences of statelessness became strikingly visible in the personal narratives I encountered. Liman, a Bidayuh man in his late thirties from Kota Samarahan, reflected on how his inability to register for formal schooling during his youth had severely limited his opportunities. Although intelligent and hardworking, he remained trapped in precarious, informal labor markets, excluded from formal employment pathways due to his lack of legal documentation. Additionally, Liman often had to hide from authorities, avoiding police checkpoints and concealing his identity when traveling to work, fearing that law enforcement officers would demand identity papers he could not produce. Lia, a 20-year-old Iban teenager living in Pasai Siong, Sibu, affected by intergenerational statelessness within her family, shared her ongoing struggle to pursue higher education. Despite her academic achievements, her undocumented status barred her from entering universities, forcing her to plead for assistance through social media in the hope of securing

opportunities that should have been her right as a Malaysian-born citizen. Meanwhile, Ila, a 17 years old teenager, statelessness was further complicated by her family's unregistered *adat* marriage, which not only affected her own legal status but also that of her two siblings, Denny and Ira that consequently disrupted their education and left them marginalized within the formal educational system.

Similarly for Faiz, a 17-year-old teenager born from an unregistered *adat* marriage, statelessness quietly shaped his social experiences. He described feeling isolated from his peers, unable to participate in school-organized trips that required official identification. His exclusion from such seemingly ordinary experiences fostered a growing sense of difference and inferiority. Moreover, Faiz and his brother, Mark, both suffered the compounded consequences of their parents' religious reconversion, a process poorly regulated under Malaysia's legal framework. The existing laws surrounding religious conversion and reversion remain inadequate in addressing the citizenship status of children born from such religious transitions, often leaving them in legal limbo despite being born within Malaysian territory. This legal gap has deepened the vulnerability of children like Faiz and Mark, effectively disenfranchising them from basic rights to education, healthcare, and formal recognition.

Another case involving Flo, a young woman who was adopted as a child and whose biological parents' identities remain unknown, shared her deep insecurities about her future. Flo spoke about her fear that, without official documentation, she could one day disappear from all formal systems untraceable and unprotected, a fear that shadowed her daily life.

At the end of fieldwork, I came to realize that part of my ethical duty was to bear witness and to honour their stories not merely as data points but as acts of courage. Each testimony was a powerful reminder that statelessness is not an abstract legal issue but a deeply lived reality of exclusion, precarity, and abandonment. Their willingness to share their struggles, despite fear, exhaustion, and societal stigma, revealed not only the depth of their marginalization but also their profound resilience in the face of an indifferent system.

Critical Moments: Seeing Structures Through Everyday Lives

One key realization was that statelessness is not simply the result of individual negligence or ignorance, but it is structurally produced (Van Waas 2008; UNHCR 2014). The lived realities of my informants revealed how geographical isolation, biased legal interpretations of adat marriages, and bureaucratic inertia converged to perpetuate chronic exclusion. As Van Waas (2008) noted, statelessness is not an isolated or incidental outcome, but a systemic failure produced by legal and administrative structures that fail to recognize the lived realities of marginalized groups. Statelessness is a direct result of how state systems selectively ignore, distort, or under-address the needs of certain populations. And in this case, rural indigenous groups in Sarawak were found the be severely affected. Such systems are not neutral but actively contribute to dispossession and disenfranchisement by rendering entire communities invisible.

Insights from stakeholders further highlighted the structural causes of statelessness. NGO worker Angeline emphasized that the high incidence of statelessness among Sarawak's indigenous communities, particularly the Orang Ulu in remote areas like the Ba'Kelalan highlands, is linked to historical neglect and the state's failure to adapt civil registration systems to local needs.

Angeline manages 20 to 30 statelessness cases per month, many involving the Lun Bawang ethnic group, with issues dating back to 1963. She noted that many individuals born between 1960 and 1969, during the Konfrontasi era are still unable to obtain documentation, particularly in Lawas. This, she suggests, is a consequence of historical events.

As activists and government officers, such as Andrew, noted, the discretionary application of Article 15A of the Federal Constitution allows bureaucratic actors to decide citizenship status on an ad hoc basis, reinforcing inconsistent and biased decisions. This leads to the perpetuation of systemic inequality, where indigenous people are routinely excluded from accessing basic rights, simply because their documentation is treated as secondary or irrelevant to the state's narrow, formalistic approach to citizenship.

Furthermore, activists such as Eli emphasized the entrenched nature of these administrative practices that have evolved over decades, with little to no reform, and without political will to address the underlying causes of statelessness. This failure to act leaves communities such as the Penan community vulnerable to compounded marginalization, not just due to their geographical isolation, but also because of their position within the socio-economic hierarchy. The double marginalization faced by the Penan, socially and economically invisible to the state has reinforced a system of intergenerational exclusion that blocks access to education, healthcare, and formal employment. This political inaction ensures that statelessness persists as a structural condition, perpetuating cycles of poverty and exclusion across generations.

In their everyday lives, stateless individuals demonstrate forms of resistance and resilience in navigating this oppressive system. Whether taking illegal "shortcuts" to access education, relying on informal networks to secure basic services, or using familial ties to circumvent bureaucratic barriers, stateless individuals actively contest the state's boundaries. They do not passively accept their exclusion; instead, they carve out survival strategies within a system designed to erase them. These practices reveal a remarkable agency and an acute awareness of their precarious legal and social status, suggesting that the state's exclusionary structures are contested daily, not just by legal or policy reform, but through these acts of defiance and adaptation.

CONCLUSION

This fieldwork taught me that anthropology must move beyond documenting suffering to actively amplify silenced voices, interrogate entrenched structures, and advocate for more humane frameworks of belonging. Statelessness among Sarawak's indigenous peoples is not an outlier but a stark reflection of Malaysia's unfinished nation-building—a moral and political failure that demands our urgent attention (Van Waas 2008; Malkki 1995). In the quiet persistence of Liman's evasion of police checkpoints, Lia's thwarted university ambitions, Faiz's exclusion from school activities, and Flo's daily fear of "disappearing," I witnessed a profound resilience born of material deprivation and psychic injury. This resilience underscores that citizenship is far more than a legal status: it is a deeply subjective claim to identity and a vital psychological safeguard against the slow violence of exclusion (Rosaldo 1994; Vlieks 2017).

The research findings reveal statelessness as structural violence rooted in a legal system misaligned with local customs. Direct causes such as rigid bureaucratic procedures, unrecognized

adat marriages, and discretionary application of Article 15A intersect with indirect barriers of remoteness, poverty, and low civic awareness to perpetuate intergenerational marginalization. Stakeholders such as Angeline attribute high caseloads among Orang Ulu communities to historical neglect and the state's failure to adapt civil registration to indigenous realities, while activist such as Andrew acknowledge how administrative discretion entrenches inequality. At the same time, these communities enact alternative forms of agency by reconfiguring kinship networks and cultural practices to contest their erasure.

This study has humanized statelessness in Sarawak by centering on the personal narratives of affected individuals and revealing the concrete ways in which lack of legal identity undermines fundamental rights to healthcare, education, and social participation. By engaging directly with stateless Bidayuh, Iban, Penan, and adopted communities, hence this study dismantles stereotypes of passivity and highlight the agency and resilience these individuals deploy as they navigate and contest the legal and bureaucratic boundaries that exclude them.

Ultimately, reconciling Malaysia's legal frameworks with the cultural realities and lived experiences of its indigenous peoples is not only a matter of policy efficacy but a moral and political imperative on the path toward genuinely inclusive citizenship.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author extends gratitude to the families and stateless individuals who shared their stories, as well as to government officials, civil society advocates, and researchers who contributed their time and expertise to this study.

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Jurnal Borneo – Kalimantan

Tradisi dan Penggunaan Mantera dalam Etnik Kenyah
(Tradition and the Usage of Mantra among the Kenyah ethnic)

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ABSTRAK

Mantera merupakan elemen sosio-budaya masyarakat. Dalam konteks masyarakat Kenyah tradisional, mantera dipelajari dan dipindahkan kepada ahli-ahli masyarakat melalui penggunaan bahasa lisan dan ritual berkenaan mantera diamalkan dalam kehidupan harian seperti budaya bertanam padi dan budaya penyembuhan. Melalui mantera, corak pemikiran dan budaya masyarakat Kenyah diteliti sebagai usaha merungkai tradisi mantera tradisional dan perubahan yang berlaku akibat agen transformasi sosial seperti pengenalan agama Kristian, pendidikan formal dan perkhidmatan bioperubatan, budaya berasaskan wang dan penggunaan teknologi. Kajian menunjukkan amalan budaya mantera didapati dalam pelbagai aspek sosio-budaya seperti adat resam dan pantang larang, perubatan, pertanian, dan kepahlawanan. Walau bagaimanapun budaya mantera hampir pupus kerana budaya berkenaan hanya diamalkan oleh golongan tua.

Kata kunci*:* Mantera, tradisi lisan, Kenyah, budaya perubatan, transformasi sosial

ABSTRACT

Mantra is socio-cultural elements of societies. In the context of traditional Kenyah communities, mantra is learned and transmitted to the communities' members via oral communication and involvement in socio-economics activities such as during rice planting and healing activities. Through mantra, the patterns of thought and the culture of the Kenyah examined as an attempt to describe the tradition related to mantra and the impact of the agents of social transformation such as the conversion to Christianity, formal education, biomedical services, cash-based transactions and the use of technology. The findings show that mantra is practiced in a range of socio-cultural aspects including customs, taboos, medicine, agriculture and fighting activities. However, mantra in contemporary Kenyah is in the midst of disappearing because the culture practiced only by the older generation.

Keywords*:* Mantra, oral tradition, Kenyah, ethnomedicine, social transformation

PENGENALAN

Antara aspek yang dimasukkan dalam penulisan ini adalah pengenalan kepada mantera, penjelasan tentang adat resam dan pantang larang berkaitan dengan bayi dan kanak-kanak, perubatan tradisi, pertanian, kepahlawanan dan perubahan yang dialami oleh mantera tradisi.

Mantera merupakan amalan berirama dan penghasilan bunyi yang berulang dalam pelbagai budaya dan masyarakat (Perry, Polito dan Thompson, 2021). Masyarakat Kenyah di Borneo (khususnya di Kalimantan Timur dan Sarawak) berjumlah kira-kira 40,000 orang (Whittier, 1978) dan mereka terdiri daripada penganut agama Kristian, Bungan Malan dan segelintir berpegang kepada kepercayaan animisme. Sebelum kedatangan mubaligh-mubaligh Kristian, semua masyarakat Kenyah percaya kepada kepercayaan animisme dan petanda (*amen* [bahasa Kenyah]) dan kepercayaan ini mempengaruhi kehidupan seharian mereka. Binatang-binatang petanda seperti burung helang dan burung *esit* menentukan sama ada mereka boleh keluar dari rumah untuk mencari rezeki. Dalam konteks masyarakat Kenyah kontemporari, agama Kristian telah merombak dengan signifikan sistem sosiobudaya masyarakat ini termasuklah sistem kepercayaan dan penggunaan mantera tradisional (Sagan, 1989). Misalnya, saya dapati dalam konteks masyarakat Kenyah yang beragama Kristian di daerah Belaga, generasi yang lebih muda, khasnya yang berumur kurang daripada 50 tahun tidak arif tentang mantera tradisional.

Dari segi sejarah, mantera telah diamalkan sejak turun temurun oleh kumpulan etnik di Sarawak seperti Iban, Melayu, Bidayuh, Melanau, Kayan dan Kenyah. Hal ini dibuktikan oleh McDougall, Hose, and Haddon (1912) pada zaman pemerintahan Rajah Brooke. Penulisan pengkaji tempatan seperti Benedict Sandin (1980) juga membuktikan tradisi ini masih lagi diamalkan oleh segelintir masyarakat di Sarawak. Menurut pendapat Harun Daud (2001), tradisi lisan mempunyai hubungan yang rapat dengan corak kehidupan, pemikiran dan kepercayaan masyarakat yang melahirkannya. Dalam konteks perbincangan ini, akan ditumpukan perbincangan tentang penggunaan mantera dalam masyarakat Kenyah yang merupakan salah satu etnik Orang Ulu di Sarawak. Menurut Perlembagaan Persatuan Kebangsaan Orang Ulu, Peraturan 3 (11) konsep Orang Ulu merujuk kepada Bukitan, Bisaya, Kayan, Kajang (termasuk Sekapan, Kejaman, Lahanan, Punan, Tanjong dan Kanowit), Kelabit, Kenyah (termasuk Seping, Sebop, Lakiput, Badang dan Berawan), Lugat, Lisum, Murut (Lun Bawang), Penan, Sian, Tabun, Ukit dan Saban.

Latar Belakang Komuniti

Data kajian ini diperolehi melalui kaedah etnografi dan etnologi. Melalui kaedah etnografi penulis telah menjalankan kerja lapangan di kampung-kampung Kenyah di daerah Belaga termasuk Uma Baha (Bakah), Uma Kulit (Lebu' Kulit), Uma Badeng, Uma Bakong and Uma Kelap. Semasa menjalankan kerja lapangan pengkaji menggunakan kaedah temubual dan pemerhatian untuk mendapatkan data. Sementara kaedah etnologi yang melibatkan perbandingan silang budaya dilakukan terhadap data etnografi, masyarakat dan budaya yang telah ditulis atau dikaji oleh pengkaji lepas. Penggunaan mantera dalam kalangan etnik Kenyah akan dikupaskan dengan lebih terperinci berdasarkan tajuk-tajuk seperti adat resam dan pantang larang, perubatan, pertanian, dan kepahlawanan. Adat *(adet)* dalam konteks masyarakat Kayan-Kenyah merujuk kepada cara hidup, nilai-nilai asas, budaya, kod perlakuan yang diterima, adab, konvensi dan undang-udang adat (Majlis Adat Istiadat Sarawak, 1994).

DAPATAN KAJIAN

Adat Resam dan Pantang Larang

Aspek-aspek adat dalam konteks asal usul, definisi, fungsi, dan aplikasinya wajar dijelaskan satu persatu untuk merungkai pelbagai persoalan termasuklah yang berkaitan dengan perubahan sosio-budaya dan pembentukan ilmu pengetahuan dalam masyarakat Kenyah.

Dari segi etimologi, perkataan adat dalam bahasa Kenyah disebut atau dieja sebagai *adet*. Istilah *adet* telah digunapakai oleh masyarakat Kenyah sejak turun temurun lagi dan dikenali sebagai adat lama *(adet pu'un)*. Pengetahuan tentang adat ini telah diperturunkan dari generasi ke generasi melalui tradisi lisan (contohnya melalui mitos, lagenda, mantera, cerita, puisi, dan nyanyian) dan melalui tradisi bukan lisan (misalnya penggunaan tumbuhan ubatan dan penghasilan kraftangan). Masyarakat Kenyah di Sarawak dan Kalimantan Timur tinggal berasingan dari segi geografi namun begitu terdapat banyak persamaan dari segi budaya seperti sistem kepercayaan berteraskan kepada Bali Penyalong dan Bungan Malan pada masa lampau, penggunaan musik *sape* dan kegiatan berhuma padi. Pengamalan agama Bungan Malan menyebabkan masyarakat Kenyah tradisional mengikuti Adat *(Adet)* Bungan yang merangkumi pelbagai aspek seperti pemujaan kepada Tuhan Bungan Malan sebelum menjalankan pelbagai aktiviti, misalnya menanam padi.

Dalam konteks masyarakat Kenyah tradisional, adat difahami mempunyai persamaan yang sangat rapat dengan pengertian kosmologi atau ilmu tentang alam (Whittier, 1978). Memandangkan kosmologi merupakan salah satu cabang falsafah, ini bermakna kosmologi (adat dalam masyarakat Kenyah), menjadi alat untuk merungkai persoalan-persoalan yang kompleks tentang alam, contohnya persoalan-persoalan yang berbentuk keagamaan (teologikal) dan falsafah (metafizikal). Pendek kata, adat dalam masyarakat Kenyah mengandungi falsafah tentang keseluruhan cara hidup mereka, termasuk aspek sosial, agama, ekonomi, dan politik (Sagan, 1989).

Memandangkan adat merupakan satu konsep yang kompleks, Whittier (1978), berhujah bahawa adat sering didefinisikan oleh kebanyakan orang sebagai kebiasaan, atau sebagai hukum adat. Adalah menjadi kebiasaan bagi anggota masyarakat Kenyah menghormati golongan yang lebih tua dan memastikan binatang-binatang tidak diperolokkan. Jika berlaku kejadian-kejadian sebaliknya, ini telah menyalahi adat kebiasaan dan dipercayai bersifat luarbiasa, misalnya kejadian *selit* atau peristiwa yang boleh menyebabkan individu atau sebuah komuniti disumpah menjadi batu. Berdasarkan cerita lisan masyarakat Kenyah, pada masa lampau, seorang ayah dan anak lelakinya telah disumpah menjadi batu oleh kuasa ghaib akibat perbuatan mereka mentertawakan seekor binatang *(kitan)* yang ditangkap di hutan. Menurut seorang informan dari daerah Belaga, kampung halamannya dipercayai nyaris-nyaris ditimpa malapetaka *selit* dan peristiwa berkenaan diceritakan berikut:

> Pada suatu petang [tahun 1982], cuaca tiba-tiba bertukar gelap *(metem)*, ribut *(bayu kasa)* bertiup dengan kuat sekali dan rumah panjang kami dipenuhi oleh daun-daun berwarna hijau. Selepas itu terdapat banyak katak hijau *(saai bileng)* masuk ke dalam verandah rumah. Penduduk kampung membaling *kavong* dan *lu* ke luar rumah dan berkata "jika *selit*, alatan ini akan hidup semula." Kami berdoa kepada Tuhan dan memohon hujan batu tidak turun. Jika turun

> [hujan batu] kami boleh bertukar menjadi batu. Suami saya melihat kaki satu lembaga yang sangat besar melangkah ke arah bukit berhampiran dan kayu-kayu yang dipijaknya ranap. Selepas disiasat didapati kejadian berkenaan berpunca daripada perbuatan sekumpulan anak-anak muda yang mempermain-mainkan katak semasa mereka pergi berkelah. (Komunikasi personal: Wanita Uma Baha, Disember 2014)

Masyarakat Kenyah tradisional memahami bahawa makhluk-makhluk di bumi ini telah dicipta oleh tuhan bernama Bali Penyalong dan tingkah laku seseorang Kenyah akan dipengaruhi oleh pemahaman mereka tentang alam ciptaanNya. Contohnya, Tuhan Burung Helang, bernama Bali Flaki (Pelahi) merupakan pengantara di antara Bali Penyalong dan manusia pada masa silam dan ini menyebabkan manusia harus memahami dan mematuhi mereka. Dalam situasi ini setiap individu wajib memerhati petanda-petanda yang ditunjukkan oleh binatang-binatang penyampai mesej sebelum seseorang itu keluar dari rumah seperti untuk menjalankan aktiviti-aktiviti harian. Untuk memastikan mereka tidak melanggar adat, maka mereka harus mematuhi peraturan dan pantang larang yang menjadi norma dan nilai dalam kalangan masyarakat berkenaan.

Dalam konteks masyarakat Kayan dan Kenyah kontemporari dengan kerjasama Majlis Adat Istiadat Sarawak dan ketua-ketua masyarakat Kayan dan Kenyah, adat mereka telah didokumentasi dengan terbitnya buku Adet Kayan-Kenyah pada tahun 1994. Adat dalam konteks dokumen ini ditakrifkan sebagai "...cara hidup, norma dan nilai asas, budaya, tingkah laku yang diterima pakai secara umum, budi pekerti, adat resam, dan pantang larang" (Adet Kayan-Kenyah, 1994: 127). Pada pendapat saya, definisi berkenaan menggambarkan kesedaran golongan yang terbabit dalam penghasilan Adet Kayan-Kenyah bahawa adat merupakan satu konsep yang kompleks dan pendokumentasian adat berkenaan memerlukan pemahaman yang mendalam tentang adat Kayan-Kenyah.

Fungsi utama adat adalah untuk mengekalkan keharmonian dalam konteks jasmani, emosi, rohani, dan sosial. Contohnya keharmonian hubungan dalam kalangan ahli-ahli masyarakat, dan keharmonian hubungan di antara ahli-ahli masyarakat dengan persekitaran fizikal mereka. Setiap individu dijangka bertingkah laku menurut adat, dan ini menyebabkan perbuatan yang melanggar adat adalah harus dielakkan kerana pelanggaran terhadap adat dipercayai boleh mengancam kesejahteraan individu, keluarga, dan keseluruhan ahli komuniti Kenyah. Seandainya seseorang individu dan sesebuah isi rumah telah melanggar adat, maka langkah-langkah pembetulan perlu diambil untuk mengembalikan keadaan kacau bilau atau tidak tenteram kepada keadaan harmoni dan seimbang.

Dalam konteks kitaran hidup (dari bayi, kanak-kanak, remaja, dewasa, and usia tua) seseorang individu dalam masyarakat Kenyah dijangka menghormati dan mematuhi adat resam dan pantang larang masyarakatnya. Setiap anggota masyarakat belajar mematuhi adat resam dan pantang larang yang terdapat dalam masyarakatnya melalui proses sosialisasi dan internalisasi.

Bayi dan Kanak-kanak

Peranan ahli-ahli keluarga dan masyarakat Kenyah adalah sangat penting dalam konteks penjagaan bayi dan kanak-kanak kecil. Oleh yang demikian, ibu bapa memainkan peranan dalam

menghasilkan anak-anak yang sihat dari aspek jasmani, emosi, rohani dan moral. Sejak kecil lagi anak-anak diajar dengan norma-norma yang menjadi panduan hidup masyarakat Kenyah. Masyarakat Kenyah tradisional mempunyai strafikasi sosial yang ketat: golongan aristokrat *(paren),* golongan biasa *(panyen)* dan hamba *(ule')*. Oleh yang demikian bayi yang kecil akan dibesarkan mengikut status sosial mereka. Misalnya anak-anak orang biasa tidak boleh digendong dengan alat pembawa bayi yang melambangkan unsur ghaib seperti penggunaan simbol manusia *(kalong kelunan)* dan harimau *(lecau)*. Jika si ibu tidak akur kepada adat dan pantang larang berkenaan, anak-anaknya boleh mendapat bala seperti sakit teruk. Alat pembawa bayi akan digantung dengan bahan-bahan berunsur perlindungan seperti loceng kecil, gigi binatang dan ubat *long* untuk memberi perlindungan kepada si bayi. Begitu juga, mana-mana anak kecil dalam masyarakat Kenyah tradisional tidak boleh dipuji secara terang-terangan atau melalui ungkapan seperti cantik, berbau harum dan comel. Sebaliknya orang-orang yang rasional dijangka menggunakan kata-kata yang mempunyai maksud yang bertentangan seperti buruk *(afe),* busuk *(bao)* dan hodoh *(jefuro)* untuk mengelakkan makhluk-makhluk bukan manusia merasa cemburu kerana anak-anak hantu-hantu sangat hodoh dan menjijikkan (Liau, 1997). Contoh doa yang dibaca oleh si ibu kepada Bungan Malan Peselong Luan ialah *"petubo ngan jage anakke Bungan Malan."*

Selain itu, si ibu yang mempunyai bayi tidak dibenarkan keluar pada masa-masa tertentu seperti selepas senja berlabuh dan selepas hujan panas. Ibu yang mempunyai anak-anak kecil juga tidak dibenarkan menghadiri upacara kematian orang yang tinggal sekampung kerana semangat anak-anak kecil mudah diganggu gugat oleh makhluk-makhluk jahat. Muka atau kening anak-anak kecil akan dicalit dengan warna hitam dari periuk belanga untuk mengelirukan roh-roh jahat yang berkeliaran di kawasan kampung. Bayi-bayi juga dipakaikan dengan gelang tangan manik berwarna hitam sebagai langkah untuk mengelakkan mereka diganggu oleh makhluk jahat. Rumah-rumah orang yang mempunyai anak-anak kecil akan digantungkan dengan tumbuh-tumbuhan yang berunsur perubatan seperti daun *pong*, batang *long*, siput *belale*, sarang lebah *awa* dan duri-duri tumbuhan hutan. Semasa si ibu atau bapa mengggantung bahan-bahan ini mantera dilafaz seperti berikut:

> *Oh… Bungan Malan*
> *nyafau ngelingau nyekang melivang,*
> *nyekang ngerada ame,*
> *ngeco inu de ube nai piat peluvat ame.*
> (Komunikasi personal: Wanita Uma Baha, Disember 2014)

Makanan yang diberikan kepada bayi dan anak-anak kecil juga perlu dijaga, contohnya jika bayi lapar mereka perlu disusukan oleh ibunya dengan kadar segera kerana dipercayai ada hantu-hantu, contohnya *bali erit* yang akan mengambil kesempatan menyusu bayi-bayi yang tidak diendahkan. Bayi-bayi yang kecil juga tidak boleh dibiarkan tidur bersendirian di dalam rumah atau di ladang tanpa ditemani oleh orang yang lebih dewasa.

Ibu-bapa akan membaca jampi serapah untuk anak-anak mereka seperti meminta pertolongan daripada tuhan bernama Laki Penyalong bagi yang mengamalkan adat lama *(Adet Pu'un)* dan bagi yang mengamalkan Adat Bungan akan memanjatkan doa kepada Bungan Malan. Contoh jampi serapah yang dipanjatkan ialah "jauhkan semua benda yang datang mengancam mencederakan kami" *(ngeco inu de kenai nyale nai mice ame).* Akibat pemelukan agama Kristian

dalam kalangan masyarakat Kenyah, kepercayaan kepada Laki Penyalong dan Bungan Malan telah bertukar kepada kepercayaan kepada Nabi Isa. Di daerah Baram, mantera tradisional Kenyah seperti *nabadah* dan *gaiing* telah disesuaikan dengan doktrin agama Kristian (Galvin, 1968). Bagaimanapun, menurut pemerhatian saya didapati kepercayaan kepada Laki Penyalong dan Bungan Malan tidak lenyap sepenuhnya dalam kalangan segelintir generasi yang lebih tua, khasnya yang berumur lebih daripada 60 tahun walaupun mereka telah beragama Kristian. Ini menunjukkan tradisi lama dalam konteks generasi tua berkait rapat dengan identiti, warisan dan sejarah keluarga mereka. Menurut Kottak (2006), sebagai satu komponen budaya, sistem kepercayaan dalam mana-mana masyarakat perlu bersifat dinamik supaya perubahan yang berlaku dapat dihadapi dengan baik.

Semasa zaman remaja, awal dewasa, dewasa dan berusia, semua individu harus menjalani hidup berdasarkan adat resam dan pantang larang masyarakat Kenyah. Adat Kayan-Kenyah (1994) menggariskan panduan tentang banyak aspek dalam kehidupan Kayan-Kenyah seperti adat perkahwinan, adat mendirikan rumah panjang dan adat berhuma. Golongan kanak-kanak dan remaja diajar bahawa bangun lewat pada waktu pagi adalah bertentangan dengan norma masyarakat. Pembaziran makanan terutamanya nasi tidak dibenarkan kerana beras atau nasi mempunyai semangat *(berua)* dan semangat ini perlu dijaga (perkara ini dibincangkan dengan terperinci dalam bahagian pertanian). Apabila kaum lelaki pergi berburu di dalam hutan atau menangkap ikan di sungai, adat dan pantang larang juga perlu diikuti. Mantera yang lebih berbentuk doa dibaca seperti berikut:

> *Dise kenai ke meta cen meta pengumen*
> *Baen iho petubo asat ke*
> *Kenai ke meta pengumen ce*
> *dalem ke mudip*
> *pepau ngadan ko tuhan.*
> (Komunikasi personal: Lelaki Uma Baha, Disember 2014)

Menurut responden tersebut, jika anjing buruan mereka didapati tidak dapat berburu dengan baik, nampak ketakutan dan keletihan, anjing-anjing berkenaan akan dijampi dengan cara mengambil sebatang buluh, memasukkan air ke dalam buluh berkenaan, dan memasukkan umbut *nyateng* ke dalamnya dan doa dipanjatkan kepada Bungan Malan. Selepas itu, air yang telah dijampi dipercikkan kepada anjing-anjing buruan mereka. Bagaimanapun informan tidak dapat mengingati doa yang dibaca kerana beliau masih muda ketika menyaksikan peristiwa berkenaan.

Semua aspek kehidupan masyarakat Kenyah seperti dalam bidang sosial, ekonomi, politik dan keagamaan juga berpanji kepada adat resam dan pantang larang. Menghormati ibu bapa dan golongan yang lebih tua merupakan satu adat yang diutamakan. Si anak yang tidak memainkan peranan menghormati dan menjaga orang tua mereka akan mengalami tulah *(parib* atau *parit*). Oleh itu, dalam kalangan masyarakat Kenyah tradisional, keluarga yang berbentuk 'luas', yakni yang terdiri daripada sekurang-kurangnya tiga generasi adalah suatu kebiasaan. Tinggal bersama dalam satu bumbung membantu ahli-ahli sesebuah isi rumah *(pengelamin)* memahami kedudukan sosial dan peranan masing-masing.

Dalam bidang ekonomi, semua ahli-ahli masyarakat mementingkan penanaman padi kerana nasi merupakan makanan ruji mereka, berkait rapat dengan kepercayaan dan pemilikan

harta benda. Dalam bidang sosio-politik dan keagamaan tradisional, hanya golongan aristokrat *(paren)* dan *deta'u* yang dikatakan boleh memegang pucuk kepimpinan kampung seperti menjadi ketua kampung, mengetuai upacara-upacara tertentu seperti penanaman padi dan penyembahan Bulan Malan. Individu yang menjadi pengamal perubatan tradisional juga kebiasaannya datang dari golongan yang menduduki stratifikasi sosial yang tinggi dalam masyarakat.

Perubatan

Mantera merupakan amalan berirama dan penghasilan bunyi yang berulang dalam pelbagai budaya untuk menyembuh penyakit dan mengatasi kesukaran psikologi dan emosi (Perry, Polito dan Thompson, 2021). Penggunaan jampi serapah dalam masyarakat Kenyah merupakan salah satu daripada teknik penyembuhan sakit-demam. Jampi serapah yang digunakan dalam kalangan masyarakat Kenyah mempunyai dua konteks: pertama, dibaca di dalam hati atau secara senyap-senyap dan kedua, dibaca secara lisan atau boleh didengar oleh orang lain. Sebelum diterangkan penggunaan mantera dengan lebih lanjut, terdapat beberapa perkara perlu difahami terlebih dahulu seperti etiologi dan penjenisan sakit-demam, kegiatan dan kaedah penyembuhan, dan teknik pencegahan dalam masyarakat Kenyah.

Etiologi sakit demam dalam masyarakat Kenyah, boleh dibahagikan kepada dua, yakni pertama, semulajadi (naturalistik) dan kedua, personalistik. Elemen-elemen sejuk, panas dan angin adalah faktor alam semulajadi yang boleh menyebabkan sakit-demam; manakala gangguan manusia, ahli sihir, hantu-hantu dan kuasa-kuasa luar biasa adalah contoh sakit-demam yang bersifat personalistik. Etiologi sakit-demam dalam masyarakat Kenyah mempunyai persamaan dengan masyarakat bumiputera lain di Malaysia seperti dalam kalangan masyarakat Melayu (Hashim Awang, 1990) dan masyarakat Iban (Chen, 1975; 1981).

Oleh kerana masyarakat Kenyah percaya etiologi sakit-demam adalah berpunca daripada faktor-faktor semulajadi dan ghaib, maka cara mereka menangani isu kesihatan adalah bersesuaian dengan punca-punca sakit-demam tersebut. Misalnya jika seseorang itu merasa sangat sejuk dan kurang sihat, maka makanan yang bersifat panas seperti bubur nasi yang panas boleh dimakan dan air halia boleh diminum untuk memanaskan badan. Sebaliknya jika sesorang itu merasa sangat panas dan tidak sihat, maka makanan atau minuman yang berunsurkan sejuk perlu diminum atau dimakan seperti air tumbuhan herba seperti *long* dan *pong*. Contoh jampi yang dibaca ialah:

> *Ngeco inu de kenai nyale nai mice ahe*
> *Nuo ube inu-inu tai nuyan kun baen ca taban*
> *ngan penisen du*
> *Ahe muat ahe magat umen taban ji*
> (Komunikasi personal: Wanita Uma Baha, 2014)

Satu lagi contoh jampi yang dibaca oleh pengguna mantera untuk mengubati penyakit *peliyai* dalam kalangan masyarakat Kenyah di Kalimantan Timur telah direkodkan oleh Gollin (2001: 169) seperti berikut:

> *Ca, dua, telu, pat…*
> *Sapat pesau pa'dau na sakit peliyai ini.*
> *Ketai linguk,*

Ketai ndem,
Ketai alem,
Ketai pesau'
Ketai pa'dau apan na tai malit.
Tai kupit na!

Teknik penyembuhan dan pencegahan sakit-demam yang berpunca secara semulajadi boleh diusahakan pada tahap individu atau sesebuah isi rumah. Misalnya, anak-anak kecil tidak dibenarkan bermain-main di luar rumah semasa hujan lebat atau semasa panas terik kerana unsur sejuk atau panas yang keterlaluan boleh menyebabkan anak-anak berkenaan mengalami demam sejuk atau demam panas. Anak-anak kecil tidak dibenarkan bermain-main di luar rumah (contohnya bermain sorok-sorok) ketika remang senja dan ketika hujan panas kerana dikhuatiri hantu-hantu jahat berkeliaran pada masa itu. Teknik penyembuhan sakit-demam yang berpunca daripada alam semulajadi boleh ditangani dengan pelbagai cara, misalnya berurut, mengambil ubat-ubatan yang dibuat daripada tumbuh-tumbuhan (contohnya batang dan akar kayu) oleh ahli-ahli keluarga yang lebih tua, memakan makanan yang berkhasiat dan mendapat tidur yang cukup. Hal ini bermakna sakit-demam yang berpunca daripada faktor semula jadi lebih mudah ditangani oleh individu dan ahli-ahli keluarganya berbanding dengan sakit-demam yang berpunca daripada unsur-unsur ghaib.

Selain melakukan aktiviti penyembuhan pada peringkat individu dan isi rumah, Sandin (1980) menyatakan bahawa amalan perubatan dalam masyarakat Kenyah tradisional juga melibatkan ahli-ahli masyarakat yang tidak tinggal sebumbung. Hal ini bermaksud aktiviti penyembuhan dilakukan oleh pihak yang bukan ahli sesebuah isi rumah seperti dukun tradisional yang dikenali sebagai *ia de un bali rayong* dengan melakukan upacara *dayong*. Sandin (1980) tidak banyak menulis contoh-contoh mantera yang telah digunakan oleh dukun dalam kalangan masyarakat Kenyah tradisional. Saya dapati dalam konteks masyarakat Kenyah kontemporari di daerah Belaga, mantera penyembuhan yang lengkap tidak dapat diperolehi kerana dukun tradisional tidak wujud lagi dan ajaran Kristian menentang amalan penggunaan jampi serapah. Hal ini bermakna, peristiwa-persitiwa yang telah disaksikan oleh Sandin (1980) digunakan oleh saya sebagai panduan untuk menerangkan penyembuhan dalam masyarakat Kenyah tradisional.

Menurut adat resam masyarakat Kenyah tradisional, jikalau seseorang itu mengalami sakit-demam, beberapa orang lelaki yang telah berusia (memiliki status sosial yang baik dan dipercayai mempunyai hubungan spiritual) diminta untuk menyembuhkan si pesakit seperti mana dinyatakan di bawah (Sandin, 1980: 10):

(i) Jika seorang bayi yang jatuh sakit, maka 1 orang berketurunan aristokrat dan 1 orang kebanyakan akan dijemput;

(ii) Jika seorang remaja lelaki yang jatuh sakit maka 2 orang berketurunan aristokrat dan 2 orang kebanyakan akan merawatnya;

(iii) Jika orang dewasa yang jatuh sakit, maka 3 orang berketurunan aristokrat yang telah berumur dan 2 orang kebanyakan diminta merawatnya; dan

(iv) Jika orang tua yang jatuh sakit, maka 4 orang berketurunan aristokrat yang dianggap warga emas dan 2 orang kebanyakan diminta merawatnya.

Pihak-pihak yang terlibat untuk menyembuhkan individu yang mengalami sakit-demam perlu mendaki bukit pada awal pagi (kebiasaannya pada pukul 8 pagi) untuk menunggu kemunculan burung helang, yang merupakan burung pengantara di antara masyarakat Kenyah dan Bali Penyalong. Mereka yang terlibat dalam misi penyembuhan ini membawa bersama-sama mereka telur ayam dan ayam hidup mengikut jumlah orang yang terlibat dalam aktiviti penyembuhan berkenaan. Misalnya jika upacara penyembuhan bagi bayi dijalankan, maka 2 biji telur ayam dan 2 ekor ayam hidup diperlukan. Pihak yang terlibat dalam upacara penyembuhan akan duduk di atas bukit, memegang telur ayam dan memohon doa kepada Bungan Malan untuk meminta burung helang terbang di langit. Sekiranya burung helang tidak muncul dalam masa tertentu, maka mereka akan balik ke rumah panjang dan upacara seumpama itu diulangi pada keesokan harinya. Seandainya seekor burung helang muncul, pihak yang menunggu tadi akan membaca doa yang dipanggil *uyan udip,* dan mereka berdoa supaya burung helang berkenaan menyampaikan permintaan mereka kepada Bungan Malan supaya individu yang sedang sakit akan sembuh dengan segera. Contoh doa:

[Sambil memegang dan mengangkat kayu upacara *(padau)*]

Ji unong udip me
Kuen Bungan Malan Peselong Luan
Ina me mecai padau ji unong udip me
Iho ngerene iho negening dau temame me.
(Komunikasi personal: Lelaki Uma Baha, Disember 2014)

Selepas membaca jampi serapah, maka ayam tadi disembelih dan darahnya disapukan di batang-batang kayu yang dipacakkan di tanah dan telur ayam juga diletakkan di atas kayu *padau*. Mereka kembali ke rumah panjang dengan membawa ayam yang telah dibunuh dan ayam berkenaan digunakan semasa membaca doa, sambil ayam itu dipusing-pusingkan atau dihayun-hayunkan di atas orang yang sakit. Selepas upacara menggunakan ayam itu selesai, seekor khinzir dibunuh dan doa dipanjatkan kepada Bungan Malan utuk memohon kesembuhan. Sedikit darah khinzir dipalitkan ke badan pesakit dan darah khinzir yang selebihnya diletakkan di luar rumah pada sebatang kayu upacara. Lebih kurang dua jam kemudian, binatang yang disembelihkan tadi dimasak, dan semua pihak yang hadir memakannya. Selepas menjamu selera, mereka yang terlibat secara langsung dalam upacara penyembuhan ditemani balik ke rumah masing-masing dan mereka diberi sebilah parang sebagai alat untuk memperkuatkan semangat mereka.

Sakit-demam yang dipercayai berpunca daripada unsur-unsur personalistik yang agak sukar diubat melalui penggunaan orang berketurunan aristokrat dan golongan rakyat biasa, boleh digantikan dengan menggunakan perkhidmatan dukun *(ia de un bali rayong)*. Dalam masyarakat Kenyah tradisional, dukun memainkan peranan penting dalam mengembalikan keseimbangan kesihatan individu yang sakit dengan usaha melakukan teknik penyembuhan secara menyeluruh. Fungsi utama aktiviti penyembuhan ialah untuk membebaskan seseorang yang sedang dilanda sakit-demam itu daripada kesengsaraan fizikal dan emosi; membolehkan individu berkenaan kembali semula ke pangkuan masyarakat; dan membolehkan individu berkenaan menjalankan peranan dan tanggungjawabnya sebagai salah seorang anggota masyarakat.

Aktiviti penyembuhan secara holistik yang dilakukan oleh pengamal perubatan Kenyah tradisional juga melibatkan aspek-aspek jasmani, emosi, rohani dan akal fikiran. Dalam kata lain, individu yang mengalami sakit-demam, perlu melalui proses-proses penyembuhan atau upacara tertentu. Untuk menjelaskan perkara ini, saya akan mengambil contoh yang telah ditulis oleh Sandin (1980) hasil daripada penyelidikannya yang dilakukan dari tahun 1953 hingga 1970 khasnya di daerah Baram di Sarawak di dalam perenggan seterusnya.

Seandainya sesebuah keluarga ingin menggunakan perkhidmatan dukun untuk menyembuhkan ahli keluarga mereka yang sakit tenat, maka beberapa orang ahli-ahli perubatan masyarakat Kenyah dijemput berkumpul di dalam rumah mereka. Ahli-ahli kumpulan penyembuhan diminta menyanyi *(ngerahang)* dalam masa 15 ke 20 minit. Pada masa yang sama beberapa orang muda disuruh untuk memanggil dukun. Sebelum bertandang ke rumah orang yang sakit, dukun akan berunding dengan penjaga semangatnya yang dikenali sebagai *bali utong.* Seandainya penjaga semangatnya bersetuju, maka dukun akan bergegas ke rumah orang yang sedang sakit.

Apabila dukun itu tiba di rumah orang yang memerlukan khidmat penyembuhan, dukun memusingkan telur ayam yang telah diletakkan di dalam gong dan dukun berkenaan menelitikan petanda yang ditunjukkan. Jika telur yang diputar itu berhenti bergerak dan menunjukkan arah ke bilik, maka itu menunjukkan petanda yang baik. Sama ada petanda yang dilihat itu baik atau buruk, dukun akan keluar dari bilik pesakit untuk seketika dan memanjatkan doa kepada Bungan Malan. Semasa bersendirian, dukun menari-nari dan melompat-lompat sambil memegang sebilah parang ilang dalam masa 10 minit.

Selepas itu, dukun naik semula ke rumah dan memberitahu ahli-ahli keluarga tentang mesej yang disampaikan oleh Bungan Malan dan saat itu sering disusuli dengan keadaan panik. Jika pesakit didapati telah melanggar pantang larang, maka dia akan didenda, dan ahli-ahli keluarganya perlu memberi enam telur ayam atau satu gong atau kedua-duanya kepada dukun yang mewakili Bungan Malan. Selepas itu, dukun akan melaung dengan kuat sambil menyebut bentuk kesalahan yang dilakukan oleh pesakit dan menyatakan jenis burung petanda yang tidak diendahkannya, dan dukun merayu agar Bungan Malan mengampunkan si pesakit. Selepas doa kemaafan dilaung-laungkan, maka dukun menyampaikan mesej dari Bungan Malan kepada pesakit dan ahli-ahli keluarga pesakitnya dan mengingatkan si pesakit agar mematuhi burung petanda pada masa hadapan.

Seterusnya, dukun memusing gong yang mengandungi enam biji telur ayam sebanyak tiga kali dan dia ‘masuk’ ke dalam gong berkenaan sambil memegang sebilah parang ilang. Apabila dia keluar dari gong berkenaan, dia menunjukkan kepada semua orang yang menyaksikan upacara penyembuhan, tanda yang roh pesakit telah kembali ke dalam parang ilang. Dukun tidak membenarkan sesiapa mendekatinya sehingga roh pesakit telah berada di tengah-tengah parang ilang. Sambil memegang parang ilang, dukun berjalan ke arah pesakit dan membenarkan roh berkenaan hinggap di kepala pesakit. Dukun membaca doa dan mengesahkan bahawa pesakit telah kembali sihat. Untuk menamatkan upacara penyembuhan, dukun membunuh seekor ayam dan darah ayam dipalit di kepala dan tangan pesakit. Dukun meletakkan parang ilang yang digunakannya berdekatan dengan pesakit sebagai penampan daripada gangguan roh-roh jahat. Selepas itu, dukun ditemani oleh beberapa orang muda kembali ke rumahnya dan dukun membawa bersamanya sebilah parang sebagai pengeras, seekor ayam dan sedikit upah.

Meskipun upah yang diberi kepada dukun tidak dapat dinilai dengan wang ringgit, mereka dihormati dalam kalangan masyarakat Kenyah tradisional. Walaupun dukun dalam kalangan masyarakat Kenyah tradisional terdiri daripada kaum lelaki dan wanita, namun sejumlah besar dukun berkenaan terdiri daripada golongan lelaki. Seseorang itu boleh menjadi dukun melalui beberapa cara: melalui warisan (contohnya ilmu perubatan diperturunkan daripada si bapa kepada si anak), melalui peristiwa-peristiwa yang bersifat mistik (misalnya melalui mimpi yang berulang-ulang) dan melalui anugerah *(penulat)* dari tuhan. Upacara penyembuhan memerlukan seseorang dukun melakukan beberapa ritual seperti menari-nari, bertepuk tangan, membaca jampi dan menilik nasib menggunakan umbut *nyateng.* Contohnya, seorang dukun wanita Kenyah di daerah Belaga pada masa lampau menari-nari dan menyanyi seperti berikut semasa upacara penyembuhan:

Tia fe saong ke tepo' urut
Tia fe tangep ke buah usan
Tia fe safai ke berak lihot
Neng tuneng neng tucut.
(Komunikasi personal: Wanita Uma Baha, Disember 2014).

Pencegahan sakit-demam dalam kalangan masyarakat Kenyah juga memerlukan kerjasama semua pihak, yakni individu, isi rumah dan ahli-ahli komuniti. Sekiranya mereka mendengar perkhabaran buruk bahawa sejenis penyakit telah menyerang wilayah berhampiran, ketua kampung akan mengadakan mesyuarat tergempar untuk menjalankan upacara yang dipanggil 'upacara menghadang penyakit' *(muko mending)* untuk menghalang penyakit masuk ke kampung mereka (Sandin, 1980). Menurut Sandin lagi, di daerah Baram upacara penghadang penyakit dibahagi kepada dua: pertama, dijalankan secara besar-besaran dan kedua, diadakan secara kecil-kecilan. Upacara menghalang penyakit yang pertama memerlukan semua penduduk kampung tinggal di dalam rumah panjang selama tiga hari dan upacara yang kedua menyebabkan mereka perlu tinggal selama satu hari dan tidak keluar dari rumah semasa upacara berjalan.

Aktiviti-aktiviti persediaaan untuk menjalankan upacara menghalang penyakit yang bersifat besar-besaran dimulakan dari awal pagi (lebih kurang pukul 6 pagi) dan berakhir pada pukul 5 petang. Antara aktiviti yang dilakukan ialah mengumpul sejenis tumbuh-tumbuhan yang baunya boleh menakutkan hantu-hantu jahat; mengukir kayu; mencabut anak-anak pokok tertentu; dan mencantas pokok tertentu yang mempunyai daun yang banyak. Alat-alat penyembahan seperti telur ayam, ayam hidup dan khinzir disediakan untuk menyempurnakan upacara penghalang penyakit. Jampi serapah akan dibaca untuk memohon pertolongan Bungan Malan dan binatang ritual digunakan sebagai bahan penyembahan dan darah binatang berkaitan disapukan atau dipercikkkan atau diletakkan pada tempat-tempat tertentu. Hujung-hujung rumah panjang diletakkan dengan bahan-bahan upacara, yakni satu patung kayu yang telah diukir; satu kayu berukir yang banyak mata, telinga dan mulut; satu pokok yang telah dicabut, diletak dengan akarnya ke atas; dan satu pokok kecil yang daunnya tidak dibuang.

Pada waktu petang (kira-kira jam 5 petang), semua pintu rumah dan tingkap ditutup untuk mengelakkan 'perjumpaan' di antara manusia dan roh-roh ghaib. Semasa upacara-upacara ini berlangsung, setiap orang perlu mematuhi pantang larang, contohnya tidak dibenarkan keluar ke tanah, perlu bercakap-cakap dengan nada yang perlahan-lahan, dan hanya berinteraksi dengan orang-orang yang tinggal sebumbung. Selain itu, orang luar tidak dibenarkan melawat rumah

panjang dalam tempoh tiga hari dan pantang-larang harus dipatuhi sepenuhnya. Pada hari yang keempat, semua penduduk kampung bebas keluar rumah, misalnya pergi ke ladang, berburu dan mengunjungi sanak saudara yang tidak tinggal sebumbung. Alat-alat upacara yang telah diletakkan di hujung rumah panjang tidak dicabut tetapi dibiarkan reput secara semulajadi.

Ternyata, dalam konteks masyarakat Kenyah tradisional amalan perubatan mereka berpanji kepada pemahaman mereka tentang faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan sakit-demam seperti faktor semulajadi dan faktor ghaib. Hal ini bermakna adalah menjadi tanggungjawab setiap individu untuk mengelakkan diri mereka daripada mengalami sakit-demam yang disebabkan oleh unsur-unsur semulajadi atau ghaib. Jika perlanggaran pantang larang telah berlaku, maka upacara penyembuhan dilakukan oleh oleh golongan tertentu atau dukun akan mengambil tempat dengan disertakan oleh mantera kepada kuasa-kuasa ghaib seperti Bulan Malan. Ringkas kata, masyarakat Kenyah mementingkan kesejahteraan diri, keluarga dan komuniti kerana kesihatan yang baik membolehkan mereka memainkan peranan aktif dalam aktiviti harian seperti bercucuk tanam.

Pertanian

Menurut Conley (1978), kegiatan penanaman padi merupakan satu tema utama dalam masyarakat Kenyah tradisional. Selain daripada penanaman padi, tema-tema utama seperti kepercayaan kepada kuasa-kuasa ghaib dan kepentingan semangat kemasyarakatan juga dijelaskan dalam konteks aktiviti pertanian khususnya penanaman padi. Bagi menjelaskan peraturan dan norma-norma berkaitan dengan penanaman padi, maka dijelaskan perkara yang berlaku sebelum dan semasa padi ditanam, semasa menuai, dan selesai menuai. Dalam setiap kampung, seorang ketua upacara penanaman padi dan pembantu-pembantunya dilantik sebelum aktiviti penanaman padi dijalankan. Pada masa lampau, dalam kalangan masyarakat Kenyah Uma Baha di daerah Belaga, ketua upacara penanaman padi harus *malan tau* atau berpantang pada waktu siang selama setahun supaya petani-petani mendapat hasil tuaian yang banyak.

Menurut Sandin (1980), di daerah Baram, langkah pertama yang lakukan oleh ketua upacara penanaman padi dan pembantu-pembantunya pada waktu awal pagi ialah mendaki bukit berhampiran dengan kampung mereka untuk melihat kemunculan burung helang di langit. Ketua upacara duduk di tengah-tengah pembantunya dan mereka memanjatkan doa kepada Bulan Malan untuk mendapatkan restu dan mereka memohon agar burung helang terbang dari kiri ke kanan mereka kerana itu menunjukkan petanda yang baik. Selepas mendapat petanda yang baik mereka balik ke rumah panjang dan selepas makan tengahari, kumpulan ini masuk ke dalam hutan dengan membawa beras untuk diberi kepada binatang-binatang petanda seperti burung helang *(pelahi)* dan burung kelicap *(esit)* sebagai makanan atau pemberian. Mereka membaca jampi serapah agar binatang-binatang berkenaan menunjukkan belas kasihan *(pengelesau)* kepada mereka. Contoh doa:

> *Ji dise me mahan iho esit, iho lesau ame.*
> *Nuo buwe de jaet nai piat peluvat ame.*
> (Komunikasi personal: Wanita Uma Baha, Disember 2014)

Selepas itu, mereka balik ke rumah masing-masing dan bersiap sedia untuk memulakan kerja-kerja mereka pada keesokan harinya, misalnya menajamkan peralatan yang digunakan. Aktiviti-aktiviti menebas dan menebang merupakan kerja-kerja yang memenatkan dan ia mengambil masa lebih

kurang kurang dua bulan. Selepas kawasan hutan telah diterangkan, ia dibiarkan untuk masa tertentu untuk memastikan sesuatu kawasan benar-benar kering, dan tumbuhan-tumbuhan telah kering sebelum kawasan tadi dibakar. Kawasan yang telah dibakar itu dibiarkan selang beberapa hari sebelum kegiatan penanaman padi dan tanaman makanan lain seperti jagung, ubi dan keledek dijalankan.

Sebelum padi ditanam, ketua upacara penanaman padi memotong sebatang pokok dan batangnya dipacakkannya ke arah langit. Semasa waktu tengahari (kira-kira pukul 12 tengahari), dia mengukur bayang-bayang kayu itu apabila bayang-bayang berkenaan dianggar sepanjang lengan bawahnya. Alat pengukur berkenaan disimpan dengan baik oleh ketua upacara penanaman padi dan ia ditayangkan kepada orang ramai semasa upacara berkaitan dengan penanaman padi dalam tempoh yang telah ditetapkan. Alat pengukur tersebut dibuang oleh orang yang dilantik sebagai ketua upacara baru pada tahun seterusnya.

Satu mesyuarat diadakan untuk menentukan bentuk kerja menanam padi yang dilakukan seperti bekerja secara giliran *(senguyun)* dan membantu *(mepo*) ketua upacara dan ketua kampung menanam padi. Contoh jampi yang dibaca sebelum padi ditanam *(nugan)* ialah *"tia ngot tia ubot udip padai me ta tane ji."* Sewaktu menanam padi, orang lelaki dewasa ditugaskan menugal atau menujah tanah di barisan hadapan; manakala kaum wanita menyimpan benih ke dalam lubang tanah yang ditugal di barisan belakang.

Semasa padi yang ditanam telah hidup, petani-petani melakukan aktiviti merumput dan upacara-upacara berkaitan dengan unsur kesuburan padi seperti *uyan seli* dijalankan untuk memastikan burung-burung dan binatang-bintang liar tidak menganggu padi mereka. Orang-orang *(udo')* juga dibuat untuk menakut-nakutkan unggas-unggas dan binatang-binatang yang cuba merosakkan tanaman mereka. Apabila padi mulai berbuah, satu lagi upacara dilakukan dengan membunuh ayam atau khinzir di luar rumah panjang dengan harapan mereka mendapat hasil tuaian yang banyak dan perayaan diadakan selama tiga hari.

Sebelum aktiviti menuai dijalankan, satu lagi upacara yang dipanggil sebagai *lemalan* diadakan. Upacara ini diadakan oleh setiap isi rumah di ladang masing-masing dengan menyembelih seekor ayam sebagai bahan penyembahan kepada Bungan Malan. Contoh doa yang dibaca sebelum menuai *(majau)* ialah *"mecai ngan luwai me majau tau yi, melai me ala padai."* Sedikit tangkai padi diambil, dileraikan, digoreng tanpa minyak, dan kemudian ditumbuk dengan lesung kayu untuk menghasilkan makanan yang dinamakan sebagai *ubek* dan ia dimakan dalam satu perayaan yang mengambil masa sehari suntuk, menandakan pemulaan musim menuai. Selepas menuai selama enam hari berturut-turut, satu upacara dijalankan untuk menunjukkan kesyukuran ahli-ahli komuniti dengan hasil ladang mereka. Pada waktu upacara itu dilangsungkan, ayam atau khinzir tidak perlu dibunuh dan hanya jampi serapah dibaca. Musim menuai akan berjalan selama dua bulan dan bantuan diberikan kepada ketua upacara penanaman padi dan ketua kampung untuk menuai padi di ladang mereka. Selepas aktiviti menuai telah selesai, maka satu pesta diadakan, dan setiap isi rumah memberi sedikit hasil tuaian kepada ketua upacara dan ketua kampung sebagai tanda berterima kasih. Dalam konteks masyarakat Kenyah kontemporari di daerah Belaga upacara yang terakhir ini dikenali sebagai pesta selepas menuai atau *Ramai O'o Ajau (Pelepek Uman).*

Berdasarkan proses-proses penanaman padi yang telah diterangkan, boleh disimpulkan bahawa adat resam dan pantang larang sangat perlu dipatuhi oleh setiap orang kampung untuk

mendapatkan hasil yang lumayan. Upacara-upacara penyembahan seperti memanjatkan mantera dan menyembelihkan binatang ternakan (contohnya ayam dan khinzir) adalah penting untuk memohon berkat dan perlindungan dari Bungan Malan. Menurut Malinowski, iaitu bapa antropologi terkenal, upacara-upacara yang dijalankan oleh ahli-ahli sesebuah masyarakat adalah bertujuan untuk berurusan dengan unsur-unsur ghaib dan upacara-upacara berkaitan boleh mengurangkan perasaan tidak pasti dan takut (Miller, 2009). Perasaan-perasaan yang bersifat negatif (contohnya tidak pasti dan takut) wajar ditangani oleh masyarakat.

Kepahlawanan

Dalam konteks masyarakat Kenyah tradisional, sifat-sifat pahlawan, misalnya berani *(mahang)* pantang mengalah *(bawe)* dan gagah *(salet)* merupakan aspek yang dipandang tinggi dalam masyarakat ini terutamanya dalam kalangan kaum lelaki. Sejak dari kecil lagi kanak-kanak diajar supaya bersikap berani dan seawal umur empat tahun kanak-kanak lelaki dibenarkan bermain dengan alat-alat yang tajam seperti tombak dan parang, dan pada umur tujuh tahun mereka disuruh tidur berasingan daripada ibu bapa mereka (Sandin, 1980). Dalam tulisan Galvin (1968), dikatakan kanak-kanak lelaki dilibatkan dalam upacara yang bermotifkan keperwiraan. Dalam upacara *suen* misalnya dengan beralatkan tombak kecil, kanak-kanak dibenarkan menombak atau 'menyerang' tengkorak manusia dalam upacara yang diadakan dan jampi serapah dibaca oleh golongan yang lebih tua seperti berikut:

> Kita memberi persembahan kepada Bungan Malan dalam upacara memburu kepala yang dibenarkan oleh Engkau agar anak-anak lelaki kami aktif dan ada kekuatan dalam peperangan (Galvin, 1968: 241).

Ritchie (2006) menyatakan bahawa mendiang Temenggong Oyong Lawai Jau (Paramount Chief) masyarakat Kenyah dan etnik Orang Ulu lain seperti Kayan, Penan dan Kelabit di daerah Baram merupakan salah satu pahlawan dan pemimpin yang telah dilatih oleh bapa dan ayah saudaranya menggunakan alat-alat merbahaya semenjak kecil lagi dan apabila menjelang umur 20 tahun beliau telah mahir tentang selok-belok kehidupan sosial dan geografi daerah Baram seperti pengembaraan dan pemburuan di kawasan hutan belantara.

Penekanan kepada kepahlawanan menjadi satu kebiasaan pada zaman dahulu kerana berapa sebab, contohnya keadaan persekitaran fizikal yang dikelilingi dengan hutan belantara, sungai yang deras atau merbahaya, ancaman daripada binatang buas dan risiko serangan pihak musuh. Apatah lagi, dari segi sejarah, sebelum Rajah Brooke memerintah Sarawak, masyarakat peribumi di Sarawak terlibat dalam aktiviti yang melibatkan nyawa insan lain seperti kegiatan perhambaan, peperangan dan memburu kepala. Oleh itu, selepas Rajah Brooke memerintah Sarawak pada tahun 1841, beliau memerintah supaya kegiatan memburu kepala diharamkan atau dilarang sama sekali (Walker, 2002). Implikasi dari pengharaman aktiviti memburu kepala telah melemahkan institusi *ngayau,* mewujudkan keamanan di Sarawak dan menggalakkan interaksi sosial antara kaum di Sarawak seperti Melayu, Iban, Cina, Bidayuh dan Orang Ulu (contohnya Kayan dan Kenyah). Contohnya perdamaian *(petutong)* yang diadakan di Kapit, Sarawak pada tahun 1907 dan 1922 telah mewujudkan keamanan di kalangan para penduduk di wilayah-wilayah jajahan British dan Belanda (Sandin, 1980) seperti kaum Iban, Kayan dan Kenyah.

Penggunaan mantera dalam konteks masyarakat Kenyah tradisional boleh diucapkan secara individu atau berkumpulan, contohnya mengungkapkan kata-kata peniup semangat seperti berikut: *"metanek bala"* atau *"Ep barep taun melai ke'/me' ube, taun melai ke/me tai kalah."* Di samping itu, ungkapan-ungkapan tersebut digunakan untuk mengurangkan perasaan takut si pengucap dan sebagai usaha memohon perlindungan dari kuasa-kuasa ghaib seperti Bungan Malan. Mantera juga dibaca dalam konteks sebelum dan semasa seseorang itu masuk ke dalam hutan tebal untuk memburu binatang dan mengumpul hasil-hasil hutan. Mantera juga dibaca sebelum dan semasa terlibat dalam peperangan dengan pihak musuh, dan mereka yang terlibat dalam aktiviti pengembaraan ke daerah-daerah asing supaya mereka mendapat pertolongan dari unsur-unsur ghaib. Pihak yang menggunakan mantera kadang kala menggunakan alat-alat yang berunsur ghaib seperti penggunaan tangkal *(bali taban)* untuk mendapat perlindungan. Bagaimanapun, McDougall, Hose, and Haddon (1912) menyatakan bahawa penggunaan tangkal tidak popular dalam kalangan lelaki Kenyah tradisional.

Upacara-upacara tertentu dijalankan untuk menaikkan semangat keperwiraan lelaki Kenyah tradisional, misalnya melalui kultus *mamat*. Dari konteks etimologi, perkataan *mamat* berbaur dengan konsep-konsep seperti 'pesta', 'istiadat', 'upacara' dan 'kenduri-kendara.' Pesta *mamat* dikatakan dimulakan ekoran arahan Tuhan Bungan Malan kepada seorang lelaki ciptaannya bernama Apoi Akar (Sandin, 1980). Hal ini menyebabkan seorang lelaki berketurunan Kenyah dijadikan korban: kepalanya dipotong, dikeringkan menggunakan api, dan dijemur di bawah pancaran sang suria. Kepala manusia itu dijadikan sebagai 'piala' yang digunakan dalam pesta *mamat* yang mempunyai banyak tujuan seperti untuk mendapatkan penyembuhan dari sakit-demam, melipat gandakan rezeki, dan menaikkan sifat kepahlawanan. Upacara-upacara yang dijalankan juga disertakan dengan aktiviti menyembelih binatang peliharaan sebagai alat penyembahan seperti ayam dan khinzir. Darah binatang berkenaan dipalit ke tangan semua hadirin dalam upacara yang dilaksanakan. Selain membunuh binatang sebagai alat penyembahan, pelbagai aktiviti dijalankan semasa pesta mamat seperti menyanyi, menari dan memuja tuhan mereka. Contohnya, doa berikut dibaca semasa mereka menyembah 'batu suci' *(batu tuloi)*:

> Sekarang saya sudah buat untuk kamu dua mata, dua telinga, dan mulut; untuk kamu melihat, mendengar, dan bercakap. Oleh itu, dengarlah doa saya. Perhatikan dengan matamu kehidupan sosial kami, dan dengar dengan telingamu rayuan-rayuan kami. Jawab dengan mulutmu doa kami. Saya berdoa agar kami semua bergembira semasa pesta ini" (Sandin, 1980: 29).

Penulisan Galvin (1968), berdasarkan kajiannya di ulu Baram dalam kalangan masyarakat Kenyah pada bulan April 1966 menyatakan bahawa perayaan *mamat* adalah satu cara yang berkesan untuk menyatupadukan ahli-ahli masyarakat, menonjolkan sistem kepercayaan yang dianuti dan mengembalikan kegemilangan zaman lampau. Dalam pesta *mamat* juga individu yang telah mendapat kepala musuh dirayakan dan ini menyebabkan status sosial mereka boleh dipertingkatkan. Selain terlibat aktif dalam aktiviti memburu kepala dan peperangan, status sosial seseorang lelaki juga boleh dinaikkan akibat penglibatan mereka dalam aktiviti pengembaraan ke tempat-tempat lain di luar wilayah mereka (Galvin, 1968). Hal ini bermakna golongan yang bukan bangsawan berpeluang meningkatkan gred sosial mereka dan ini memberi peluang kepada mereka untuk mengahwini gadis-gadis dari golongan aristokrat. Dalam kata lain, ganjaran yang diberikan

kepada golongan yang mempamerkan kepahlawanan yang tinggi menyebabkan golongan lelaki dalam masyarakat Kenyah tradisional menekan nilai-nilai seperti gagah dan pantang mengalah.

Perubahan

Dalam bahagian-bahagian awal artikel ini, telah dijelaskan banyak aspek yang saling berkaitan di antara satu sama lain seperti adat resam, pantang larang dan penggunaan mantera yang berkaitan dengan amalan perubatan, pertanian dan kepahlawanan. Setiap aspek yang telah dijelaskan mempunyai pertalian rapat dengan aspek-aspek tradisional seperti organisasi sosiobudaya, rumah panjang dan isi rumah. Masyarakat Kenyah tradisional mempunyai stratifikasi sosial yang jelas, misalnya pembahagian masyarakat kepada kelas-kelas tertentu seperti golongan aristokrat *(paren)*, golongan biasa *(panyen)* dan golongan hamba abdi *(ule')*. Struktur kelas ini diperkukuhkan oleh satu pandangan dunia yang dikenali sebagai adat, yakni satu struktur yang mempertahankan kewujudan dan keseimbangan dalam masyarakat Kenyah tradisional (Hong, 1978). Adat ini boleh dikatakan sebagai satu sistem yang menyeluruh dan tanggungjawab setiap ahlinya ditentukan oleh adat dan semua pihak harus mematuhi adat mereka. Tuntasnya untuk memastikan keseimbangan dalam konteks semulajadi dan ghaib dikekalkan, semua aspek perlu dipatuhi, misalnya adat dan pantang larang berkaitan dengan amalan penyembuhan, penanaman padi dan peperangan.

Aspek perubahan dalam konteks sistem kepercayaan dan amalan-amalan masyarakat juga digambarkan dalam bab ini. Daripada masyarakat yang percaya kepada semangat atau dikenali sebagai animisme, masyarakat Kenyah tradisional telah mengadaptasikan amalan kepercayaan kepada Bungan Malan walaupun kadar pemelukan kepada kepercayaan kepada Bungan Malan berbeza-beza dari satu kampung ke kampung lain (Liau, 2013). Pengikut-pengikut Bungan Malan dikatakan berminat kepada sistem kepercayaan ini kerana ia lebih praktikal daripada percaya kepada petanda-petanda yang menghalang penglibatan mereka secara aktif dalam kegiatan sosial, ekonomi dan politik. Misalnya, jika petanda yang dilihat mereka kurang baik, maka sesebuah kawasan pertanian yang telah diterangkan boleh ditinggalkan kerana dikhuatiri boleh membawa malapetaka kepada ahli-ahli masyarakat. Daripada perspektif pragmatisme, perbuatan meninggalkan tanah yang telah ditebang atau ladang yang telah diusahakan merupakan satu pembaziran dari segi masa, tenaga dan ekonomi.

Akan tetapi harus dijelaskan di sini bahawa kepercayaan kepada Bulan Malan menggambarkan satu bentuk 'penentangan' terhadap agama Krisitian yang mulai berkembang semenjak zaman pemerintahan British dan Belanda. Dalam konteks masyarakat Kenyah di daerah Belaga dan daerah Baram pengamal agama tradisional dan Bungan Malan telah menjadi golongan minoriti dari segi jumlah pengikut-pengikutnya dan ramai penganut-penganutnya terdiri daripada golongan warga emas. Tekanan daripada banyak faktor luaran seperti pengharaman amalan memburu kepala, penghapusan sistem penghambaan, pengenalan amalan Kristian, pendidikan, pertanian dan perubatan moden dikatakan telah memberi impak yang signifikan kepada amalan-amalan tradisional seperti penggunaan jampi serapah dalam konteks perubatan, pertanian dan kepahlawanan (Hong, 1978). Dalam kata lain, adat dan pantang larang lama telah dipinggirkan dalam usaha masyarakat ini berhadapan dengan persekitaran sosial dan fizikal mereka yang sentiasa berubah-ubah.

Dalam konteks masyarakat Kenyah di daerah Belaga yang telah mengalami petempatan semula akibat pembinaan Empangan Bakun, kesan-kesan faktor-faktor luaran sungguh signifikan

dalam merombak keseluruhan adat masyarakatnya. Misalnya semenjak penempatan ke tempat baru di Sungai Asap-Koyan pada tahun 1998, penyelidik dapati generasi muda dalam kalangan masyarakat Kayan dan Kenyah telah direnggangkan daripada sejarah dan amalan-amalan tradisional mereka, misalnya pemilikan tanah yang sedikit (lebih kurang tiga ekar) setiap isi rumah turut menghalang penanaman padi secara aktif (Liau, 2007; 2019). Malah pengenalan kepada bioperubatan dan kepupusan hutan semulajadi juga telah mengurangkan kebergantungan mereka kepada amalan perubatan tradisional seperti penggunaan herba tradisional.

Walaupun penggunaan mantera dalam masyarakat Kenyah tradisional mempunyai sejarah yang berkurun-kurun lamanya tetapi penyelidik dapati amalan ini semakin pudar khasnya dalam masyarakat Kenyah yang dari generasi muda dan mereka yang tinggal berjauhan dari kampung-kampung halaman mereka. Kematian ketua-ketua upacara yang biasanya tergolong dalam kalangan generasi emas tidak digantikan dengan pengganti-pengganti baru yang arif tentang adat dan pantang larang masyarakat Kenyah. Dalam penulisan ini, penyelidik banyak bergantung kepada penulisan-penulisan yang kebanyakkannya telah ditulis sebelum tahun 2000. Penggunaan doa dalam konteks masyarakat Kenyah kontemporari mempamerkan asimilasi terhadap agama Kristian dan tidak dinafikan nilai-nilai dan norma-norma agama Kristian telah bertapak kuat dalam masyarakat Kenyah kontemporari. Hal ini dapat dilihat dengan penggunaan doa dan puji-pujian kepada Tuhan sebelum seorang itu memakan ubat-ubatan atau sebelum mereka terlibat dalam aktiviti-aktiviti pertanian. Ini menandakan dari aspek pragmatisme, agama Kristain diminati oleh ramai kumpulan etnik di Sarawak seperti Kayan, Kenyah, Lun Bawang dan Kelabit kerana agama ini memberi kebebasan kepada mereka, contohnya tidak percaya kepada petanda.

PENUTUP

> Jika penerbitan tentang aspek kehidupan sosial masyarakat Borneo tidak dijalankan, masyarakat Sarawak "pada masa kini dan masa hadapan akan tidak sedar tentang kegemilangan zaman lampau mereka" (disesuaikan dan diterjemahkan daripada Sandin, 1980: v).

Jika pada zaman dahulu jampi serapah dalam kalangan masyarakat Kenyah dipanjatkan kepada kuasa-kuasa ghaib seperti Bali Penyalong dan Bungan Malan, pada masa kini doa dalam kalangan ahli masyarakat Kenyah yang telah berada di usia senja disesuaikan dengan kepercayaan agama Kristian. Dalam kalangan generasi Kenyah yang lebih muda, penggunaan jampi serapah merupakan satu perkara asing bagi mereka kerana kebanyakannya dilahirkan dan dibesarkan dalam keluarga Kristian. Tambahan pula, doktrin agama Kristian menentang sekeras-kerasnya perbuatan yang berunsur syirik seperti upacara pemujaan terhadap Bulan Malan. Kesimpulannya, walaupun penggunaan mantera dalam masyarakat Kenyah telah mengalami perubahan yang signifikan akibat pelbagai faktor, khasnya agama Kristian, saya berharap agar penggunaan mantera diteruskan oleh ahli-ahli masyarakat Kenyah dengan melakukan pengadaptasian kerana penyesuaian penting untuk individu, isirumah dan komuniti.

PENGHARGAAN

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The Tree, the Compass, and the Mirror: Toward a Sacred Philosophy of History in Sarawak

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes a sacred philosophy of history grounded in Sarawak's political memory, symbols, and contemplative traditions. In an age of post-truth, where knowledge is often reduced to emotion, spectacle, and data, there is an urgent need to recover meaning in how history is studied, remembered and shared. Guided by Tawhidic Epistemology, this paper reimagines history not merely as a record of events, but as a field of signs and responsibilities that connect human life to higher truths. Through the metaphors of the tree (rooted memory), the compass (sacred tradition), and the mirror (collective reflection), it draws on the works of Sarawakian writers such as Sanib Said, Suffian Mansor and Yusuf to show that a contemplative, spiritually grounded approach to history already exists within local traditions. The proposal resonates with the metaphysical insights of Muhammad Umar Faruque and responds to Jason Stanley's critique of political knowledge in the post-truth era. By calling for a reintegration of the humanities and social sciences with science and technology, the article suggests that Sarawak's unique historical consciousness may offer a path toward restoring meaning, dignity, and balance in education, leadership, and global civilizational discourse.

Keywords: Sacred philosophy of history; Tawhidic epistemology; Sarawak political memory; contemplative history; post-truth crisis

INTRODUCTION

The modern study of politics and history is marked by a profound absence: the Sacred has been forgotten. Through much contemporary scholarship, political life is reduced to material processes and history is treated as a chronological series of secular events. This fragmentation of knowledge reflects a deeper epistemological crisis. This crisis is not only of method but also of meaning. In the context of Sarawak where nature, memory, and community have long reflected an underlying spiritual order, this absence is especially striking. The traditions of the Sarawak Malays and the

indigenous peoples bear witness to a worldview in which political authority was not severed from metaphysical realities. Natural features such as mountains, rivers and forests were seen as living signs of a higher truth. To address this loss, there is a need for a renewed philosophy of history and politics that recognizes the presence of the Sacred as foundational, not peripheral. This essay offers an initial inquiry into this recovery, drawing on Tawhidic Epistemology as a compass, and using Sarawak's cultural and ecological memory as both guide and mirror.

One way to begin recovering the Sacred in knowledge is to look at the tree. In Sarawak, trees are not only part of the forest. They are part of memory. For generations, the rainforest has shaped how people live, think, and govern. Large trees such as the tabang and engkabang are respected not only for their size, but also for what they represent. They remind us of strength, patience, and deep roots. In many Sarawakian communities, trees mark sacred spaces. They are not to be cut without good reason. They stand as quiet witnesses to the passing of time.

Sanib Said (1993) has shown that traditional political life in Sarawak was closely tied to the land. Mountains, rivers, and forests were not just physical features. They were part of a larger moral world. Political leadership had to follow the flow of nature, not go against it. Even among the Malays, the idea of authority was linked to the land and to the guidance of *adat*. This shows that the natural environment was part of how people understood truth and order.

The tree then becomes a symbol. It shows that knowledge and leadership must grow from the soil of memory. A tree without roots cannot stand. In the same way, political ideas that forget the Sacred cannot last. They may look strong for a while, but they will fall when the winds change.

In Sarawak, the presence of a higher order can still be felt across its diverse communities. Although modern governance often speaks in technical language, the older memories of the land remember something deeper. Mountains, rivers, trees and rituals once reflected a unity that connected human life to a sacred reality. Among the Malays, the Dayaks, the Orang Ulu and others, there existed a quiet understanding that life was part of something larger than itself.

Tawhidic Epistemology offers a way to reconnect with this memory. It is not just an Islamic framework meant for one community. It is a way of seeing knowledge itself as sacred. It reminds us that truth is not owned by any one group. Truth reflects the unity of all existence under the One, a signature. As Osman Bakar (1998) explains, Tawhidic knowledge recognizes that reality is ordered and purposeful. Knowledge, politics, and history must reflect this higher pattern.

In the Sarawakian context, Tawhidic Epistemology can help connect the cosmologies of the Malays, Dayaks, and Orang Ulu into a shared remembrance. It allows nature, ritual, and political life to once again mirror a higher truth. It brings harmony between ethnic groups without needing domination. It gives meaning without forcing uniformity. In a world often pulled apart by differences, this compass quietly points toward unity.

A mirror does not lie. It shows what is in front of it, be it beautiful or broken. Sarawak today reflects both harmony and struggle. On the one hand, it remains one of the most peaceful and culturally rich regions in Southeast Asia. People of different faiths, languages and traditions live side by side with dignity. This reflects a deep moral and spiritual strength that goes beyond official policies. On the other hand, this surface harmony sometimes hides deeper fractures. Historical forgetting, economic inequality, and cultural displacement are also part of what the mirror reveals.

Sarawak's mirror is not only of facts and statistics. It is made of rituals, silences, and the way people carry themselves. As Sanib Said notes, Sarawak's political culture has always involved

negotiation, respect and restraint. These values are still visible in many communities today. Yet, modern political life often moves too quickly to reflect. It becomes noisy, competitive, and detached from older wisdom.

Looking into the mirror is to ask: who are we becoming? The answer is never fixed. A mirror can reflect pride, but also confusion. Tawhidic Epistemology helps us read the mirror not only with the mind, but with the heart. It asks us to recognize the signs of unity behind the surface. It reminds us that even broken mirrors can still reflect light.

The Sacred has not disappeared. It waits to be remembered. In Sarawak, the landscape itself still speaks. Trees, rivers, and mountains are not only natural features. They are signs. They point to a deeper order that once shaped political life and historical understanding. What has been lost is not the reality of the Sacred, but the language to speak of it.

This paper has offered three images to begin that recovery: the tree, the compass, and the mirror. Together, they invite a new way of thinking about political knowledge grounded in Tawhidic Epistemology. They help us see that history is not only a record of events. It is also a field of signs and meanings.

This is a call for scholars in Sarawak and beyond. We must strengthen the foundations of our social sciences and humanities. They are not separate from the development of our society. They shape how we see ourselves, how we govern, and how we relate to others. The push for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics is important. But it must grow together with a strong and sacred understanding of human life. The two are not in competition. They are partners.

A more balanced, more truthful, and more compassionate political future will not come from technique alone. It will come from memory, wisdom, and presence. That is the real beginning of knowledge.

APPROACH AND METHOD

The Sacred and the Philosophy of History

In Sarawak today, history is often presented in a linear and pragmatic way. From school textbooks to public speeches, the narrative usually moves from struggle to independence, from tradition to development, and from conflict to unity. This kind of history supports national harmony and progress. It helps people understand where they come from and where they are going. However, something remains quiet underneath. The sacred and symbolic dimensions of time are rarely mentioned. They are not denied, but they are not seen clearly. They exist like an undercurrent, faintly felt beneath the surface of daily life.

In many traditional societies, time is not simply a straight line. It is a cycle. It follows the rhythm of nature, the seasons, and the soul. It returns to beginnings. Mircea Eliade (1954) describes this as sacred time, a kind of time that is different from the modern clock. Sacred time is re-entered through rituals, myths, and symbolic actions. It is not measured but remembered. Festivals, ceremonies, and prayers are ways for communities to return to the moment when meaning was first revealed. These acts do not just repeat events. They reconnect the present to a sacred origin.

In Sarawak, this sacred rhythm still exists. It can be seen in the cycle of *Gawai, Nukenen, Hari Raya, Good Friday,* and the *Khutbah Jumaat*. These are not just holidays or routines. They are acts of remembrance. They carry echoes of a time that is not bound by chronology. Yet, when history is

told without this layer of meaning, it becomes thin. It becomes a list of events without orientation. It may help us move forward, but not necessarily in the right direction.

The deeper rhythms become more visible in moments of collective reflection. One example is Sarawak Day, celebrated each year on July 22nd. While the official speeches speak of strong governance, unity, and history, the atmosphere of ten more than political. For many Sarawakians, Sarawak Day is a quiet reawakening. It recalls not just a legal change, but a sense of identity that is older than the state itself. The flag, the music, the public gatherings and the stories shared during this day carry emotional and spiritual weight. Even if it is not always spoken out loud, there is a feeling that Sarawak is not only a land but also trust. She is a gift to be remembered, protected and honored.

This same sacred rhythm appears when a leader passes away. The death of figures like Tok Nan, Tun Rahman, and Tun Taib was not only a political event. It was a moment of pause. People reflected on what kind of leadership had shaped the land. During these times, the language of the public changed. It became softer. Words such as "legacy", "trust", "hikmah", and "amanah" came forward. These are not technical terms. They come from a deeper register. In mourning, people did not just think of policies. They remembered values, presence, and character. These moments show that Sarawak still carries a memory of sacred time. It may be hidden beneath layers of modern governance, but it is still there.

The rituals that follow such moments such as flags flown at half-mast, public prayers, and televised tributes, are not only signs of respect. They are forms of symbolic governance. They remind the people that leadership is not only about power but is also about meaning. Death in this sense becomes a kind of mirror. It reflects what was once linved. It invites society to reflect on what it wishes to carry forward.

Sacred time also lives in quiet places. In Sarawak's kampungs, memory still breathes through simple things. In Kampung Pinang Jawa, in Satok along Jalan Haji Kassan, and in the houses of Kampung No. 5, there are layers of remembrance not written in books. They are carried by the sound of chickens in the mornings, in the scent of food being prepared, and in the way, neighbors greet each other without needing to speak much. In Kampung Barieng Sibu, one can still hear the calls of cockerel at dawn, and the busy chirps of hen and her chicks in the morning and the afternoon. The world 'wakes' slowly. The sense of time is not rushed but felt.

As a child, moments such Ramadan nights in Kampung Pinang Jawa were filled with life. There were rows of people performing *tarawih*, the sound of laughter, the joy of playing with firecrackers and the scent of *sotong tutok* sold near Masjid at-Taqwa Kampung Gita. These were not just childhood memories. They were moments of sacred rhythm. They formed a sense of being part of something larger.

Such memories are not only personal. They form part of the political and historical consciousness of a place. They shape how people view authority, trust, and belonging. These rhythms of life reflect a structure of time that is not only linear but symbolic. They carry echoes of return, cycles and meaning that repeat with new depth.

Tawhidic Epistemology helps bring these memories into the field of knowledge. It teaches that signs of the Real are not limited to sacred texts alone. They can be found in the order of creation, in the flow of time, and in the patterns of life. Sacred time, through this lens, becomes not something separate from history, but its hidden heart. To study history without remembering is to forget what makes it human.

Contemplative History as a Method

In Sarawak, the act of remembering is more than recalling events. It is a contemplative engagement in the past. This approach resonates with Khairudin Aljunied's concept of contemplative history, which emphasizes reflection, silence, and spiritual meaning in historiography. Rather than merely cataloging facts, this method seeks to understand the deeper significance of historical narratives and their impact on identity and belonging. (Aljunied, 2025)

Sarawakian memory is not confined to official records but is lived and experienced in daily life. Described earlier were the rhythms of village life, the communal gatherings during Ramadan in the stories passed down through generations embody a historiography that is present and alive. This resonates with the observations of Sanib Said (1993), who emphasized that Sarawakian political identity is rooted not only in modern institutions but also in the lived experiences and oral traditions of the people. History in this setting is not only taught. It is also performed and flows through rituals customs, and the moral structure of daily interactions.

This approach aligns with the Tawhidic Epistemology, which integrates knowledge with spiritual understanding. By acknowledging the sacred in historical narratives, we move towards a more holistic understanding of our past, one that encompasses both the material and the spiritual dimensions of human experience. (Bakar, 1998)

Incorporating contemplative history into our academic discourse encourages scholars to engage with history not just intellectually but also emotionally and spiritually. It invites a form of scholarship that is empathetic, reflective, and deeply connected to the lived experiences of communities it seeks to understand.

FINDINGS

Sarawak Malay and the Sacred

The works of Sarawak Malay historians such as Sanib Said, Suffian Mansor, and Adibah Yusuf et al reveal a sensitivity to the moral and symbolic dimensions of political life. Although they do not always speak in explicitly metaphysical terms, their writing reflects a closeness to the inner values of Sarawakian society. Rather than focusing only on the structures of state power, they give space to community memory, oral traditions and local symbols that carry cultural and spiritual weight. Their research highlights the importance of trust, moral leadership, and amanah as foundations of political life. These are not merely ethical preferences. They are reflections of an older worldview in which politics was not separated from the Sacred.

What makes Suffian Mansor's contribution important is his commitment to grounding Sarawak's political history within a larger framework of Malay and Islamic civilization. He does not reduce history to dates and events. Rather, he frames Sarawak Malay civilization as a continuity of meaning that is rooted in memory, values, and sacred structures. Suffian writes,

> *"Peradaban Melayu Sarawak seiring dengan perkembangan peradaban Melayu di alam Nusantara yang menerima pengaruh daripada Kerajaan Majapathit, Brunei dan peradaban Islam*" (Mansor & Awang Pawi, 2019)

This framing moves beyond politics as power. It sees history as a movement of civilization, where Islamic teachings, regional unity, and local leadership form the spiritual soul of society. He adds:

> *"Peradaban itu juga harus mencakupi soal tingkah laku dan sikap… yang mempunyai kebudayaan yang luhur bagi seluruh masyarakat"*

This echoes Tawhidic Epistemology, where knowledge must not only inform but refine the soul. By drawing from both Islamic sources and classical Malay categories, Suffian offers a civilizational reading of Sarawak that is moral and metaphysical at once. His description of Santubong as a center of trade, worship, and interaction between Malays and Dayaks also hints at the cosmological dimension of place:

> *"Penempatan orang Melayu di Santubong… berkembang sebagai pusat perdagangan… hubungan dua hala antara orang Melayu dan Dayak… perdagangan ini dikembangkan lagi dengan adanya pedagang China"*

This description is not just economic. It is symbolic of order, harmony and sacred rhythm that marks a landscape where human activity reflects divine harmony.

Even in his assessment of the Brooke period, Suffian does not fall into bitterness or secular critique alone. He recognizes how the loss of traditional Malay leadership, the weakening of Islamic institutions, and the erosion of nakhoda culture were not just political setbacks. They were civilizational wounds: *"Peradaban Melayu Sarawak pada zaman British umpama perahu yang hampir karam"*. This sentence, poetic and tragic, reveals his deeper vision: that the loss of adab, memory, and sacred responsibility is the true crisis.

The work of Adibah Yusuf and her colleagues reflects a deep concern for what is being lost in the rush of modern change. Her 2018 study on Sarawak Malay traditional houses is not only about architecture. It is about memory and identity. She writes that many younger generations "do not know to identify the Malay identity [or] the actual design of traditional wooden houses." (Yusuf, Abd Rahman, & Mohammed, 2018).

Traditional houses in Sarawak are more than just places to live. They carry values and reflect the rhythm of life and the moral structure of the community. As Adibah notes, only a few houses remain in their original form. Most have been changed or modernized. She writes that the houses "have been exaggerated and made modifications without retaining the main characteristics." This quiet erosion of form is also a loss of meaning.

The parts of the house, be them the roof, the stairs, the walls, or the windows, all had their own place and purpose. They were designed not only for comfort, but also for dignity. The stairs were not only for climbing. The marked an entrance. The windows were not only for light. They opened to the world outside. These elements reflect how Sarawak Malays understood space, family and the sacred. The house, in this way, becomes a mirror. It shows how a community sees itself.

This is where Yusuf et. al's work meets contemplative history. They do not speak of philosophy directly. But her attention to space, memory and design shows that the traditional house is also a form of history. It carries stories, reflects values, and reminds us of a time when the Sacred

was not something separate from life but part of the everyday. When houses lose their form, it is not only design that disappears. A way of knowing begins to fade.

When read through the lens of Tawhidic Epistemology, Yusuf et. al's findings become even more meaningful. The house becomes a sign. Its balance, order, and relationship with nature. All of these points to a deeper truth. The house teaches *adab*, balance and reminds us that knowledge is not just in books. Knowledge lives in wood, space, and silence.

Sacred History as Memory

The greatest loss in modern approaches to history is the loss of meaning. When meaning disappears, purpose begins to fade. When purpose weakens, the sense of belonging is lost. This is not the same as wandering in an open landscape. It is wandering without direction, without a compass and a map. The result is a kind of fragmentation. The mind may still gather facts, and the hand may still build institutions. But the heart becomes quiet, unsure of what it truly serves.

Modern historical methods often claim to be neutral and objective. They focus on chronology, causality, and documentation. They treat history as a field of measurable data. In this mode, there is little room for reflection or reverence. What matters is what can be verified. The question of what should be remembered, and why, is rarely asked.

As E.H Carr (1961), who had critically examined the idea of objective history and questions the neutrality of historians, explains: *"The facts speak only when the historian calls on them… It is the historian who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context."* He also writes: "*The belief in a hard core of historical facts existing objectively and independently of the interpretation of the historian is a preposterous fallacy."*

Carr argues that historical writing always involves choice, perspective and value. This is what modern, perhaps scientistic, historians often hide behind the language of objectivity. In the name of objectivity, history becomes disconnected from the ethical and spiritual dimension of human life.

DISCUSSION

Toward a Sacred Philosophy of History in Sarawak

This is a proposal to remember. What Sarawak needs is not simply more historical data, although the rigorous and continuous efforts to it must continue. It needs a deeper remembrance. A sacred philosophy of history in Sarawak is not a return to the past. It is a return to meaning. It is a way of reading time that respects both the seen and the unseen. It asks not only what happened, but what it meant in the order of Truth and human responsibility.

In the context of history of ideas and political life, this approach brings the political, the cultural, and the spiritual into one line of remembrance. It restores dignity to names, places, and symbols and listens to silences, respects both the wisdom of elders and the hopes of the young. By then we could see that memory is not just personal. The memory is also political and shapes how we govern, educate, and build the future.

In relation to Tawhidic Epistemology, this sacred philosophy of history becomes a natural extension. It adds to its corpus a method of remembering that integrates both the historical and the metaphysical. It brings together the outer and the inner. The world of action and the world of meaning converge, and respect that reality is not just what is recorded. It is also what is revealed.

The first step is to recognize that the social sciences and humanities are not secondary fields. They are not 'soft'. They are essential. Just as science and technology build the material strength of a nation, the humanities and social sciences build its soul. Without meaning, even the most advanced machines will serve confusion. Without memory, even the most efficient systems will forget why they exist.

Therefore, the first task is to affirm the dignity and necessity of the humanities and social sciences within national and state-level education. Universities must be encouraged to treat these fields not as technical disciplines, but as guardians of meanings, ethics, and civilizational continuity.

The second step is to train a new generation of students who could one day be scholars who can work with both memory and metaphysics. This does not mean rejecting modern tools. It means using them with purpose. Historical methods can still be critical and rigorous, but it must also be contemplative. Political theory can still be sharp, but it must also be anchored in virtue. Scholars must be given the space to explore meaning without fear of being called 'unscientific.'

The third step is to localize memory. This means working directly with Sarawak's own history, geography, rituals, and symbols. Sacred memory does not always arrive through abstract theory. It often speaks through local theories, placenames, food, architecture, and speech. Research should include oral history projects, kampung mapping, ritual documentation, and symbolic interpretation. This work can be done with the community and not with them. The challenge is exactly how are we are not to overconcentrate ourselves of gathering data and improving techniques, while 'forgetting' the very memory is supposed to serve – the remembrance.

The fourth step is integration. STEM and the humanities must not compete. They must speak to one another. For example, an engineering student learning about sustainable energy in Sarawak can also learn the sacred cosmology of rivers, forests, and balance. A medical student can learn the ethical history of healing in the local culture. These connections do not weaken science. They strengthen it and return it to wisdom.

The fifth step is institutional support. Ministries, state governments, think-tanks, religious institutions and universities must begin to support the philosophy of history as a national concern. Sacred memory is not a luxury. It is a part of resilience and shapes the way a society responds to crisis, chooses its leaders, and honours its dead. When these institutions support research, curriculum design and public reflection around the Sacred, they anchor the future in something real.

The final step is public imagination. Ideas must not stay in papers and lectures. They must reach the people. Festivals, documentaries, community storytelling nights, heritage trails, and public rituals can all carry sacred memories. The past is not only in books. It lives in the body of the people.

Restoring the Sacred Integrity in the Age of Post-truth

One of the deepest wounds of our time is the collapse of truth into emotion, spectacle and manipulation. Jason Stanley, in *How Propaganda Works* (2015), explains how public reasoning is no longer guided by clarity or honesty. Political language now appeals to reaction, not reflection. When words are used to provoke emotion rather than convey meaning, truth becomes a tool for power. Over time, people grow tired. Public trust fades. The space for careful thought disappears.

The crisis goes beyond politics. The world has lost something greater. That is the steady thread that once connected every person to the Source. Every civilization, whether tribal or royal, nomadic or settled, held on to truths that were not horizontally created and prejudiced by men. These truths gave structure to time, purpose to suffering, and dignity to life. They were not just ideas. They were reminders. They were sacred. That thread has now loosened. In its place we find images, noise, and manipulation.

The proposal for a sacred philosophy of history in Sarawak is a small step toward repair. It reminds us that history is not only about facts. It is about remembering what matters. This approach, grounded in Tawhidic Epistemology, helps return the act of knowing to its rightful place. History is no longer just a story of power or progress. It becomes a path back to the Real. In *Sculpting the Self*, Faruque (2022) offers a deeper way to understand the truth. He writes, "Truth, in its highest sense, is not merely a correspondence between statements and reality, but the unveiling of the Real itself — an event that must be prepared for by the soul".

Faruque's insight shows that truth is not just a conclusion. It is a state of the heart. This view changes how we relate to history. We are not just observers of the past. We are responsible for how we remember it. We are shaped by what we chose to honour.

Sarawak can be a place where this remembering begins again. The effort to reflect, to teach with care, to write with presence. All these are ways of healing what the post-truth age has broken. Truth does not need to be loud to be real. It needs to be lived.

CONCLUSION: RETURNING TO THE TREE, THE COMPASS, AND THE MIRROR

Among the three metaphors explored in this journey, the mirror remains the most delicate and demanding. A mirror does not lead the way. It does not grow like a tree. It does not point like a compass. Instead, it reflects. It waits and shows us what we have become and sometimes, what we have forgotten. To face a mirror honestly is never easy.

Sarawak in many ways is this mirror. It reflects more than political structures. It reflects presence. Its forests, rivers, kampungs, and languages all hold memories. In moments of quiet, they speak. In seasons of change, they still remember. But like any mirror, what we see depends on how we stand before it. Do we come with pride, or humility? With distraction, or with attention?

The mirror is also like the moon. The moon does not shine on its own. It reflects the light of the sun. Even when the clouds hide it, it is still there. Even when it shrinks to a sliver, it keeps its rhythm. The Sacred works in the same way. It may be hidden but never absent. The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, is often described in poetry as the full moon. The companions welcomed him to Medina with the words "*Tala'a al-Badru 'Alayna*," meaning the full moon has

risen upon us. That was not just a poetic moment. It was a moment of recognition. The light had returned. The night had meaning again.

Other traditions also speak of reflection. Some describe the soul as a still lake. Others peak of polished hearts. These symbols point to the same truth. What is clear within can reflect what is above. The work of sacred remembrance begins by looking inward. The mirror of the heart must be cleaned before it can reflect anything true.

A sacred philosophy of history does not begin with answers. It begins with attention. It pays respect to the silence. It treats memory as a trust. The goal is not to glorify the past, but to return to it with care. To ask what it meant. To ask who we were, and who we must become.

For a young Sarawakian, this kind of remembering should bring connection first. Connection to the land, the elders, the stories, and the soul. Then hope, which is the sense that we are not lost that we come from a line of meaning. Then presence, which is the ability to stand still without running from time. And finally, responsibility. A quiet duty that comes not from pressure, but from recognition. We are here because others came before us. We are part of something that stretches beyond what we see.

The scholar of the future must hold this awareness gently. They must remember where they came from, and where they are going. They may speak many languages and use many methods. But in their heart, they must not forget the original trust. The moment before time when all souls were asked, "Am I not your Lord?" and they answered, "Yes" (Qur'an 7:172). That answer is not just a matter of faith. It is part of the human story. It is the beginning of sacred history.

To be fully human is not a theory. It is a path lived through remembrance, care, and presence. The tree reminds us to root ourselves, the compass to talk with direction, and the mirror to see clearly. And all three remind us to return.

Sarawak may not always speak loudly. But its memory is deep. Its rhythm is slow. Its wisdom is still alive. Here, in the quiet land between forest and sea, a new beginning can take shape. Not by creating something entirely new. But by remembering what has always been there.

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Peace Systems and Peacemaking – The Long Jawe Peacemaking

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ABSTRACT

One of the earliest and most critical attacks during the period of Confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia was when some 200 Kenyah Indonesians from Long Nawang led by Indonesian army commandos went to attack Long Jawe on 28 September 1963. Two Gurkhas were killed in the attack and ten Kenyah Border Scouts. In the follow-up operation some 32 Indonesians were killed. The incident had a devastating impact on previously cordial ties between villages on each side of the border. After the official signing of peace in August 1966, there was a peacemaking in Long Jawe on 20 August 1967. However, the story of how this came about is only just beginning to unfold. This article outlines events that led to this peacemaking and how certain aspects of the process demonstrate features of peace systems and characteristics of indigenous peacemaking.

Keywords: confrontation, Long Jawe, Kenyah peacemaking, peace systems

INTRODUCTION

The formation of Malaysia in 1963 was deemed a threat by President Sukarno of Indonesia who led a border war of Confrontation against the Borneo states of Sabah and Sarawak. One of the earliest and most critical attacks during the Confrontation was when some 200 Kenyah Indonesians from Long Nawang led by Indonesian army commandos went to attack Long Jawe on 28 September 1963 [1]. Many Kenyah were forced to join this force at gunpoint. The Kenyah believed their role was to "liberate Brunei from the English colonizers," and they only understood that their target was Long Jawe when they were approaching the settlement. The Indonesian leaders told the Kenyah force that the target was the Gurkha outpost and Indonesian Kenyah scouts succeeded in sending warnings to the longhouse of impending action, sparing the lives of the villagers (Lumenta, 2011, p.136). Two Gurkhas were killed in the attack and ten Kenyah Border Scouts. In the follow-up operation, some 32 Indonesians were killed (Burlison, 2005, p. 61). Many of the

families of the bereaved Border Scouts[2] from both Long Jawe and the neighbouring village of Long Bulan grieved for years after this event. The incident affected certain families very deeply. For example, there is a story that a Kenyah man saw his uncle *(mpe')* among the Indonesian soldiers at Long Jawe. He called to him "*mpe*'" and shot at him. It is said he was decorated for his bravery, by the Malaysian forces, but he became a recluse - he didn't talk to people in his village and people said he was "mad." [3]

Nearly forty years earlier, in 1924, there was a peacemaking in Kapit which established peace between the Kenyah and other groups from Dutch Borneo and groups on the Sarawak frontier, particularly the Iban. This peacemaking ensured successful trading partnerships for both people from Dutch Borneo and their Sarawakian counterparts. Trading journeys (*peselai*) were important rites of passage for young Kenyah men who travelled to Sarawak in large groups to sell jungle produce. During these journeys they demonstrated their courage and resilience as future husbands and they learned about the world beyond the longhouse, ethnohistory and dealing with other ethnic groups (Lumenta, 2010, p.196). In the years after the Japanese occupation, Indonesian Kenyah also came to Sarawak, not just to trade but also to work as temporary labourers, in the spirit of *peselai.*

Prior to the Confrontation, in peacetime, relationships between villages ignored the existence of the transnational border. People intermarried, forming heterogenous settlements, adopted each other's children, farmed cooperatively, traded goods, and travelled on trading journeys together *(peselai).*

Intermarriage, adoption and trade are features of peace systems as will be outlined below. The attack at Long Jawe had a devastating impact on families as people got stuck on one side or the other of the border and certain families experienced severing of relationships due to the attack. Peace between Indonesia and Malaysia was declared in August 1966, ending Confrontation. However, cross-border relationships became normalized, when a peacemaking took place at Long Jawe on 20 August 1967. However, the story of how this came about is only just beginning to unfold. This article outlines events that led to this peacemaking and how certain aspects of the peacemaking process, share features with peace systems at a universal level.

THE KENYAH SETTLEMENTS

This essay will focus on the peacemaking after an incident which struck the inhabitants of Long Jawe, a Kenyah Lepo Kulit settlement on the Balui river in Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo. The Kenyah Lepo Kulit are one of the twenty or so different dialect groups which are culturally affiliated and known as Kenyah. This settlement was the last longhouse on the Balui river, about fifty kilometres from the border area, which was reached by river and jungle paths across mountainous country. The other settlement that was affected was the neighbouring Kenyah Uma Baha community at Long Bulan, as several of the Border Scouts killed in the incident came from there. The nearest centre in Kalimantan was Long Nawang, a collection of villages making up the largest centre for the Kenyah populations. It was the centre for the Indonesian provincial government and the home of the long established leader the *paren bio*, a Lepo Tau Kenyah, whose jurisdiction covered all the different Kenyah sub-groups on the Apo Kayan, including the Kenyah Badeng. The location of Long Nawang was close to the route into Sarawak, making it a strategic base for the Indonesian army during Confrontation. Since before the arrival of the Dutch, the

Indonesian Kenyah travelled frequently to Sarawak to trade *peselai* and to work and would stop off at Long Jawe. The border made little difference to their lives. There were also close relationships with their Kayan neighbours who also straddled the border. Kenyah and Kayan had close historical and cultural relationships with each other, extending across the border and were linked by trade, alliances and intermarriage.

SOURCES

In Sarawak there is a broad literature on warfare and headhunting, mainly with a focus on the Iban: Vadya, (1969); Pringle, [1970] (2010); Wagner, (1972); Wadley, (2001) (2004); Masing, (1981) and Helbing, (2021). Accounts of peacemaking are mentioned in relation to the making of the Brooke state and often from the perspectives of Brooke officials and other protagonists: for example, Hose and McDougall, [1912] (1993); Douglas, (1912); Haddon, (1901) and Appell, (1968). Narratives from indigenous perspectives are limited: Conley, (1976); Lawai, (2003) and Lumenta, (2011) detail Kenyah perspectives from Indonesian Borneo. Sutlive touches on peacemaking at Long Jawe from the point of view of his Iban subject, Temenggong Jugah, (Sutlive, 1992). Clayre and Usat (1997) document a short Sa'ban oral history which provides insights into processes of peacemaking. Mashman (2020) looks at the subject of peacemaking through the figure of a notable Kenyah leader, Tama Bulan and the *adat*. This essay draws on the material mentioned above dealing with indigenous perspectives and also interviews conducted between 2021 and 2024 with Kenyah and Kayan groups in the upper Baram, Miri, Kuching, Sungai Koyan Asap, and Data Kakus.

INDIGENOUS PEACEMAKING AND PEACE SYSTEMS

There are a number of recent studies of indigenous peacemaking and peace systems under the discipline of peace studies (Gregor, 1994; Sponsel and Gregor, 1994; MacGinty, 2008; Tuso and Flaherty, 2016; Fry, 2012; Souillac, and Fry 2014; Fry and Souillac, 2022). These researchers note a contradiction, which is based on the notion that for any community, however aggressive, to survive, there have to be mechanisms which foster cooperation and exchange (Sponsel and Gregor, 1994, p.xv). Indigenous peacemaking is particularly significant as it focusses on reestablishing relationships, restoring balance, on upholding common values and connections, and acknowledging the wisdom and skills of elders in mediating between parties. For many indigenous groups, conflict resolution is obligatory (Fry and Souillac, 2022, p.2). In addition, rituals and ceremonies are a means to convey difficult messages in safe spaces (Gohar and Schirch, 2016, p.457). Ceremonies also bring people together and can direct competitiveness in economic directions, instead of military pursuits (Fry, 2012, p.554). Another important factor is inter-community trade: good trading partnerships are "antithetical to war" (Fry 2012, p.553). Relationships are supported by acts of pardoning, which are often followed by the giving of compensation or exchanging gifts (McGinty 2008, p.148). Communities are led by respected elders who are appreciated for their experience, impartiality and wisdom (Fry and Souillac, 2022, p.3). They are charged with maintaining harmony within the community (Stobbe 2016, p.108), and practise self-control to prevent conflict and violence (Fry and Souillac, 2022, p.5). Finally, indigenous peacemaking involves entire communities, instead of individuals, as conflict results in "disunity and disharmony between human beings and between humans and nature" (Tuso, 2016, p.18).

Peace systems are defined as "groups of neighboring societies that do not make war on each other" (Fry, 2012, p.551). Such societies demonstrate features that foster peace and prevent violence from escalating (Souillac and Fry, 2014, p.618). Moreover, Fry highlights the significance of inclusive heterogenous identities which expand the *us* to include the *them,* rather than fostering *them* versus *us* relationships (Fry, 2012, p.551). For these communities, genealogies, wide kinship networks and alliances are important (Fry, 2012, p.553).

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

A characteristic of a peace system is the ability to create heterogenous identities as belonging to one people, or being kin, Researchers have discovered that identifying as "one people" lessens hostile and prejudicial feelings and encourages positive attitudes towards people working together (Fry et al., 2021, p.6). The Kenyah demonstrate features of creating kin and becoming "of the same heart" when they make kin, *oyen panek.* For example, when the Kenyah Badeng were welcomed at Long Nawang in 1909, it was said by the headman, Peingan Surang, "We share the same ancestor, we have the same heart (*kyemet*)" (Armstrong, 1991, p.8). Further to this, the Kenyah Badeng formed relationships o*yen panek,* of "making kin", between themselves and their trading partners such as the Lepo Kulit, visiting and helping at harvest time. These relationships would hold people in good stead in times of need. When a harvest failed, they could rely on the Kenyah Lepo Kulit as fictitious kin to help replenish supplies in exchange for beads, game, tools or other goods (Armstrong, 1991, p. 6). On the Balui river, Long Jawe, a Kenyah Lepo Kulit village would be a place for the Indonesian Kenyah to stop and rest for the night, relying on their ties of fictitious kin. Child adoption was a means of ensuring there was someone to nurture children, given the high mortality rate of women in the past. Siblings often adopted each other's children. In some areas, adoptions take place between families of different ethnic groups. For example, at Long Mejawah in the Balui River there have been adoptions of children of the incoming Kenyah and the long established Kayan families over the last thirty years (Tan, 2024, p.9).

The notion of people "of the same heart" recalls peace systems practiced by ten neighboring tribes of four different language groups from the Upper Xingu River region of Brazil. Like the Kenyah, who have different dialects, they have their own distinct languages but have "a larger social framework of common institutions and values" (Gregor, 1994, p.244). For the Kenyah, their culture, rituals and ceremonies can unify different dialect groups. People can see themselves as belonging to more than one dialect group, through relationships of intermarriage, adoption or fictitious kin.The capacity of being able to create heterogenous identities as being "of the same heart" or belonging to "one country" or being "kin" is described as a characteristic of many peace systems and psychologists have found that identifying as "one people" reduces hostile behaviour and prejudicial attitudes and promotes positive mindsets towards more cooperation (Fry et al., 2021, p.6).

THE IMPORTANCE OF *ADET*

Many of the features of indigenous peacemaking and peace systems described above are based on the *adet* [4] among the Kenyah. *Adet* refers to the social norms and customs that guide relationships within a community. These customs are important for peacemaking to take place. "Peacemaking processes do not exist *sui generis*, but are embedded in the cultural settings in which they develop and operate" (Fry and Souillac, 2022, p.6). These processes are based on common consent and

with consistent usage and practice over time, they gain the authority that demands that they are kept. If the *adet* is violated, there are sanctions imposed by the community. As Ramy Bulan, a Sarawakian scholar has noted, "Underpinning these traditions is the need to settle conflicts and controversies to ensure social cohesion and harmonious existence" (Bulan, 2014, p.319).

Thus, adherence to the *adet* is the means for communities to live together (Bulan, 2008, p.156) and it follows that the *adet* is the key to understanding how peace systems work. In the words of one observer, referring to the Kenyah: "When everything is acting according to its proper *adat*, there is harmony and balance. Wrong action, then, leads to an imbalance and sickness, death, crop failure and so on" (Whittier, 1978, p.117). Harmony through community consensus is the end goal, as it is crucial to diffuse disputes to keep the community together and prevent the longhouse or settlement from splitting up. This is very much in keeping with the maxim that peacemaking involves whole communities rather than individuals (Tuso, 2016, p.18).

The chief is expected to uphold the values of the community. In Kenyah culture, chiefs are often praised in song for their virtues, reinforcing the values that they promote which build on their relationships within the community. The desired characteristics of a good leader are qualities that enhance relationships. For example, the Kenyah ideal leader is expected to be compassionate and socially responsible ('*un lesau*); polite in speaking and able to think rationally (*tiga tira' ngan kenep*); effective at uniting and advising people (*mencam pebeka' ngan mencam pekatok dulu ngeleppo'*); to possess great determination and a sense of responsibility in leadership (*bawa'*) and he should refrain from vilifying others (*abe' uba' pejaat dulu*) (Lawai, 2003, p.179). These core values provide an impetus for leaders to take action to maintain and strengthen the community by uniting people and to maintain their status. The value system promotes peace and unity. At the same time, the desirable qualities of Kenyah leaders coincide with the universal qualities of indigenous peacemakers, who should demonstrate "wisdom, honesty, patience, communication skills, eloquence (and) extensive knowledge about custom." (Nawal Al-Jawhari, 2012, p.94, quoted in Tuso, 2016, p.516).

EVENTS LEADING TO THE LONG JAWE PEACEMAKING

Peace was signed between Indonesia and Malaysia in Jakarta on 16 August 1966 ending Confrontation. Tun Jugah, as the Federal Minister for Sarawak Affairs, wanted a local peacemaking to take place as many of the Iban, Kajang, Kayan and Kenyah on both sides of the border had had their lives disrupted by Confrontation and had been unable to travel for trading or for work (*peselai*) or for keeping in touch with their relatives. However, in Kuching there was not a lot of support for Tun Jugah's plan. For example, Gerunsin Lembat, the State Secretary, was reluctant for such a ceremony to go ahead as he knew there would be a mass influx of people from over the border (Sutlive, 1992, p.216).

Nonetheless, Tun Jugah understood that a local peacemaking was important, as only this would restore broken relationships. He obtained RM 10,000 to arrange a peacemaking celebration from the Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman (Sutlive, 1992, p.215). After a Cabinet meeting in Kuching, it was agreed that Tajang Laing as Minister for State in the State Cabinet should initiate the peace-making. Tun Jugah, summoned Tajang Laing to his office in Kuching. He was considered the right person for the task as he had the highest stature in the community and had many relatives, both Kayan and Kenyah, over the border. He was cast in the role of a leader who

would act as a mediator. Such emissaries are important in Borneo as they initiate the peace process at the local level (Conley, 1976, p.118). There were certain expectations of Tajang Laing as an Orang Ulu leader: his relationships with people should not be divisive but create unity and he should be able to mobilize people to come for a peacemaking.

THE LONG JAWE PEACE – MAKING: PRELIMINARY MEETING

Tajang Laing travelled back to his longhouse at Rumah Nyaveng to consult with his community as to how to plan the journey to set up a preliminary meeting with the Indonesian side and to discuss the proposed programme for the peacemaking ceremony. In an interview conducted in 2003, he explained his mission:

> "We wanted to arrange peace following our Kayan-Kenyah traditions. After all, we all originated from *Indon.* My own Kayan ancestors came from the Apokayan. I was maybe the only Sarawak official who personally knew many people from Long Nawang" (Lumenta, 2011, p.138).

It is possible to note that peacemaking was not conducted on an individual basis but involved the whole community, resonating with features of indigenous peacemaking identified at a universal level (Tuso, 2016, p.18). Tajang Laing assembled a peace mission team of about ten men. Among the men in his team were two headmen, Maren Uma Lake' Kulleh Imang and Maren Uma Wan Kilah. They took a well-worn trading route to the border travelling by boat and on foot.

His group travelled for the first two days of the journey in two longboats powered by an outboard engine and on the third day, they had to punt and paddle up the rapids as they entered the Aput River. By evening of the third day, they arrived at the Sai River where they had to go through to Batu Betamen, an important landmark. This consisted of a stone gate featuring two natural stone outcrops, one on each side of the riverbank. Once they had entered through the stone gate, they spent the night in a makeshift camp by the riverbank.

That night they all agreed that they would split up into two groups. Tajang Laing would stay back at the camp, while Maren Uma Wan Kilah would lead the others to go to Long Nawang and invite leaders to come to Batu Betamen to meet Tajang Laing. Wan Kilah was to convey the message from Tajang Laing about the Sarawak government's intention to organise a peacemaking ceremony at Long Jawe, and to invite the legitimate leaders and representatives to come and meet Tajang Laing at Batu Betamen, to discuss how a peace-celebration might take place. Batu Betamen was a suitable location for such discussions, as it was in neutral territory. This was an important factor for peacemakings among the Kenyah (Conley 1976, p. 118). Wan Kilah and his group trekked across the border to the first village of Long Penawan, then by longboat down to Long Nawang on the Apau Kayan, in Kalimantan. After a week, the group returned with Pelik Lenjau, the paramount chief of Long Nawang with his men.[5]

TRANSNATIONAL MEETING AT BATU BETAMEN

The Kenyah from Indonesia were apprehensive that those from Sarawak might seek further revenge (Sutlive, 1992, p. 216). However, one witness from Kalimantan, Belare Asa, who was present at Batu Betamen said that he had full confidence and trust in the presence of Tajang Laing that everything would work out because he was leading the peacemaking.[6] All in all, there were a

total of around a hundred people at this preliminary meeting at Batu Betamen. They discussed what had happened and how they all wanted to make peace, as there were so many families with relatives on each side of the border. This is a characteristic of the practice of the *adat* in Borneo that people want to end conflict, live at peace with each other (Bulan, 2014, p.319). In order to smooth discussions, the leaders took tiger teeth and dipped them in spring water and sprinkled it over the gathering. They swore on tiger teeth that they would no longer be enemies.

People looked after their tiger teeth carefully which were considered very ritually powerful. Only pure aristocrats (*maren*) can use the tiger tooth, and if someone swears on a tiger's tooth there is a severe penalty from the supernatural world for breaking the oath. Tiger teeth are only used in the most serious situations. It is said that tiger teeth were passed down through generations and were likely to be obtained by trade across the Indonesian archipelago. Tigers were regarded as very high spiritual entities in Borneo cosmologies and were held in fear and awe (Sellato, 2019). Sometimes tiger claws were used or the teeth of other animals. Oath taking is an important peacemaking ritual, which creates a recognized structure for people to interact and make promises with each other, facilitating communication. In addition to oath taking, there was an exchange of gifts, something which was done according to custom (*adat)*. Belare Asa brought a parang to Batu Betamen, which represented his village in Kalimantan, to the ceremony. He gave his parang to Tajang Laing. He received salt, a prized commodity, in exchange. The exchange of gifts is a common practice during traditional peace makings to affirm what has taken place through promises and rituals (McGinty, 2008, p.148).

After the oath taking had taken place, they sat down to plan the peacemaking ceremony. The day after this meeting, everyone dispersed and Tajang Laing and his party stopped at Long Jawe to discuss with the Maren Uma Pasan Abok the plans for the forthcoming peacemaking at Long Jawe. After that, he went back to Kuching to brief Tun Jugah on what had taken place at Long Jawe and at Batu Betamen.[5]

According to recollections by Tajang Laing, invitations were sent to all the Iban, Kayan, Kenyah and Kajang in Belaga and Kapit and from the Baram. Among the leaders who attended were Tun Jugah; Temenggong Lawai Jau; Temenggong Baya Malang; Nawan Lawai; Pengulu Jallong; Lake Kebing Aran; Ului Jok from Uma Belor and Penghulu Kebing Nyipa. In addition, there were Kayan leaders from Data Dian led by Jelau Lenjau and Pelik Lenjau, Kenyah son of Bo Lejau, the paramount chief from Long Nawang.[5]

THE MEETING AT LONG JAWE

The day of the peacemaking at Long Jawe was August 20 1967.[9] The arrival of the Indonesian group at Long Jawe triggered wailing and crying from women still grieving the memory of those killed (Sutlive 1991, p. 216). One eyewitness from Long Jawe, Luri Erong remembers an initial mood of uncertainty and tension: "At that time people were still anxious about being attacked by enemies."[8]

The event was difficult for some villagers, as they remembered the pain caused by the deaths of their relatives as testified by Ebon Chaw, who was from the neighbouring village of Long Bulan:

> "I felt very emotional and upset because many of the men who were killed at Long Jawe had wives or relatives from Long Bulan. The Indonesian Kenyah came to ask for pardon. When the visitors arrived, the police had to restrain me because I felt very angry." [9]

According Ta'a Erung from Long Jawe, who remembers the occasion as a young teenage girl, there was a formal welcome as they lined up to greet the visitors. "Our group of performers of young women waited in line, alongside the young men. We sang a welcome song for the visitors to greet them." The tense atmosphere dispelled by singing and music on arrival of the visitors. There was a song specially composed for the event, which was sung by school students, there was also a comedian who made people laugh.[8]

PEACEMAKING RITUALS

Figure 1. Tajang Laing Minister of State at the Long Jawe Peacemaking with Pelik' Lenjau from Long Nawang. (Photo courtesy of Dato Sri Tajang Laing).

According to Dato Sri Tajang Laing, the ceremony was held on the veranda of the longhouse, with the performance of the customary *adat* rituals performed by *dayung* ritual specialists. As Long Jawe was a Christian village, the shamans were invited from other longhouses, including Kebing Aren from Uma Nyaveng and Uloi Jok from Uma Belor.[10] The guest of honour, Tun Jugah, and all invited chiefs and elders assembled at midday in the middle of the veranda where a number of kampong pigs were tied up. Standing in front, the ritual specialist *dayung* chanted and the leading parties swore oaths. The pigs were considered the conduit for carrying the wishes of the gathering to the world of the spirits. The invocation went something like this: "Now we are all here assembled for peacemaking. If anyone breaks the spirit of this peacemaking he will die; if he maintains this peacemaking, he will be blessed with a long life of good health and prosperity."[11] Dato Sri Tajang Laing went onto describe the rituals of peacemaking as follows:

> *"Na petame' urip* means peacemaking. *Na tengaran urip* means to hold peacemaking negotiations. During a peacemaking, people would exchange hats and knives. They would eat and drink together and swear oaths. The rituals were performed by a ritual specialist (*dayung*), who chanted prayers to evoke auspicious blessings from the spirits. They would proclaim that they were all brothers that they could eat and sleep together."[5]

The important factor was the belief that the spirit world sanctioned the peacemaking and there would be penalties from the spirit world, if the oaths were broken. Such rituals also help to reinforce relationships on a spiritual plane which is very significant in peacemakings in traditional cultures (Gohar and Schirch, 2016, p.456-8).

He explained further that there was a cleansing ritual. The rim of a gong was filled with the blood of a pig that had been slaughtered. Water was added. A ceremonial stick, decorated with wood shavings (*penghut)* was dipped in the mixture of blood mixed and water; and holding this together with an unsheathed parang blade, the mixture was sprinkled over the gathering crowd. Four important powerful elements were present in this ritual: water; blood; wood and iron. The *dayung* would address the gathering invoking the spirits as the rituals took place. The invocation went something like this: "Now we are all here assembled for peacemaking. If anyone breaks the spirit of this peacemaking he will die; if he maintains this peacemaking, he will be blessed with a long-life of good health and prosperity." They swore *(pelamai)* on tiger teeth that they would no longer be enemies. Such an invocation was made to seek protection from the spirit world through the slaughter of the pig. Pigs were believed to mediate between humans and the spirit world, through the anointing power of their blood and the power of their livers to deliver augers (Janowski, 2021, p.177).

Alan Udau explained what peacemaking means to the Kenyah, as it is deeply rooted in the custom, the *adat*:

> *"Petutung* means to make peace. It also means to take an oath. You cannot resume hostilities anymore. It's very deep rooted in Kenyah culture. It's handed down over generations. *Petutung* is carried out between both parties where they swear to have peace among them. There must be no more incidents where blood is to be shed between them. This ceremony seals the oaths for peace between them."[9]

The symbolism of the rituals was further explained by Alan Udau: "the ceremonial sword, the *parang ilang* – this is not used for killing or harm, it signifies the respect for peace; the gong full of blood represents the bond of unity, the meaning of peace is together with the blood." He also explained the meaning of the oath-taking:

> "You cannot break the oath of a peacemaking when blood is shed – it's very strict- it's non-negotiable. This meaning is understood among all the Dayak tribes who stay on Borneo Island – anyone of a tribe who breaks an oath, faces the consequence of punishment incurring death."[9]

So the symbolism of the rituals would have been understood by all present and the ceremonies enabled people to move on from their initial feelings of tension and mistrust. After the rituals with the pigs were completed, the pigs were slaughtered and cooked for the ceremonial lunch. In the meantime, Tun Jugah, Temenggong Lawai Jau and other leaders present spoke; and this was followed by speeches from representatives of all those present.

According to another witness, Luri Erong who was a young girl at the time, after the rituals, and speeches the mood changed:

> "The *datun julut* was performed to the sape music accompanied by the harmonica. After that, people settled down and had their lunch. People were very happy - an atmosphere of peace prevailed. Eventually, there was peace for us in Sarawak. In the end, we all danced in a circle and Temenggong Jugah joined in and he was in the centre."[8]

For everyone to sit and eat together is an important feature of a Kenyah peacemaking as it reinforces feelings of trust and camaraderie, as noted by Conley, "After the ritual proceedings the men of both sides joined in a feast together to indicate their good will and removal of suspicion about the threat of poisoning from their erstwhile enemies" (Conley,1976, p.119). It is also noted at a more universal level that eating and drinking during a peacemaking symbolizes a shared humanity (Gohar and Schirch, 2016, p.457).

A reflection from another witness, Ebon Chaw, summarizes the process of peacemaking and also indicates how there was a transition of belief systems at that time. Although the peacemaking followed traditional custom, Long Jawe was a Christian settlement and the singing of Christian hymns lightened the gathering:

> "There was a *petutung* ceremony, a pig was slaughtered, we ate pig together. We exchanged parangs. We sang Christian songs, praise songs in Kenyah. We praised the Lord. We threw away our cares everything was lifted to the Lord." [9]

CONCLUSION

The Long Jawe peacemaking was the last major peacemaking involving indigenous groups from Sarawak and Indonesia, held at the local level. The parties involved had established mechanisms through their *adat* for making peace at the community level. The role of leaders was crucial for the early stages of mediation in order to bring these groups together. Another factor that can be attributed to the success of this peacemaking was the inclusive nature of the parties involved. This meant that the barriers which the conflict had imposed, became easily broken by the rituals and ceremonies and Christian fellowship. After this peacemaking, the Indonesians living in the Belaga, Kapit and Baram districts were able to travel back to their villages without the fear of repercussions. As anticipated, there were large-scale migrations of people, who had ancestral ties with Sarawak, into the Belaga and Kapit districts and the incoming border people decided to settle in Sarawak and obtained identity cards. Some of the Kenyah from Indonesia settled at Long Busang and their children were welcomed at the school at Long Jawe, without feeling any repercussions from the Long Jawe incident.

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Notes

[1] Commandos have been identified as *Regimen Pasukan Komando Angkatan Darat* RPKAD (van der Bijl, 2014, p.81). The record of the strength of this force varies. Both Lumenta (2011, p.136) and Burlison (2005, p.61) agree on this number. Gabriel Tan (2008, p.83) suggests the force was half this number. It is possible that the number of 200 includes boatmen, scouts and guides.
[2] Number of Border Scouts killed varies according to the account. Lumenta's informant (2011, p.136) suggests two were killed after being captured, Tan states eight were killed (Tan, 2008, p.83).
[3] Source: Tan Chee Beng personal communication.
[4] The word *adet* is the Kenyah term. The more general word used in Bahasa Malaysia is *adat.*
[5] Interview with Dato Sri and Puan Sri Tajang Laing on 16 April 2023.
[6] Belare Asa interviewed at Data Kakus May 2023. He was 16 years old at the time of the peacemaking and he was the son of a headman. He stayed two nights at Batu Betamen. After peacemaking he and his kinsmen were free to travel and work in Sarawak.
[7] Alan Udau of Uma Kulit Sungai Koyan Asap noted this date in his journal. Interview 30 May 2023.
[8] Luri Erong and Ta'a Erung two sisters interviewed at Uma Kulit Sungai Koyan Asap, June 2, 2024.
[9] Ebon Chaw at Uma Baha Sungai Koyan Asap, 29 May 2023.
[10] Jayl Langub managed to recall these names.
[11] Differs slightly from the recollections of Gerunsin Lembat who suggests the traditional rituals were performed only by a few (Sutlive 1992, p. 217).

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Jungle Doc: Providing Rural Health Clinic Services in Sarawak

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ABSTRACT

This article is to share the experience and challenges of serving in a rural health clinic and to inspire healthcare workers to take up the challenge to serve in interior regions. The article shares the author's experiences encountered while serving at Mulu National Park Health Clinic. Mulu is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, located in Sarawak, Malaysia. It holds many natural wonders and the settlement there consist of the nomadic Penan tribe and the Berawan mainly. With a population up to around 1000 it is a settlement surrounded by jungle. Medical services are provided from a government clinic since the early 90s, with an in-house medical officer post established since 2010. Serving at rural areas is an opportunity to gain valuable medical experience and provide medical and public health services to the community.

Keywords*:* Mulu clinic, Sarawak, Rural Health Services, rural clinic, Mulu.

INTRODUCTION

Sarawak, Malaysia has a population of 2.9 million (Sarawak Government, 2024) and approximately 43% live in interior regions, The highest proportions are in Sabah and Sarawak states (Ching S.Y et al., 2020; Population Statistic*s*, 2023) . With the huge geographical land mass, Sarawak has more widely dispersed rural communities consisting of various ethnic minorities. Living in longhouses, these communities are surrounded jungles and hence, exposed to its hazards which lowers the quality of living as compared to urban living (Kiyu et al., 2006).

Before the Alma Ata Declaration in 1978, Sarawak has already initiated, initiatives to enhance the health status of their rural populations. The rural health services in Sarawak initially, consisted of dispensaries, sub-dispensaries, travelling dispensaries and maternal and child health

(MCH) clinics. All the services were administered by the Health Department, except MCH services including their staff were managed by the Local Councils (Faizul Mansoor, 2018). By 1980s, all the facilities which bore those names inherited from the colonial government, were replaced as health centers, sub-health centers and village health team respectively, except for MCH. Those components provided curative services. By 1990s all clinics would have both curative and MCH services (Faizul Mansoor, 2018).

Taman Negara Mulu Health Clinic is one of the 247 health clinics in Sarawak (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2024) (Figure 1) currently, can only be reached through two ways; river and air, either from Marudi town or Miri city respectively. Marudi has a district hospital whereas Miri has the main referral tertiary hospital. The distance between Mulu and Miri is about approximately 30 minutes by commercial plane and approximately an hour by helicopter. The commercial air service operates with two flights a day to Miri. The river transportation by boat from Mulu to Marudi is approximately six hours subject to water level. From the Marudi jetty to Marudi Hospital its less than 5 minutes by road. Marudi Hospital being a district hospital can manage majority of mild to moderate severity of cases. In the event Marudi Hospital would like to refer patients to a tertiary center in Miri Hospital, inter-facility transfer using ambulance is then made. The journey from Marudi Hospital to Miri Hospital is by land which takes approximately 1.5 hours at a safe pace.

The next available clinic close to Mulu is Long Panai Health Clinic which is about two and half hours by boat on the way to Marudi town only serves minor cases just like Mulu clinic. This clinic is however connected to Marudi through an off-road route taking approximately around three hours.

Based on the general survey made in 2012, the residents of Mulu located within the 5 km operational area of Mulu Clinic are around 973 people (Mulu Health Clinic, 2014). This number covers five settlements in Mulu including the two resorts. The clinic also covers one settlement by its village health team (VHT) outside its operational area but within the VHT operational radius of 12km (Kiyu et al., 2006). This settlement is reachable by boat, 30 minutes upstream. The locals of Mulu are from the Penan and Berawan ethnics followed by other Orang Ulu ethnicities. Others residing here are workers at the resort, researchers and other government officers including from the clinic (Kuok Ho, 2020). Tourist population fluctuates according to holiday seasons with many Caucasians during their summer.

The main source of income for the residents in Mulu is tourism (Ibrahim et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2000). The residents work with the travel agencies and hotel companies such as the Mulu National Park (Mulu National Park, 2023) and a private run resort (Mulu Marriott, 2024). Agriculture is also widely practiced but much of its produce is for local consumption and trade. Other activities carried out are fishing and hunting (not for economic purpose). Many other food and daily supplies are brought in mainly by river from Marudi town or by flight making the prices costlier.

There is one road stretching four kilometers with the airport (and associated service buildings) at the center. Along this road there is a primary school and health clinic at one end, two resorts and several homestays, chalets, lodges and restaurants, besides scattered local houses all along to the other end.

This article reports the personnel experience and sharing of a doctor who served at rural Mulu National Park Health Clinic, to inspire others to serve at the interior regions of Sarawak. This article has been registered with the National Medical Research Registry of Malaysia ID: 24-02636-AW3.

DISCUSSION

Mulu Health Clinic

Mulu quickly became world known once its cavern systems were discovered to be the largest and longest in the world (Faizul Mansoor, 2018). The National Park administration felt the pressing need of a clinic there due to the increasing influx of tourist and local migration as workers in addition to the establishment of the Penan Resettlement Village. The Mulu Health Clinic then, started operating from the Mulu National Park Headquarters on October 26, 1992. On January 1998, a full-fledged government built clinic and quarters was completed and began operations (Faizul Mansoor, 2018; Mulu Health Clinic, 2014).

The health clinic is situated about 1.2km from the airport and it neighbors the Batu Bungan primary school which is next to the Penan Resettlement Village. It is a two-block wooden structure built on stilts, not only securing it from wild animals but mainly from flooding. The Melinau river is just around 20 meters in front of the clinic.

The main block consists of the outpatient and maternal child health clinics, pharmacy, nurses, medical assistant and doctor's examination rooms. The other block has the delivery room, kitchen and an observation ward with three beds. Besides the clinic buildings, the clinic grounds also have nine quarters for staff. All built out of wood on stilts too. Rainwater was originally the main water supply for the clinic and quarters, later upgraded, sourcing filtered water from the river. Electricity is supplied by a generator but its operation time is not 24 hours due to limited fuel supply. Internet is however available via satellite 24 hours using solar power. A jetty is also available to receive patients coming by boat and as well as a badminton court for staff and public recreation.

When the clinic first started, it only had one medical assistant. As the population and public health needs grew, more staff were sent and a residing doctor post was created from 2010 onwards. The clinic at the time of the authors tenure was manned by one doctor, two medical assistants, one staff nurse, two community nurse, one health assistant and one general worker. A total of eight staff.

The clinic provides health services and programs just as any other clinic at the urban and semi-urban areas. Services begin like any other health clinic from 8 am to 5 pm with 24 hour on-call services too. Other additional activities carried out and participated by the clinic staff include the Village Health Program (Kiyu et al., 2006), Flying Doctor Services (Hee et al., 2024) and Medical Evacuation by Air (Andrew Kiyu, 1986). This clinic also hosts and services the first rural continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis patient (Gregory X & Sakura Doris, 2018) (Figures 2).

Challenges in Providing Health Service

It is challenging serving as the only doctor in a rural clinic. The comfort and facilities for service in a rural clinic is unlike urban clinics. Nevertheless, over time this clinic has developed and kept well managed.

There is less air and water pollution around. Rainwater is the main source of water for domestic and drinking use by the residents here as well, besides the river water. Later, a filtering pump was installed to source water from the river for the clinic (filtered but untreated). The people here are educated to boil water before consumption and also not pollute the river and not to build sewage outlets into it. Monitoring is jointly carried out by the clinic, health office and park authorities. Acute gastro-enteritis surveillance is hence, carried out by the clinic, monitoring diarrheal and vomiting cases. Important, because the water sources are not treated. Fortunately, during the authors course of service here there were no outbreaks of any food and waterborne diseases.

Electricity is generated but not over 24 hours. This is due to the rationed supply of fuel. Usage is controlled to ensure sustainable supply throughout the year. Mulu does experience periods of drought were water levels become low, delaying fuel supply by boat from Marudi that can go for weeks. The generator run mostly during clinic (9am to 3pm) hours and from 6pm to 10pm. If there are night or overnight cases, the generator is restarted and the consumption is recalculated and rationed accordingly cutting from the usual hours.

There are also periods of heavy rains which instead causes flooding, cutting access to the clinic but usually the water subsides within a few hours. Unfortunately, it leaves behind a lot of organic rubbish and mud that all the staff gets together to clean up.

Providing healthcare services in rural areas are challenging. Accessibility to Mulu is most efficiently by air. Boat ride to the nearest town Marudi is long and hazardous. Accidents such as boat overturning (Bernama, 2024) and crocodile attacks (Borneo Post, 2024) has been reported. Its cost, is high and not fixed. Besides the flight to Miri city, there are also flights to Kuching city and temporarily to Brunei and Kota Kinabalu. Miri Hospital is the clinic's main referral point. Emergency cases are medevec there, (Hee et al., 2024) either by calling for a helicopter or using the commercial flight. Successful and quick medevec depends on weather and limited to before 4 pm. Commercial medevec can only be made by those who can afford whereas helicopter transfer is paid by the government. The medical escort can claim their airfares but the patient needs to have their own means to pay or claim (commercial plane). The cases for medevec are not only for emergencies but also for those patients who require admission or further follow up for treatment (maternal child health cases).

In addition to emergency cases needed to be flown out, contacting for referral and help is not as easy. Telecommunication signals is sparse. Sometimes one has to go search around the clinic premise for a good line.

The clinic ward is mainly for observation and transit before medevec. Cases seen besides the non-communicable chronic diseases are as reported by Kiyu et.al (Andrew Kiyu, 1986). Most of the tourist the author has encountered presented with allergies mainly, followed by injuries such

as cuts and fractures. Other emergencies seen were like pelvic inflammatory disease, acute cholecystitis, acute appendicitis, upper gastrointestinal bleed, severe contact dermatitis (Gregory X et al., 2016), stroke and many more.

Despite being a rural clinic, the author takes pride for it to be just well enough equipped clinic. The clinic has trained staff able to resuscitate, observe any critical patients overnight, conduct deliveries, carry out dressings, toilet and suturing and even minor incisions and drainage. The most challenging patients the clinic had was a case of severe allergic dermatitis (Gregory X et al., 2016) and conducting CAPD (Gregory X & Sakura Doris, 2018). A variety of antibiotics and resuscitation drugs were available.

Beside clinical management challenges, public health activities are carried out too. Such activities include vaccination provision via the school health program, vector control and surveillance especially for malaria and tuberculosis. Health education and promotional activities are also carried out. Environmental health surveys are also carried out to ensure water and sanitation are preserved. The doctor here was then known as the Medical Officer in Charge (MOIC) and is responsible for ensuring all these programs are run and reported in a timely manner. Key Performance Index are monitored and monthly reports are sent.

In addition to clinical and public health duties, the MOIC also overseas and supervisors the clerical administration of the clinic. Drug stock, staff leave, claims and managing resources. Financial management and procurement support are carried out from the Miri Divisional Health Office. Technical supervision of clinical and public health services is carried out by the respective profession heads and program heads based from the divisional health office too. The MOIC also has the responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of other staff and the upkeep of the whole clinic. It was during the author's tenure paperwork for a new jetty, generator house, refurbishment of the badminton court, rewiring of solar panel for 24-hour internet service, water supply from river started.

Besides work related to the clinic, as a sole medical officer in Mulu, networking with other agencies are important. Inter-agency programs with the school, airport authorities, resort staff are crucial in ensuring good relationship. This helps in the positive reciprocation and acceptance and support towards health provisions from the health clinic. Together with these agencies, the clinic led in the organization of community sports and events promoting healthy living under the Mulu Smoke Free program (Borneo Post, 2012).

Preparation of Rural Service

Any doctor who wishes to serve in a rural area or who is transferred there, must be firstly prepared in mindset. What is an expected concern should be recognized and planned accordingly to manage subsequent survival there. Keeping cash money is important since there are no banks and prices of essentials are expensive. Ability to cook is an advantage.

Water for cooking and drinking must be filtered and boiled. Activities requiring electricity should be managed to match its time ration.

Establishing good network with the local populace and other agency personnel is another added advantage. One can be well taken care off when in need of assistance and even cooperation to carry out both clinical and public health activities.

There were many communal activities (Figure 3) organized in this small settlement such as the school sports day, family days at the national parks, research group fellowships (include foreign groups too) and even the clinic is expected to carry out community programs of its own. Some of them include gotong-royong, sporting events promoting healthy lifestyle, health screening days and health talks.

Serving in rural areas should be viewed opportunistically. Any successful activity is already a great achievement. Service in rural areas is also an exclusive experience. An opportunistic window to become noticeable or selected for greater opportunities in career.

The support from the ministry is good and apt (Figure 4). Healthcare staff working in rural areas are given special rural allowances, allowed claims, opportunities for further training and courses, guidance and support from superiors. It is important for organizational support to staff providing services in these kinds of areas. Even for staff mobility around Mulu, a motorcycle was provided. There is even a boat.

CONCLUSION

Serving a rural area is a great opportunity not everyone will get a chance to do it. It is only rightful to make the most of the time to carry out one's duty the best one can responsibly.

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Malaysia's Role as ASEAN Chair in ASEAN – India Cooperation: An Analysis of Sustainability and Inclusivity

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses Malaysia's role as the 2025 ASEAN Chair in advancing the ASEAN-India partnership with the focus on sustainability and inclusivity. Using a liberal institutionalism theoretical framework, the study highlights how Malaysia as a middle power and founding member of ASEAN can utilize institutional mechanisms to enhance strategic cooperation with India. The study employs a qualitative method, desk based approach using secondary data from scholarly literature, official ASEAN reports, Malaysian government reports, policy documents and the news. Key areas explored include Malaysia's capacity to shape the ASEAN agenda, the role of ASEAN institutions in promoting regional integration and the significance of Malaysia-India relations the broader context of ASEAN-India cooperation. The findings suggest that Malaysia is well positioned to promote inclusive economic growth and sustainable development within ASEAN, while leveraging India's strategic and economic strengths. This paper concludes that liberal institutionalism provides a robust framework for understanding how Malaysia's leadership could institutionalize ASEAN-India cooperation beyond traditional economic diplomacy.

Keyword*s:* ASEAN-India relations, liberal institutionalism, sustainability, inclusivity, middle power diplomacy

INTRODUCTION

The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 laid the foundation for the emergence of the modern nation-state system, replacing the dominance of city-states and empires. Prior to this treaty, the international structure was largely governed by imperial rule, characterized by vast territories under the direct authority of emperors or monarchs (Croxton, 1999). At that time the notion of statehood based on fixed territorial boundaries had not yet taken form as imperial domains were ruled centrally by sovereign monarchs. The population within these empires was typically unified through political

structures particularly colonial policy. However, the sustainability of imperial conquest gradually diminished with the rise of national consciousness among the colonized populations. Consequently, the international system began to transition toward the nation-state model as we know it today. Former colonies gained independence from their colonial rulers, leading to a more complex and decentralized international political system. The newly established nation-states, driven by varying forms of nationalism emerged as primary actors in international affairs. This evolution introduced heightened competition and conflict, given the frequent clashes between divergent national interests.

Southeast Asia is one such region that experienced centuries of colonial rivalry with nearly all of its territories having been subjected to colonization except for Thailand (Lee Jun Jie, 2018). Modern states such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar were all once under the rule of various colonial powers. The legacy of colonization has had a profound impact on the governance and administrative systems of these states, where colonial frameworks were often adopted as models in shaping the structures of post-independence nation-building (Go, 2010).

Recognizing the anarchic nature of the international system, post-colonial Southeast Asian states began to consider the importance of establishing a regional organization to manage their shared interests as neighboring nations. This initiative arose from the security dilemma confronting newly independent states, which feared external threats from the broader international system that could undermine their sovereignty and national security. Lacking robust defense capabilities these states turned to diplomacy as a means of safeguarding their sovereignty and advancing their national interests. Diplomacy, in general is perceived as a process of negotiation and cooperation between actors to reach mutually acceptable outcomes. In contemporary international politics, interdependence has become a defining feature compelling states to engage with one another (Ramli & Kamarulnizam, 2019). This reality, along with other domestic challenges such as political instability, ethnic fragmentation, and underdeveloped economies prompted newly independent states to initiate the formation of regional organizations (Tarling, 1993).

The Ideological rivalry between democracy and socialism during the Cold War further motivated pro-Western states such as Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines to establish a regional organization. This aligns with the view of Eric Brahm, who contends that the establishment and evolution of regional organizations cannot be separated from the influence of international organizations. During the Cold War era, regional bodies served as substitutes for international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), which was often ineffective in resolving conflicts due to the dominance of great powers within the Security Council. Consequently, then UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali supported the formation of regional organizations to address Cold War era conflicts more effectively. This policy emerged from the recognition that the UN possessed limited influence in developing the human capital necessary for peacebuilding efforts (Brahm, 2005).

To address the uncertainty and potential threats in the region, countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines reached a consensus to establish a regional organization known as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on 8 August 1967 through the Bangkok Declaration. The declaration was signed by Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Razak Hussein, Indonesia's Foreign Minister Dr. Adam Malik, Thailand's Foreign

Minister Thanat Khoman, the Philippines Secretary of Foreign Affairs Narciso Ramos and Singapore's Foreign Minister S. Rajaratnam (Mokhtar A. Kadir, 1991). In this context, Malaysia as one of the first nations to recognize the value of regional cooperation, concluded that the security of Southeast Asian countries could not be assured as long as they remained divided and pursued individual paths. Regional unity was seen as essential for achieving comprehensive development and reducing dependency on major powers.

Problem Statements

This study seeks to examine the interrelationship between Malaysia's leadership through its ASEAN Chairmanship in 2025 and India's role as a strategic partner in enhancing economic, trade, social and strategic development across the Southeast Asian region. The current international structure is increasingly shaped by the rivalry between two major global powers the United States and China posing a challenge for ASEAN to navigate regional affairs without becoming entangled in their geopolitical contestation. In this context, Malaysia as the ASEAN Chair in 2025 is expected to play a critical role in ensuring that ASEAN derives substantial benefits particularly in the realms of economic and social development. At the same time, fostering closer ties with India offers a valuable alternative partnership beyond the traditional alignments with the United States and China. As noted by Datuk Ramesh Kodammal, Founder of the ASEAN-India Business Council on 6 March 2024, the relationship between ASEAN and India is crucial for addressing regional and global security concerns. Both ASEAN and India must strengthen their cooperation in promoting stability and security across the Indo-Pacific region and its surrounding areas.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical approach is essential for guiding the understanding of complex issues within the discipline of International Relations. To achieve greater clarity and to identify viable answers and solutions to the questions posed in this study, liberal institutionalism presents a highly relevant theoretical lens for examining Malaysia's role as ASEAN Chair in the context of ASEAN-India cooperation. This theory elucidates how regional institutions such as ASEAN serve as key platforms that facilitate cooperation among member states and external strategic partners in pursuit of mutual goals and win–win outcomes. As Keohane (1984) argues, institutions not only enable cooperation in an anarchic international system but also reduce uncertainty, create stable expectations, and lower transaction costs in inter-state relations.

Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship represents a significant responsibility for the country in ensuring that ASEAN's strategic objectives are realized, while also strengthening the region's resilience against the influence or exploitation of major powers such as the United States and China. Within the liberal institutionalist framework, the Chair of such an institution assumes the role of institutional leadership tasked with coordinating collective actions through pre-existing norms and structures (Acharya, 2014). ASEAN's normative framework known as the "ASEAN Way" must be preserved but Malaysia's approach as Chair in 2025 should also prioritize sustainable development and inclusivity as central pillars of regional cooperation.

Sustainability and inclusivity have become Malaysia's guiding principles in its ASEAN leadership strategy taking into account the increasingly competitive global environment and the likelihood of economic and geopolitical uncertainty emerging from the ongoing shift from a uni-

multipolar to a multipolar world order. As a middle power in international politics, Malaysia has consistently demonstrated an active diplomatic role in promoting peace, security, and prosperity through multilateral engagement. The country's contributions to United Nations peacekeeping operations serve as evidence of its commitment to upholding international mandates and maintaining global peace and security. Malaysia is also committed to continued active participation in international dialogue and multilateral efforts to find peaceful solutions to global issues through platforms such as the United Nations and various global forums. Malaysia firmly adheres to the principles of inclusive engagement and cooperation, while rejecting isolationist and unilateral actions (Prime Minister's Office, 2019).

The ASEAN-India partnership is governed by various institutional mechanisms, including the ASEAN-India Summit, the ASEAN-India Plan of Action (2021–2025) and the ASEAN-India Green Fund. Through the liberal institutionalist lens, this cooperation is understood not merely in terms of short-term strategic gains, but in relation to long-term objectives such as interdependence, norm-based trust, and collective development (Keohane & Nye, 2011). Moreover, institutions do more than align national aspirations they also facilitate and enforce compliance with international agreements made between states (Martin & Simmons, 1998). Institutions help build long-term commitment and trust, as reflected in Malaysia's ongoing efforts in clean energy development and digital transformation under ASEAN-India cooperation.

Institutions such as ASEAN also serve as diplomatic channels that enable states to mitigate security dilemmas caused by the anarchic nature of the international system, through the establishment of shared norms and structured diplomatic interaction (Milner, 1992). Hence, ASEAN plays a pivotal role in coordinating cooperative actions among its member states. Although ASEAN operates without binding treaties, it continues to embrace a spirit of collaboration anchored in the core principles of liberalism.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this article is grounded in social science research design, specifically utilizing a qualitative research approach. For the purpose of this study, the author adopts secondary data collection methods to obtain a comprehensive background and conduct in-depth analysis of all relevant aspects pertaining to the research topic. The secondary data were gathered from a range of existing sources including scholarly articles, journal papers, conference proceedings, official government and ASEAN reports, academic books, as well as official websites of both governmental and ASEAN institutions. These secondary sources serve as essential references for developing the theoretical and conceptual frameworks underpinning the study. Their use allows the author to construct a well-informed analysis based on existing academic and policy-oriented literature related to Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship and ASEAN-India cooperation.

Regional Organization as a Set of Shared Interests Among Member States

Established in 1967, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has become a pivotal regional organization that significantly contributes to the stability of Southeast Asia. Since its inception, ASEAN has expanded to include all Southeast Asian countries, now comprising ten member states. Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia were among the last to join ASEAN in 1997 (Lee Poh Ping, 2009). Over time, ASEAN has evolved beyond its early pro-Western image by

prioritizing multilateral cooperation among its members and adopting a neutral stance in international affairs. The inclusion of Southeast Asian countries has positively impacted both the organization and its member states. Although ASEAN is not a defense pact, its collaboration in political, economic, social, and educational spheres has generated long-term benefits for all members. This has also supported the emergence of Southeast Asian nations as influential middle powers in the international system.

Economic development and political stability among member states have attracted significant international investment, thereby opening new markets across ASEAN. Furthermore, ASEAN actively engages with major global powers to stimulate economic growth, demonstrating the organization's substantial and positive role in advancing the interests of its members (Hisyam Basabah, 2019). The close cooperation among ASEAN countries has contributed meaningfully to preserving the region's autonomy and reducing dependency on external powers. Even countries like Singapore and the Philippines historically aligned with the United States now advocate for a consensus-based approach among all members to preserve the region's independence and neutrality, irrespective of global power shifts. ASEAN's diplomatic prudence in navigating political and economic pressures has been critical to its continued relevance. As a coalition of small states in the international political arena, ASEAN employs a "hedging" strategy asserting its relevance while avoiding alignment through "bandwagoning" with major powers. This approach mirrors Malaysia's own foreign policy of maintaining balanced relations with all global powers in pursuit of national interest (Acharya, 2014).

As a regional organization comprising ten member states, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore, Brunei, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar ASEAN's collective cooperation has been continuously strengthened to promote regional development. Each member state maintains distinct national interests, expressed through their respective foreign policies, aimed at maximizing national benefits. The concept of a "region" may be defined as a structure, process, and system that aims to achieve greater alignment within a specific international area, encompassing economic, political, security, socio-cultural, and other forms of interconnection. This definition underscores the link between regionalism and geographical proximity, as well as the sense of shared identity among member states (Dent, 2008). The regional spirit shared by ASEAN members is embodied in a distinctive approach known as the "ASEAN Way." ASEAN actors regard the organization as a platform for collaborative efforts that can uplift the entire region. From an idealist perspective, states and global structures are viewed as part of a community capable of cooperating to address shared challenges. The principles of idealism or liberalism underpin ASEAN's decision-making processes, as the goal of the "ASEAN Way" is to reach consensus with a mutual understanding that all member states possess equal standing.

Although most regional and global organizations are founded on liberal principles, there is ongoing debate about the extent to which some operate under realist assumptions. For example, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) serves as a platform for South Asian countries, but the disproportionate influence of India its most powerful member has hindered the organization's effectiveness as a genuine vehicle for regionalism. In contrast, ASEAN's balance of power and shared cultural dynamics have fostered a more conducive environment for pursuing the organization's idealistic goals. Moreover, the "ASEAN Way" as a decision-making process reinforces efforts to enable collaborative governance and lays the groundwork for institutionalized cooperation (Susy Tekunan, 2014).

Malaysia's Role as ASEAN Chair in 2025

Malaysia must play a clear and effective role not only as a member of ASEAN but also as the ASEAN Chair beginning on 1 January 2025. Under Malaysia's leadership, economic sustainability and inclusive regional solidarity will be key priorities. According to Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, ASEAN under Malaysia's Chairmanship will also focus on enhancing global cooperation as the current global landscape is increasingly complex and demands that ASEAN adopt new roles and responsibilities. This responsibility arises from ASEAN's growing stature as a region of 671 million people and a combined GDP of USD 3.8 trillion, making it the fifth largest economy in the world. Accordingly, Malaysia's Chairmanship theme for 2025, "Inclusivity and Sustainability," reflects ASEAN's vision of equitable growth, where all member states regardless of size or economic capacity benefit from development (Anwar Ibrahim, 2024). The theme aims to bridge development gaps, improve quality of life, and mitigate the impact of climate change. Implicit within this theme is a call for enduring unity and resistance to any divisive efforts. "Many envy our unity, and that is what we must defend," remarked Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohamad Hasan (2024). The central task is to preserve ASEAN's unity as a zone of peace, neutrality and sustainability for the future.

One of Malaysia's core priorities as ASEAN Chair in 2025 is the sustainability of regional security, particularly as ASEAN states face global security dilemmas arising from economic and strategic uncertainties between the world's two major powers the United States and China. Each ASEAN member is working to safeguard its own national security across various domains economic, human, food and beyond through collective action and mutual support within ASEAN. This shared commitment reinforces the ASEAN spirit and strengthens organizational cohesion. Through ASEAN, cooperation across sectors such as economy, security, politics, culture, technology, and education can be further enhanced for the benefit of all members. The differing levels of development among ASEAN member states have led to mechanisms of mutual assistance, particularly to support less developed members, thereby narrowing intra-regional development disparities. This approach ensures that the economic prosperity generated through development is equitably distributed among nearly 700 million people in Southeast Asia (ASEAN, 2007; ASEAN Secretariat, 2023). A more effective ASEAN also increases its attractiveness to foreign investors, contributing to regional growth and stability.

In addition to prioritizing regional security sustainability, Malaysia's Chairmanship also emphasizes economic inclusivity. Malaysia recognizes that for ASEAN to emerge as a viable "third bloc" in the international system, it must possess economic strength and capability without leaving any member behind. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Southeast Asia received USD 156 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2020. This figure has continued to grow, driven by the political and economic stability of ASEAN countries. For instance, major U.S. companies such as Tesla, Amazon, and Google have chosen Indonesia as a key investment destination, largely due to confidence in the leadership of former President Joko Widodo, who brought political stability following the presidential election. Meanwhile, Hyundai has selected Thailand as a strategic base for expanding its presence in Southeast Asia. These rising investments have had a direct and positive impact on the economies of ASEAN member states (Hisyam, 2021).

The ongoing U.S-China trade conflict has become a critical factor influencing global economic and political dynamics especially in Southeast Asia. Both superpowers hold significant interests in the region, and ASEAN states maintain strong economic ties with both. This conflict has disrupted global supply chains, prompting companies to diversify and relocate production operations out of both China and the United States. The resulting uncertainty in international trade has exerted pressure on financial systems and posed challenges to economic growth. Nonetheless, this volatility has also created new opportunities for ASEAN countries, particularly as they adapt to shifting trade patterns and global economic trends. ASEAN states are collaborating to address the financial disruptions caused by the trade war. To mitigate negative impacts and capitalize on emerging opportunities, these countries must align their investment and trade policies to maintain competitiveness in an evolving global landscape (Esquivias, 2024).

As highlighted, ASEAN's "hedging strategy" plays a pivotal role in maintaining regional stability amid intensifying U.S.–China rivalry. ASEAN's consensus-based approach encourages strategic cooperation with external powers while fostering balanced bilateral relations with key global actors. Among ASEAN's primary strategies are partnerships such as ASEAN + China, ASEAN + United States, ASEAN + Russia, ASEAN + Japan and ASEAN + India. These arrangements not only help ASEAN sustain beneficial relations with major powers but also generate significant returns for member states. Southeast Asia with a population nearly 700 million and a strategic position in global trade, politics, and economics represents a highly valuable market. It is clear that ASEAN's cooperation with major powers such as the U.S., China, Russia, Japan, and India is driven by mutual interest and the potential for substantial economic gains (Bajpaee, 2022). This paper highlights the ASEAN–India partnership in particular, given India's status as the world's most populous country and its potential to serve as a vast economic market not only for Malaysia but for all ASEAN member states.

DISCUSSION

The Importance of ASEAN–India Cooperation Through Economic Sustainability and the Inclusiveness of Member States

The relationship between India and the Southeast Asia region has been harmonious since ancient times. This early connection led to the process of Indianization (Coedes, 1971), wherein Indian cultural influence spread extensively across the region. This process significantly impacted the culture and development of the countries in Southeast Asia. India, being one of the oldest civilizations in the world, contributed greatly to the spread of Hinduism, especially in Indonesia. Early civilizations such as Kedah Tua and Srivijaya adopted Hinduism as their faith, largely due to the influence of Indian missionaries (Abdullah Sidek, 2021).

Through the theme of "Inclusivity," Malaysia leads ASEAN member states in pursuing strategic cooperation in areas such as economic development, political collaboration and technology sharing pillars that form the foundation of ASEAN–India cooperation. India has been a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) since 1996, which underscores its commitment to regional security. India's engagement with ASEAN gained further significance after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, when Southeast Asia was labeled as a terrorist stronghold. India's active role was seen as a valuable contribution to regional security, particularly in the western flank of ASEAN (The Hindu, 2002).

India's trade and investment with ASEAN have expanded dramatically. ASEAN is now India's fourth-largest trading partner, while India ranks as the seventh-largest trading partner of ASEAN. Over 20% of foreign investments flow into ASEAN, with Singapore leading the charge. ASEAN is also a key source of investment for India, and the region is essential for India's long-term economic ambitions. Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with ASEAN countries are among the longest-standing in India's foreign policy and carry high aspirations. Furthermore, air connectivity has grown rapidly, facilitating closer ties between India and ASEAN, as well as improving access to Southeast Asia. This has contributed to India becoming a prominent source of tourism for the region. The extensive Indian diaspora, numbering over six million people across Southeast Asia, also strengthens the ties between India and ASEAN, fostering deeper cultural, social, and economic connections (Narendra Modi, 2018).

The cooperation and strong relationship between ASEAN and India have yielded significant outcomes for both parties. Looking ahead, both ASEAN and India are focused on strengthening their partnership to achieve sustained mutual benefits. During the 23rd ASEAN-India Senior Officials Meeting on 2 April, 2021, senior officials from both sides discussed various areas of mutual interest, including counterterrorism, violent extremism, transnational crimes, maritime cooperation, and regional connectivity. They also addressed issues like trade and finance, investment, economic cooperation, and crucial matters like climate change, agriculture, disaster management, education, cultural ties, sustainable development, narrowing development gaps, science and technology, and digital transformation and cybersecurity (ASEAN, 2021).

The potential of ASEAN-India cooperation is significant, given the combined population of both regions, which approaches 2 billion people, or nearly one-quarter of the global population. This vast demographic offers immense opportunities for economic growth. If these opportunities are maximized, ASEAN and India could emerge as a new global economic powerhouse (ASEAN, 2023). Additionally, India's relatively low labor costs present an attractive proposition for ASEAN member states looking to invest and operate there, which would lower production costs and further strengthen economic ties between the two regions. Clearly, ASEAN-India cooperation can yield numerous benefits for both parties across various sectors (Naina Bhardwaj, 2023). As Malaysia chairmanship to ASEAN in 2025, its role will be pivotal in enhancing the strategic partnerships and inclusivity within ASEAN, ensuring that these collaborations, including with India, move beyond mere dialogue and lead to tangible results for mutual prosperity.

Multilateralism of Malaysia and ASEAN + India, Now and in the Future

Multilateralism refers to interactions involving three or more states, typically conducted through organizations or cooperative frameworks that encompass multiple countries. It is also understood as the practice of coordinating policies among participating states—either formally or informally through governmental institutions, regional organizations, or international bodies. Since the end of World War II, multilateral engagement has become a defining feature of global governance (Muldon, 1982). According to Robert Keohane, international institutions support multilateralism by reducing transaction costs, providing information, and facilitating the enforcement of agreements. Even in the absence of hegemonic power, cooperation can be sustained through rule-based institutions (Keohane, 1984). Multilateralism can also be interpreted as the sharing of common values, norms, ideas, and identities among states, given that the international structure itself is socially constructed. As such, multilateral institutions represent the aspirations and values

of their member states (Wendt, 1999). In this context, states gather in multilateral forums not merely for practical purposes, but also to promote shared ideals and cultivate a collective identity. The legitimacy of an international institution derives from its ability to reflect shared values, thereby facilitating cooperation and enhancing the stability of international relations.

From the perspective outlined, it can be understood that ASEAN plays a pivotal role as a regional institution aimed at maximizing the interests of its member states. Consequently, the relationship between ASEAN and India focuses on cooperation in various domains, including politics, economics, defense, culture, and education. India began its engagement as an ASEAN dialogue partner in 1996 and subsequently joined the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), marking the beginning of a significant period of regional economic integration. The first India-ASEAN Summit was held in Phnom Penh in 2002, and the signing of the Long-term Cooperation Agreement for Peace and Prosperity in 2004 marked a milestone in India's Look East Policy, further solidifying its engagement with the region. As a dialogue partner of ASEAN, India's involvement is crucial in ensuring the expansion of markets and fostering multilateral relations through ASEAN with other regions, which is essential for maintaining and enhancing the stability and development of Southeast Asia. The prospects for long-term cooperation between ASEAN and India are substantial, as this partnership potentially engages a population of over 2 billion people, underscoring the significance of such regional collaborations (Anwar Ibrahim, 2024).

Global Challenges and Malaysia's Leadership of ASEAN 2025

The current international structure is characterized as uni-multipolar, with intensifying competition as each nation strives to enhance its national interests through various methods, including cooperation or force. The North-South exploitation, a term that refers to the domination and exploitation of wealthy and developed countries over poorer and developing nations, is becoming more pronounced. China, for instance, is an emerging economic and military power with growing capabilities to exert its hegemony in Asia. This strength is underpinned by China's politics, economy, military, and technology, all of which have been significantly developed since 1978 under the administration of Deng Xiaoping (Michael E. Marti, 2002).

This is further compounded by China's membership as a permanent member with veto power in the United Nations Security Council, granting it greater access to exert its foreign policies on smaller nations. The dependency theory provides a suitable framework to explain the reliance of smaller nations on great powers. Through this dependency, peripheral countries often rely on aid and financial support from core nations to sustain their operations. This theory, which emerged in the late 1960s, was originally developed to explain the socio-economic conditions in Latin America (Ahiakpor & James, 1985).

Recognizing the potential risks that could lead Southeast Asian countries to become proxies for core nations, ASEAN has decided that it is essential for its member states, which are primarily peripheral nations, to engage in dialogue and cooperation with major powers. Although India is not a veto-holding member nor a core power in the international system, its status as a "sleeping giant" in the economic field allows it to bring significant value to this partnership. Through mutual interests, both ASEAN and India continue to safeguard their respective interests collaboratively. India is particularly concerned about security threats in Southeast Asia, fearing that such threats could undermine its position and interests in the region. Furthermore, India has

shifted its energy dependence away from the Middle East, increasingly turning to Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam, Myanmar, and Indonesia for its energy needs (Pandya & Malone, 2010).

Thus, the ASEAN-India dialogue and cooperation present a dual-purpose approach, not solely focused on economic and trade interests. ASEAN member states, such as Malaysia, benefit from greater access to bilateral relations with India because ASEAN as a regional organization has earned India's trust, and India views ASEAN member states as crucial partners. Malaysia's Chairmanship of ASEAN from 2025 to 2027 will usher in a new chapter in bilateral cooperation, as Malaysia has long maintained excellent relations with India, reinforced by the personal rapport between Prime Ministers Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia and Narendra Modi of India. In light of the competitive global challenges, Malaysia has outlined three key strategies as ASEAN Chair in 2025: strengthening regional value chains and regulatory cooperation, fortifying the foundations of member states through collaborative economic restructuring, and leveraging the strengths of ASEAN member states for collective benefit in the region. Additionally, Malaysia has set ambitious goals for ASEAN to achieve a resilient economy, becoming the fourth-largest global economy by 2030, increasing trade and investment values, and promoting digital transformation across the region (Jabatan Penerangan, 2024).

CONCLUSSION

This study has examined Malaysia's anticipated role as ASEAN Chair (2025) through the lens of liberal institutionalism, emphasizing how regional institutions like ASEAN can facilitate sustainable and inclusive cooperation with strategic partners such as India. The findings indicate that Malaysia is well-positioned to lead ASEAN in institutionalizing deeper economic and strategic ties with India by leveraging its long-standing diplomatic credibility, non-aligned posture and middle power identity. Malaysia's foreign policy approach grounded in engagement, consensus-building and economic diplomacy, provides a comparative advantage in navigating complex geopolitical realities and balancing interests among ASEAN member states and external powers.

This paper further argues that ASEAN-India cooperation, if broadened beyond traditional trade and investment frameworks, holds transformative potential for regional development. Malaysia's chairmanship could champion targeted initiatives such as regional value chain integration, inclusive digital infrastructure, clean energy partnerships and SME capacity-building programs. These efforts would not only enhance ASEAN's collective economic resilience but also narrow intra-regional development disparities particularly benefiting less developed member states such as Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar. As the ASEAN Chair, it is a priority for Malaysia to lead efforts to strengthen regional peace, stability, and prosperity. Furthermore, Malaysia is committed to promoting strategic relations among member states through dialogue and diplomacy, as well as collaborating to develop economic partnerships. Malaysia will continue to advocate for stronger commitments to enhance trade and investment between ASEAN countries (Mohamad Hasan, 2024). This statement reflects Malaysia's determination to ensure that the ASEAN region remains a focal point for global investment. As a result, Malaysia has made considerable efforts to cooperate international trade blocs such as BRICS, which are seen as offering substantial trade opportunities not only for the Malaysian economy but also as having the potential to positively impact the Southeast Asian region as a whole.

Malaysia holds a strategic opportunity to reframe ASEAN-India relations through the lens of sustainability and inclusivity. This involves advocating for institutional reforms that integrate long-term cooperation mechanisms into the ASEAN-India framework, such as regularized policy dialogues, jointly funded sustainability initiatives, and cross-border innovation platforms. In doing so, Malaysia can assume a central role in shaping a more cohesive and future-oriented ASEAN, while reinforcing the liberal institutionalist principles through its ASEAN Chairmanship. The application of liberal economic principles promoted by Malaysia may offer significant benefits to ASEAN as an effective regional organization as trade interdependence raises the cost of conflict, thereby creating incentives for cooperation and reducing the likelihood of war. By opening markets and enhancing economic integration, states construct a network of interconnections that strengthens both stability and economic prosperity (Keohane & Nye, 1997). Liberal internationalism is rooted in an open global economy, where free trade fosters cooperation, mutual dependence and shared prosperity. By liberalizing their markets, ASEAN countries contribute to a broader system of global economic governance that supports long-term stability and inclusive growth (Ikenberry, 2009).

Accordingly, under Malaysia's Chairmanship, ASEAN is well-positioned to further promote economic cooperation with major economic powers such as India. In light of the current international structure, this necessitates comprehensive and dynamic efforts by middle powers and smaller nations such as ASEAN member states to ensure the sustainability and resilience of their national and regional development.

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The Malaysia Plan: A Policy Initiative and/or a Shopping List

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ABSTRACT

The Malaysia Plan, a cornerstone of national development strategy, is designed to guide economic and social progress through five-year planning cycles. Many countries implemented the five-year development plan because of the failure of the market or price mechanism to promote growth, efficiency and equity. The plan can help to accelerate the country's economic growth and development through resource mobilization and allocation. However, its effectiveness has been increasingly questioned due to persistent gaps between policy formulation and implementation. The process of making a Malaysia Plan is a lengthy exercise, involving all levels of the civil service, and numerous technical committees and taskforces. This paper critically examines whether the Malaysia Plan functions as a coherent policy initiative or merely a political shopping list. Drawing on document analysis and case-based evidence from Sarawak—specifically the Kuching Outer Ring Road and Samarahan projects—the study explores how institutional fragmentation, shifting political priorities, and budgetary constraints undermine project execution. The analysis is framed within institutionalism theory, revealing that over 60% of approved projects are not completed within the plan period. These findings suggest that the Malaysia Plan, while ambitious in scope, often fails to translate strategic objectives into actionable outcomes. The paper concludes with recommendations for enhancing institutional accountability, improving project selection transparency, and aligning budgetary processes with long-term planning goals.

Keywords*:* Malaysian Plan, policy implementation, development planning, institutional accountability, budgetary constraints.

INTRODUCTION

Development planning has long been a cornerstone of Malaysia's national strategy, with the Malaysia Plan serving as the primary instrument for articulating and implementing socio-economic goals. Since its inception in 1966, the Malaysia Plan has evolved into a comprehensive five-year

framework that outlines government priorities, allocates resources, and guides public sector investment. However, despite its ambitious scope, the Malaysia Plan has faced persistent challenges in translating policy into practice. These include delays in project implementation, shifting political priorities, and institutional fragmentation—issues that have raised concerns about whether the Plan functions as a coherent policy initiative or merely a political shopping list.

The Twelfth Malaysia Plan (RMK12), for instance, continues to emphasize strategic urban and regional development, particularly in Sabah and Sarawak, yet implementation gaps remain evident (Abdullah, J., Zanudin, K., & Marzukhi, M. A., 2022). Salleh, D., & Junaiadi, N. H. (2023) have noted that while the Plan articulates clear objectives, its execution is often undermined by bureaucratic disinterest and the politicization of project selection. This disconnect between planning and implementation is not unique to RMK12 but reflects a broader pattern observed across multiple plan cycles.

This paper addresses the central research question: Is the Malaysia Plan a coherent policy initiative or a political shopping list? To explore this, the study draws on policy implementation theory, institutionalism, and the political economy of planning. These frameworks help unpack the structural and political dynamics that influence how development plans are formulated, prioritized, and executed. This paper is trying to show that the Malaysia plan document is a major government policy initiative which guides government activities and courses of actions for a period of five years.

For the plan to be of any use, its approved projects must be implemented. Project implementation is influenced by many factors including the prevailing economic, political and social circumstances. Some projects in the approved project list of a Malaysia Plan may not be considered at all in the plan's five annual budgets. Some projects may be dropped during the Mid-Term Review of the plan, while new projects may be added in. The Kuching Outer Ring Road, the second road linking Kuching with Kota Samarahan in Sarawak, for example, was not a Malaysia Plan project initially, but it was added in later during the annual budget exercise (see Table 1).

The paper is also trying to fill that gap by situating the Malaysia Plan within established political science discourse and by critically examining its implementation through case-based evidence from Sarawak, as the list of the approved Malaysia Plan projects can be altered, the Malaysia Plan document and its associated documents denote a shopping list where items may be added to or dropped from the list.

By focusing on the Kuching Outer Ring Road and Samarahan projects, this study illustrates how institutional fragmentation, budgetary constraints, and political interference can derail even well-intentioned development plans. The findings contribute to ongoing debates about governance, accountability, and the role of planning in achieving equitable and sustainable development in Malaysia.

METHOD AND APPROACHES

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in document analysis and case study methodology to critically examine the Malaysia Plan as both a policy initiative and a political instrument. Thus, in-depth interview among the several State Planning Unit and Samarahan District officers have been conducted to gather some valuable data and information in this study.

The approach is guided by the need to understand how planning documents are formulated, interpreted, and implemented within Malaysia's federal and state governance structures.

Document Analysis

The primary method involves a systematic analysis of official planning documents, including: Malaysia Plan (MP) reports (e.g., 7MP, 8MP, 9MP); mid-term review documents; annual budget allocations and project implementation records.

These documents are examined to identify patterns of project approval, budget allocation, and implementation outcomes. The analysis focuses on discrepancies between planned and executed projects, particularly those that were altered, postponed, or dropped during the plan period.

Case Study Selection

Two case studies are selected to illustrate the dynamics of planning and implementation: Kuching Outer Ring Road and Samarahan-Ensengei-Baki Road.

These projects were chosen due to their visibility in planning documents and their relevance to Sarawak's development agenda. They exemplify how political priorities and budgetary constraints influence project selection and execution.

Analytical Framework

The study is framed within one of the key political science theories which is Institutionalism. It will help to understand how bureaucratic structures and inter-agency coordination affect outcomes. This study used the lens of institutionalism to narrate the question of, Is the Malaysia Plan a coherent policy initiative or a political shopping list? The narratives about Malaysia Plan are discuss thoroughly in this study. The process and implementation of Malaysian Plan will show either it a coherent policy initiative or a political shopping list.

Data Sources

Data is drawn from; Government publications and archives; budget tables and scheme value records; and scholarly literature on Malaysian development planning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Development Planning and Five-Year Development Plan

Developing countries adopt development planning and operationalize its idea in anticipation that it can help to accelerate the country's economic growth and development. Maki and Angus (1973) associate development planning with the efforts to plan for sectoral programmes and regional development. Khan (1988) describes development planning as:

A deliberate government effort (usually monitored by a central organization or planning authority) to coordinate economic decision-making over the long-run or a period of time and to influence or direct changes (in some cases, even control) in principle economic variable (e.g., income, employment, investment, exports, imports) in accordance with a predetermined set of development objectives.

Development planning may be conceptualized on a short-term, medium-term or long-term basis. The most obvious symbol of development planning in developing countries is the Five-Year Development Plan. A Five-Year Development Plan is considered a medium-term plan, as opposed to the long-term plan which covers a period of 10-20 years and the short-term plan such as the annual plan.

An example of a long-term plan is the perspective plan. As it deals with large aggregates (and over a longer period), a perspective plan is, in fact, a 'frame'[1], in which the operational plans such as the Development Plan and the Annual Plan are set. The perspective plan and the medium-term plan have a similar aim which is to specify the intention of the government of trying to achieve some stated (quantitative) object at a stated time. Both types of plan deal with estimates of future conditions. But a medium-term estimate is more common and received more attention than a long-range one because of its shorter time-horizon. If the prime object of the perspective plan is to provide the theoretical framework for the shorter plans, the main concern of decision-making in the medium-term plan is about the country's output structure, and the choice of investments, exports, and imports. The aim of an annual plan, which is drawn up in conjunction with the annual budget, is to provide the details of the government's policy to be implemented for the coming year.

Plan Document

A plan document varies in completeness. A five-year development plan is said to be a comprehensive one, as it covers virtually all the sectors of the national economy such as manufacturing, agriculture, and public sector. A typical five-year plan may contain any or all of the following parts: a survey of current economic conditions; a list of proposed public expenditures; a discussion of likely developments in the private sector; a macro-economic projection of the country's economy; and a review of government policies.

Some analysts see planning document as a formal document that consists of statistics and proposals for new investment or activity (Hayward and Narkiewiczs, 1978). While others such as Griffin and Enos (1970) see planning document as an 'economic manifesto' as well as a political document. According to them, a planning document is as much a political document as it is an economic one because it is also an expression of the aspirations of a society, and of the goals and the targets to be accomplished.

Similarly, Toye (1989) argues that it is a political document as it also expresses an aspiration of a society of the policies that have been designed to achieve those goals and targets. This implies making preferences such as on what sort of society one would like to live in. Making preferences is a process that involves not only the allocation of values, but also the selection of priorities among values. Making a choice means choosing between conflicting objectives in order to secure the preferred one at the expense of the others (Shanks, 1977). This process of selecting values is, in itself, a reflection of political choice.

The same can also be said of the choice of policy instruments to accomplish the desired goals and objectives of the plan. Because the process often 'embodies values about means, it is also a highly political process' (Bell 1977). In other words, a five-year plan document and the process of making it are inherently normative or value-loaded in content (Skelcher, 1982). And for these reasons, a plan document is as much a political document as it is an economic one.

It is a political document because of its distributional objective and interventionist control of economic resources (Toh and Low, 1988) and also involves the allocation and selection of values. It is also a political document because the allocation and selection of values also coincide with the domestic power structure, suggesting the relationship between politics and economics. It is a political document as much as it is a technical one, because it is more than just about making a forecast (and a projection or an intervention in the economy), but is also about a government effort to reconcile such forecast with what is politically preferred (Hayward and Narkiewwiczs, 1978).

Impetus for Making the Five-Year Development Plan

There are several reasons why a five-year development plan is initiated in developing countries. The first reason is that developing countries are often asked to provide justification for claims for foreign aid. The argument for this is that foreign aid agencies (such as the World Bank and the Agency for International Development) insist that grants and loans will only be made available to the developing country on the condition that a national development plan showing specific sectoral targets and development projects to be undertaken exist there.

The second reason for initiating development planning in developing countries arises from the alleged failure of the market or price mechanism to promote growth, efficiency and equity (Griffin and Enos, 1970), as the market is unable to do its job. The assumption then is that if the market cannot do the job properly then the task of promoting growth with equity in developing countries must be assumed by the government. The outcome of the market failure in this aspect is the gross disparities between the social and the private valuations of alternative investment projects (Todaro, 1989).

The third reason is resource mobilization and allocation. Investment projects must be chosen and coordinated wisely so that a country's limited resources are channeled to where they can be used in the most productive manner. But in developing countries, the only dominant institution that is capable of undertaking such development initiatives and stimulating the economy is the public sector. The task of generating development and public equity is, therefore, left to the government sector (Hirschmann, 1999).

To be able to attain these goals, public sector resource allocation and investment must be planned properly. Public sector planning can help to address three important tasks: (a) the establishment of a framework for public sector resource allocation; (b) the establishment of a guideline for making decisions in the public and semi-public agencies entrusted with national development; and (c) the provision of criteria for evaluating sector investment (Rondinelli, 1978).

The fourth reason for development planning involves popular attitudes and psychology. The argument here is that development planning can help to rally a population behind the government. Projects such as the campaign to eliminate poverty that cuts across all boundaries, such as racial or religious boundaries, may have a positive impact on how the people judge the government.

The fifth reason is simply emulation. That is some developing countries undertake the development-planning effort because some other countries have done it.

General Overview of the Development Planning Process

The initial stage of preparing a five-year development plan is usually divided into three major stages, namely the macro stage, the sector stage and the micro or the project stage. Basically, the macro stage of plan formation involves the estimation of the levels and growth rates of national output (such as savings, investment, capital, capital stocks, exports, imports, foreign assistance, employment etc) for the next five years. These estimates form the macroeconomic framework for the development plan, and become the basis of preparing the next two stages. This is also the stage where: (a) the goals of the plan are identified and translated into quantitative targets for growth, employment creation, income distribution, poverty alleviation etc; and (b) the measures required to facilitate accomplishment of these goals (such as development policy) are also determined.

In principle, once the desirable levels of and the rates of growth of the entire economy have been determined at the macro stage, the next step is to determine the desirable levels and rates of growth for the individual sectors. This is the sector stage of the plan formulation and its main concern is sectoral projection which include projections on: (a) the individual sector output (production); (b) the input (resources and investment needs) requires to produce that output; and (c) the employment to be generated out especially, of the agricultural and manufacturing sectors.

The micro or project stage of the plan formulation is the stage where the detailed investment programmes and projects within the sector are designed. The projects that have been designed are appraised to ensure that they meet the requirements for the attainment of the planned growth targets and can help to effectuate growth. The micro stage is concerned more with how individual project is going to affect a given area. The success of any planning exercise depends on how the three stages (and related processes or activities such as choosing broad objectives and articulating of goals) interact with each other.

Development planning process involves a top-down approach and a bottom-up approach. The top-down approach of planning begins with a call from the relevant central agencies to all line agencies (ministries, departments, and other governmental bodies) to submit their proposals for development programmes and/or projects for the five-year development plan.

In contrast, the process of preparing projects at the micro stage level or at the line or operating agencies level represents the bottom-up approach to plan formulation. This process begins with submission of proposed projects by those agencies to the central agency that has requested for them. That is the task of identifying, formulating and proposing development projects lies with the line agencies. Ministries/departments/ agencies prepare the development programmes and projects only on the areas in which they specialize in. For example, the agriculture department prepares the programmes and projects that are related to agricultural activities only. Once this is done, the departments then submit their proposals to the requesting agency.

At the central agency level, the development proposals are reviewed and appraised. After the screen process at the central agency has been done, those development proposals are then submitted to the cabinet for approval. And from there, these proposals are forwarded to the legislature for endorsement. The end product of this process is a five-year development plan document that: (a) outlines the activities to be implemented over the next five years; and (b) that controls the public sector investment as well as its operating and budgeting decisions.

In calling for the line agencies to prepare the plan programmes and projects, the relevant central agency, first, provides them with the detailed guidelines explaining the government's objectives and strategies for the coming plan. These guidelines also explain the kind of resources that will be made available for development expenditures. The guidelines on how resources are going to be used are extremely important as they represent the government's commitment for the five-year plan.

FINDINGS

Policy Framework of the Malaysia Plan

Federal level

The macro parameters for making the Malaysia Plan are prepared at the Economic Planning Unit (EPU[2)] level. The first thing EPU did in every Malaysia Plan is to prepare the cabinet paper on the preparation of the new Malaysia Plan. The main aim of this cabinet paper is to get the cabinet's consent so that EPU can start the process of making the new Malaysia Plan. After cabinet has granted approval, the various sections in EPU then begin the processes of establishing the macroeconomic framework for the new plan. The processes of making this framework also involves making estimates, like forecasting the projected revenue and expenditure of the government for the next five years, making estimates for resource availability, for key aggregates on unemployment and employment and so on.

In developing those estimates, EPU officers require the assistance from officers in other central agencies such as the Treasury, the Central Bank, the Department of Statistics, and MAMPU[3]. Those officers are brought together under the auspices of the Inter Agency Planning Committee (IAPG). The main task of the IAPG members is to deliberate on the issue paper that has been prepared by the EPU. The issue paper identifies the issues and public policy options associated with the formation of the new Malaysia Plan, the plan's objectives and the strategies to be adopted, and so on.

Once the macroeconomic framework for the new Malaysia Plan has been established, the Director General of the EPU would then instruct all heads of operating agencies, through the issuance of a call circular, to start the process of preparing for the new Malaysia plan in their respective agencies

State level

Like in many other major activities been undertaken by the civil service, the processes of making the Malaysia Plan begins with the official memorandum from the State Secretary. Through this memorandum, the State Secretary requests all heads of ministries, departments and agencies in the state to initiate the processes of making the Malaysia Plan in their respective ministries, departments or agencies, as the current plan is coming to an end. However, it is the Director of the State Planning Unit that would shoulder the major responsibility of making the Malaysia Plan at the state level. Often, he or she is the one who will brief the state cabinet on salient matters (such as issues to be considered and ideas to be adopted) for the new Malaysia Plan. It is also the Director of the SPU who is responsible for explaining to all heads of ministries, departments and agencies in the state about: (a) the economic scenario in the state for the next five years to (b) the state policies on certain issues, the state objectives and its targets for the plan period; (c) the approach to be used in preparing the Malaysia Plan in the state, especially on the allocation of resources; (d)

the datelines for submitting project proposals; (e) the dates for the State Taskforce (STF) meetings; and (f) the dates for the various agencies to hold their meetings.

In the preparation of the policy framework for the making of the Malaysia Plan at the state level, the SPU Director is helped by the Inter Agency Planning Committee. One of the tasks of the State IAPG is to make decisions or suggestions on policy, strategy and programmes for the new Malaysia Plan to be forwarded to the State Economic Development Committee or to the state cabinet. The IAPG is also responsible for establishing the general objectives and for identifying key issues that can be used by the ministries/departments/agencies to prepare their Malaysia Plan proposals.

Submission of Project Proposals

Malaysia Plan projects may be classified into three main categories namely the state-funded projects, the federal-funded state projects, and the federal projects. The state-funded projects are those projects that fall under the state list in the federal constitution, and are proposed by officers at the state departments/agencies. Projects proposed under this fund are submitted to the SPU, appraised and recommended by the State development Executive Committee (SDEC) approved by the state cabinet, passed by the state legislature, and funded by the state coffer.

The federal-funded state development projects are those projects that fall under the concurrent list in the federal constitution, while the federal projects are those projects that fall under the federal list. Federal projects are mostly big projects such as trunk roads and cost a lot of money to implement.

The State-funded projects proposed by the districts are submitted upwards along the administrative hierarchy until they get to the departmental Headquarters level, and then to the portfolio ministry, and finally to the SPU. The proposed projects are screened and checked along the way.

The submission of the federally-funded state projects to the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) at the federal level involves two methods. The first method of submitting these types of projects is through the State Planning Unit. The second method is through the federal ministries. The second method is used by those departments in the state that do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Federal department such as the Agriculture Department and the Public Works Department in Sarawak.

The submission of the federal projects also involves two methods. First, these projects are submitted by the state departmental headquarters to the federal counterparts, and then to the portfolio ministry, and finally to the EPU. To ensure that those projects reach the EPU, the state departmental headquarters also submits those projects to the SPU, as the federal headquarters may omit them of the list of projects that it passes to the EPU. For these projects, normally the SPU would not screen them as they are deemed to be benefiting the state.

The Malaysia Plan Ceiling

Malaysia Plan ceiling is the total value or the total cost or the total scheme value that has been set for development programmes and projects for the five-year plan period. For example, the ceiling for the Ninth Malaysia Plan is RM220 billion, compared to RM170 billion for the Eighth Malaysia Plan, and RM162.5 billion for the Seventh Malaysia Plan. The plan ceiling represents the ability of the government to deliver the development programmes and projects during the plan period.

The Plan ceiling is actually the threshold to the amount to be allocated for the development programmes and projects. That is, the plan ceiling is the amount that the government can afford for the plan period. The government needs to do this because resources are scarce.

To ensure that the government could afford its development initiatives, the size of the Malaysia Plan ceiling is determined first. This is the responsibility of the EPU and the Treasury officers. But before they come out with figures, the EPU and the Treasury officers would consult officers in other agencies first, and this they do through the Inter Agency Planning Group (IAPG) mechanism. The number of projects that could be accommodated within the ceiling parameters is determined accordingly.

Each ministry also has its own ceiling or threshold. The same thing applies to each project. It also has its own project ceiling which is the actual amount that can be utilized on it during the plan period. Working within ceiling parameter, the ministry begins to re-arrange its priorities to match against what it is about to be allocated. EPU hopes the ceiling parameter will help to deter officers in the operating agencies from submitting a large number of projects. However, in practice, in anticipation that a lot of its proposed projects will be slashed, very often a department will submit a long list of projects to the EPU for approval.

Scheme Value

A scheme value may be defined as the required cost to implement the project and all its components. A scheme value is the project money. A scheme value that has been approved during the plan period may not be all utilized during the same plan period. This is because the total expenditure that has been approved for the project in the plan period is often less that its total scheme value. For example, the approved scheme value for the Samarahan-Ensengei-Baki road in Kota Samarahan District in Sarawak under the 7MP is RM29.6 million, but only RM12 million or 40.5% of its total scheme value is allocated for the plan period (see Table 1).

From Table 1, we can see that overall, the total 7MP scheme value for roads and bridges in Sarawak is about RM4.4 billion. But the total approved estimates for roads and bridges for the state are only RM1.9 billion. This means that the RM2.5 billion (56.8%) balance will be utilized during the next plan period. The total scheme value for roads and bridges for the Kota Samarahan District under the 7MP is RM470.5 million but only RM234.4 (49.8%) is given. The same can also be said for projects 01, 06, 13 and 24 (see Table 1). The implementation of those projects would have to go beyond the 7MP period as their expenditure estimates for the 7MP are less than their total scheme value. Of the five projects used as examples in Table 1, only the SMK Asajaya Laut-Kampong Serpan Road has a chance to be completed during the plan period as its expenditure estimates (RM1.4 million) for the period is the same as its total scheme value.

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Table 1: The Approved Value for Roads and Bridges Under the 7MP and the Estimates for 1996-2000Kota Samarahan, Sarawak

Head Title	Scheme Value (Approved under 7MP)	Total Estimates for the Years 1996-2000
Samarahan Division	*(RM) million*	*(RM) million*
(01) Samarahan/Semera/Pendam Road	40.0	1.5
(06) Samarahan/Ensengei/Baki Road	29.6	12.0
(13) Bukit Punda/Simunjan Road Improvement	44.0	23.0
(24) Kuching Outer Ring Road	80.0	70.0
(36) SMK Asajaya Laut/Kpg. Serpan Road	1.4	1.4
Sub-Total (approved for the Division 36 projects)	*(470.5)*	*(234.4)*
Total for Ministry of Infrastructure Development, Sarawak	4,381.1	1,887.6

(Source: Government of Sarawak, 1996: 280-282 & 295)

Table 1 shows that: (a) not all projects that have been approved and given the scheme value will be implemented and completed in the same plan period; and (b) the projects with greater importance and urgency (such as the Kuching Outer Ring Road) will be given priority.

Project List and Project Implementation

After the projects have been approved, the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) will prepare the lists of the approved projects according to ministries and states. The lists of the approved projects will be sent to the respective ministries and state governments. The same lists are also sent to the Treasury and other central agencies. At the state level, the SPU redistributes these lists to the respective agencies in the state.

The project list is computerized and each project is given a SETIA[4] code for easy monitoring. The SETIA code has 10 digits which are the total number of digits for (a) project head; (b) project sub-head; (c) project budget code; and (d) project serial number. The SETIA concept is mainly used in monitoring financial performance. Physical performance is monitored using the SETIA-SIAP[5] mechanism.

Each project is given as estimated cost (or scheme value) and its allocation for the Malaysia Plan period. The departments or the agencies implement the five-year project based on the project list, the approved ceiling, and the approved allocation for the five-year period.

Upon receiving these lists from the EPU, each ministry is free to re-prioritize its projects and adjust the individual project ceiling. It is also allowed to transfer funds from one project to another, but permission must be sought first from the EPU or the State Planning Unit[6]. However, the ministry is not allowed to adjust (add or reduce) the total ceiling allocation for its projects.

The process of preparing for Malaysia Plan project implementation actually starts after the projects have been approved in principle during the development budget examination (where the project ceiling is determined). Often the process of preparing for project implementation and the process of bidding for the funds to be used in implementing the project cannot wait for the parliament to endorse the plan as its endorsement is often granted deep into the first year of the new Malaysia plan period. For example, the Ninth Malaysia Plan was only tabled in Parliament in March in 2006, the first year of the current plan period. In comparison, the Seventh Malaysia Plan was only tabled in parliament in the middle of 1996, the first year of the plan period.

Annual Budget and the Five-Year Development Plan

To be of any operational use, the five-year development plan must first be translated into annual plan or annual programmes. And this in turn must be translated into fiscal terms in the annual budget process indicating the number of expenditures to be spent in the coming year to fund both the existing policies and programmes, and the proposed new government initiatives.

The five-year plan document indicates the total expenditure estimates for development programmes/projects for the next five years. But these figures have no binding commitments in a sense that the document does not authorize any public expenditure at all. Instead, public expenditures for the various operating agencies are authorized only by the annual budget passed by Parliament. An annual budget is a great and significant event as it portrays a pledge by the government as to how it will use the taxpayers' money for the coming year (Corbett, 1992). An annual budget expresses government's priorities and choices.

The annual budget exercise provides the opportunity to make annual plan modification, and to review, re-appraise and change both the programmes and the objectives of the plan. During the annual budget exercise, new projects may be added to and approved projects may be dropped from the existing list of the five year-year plan projects. As circumstances change all the time, the original plan targets for revenues, foreign-exchange earnings, foreign aids, and major crop production, for example, may fall below expectations. In this situation, the original plan targets will have to be changed or modified to match the resources available, and to prevent the concentration of expenditures in one particular year. In other words, an annual plan is an integral part of the five-year development plan as the total development expenditure estimates for the five-year plan is disbursed through it.

Mid-Term Review and the Rolling Plan Concept

Another avenue which provides the opportunity to revise the Malaysia Plan list of approved programmes and projects is the Mid-Term Review (MTR) exercise. During the MTR exercise: (a) new projects may be added; (b) project ceiling may be revised downwards or upwards; and (c) some projects may be dropped. During this exercise, the projects that have been slashed or chopped

off during the plan's budget examination may be re-submitted. Revision is necessary because the projects that may have been thought to be important then may no longer be considered to be useful now.

Table 2: Federal Government Allocation by Sector for the 6MP and the Revised Allocation under its MTR

Sector (1)	Ringgit Malaysia				(%) ↑↓ between (2) & (3) (4)
	Origunal Allocation (2)	%	Revised Allocation (3)	%	
A. Economic	31, 253	56.8	29,875	51.0	↓ 4.4
Agriculture Development	9,019	16.4	6,685	11.4	↓25.9
Commerce and Industry	5,752	10.5	5,034	8.6	↓12.5
Transport	10,759	19.6	12,749	21.8	↑18.5
B. Social	13,468	24.5	14,780	25.3	↑ 9.7
Education and Training	8,501	15.5	7,760	13.3	↓ 8.7
Health	2,253	4.1	2,519	4.3	↑11.8
C. Security	8,408	15.3	11,139	19.0	↑32.5
Defense	6,000	10.9	9,258	15.8	↑54.3
D. General Administration	1,888	3.4	2,706	4.7	↑43.3
Total	55,000	100.0	58,500	100.0	↑ 6.4

Source: Compiled from Table 2.3 (Government of Malaysia, 1991: 62) and Table 6.3

(Government of Malaysia, 1996: 177)

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Table 3: Public Sector Development Allocation for the 6MP and Revised Allocation under its MTR

	Ringgit Malaysia (Million)				
	Original Allocation 6MP	(%)	Revised Allocation 6MP	(%)	(%)↑↓
a. Federal Government	55,000	52.9	58,500	49.8	↑ 6.4
b. State Government	12,000	11.5	7,251	6.2	↓39.6
c. Statutory Bodies & Local Governments	2,000	1.9	6,249	5.3	↑12.5
d. Non-Financial Public Enterprise (NFPE)	35,000	33.7	45,500	38.7	↑30.0
Total	104,000	100.0	117,500	100.0	↑12.9

Source: Compiled from Table 2.2 (Government of Malaysia, 1991: 60) and Table 6.1

(Government of Malaysia, 1996: 175)

The MTR also provides the government the opportunity to re-prioritize its development programmes and projects as well as to review its policies and strategies. Tables 2 and 3 reveal that the total development ceiling for a Malaysia Plan can be changed during the MTR exercise.

The rolling plan concept therefore signifies three things. First, the concept allows for the allocation that is not spent in the current plan to be carried over to the next plan. Second, it allows the projects that are not implemented during the current plan to be carried over to the next one. Third, it allows the plan to be modified during the mid-term review exercise.

FINAL ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

This paper is trying to show that a major policy initiative undertaken by the government once in every five years is the making of the five-year Malaysia plan. The Malaysia plan document is a political document as it is ladened with values. It is an economic document as it provides the direction for the country's economy, and the guidelines for governmental actions for the next five years. The Malaysia Plan, as a recurring five-year development blueprint, reflects not only the government's economic aspirations but also the institutional dynamics that shape policy formulation and implementation. Viewed through the lens of institutionalism, the Plan is more than a technical exercise in resource allocation, it is a manifestation of how formal structures, bureaucratic norms, and political arrangements influence development outcomes.

Institutionalism emphasizes the role of rules, routines, and organizational behavior in shaping policy processes. In the case of the Malaysia Plan, the involvement of central agencies such as the Economic Planning Unit (EPU), Treasury, and State Planning Units (SPUs), alongside inter-agency committees, illustrates a deeply embedded institutional framework. These entities operate within established procedures for project proposal, appraisal, budgeting, and review, yet the outcomes often reflect institutional apathy, fragmentation, and adaptive improvisation rather than coherent strategic planning. As the approved project list can be changed, the Malaysia plan document and its associated documents are just like a shopping list. Just as in the shopping list,

the items that are considered important at the material time may be added to the list, while the items that have been thought to be useful during the planning process may no longer be of any relevant and therefore are taken out of the list. The Kuching Outer Ring Road which is the second road linking Kuching with Kota Samarahan in Sarawak is a good example to show how projects that have not been thought of initially suddenly appears on the scene and is implemented immediately.

New projects may be introduced during the annual budget making exercise and during the mid-term review. As the total Malaysia Plan ceiling cannot be changed, this means that the money that have been allocated for some of the already approved projects are now taken away from them to be used in implementing the new projects. As a result, those projects are either scraped off of the list or their implementation is postponed. For instance, the frequent re-prioritization of projects, the emergence of new initiatives during mid-term reviews, and the high percentage of uncompleted projects suggest that institutional constraints such as budgetary ceilings, inter-agency competition, and political bargaining play a significant role in shaping what gets implemented.

Project implementation is determined by many factors. Two of those factors are the issue of urgency and importance. Projects that are considered to be urgent and important are given priority. As new priorities arise because of changing circumstances the less urgent and important projects are pushed further down the list and may eventually disappear from the scene completely as they may not be considered at all during the five-annual budget exercises during the plan period even though they may have been approved by the cabinet. The high percentage of incomplete projects during the current plan period also indicates that projects in the approved project list may not be given top consideration as new priority emerges and gets into the government's agenda.

Moreover, the metaphor of the Malaysia Plan as a "shopping list" underscores the institutional fluidity of planning in Malaysia. Projects are added or removed not solely based on technical merit but often due to shifting political priorities, administrative discretion, and fiscal limitations. This reflects the normative dimension of institutionalism, where policy choices are embedded in value-laden processes and power structures. To improve the effectiveness of the Malaysia Plan, future planning efforts must address these institutional challenges. This includes:

1) Strengthening inter-agency coordination to reduce duplication and fragmentation.
2) Enhancing transparency in project selection and budget allocation.
3) Institutionalizing mechanisms for accountability and performance monitoring.
4) Integrating political economy analysis into planning to anticipate and manage policy shifts.

In conclusion, the Malaysia Plan is not merely a policy document or a list of projects, it is an institutional artifact shaped by the interplay of bureaucratic routines, political interests, and economic constraints. Understanding its limitations and potential requires a deeper engagement with institutional theory, which can illuminate the structural and behavioral factors that govern development planning in Malaysia and similar federal systems. On the other hand, the lists of approved projects that the EPU provides to the operating agencies can also be said to be their shopping lists as those lists can also be modified, altered, changed, and re-prioritized.

Notes

[1] A frame encompasses the activities that have been "designed to enable decision-makers (and institutions they are in) to make sense of their world" (see Alexander 1992).

[2] EPU is the central agency responsible for planning in Malaysia.

[3] MAMPU refers to the Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Management Planning Unit.

[4] SETIA stands for **S***istem* **E**conomic Planning Unit, **T**reasury, **I**mplementation and Coordination Unit and **A**ccountant General Department.

[5] SIAP is an acronym in Malay for the Integrated Scheduling System. It was first introduced in October 1994. The main aim of the SIAP concept is to provide a uniform approach for the planning of implementation of development project, for controlling and monitoring project implementation, and for reporting project performance.

[6] That is if the amount to be transferred is within EPU's/SPU's jurisdiction to do so, otherwise the matter is referred to the cabinet for authorization.

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The Berawan Comparative Glossary: Motivation, Challenges and Undergirding Principles

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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the motivation for the glossary, the challenges in eliciting vocab on traditional lifestyle, flora and fauna, and the principles undergirding a unified orthography. Berawan is a language family comprised of four lects. The Berawan settlements are located along the Tinjar and Tutoh rivers, which are tributaries of the Baram River in the Malaysian state of Sarawak. The main output of this lexicography project was a comparative glossary with 1163 lexical items and for each of these items, all four lects are displayed side by side with English and Malay glosses. The Berawan lexemes are presented using a community approved unified orthography, which represents sounds that are pronounced the same way with the same graphemes across lects but also presents differences in a consistent way. The undergirding principles for the unified Berawan orthography are linguistic soundness, cross-lectal comparability, reproducibility, teachability, acceptability to all stakeholders and economical representation of sounds and words. It is hoped that the Comparative Berawan Glossary will become an impetus for the future production of Berawan dictionaries and literature.

Keywords: Austronesian, Berawan, Borneo lexicography, glossary, orthography, diplomacy

INTRODUCTION

The Berawan is a language family comprised of four lects, which are Batu Belah (BB), Long Teru (LTu), Long Jegan (LJg) and Long Terawan (LTn). Berawan is a member of the North Sarawak language family (Blust 1974). According to Eberhard, Simons and Fennig (2024), all the Berawan lects are considered endangered. The Berawan population as of 2020/2021 is 7508 speakers (Thomas Paran, personal communication, September 26, 2023). The Berawan settlements are found on the Tinjar and Tutoh rivers which are tributaries of the Baram River in the Malaysian state of Sarawak. On the Tutoh, the Batu Belah live in three villages and the Long Terawan in two

villages. On the Tinjar, the Long Teru have three villages and the Long Jegan have ten (Thomas Paran, personal communication, September 26, 2023).

The recently published Comparative Berawan Glossary / Glosari Komparatif Bahasa Berawan (Burkhardt, Burkhardt, & Ang, 2023), presents 1163 vocabulary items for each of the four Berawan lects side by side with English and Malay glosses. The lexical items are arranged according to semantic fields, for example 'nature', 'flora and fauna', 'person or mankind', 'daily life', etc. Each semantic field is further divided into subfields. The field 'flora and fauna', for example, is subdivided into the subfields 'land animals', 'birds and bats', 'fish and other river creatures', 'forest and plants', and 'fruits'. The semantic fields and subfields are drawn from Moe (2001). Table 1 is an excerpt from the comparative glossary:

Table 1 – Excerpt from Burkhardt, Burkhardt, & Ang (2023, p. 39)

Batu Belah	Long Teru	Long Jegan	Long Terawan	Malay	English	Item
Flora and fauna (Flora dan fauna)						
Birds and bats (Burung dan kelawar)						
manok	manok	manâwk	manô'	burung	bird	159#
pelakkéh	pelakkéh	pelakkây	pelakkêh	helang	eagle / hawk	165#
temenngang	tebenngang	temenngang	belenngang	burung enggang	Rhinoceros hornbill	166#
jelinât	jelinât	jelénât	luka'	burung enggang hitam	Malayan black hornbill	167#
tekukkoh	tekukkoh	sekokkâw	kuku	burung enggang jambul putih	White-crowned hornbill	168#
mattoy	mattoy	mattoy	mattoy	burung enggang papan	Great Hornbill	169#
tepiyon	tepiyon	tepiyon	tekiyon	burung enggnag kelingking	Oriental Piped Hornbill	170#

While the comparative glossary is the heart of the so named publication, the book also contains a brief sketch of the historical development of the Berawan lects, a summary description of the consonant and vowel systems of the Berawan lects, and a spelling guide with examples of Berawan words across lects. The sketches and descriptions are all in English and Malay, due to the bilingual character of the book. Likewise, the glosses for the Berawan lexemes and the indices are presented in English and Malay.

The following sections describe the motivation for producing the comparative glossary, the challenges in the elicitation process of Berawan vocabulary, and the principles that undergird the writing of Berawan words.

The following notational conventions are used in this article: For the representation of Berawan words and sounds, phonetic transcriptions are presented in square brackets ([…]), phonemes are set in forward slashes (/…/) and orthographic notations appear in italics, for example BB/LTu *manok* /manok/ [mɑnɔk] 'bird'. Burkhardt (2014) uses the breve for the phonemic notation of short vowels (e.g. /ă/). However, in this article, they are presented with a circumflex instead (e.g. /â/). Acronyms used to refer to proto-languages are as follows: PAn stands for Proto-Austronesian, PMP for Proto-Malay-Polynesian, and PWMP for Proto-West-Malayo-Polynesian. All PAn, PMP and PWMP items are taken from Blust, Trussel, & Smith (2023).

METHODOLOGY

Motivation for the Glossary

The groundwork for the glossary is Burkhardt's (2014) dissertation entitled 'The reconstruction of the phonology of Proto-Berawan'. The main goal of the dissertation was to reconstruct the system of phonemes of Proto-Berawan, the assumed ancestor language of the currently spoken Berawan lects. For that purpose, the sound systems of the individual Berawan lects needed to be analysed and described. Furthermore, sufficient vocabulary from all Berawan lects had to be collected to be able to reconstruct a pool of proto lexemes that is big enough to draw valid conclusions about phonological innovations that are shared by all Berawan varieties but do not occur in other languages of the North Sarawak language family. For example, all Berawan lects, but no other North Sarawak language, exhibit a change from PAn/PMP/PWMP *-b to -*m*, as in PAn *qaseb > all Berawan *cam* 'smoke', PMP *e(ŋ)keb 'cover' > all Berawan *kâm* 'cover', and PWMP *eleb > all Berawan *lâm* 'knee' (Burkhardt, 2014, p. 304-305).

One result of the dissertation was the reconstruction of 490 Proto-Berawan lexemes. The dissertation had since been made available online on Research Gate and this was also made known to Berawan speakers so that they could access the outcome of this work. On the other hand, the dissertation is of limited benefits to the Berawan since it had to be written in a very technical (linguistic) jargon, and the corpus of reconstructed items and the Berawan language items on which they are based is rather limited, even though the number of lexical items used and reconstructed is 2.5 higher than the typical 200-items Swadesh list used for such endeavours. Nevertheless, the items used across Berawan lects for these reconstructions are a good basis for the development of a glossary and a future dictionary.

Another result of the dissertation was the identification of the phoneme system for each Berawan lect. This forms the basis for the development of Berawan orthographies that allow for an accurate written representation of Berawan lects, usable for Berawan speakers to read and write their respective lect.

Due to the comparative nature of the dissertation, sound correspondences were established across Berawan lects, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Sound correspondences across Berawan lects (Burkhardt, 2014, p. 385)

Proto-Berawan	**BB**	**LTu**	**LJg**	**LTn**	**Gloss**
*accih	accih	accih	cey	accîh	one
*akkuh	akkuh	akkuh	akkew	akkûh	ashes
*appok	appok	appok	appâwk	appô'	dust

Therefore, a comparative glossary was envisioned because it allows to list such items in a clear and comparable manner and thus aids speakers of Berawan lects to become aware of and learn about the similarities and differences with other lects. This has the potential of raising cross-dialectal intelligibility among Berawan speakers. According to Thomas Param (pers. comm.), cross-lectal intelligibility was higher among the Berawan in the past. In present times, it has decreased mainly due to two factors. On the one hand, many Berawans have moved out from their traditional settlements to towns and trade-centres in search for employment and many of them entered ethnically mixed marriages (Burkhardt & Burkhardt, 2017, p. 58). Their children are usually raised with Malay or English as the language of the home and the Berawan lect of one of their parents has become their heritage language, of which they acquire a basic knowledge at best. Second, there are less intermarriages across Berawan groups nowadays compared to the past. This has decreased inter-dialectal intelligibility. To reach true comparability, the lexical items presented in the glossary need to be presented in a unified orthography that represents sounds that are the same with the same orthographic symbols consistently. Thus, a motivation of the comparative glossary, on the receptive side, is to help raise intelligibility across Berawan lects.

On the productive side, a motivation for the compilation of the glossary is to provide an impetus for Berawan speakers to write their lects. For this purpose, the glossary does not only list lexical items in a consistent united orthography but contains a spelling guide where every Berawan vowel and consonant sound is listed with examples across lects.

Another perhaps more urgent motivation for the comparative glossary, due to the status of Berawan language endangerment, is its focus on the documentation of vocabulary that relates to the traditional riverine lifestyle of the Berawan and the flora and fauna that surrounds their traditional dwellings. Therefore, the collection of lexical items was increased from the dissertation's 490 items to 1163 items per lect.

On the other hand, the comparative glossary is not only geared towards Berawan speakers and readers, but also towards the international linguistic community. For this purpose, a comparative summary of the Berawan sound and phoneme system is explained in a separate section, as well as the methodology employed for the elicitation of the glossary items and the development of the unified orthography. Furthermore, Berawan items listed may provide helpful evidence for historical linguists to reconstruct new Proto-West-Malayo-Polynesian proto-lexemes.

To capture a regional audience (Malaysia, Indonesia, Nusantara) as well as an international one, the introductory section of the glossary, the glosses for the Berawan lexemes and an alphabetical index of glosses is provided both in Malay and English.

Challenges in Elicitation of Berawan Vocabulary

The language consultants for the elicitation of traditional Berawan vocabulary were Berawan native speakers 50 years of age or older. The elicitation of the vocabulary of daily activities did not prove too difficult. On the other hand, a semantic field where it was difficult for language consultants to recall specific lexemes was fauna. For example, when types of hornbills were elicited, the initial results obtained were different in quantity across lects. In two lects, the Berawan names for the rhinoceros hornbill and the oriental piped hornbill were obtained. In a third lect, the answer also included the name for the Malayan black hornbill and in a fourth lect, the name for the great hornbill could be elicited besides the names for the other three hornbill species. In a second elicitation round, the author obtained the names for the Malayan black and the great hornbill from the first two lects by prompting them with the respective item from the other two lects. In addition, pictures of each type of hornbill were shown to the informants to verify the accuracy of the respective Berawan term per lect.

The historical sound changes described in Burkhardt (2014) usually helped to predict the correct term across lects. For example, LJg *jelénat* 'Malayan black hornbill' would be expected to be BB and LTu *jelinat*, since they retain Proto-Berawan *i in the penultimate syllable, whereas in LJg, the penultimate high front vowel gets lowered to the mid-front vowel *é* across an intervening consonant (*n* in this case), if the vowel in the ultima is non-high (*a* in this case), a phenomenon termed regressive vowel-height harmony (Burkhardt, 2014, p. 81). The prediction proved correct and the BB and LTu language consultants responded with *jelinat*.

Another semantic field were the recall of indigenous vocabulary proved challenging were traditional ornaments such as traditional earrings, necklaces, bracelets and ornamental hats. Prompting from one dialect to another was also used in this case to elicit the respective terms across lects. In one instance, the vernacular word for traditional long female earrings could not be recalled anymore, so the respective spot in the glossary was left empty. As less and less people wear traditional ornaments, the vernacular vocabulary for these items slowly fades away. Similarly, it is also not surprising that loss of biodiversity and the fading away of flora and fauna vocabulary go hand in hand.

As it came to indigenous words for four different types of gongs, the lexical items were readily remembered, which are (1) *sanang*, (2) *gennéng*, (3) *tawâk* in all Berawan lects, and (4) BB/LTu *gung*, LJg *agewng*, LTn *agung*. However, when pictures of the four types of gongs were shown to the language consultants, there was no general agreement among them which lexeme

refers to which gong. Therefore, these gongs are merely listed with the general meaning 'gong' in the respective Malay and English gloss columns in the comparative glossary.

DISCUSSION

Principles undergirding the writing of Berawan words

Linguistic soundness

To make the lexical items across Berawan lects truly comparable, a unified orthography was adopted. It is based on the identification of the vowel and consonant phonemes of each Berawan lect, an outcome of Burkhardt (2014). This determines the number of phonemes the Berawan lects possess in sum and how many orthographic symbols are needed to represent these phonemes. Ideally, an orthography should be "linguistically sound, acceptable to all stakeholders, teachable and easy to reproduce" (Cahill & Karan, 2008, p. 3). A linguistically sound orthography ideally exhibits a one-to-one correspondence of phonemes and graphemes, whereby a grapheme can be a monograph or polygraph, the latter typically being a digraph (e.g. *ng* or *iw*) or trigraph (e.g. *nng or iew*). This avoids underrepresentation on the one hand and overrepresentation on the other. Underrepresentation occurs when one orthographic symbol represents two or more phonemes. This is the case for the letter *e* in the current Malay orthography. On the one hand, it represents phoneme /é/ [ɛ], referred to as 'e taling', as in *perang* /péraŋ/ [pɛrɑŋ] 'brown'. On the other hand, it represents schwa /e/ [ə], referred to as 'e pepet', as in *perang* /peraŋ/ [pəraŋ] 'war'. An example for overrepresentation are the German orthographic symbols *f* and *v*, which both represent phoneme /f/, as in *voll* /fol/ 'full' and *faul* /faul/ 'lazy'. For vital languages with millions of speakers, like Malay and German, this does not pose a problem. For endangered languages, however, under- or overrepresentation should be avoided as far as possible, since it creates inaccuracies in written language documentation and it potentially complicates language acquisition by young Berawans who wish to learn their heritage language, but whose mother tongue is Malay or English. Therefore, the unified Berawan orthography uses *é* an *e* as separate graphemes for phonemes /é/ [ɛ] versus /e/ [ə], for example in BB/LTu/LJg *cén* /cçén/ [cçɛn] 'strength' versus *cen* /cçen/ [cçən] 'animal' (Burkhardt, Burkhardt, & Ang 2020, p. 10).

Cross-lectal Comparability

To be able to compare the Berawan lects, there needs to be not only a one-to-one correspondence between grapheme and phoneme within a lect, but also, as far as possible, across lects. Therefore, long monophthongs are orthographically represented with a single vowel symbol without diacritics, which are *a*, *i*, *o*, *u* across all Berawan lects. The exception is *é* /é/ [ɛ], which needs a diacritic to distinguish it from schwa (*e* /e/ [ə]). Short monophthongs are represented consistently with a diacritic across lects, which are â, ê, î, ô, û. The exception is schwa *e*, which does not need a diacritic since it is always short (Schwa is far more frequent than *é*.). Likewise, diphthongs are written the same way across lects. Long diphthongs are written *ay* and *aw*, as *ay* in all Berawan *paray* 'rice plant' and as *aw* in BB/LTu/LTn *mutaw* and LJg *motaw* 'tired'. Short diphthongs are written *ây* and *âw*, as *ây* in LTn *lây*' 'upper arm' and LJg *parâyk* 'to shave', and as *âw* in LTn *gimâw*' 'root' and LJg *tâwng* 'top end (of a tree)' (Burkhardt, Burkhardt, & Ang 2020, p. 10-11), with the circumflex on the base vowel like the diacritic used for short monophthongs. There is one exception to the one phoneme – one grapheme approach, which is Long Jegan word-final *-ng*. The

grapheme is used in this position to refer to [ŋ] and [ɲ], reflecting the intuition of Long Jegan speakers. However, this does not pose a problem, since the two sounds occur in complementary distribution in word-final position: [ɲ] occurs after diphthongs with a high front offglide [ˡ], as in *kakeyng* /kakeyñ/ [kakəˡɲ] 'left (side)' and *kérâyng* /kérâyñ/ [kɛraˡɲ] 'new', but in other environments, only [ŋ] occurs, as in *tolang* /tolaŋ/ [tolaŋ] 'bone', *ameng* /aməŋ/ [aməŋ] 'dump', and *monâwng* /monâwŋ/ [monaᵘŋ] 'mouth' (Burkhardt, 2014, p. 185). Table 3 shows how cross-lectal comparability is achieved by providing one-to-one correspondences between vowel phonemes and graphemes across lects. The graphemes are represented the same way as the phonemes.

Table 3 Cross-lectal comparability of Berawan vowel phonemes / graphemes

	Monophthongs of default length (mid-long to long)	**Diphthongs of default length (mid-long to long)**	**Extra-short vowels**	**Extra-short diphthongs**
BB/LTu	a é i u o	ay, oy, uy, aw, iw	â, e	(ew)
LJg	a é i u o	ay, oy, uy, aw, iw	â, e	ây, âw, ey, ew
LTn	a é i u o	ay, oy, uy, aw, iw	â, e, ê, î, ô, û	ây, âw, ey, ew

z

Reproducibility and Teachability

All graphemes should be easily reproducible. Nowadays, computers and smartphones are widely used in Malaysia and the Berawans are no exception to this. Therefore, graphemes should be used that are reproducible on such devices. The graphemic symbols used in the unified Berawan orthography are easy to type on computers and smartphones with an English or Malay language setting. The diacritics that were chosen to represent short vowels are found in the list of vowels with diacritics that appears if a key is held down on a virtual smartphone keyboard for about a second. The smartphone list that appears for *a*, for example, contains *à*, *á*, *â*, *ä*, *æ*, *ã*, *å*, and *ā*. In academic transcriptions of classical manuscripts, the breve (*ă*) is frequently used to mark short vowels (Zui, June 24, 2023). However, that symbol is not included in the above-mentioned list. Therefore, the circumflex (*â*) was chosen to represent the low short vowel since it looks like an upside-down version of the breve.

To be teachable, graphemes that are also used in Malay, the national language, were chosen for the same sounds: *ng* for /ŋ/ [ŋ], *ny* for /ñ/ [ɲ], *c* for /cç/ [cç] and *j* for /[ɟʝ/ [ɟʝ], and *e* for Schwa /e/ [ə] etc. For the mid front vowel /é/ [ɛ], *é* was selected, which is the same symbol that was used for that sound in the Malay orthography before its 1972 reform (Ismael, 2000). Furthermore, the one-to-*one correspondence between Berawan phonemes and graphemes facilitates teachability.*

Acceptability to all Stakeholders

In the development of a national or regional language for usage in government, courts, business and education, there are many stakeholders including politicians, lawyers, educators and not to forget ordinary speakers of the language. Since Berawan lects do not have such a status, the stakeholders are, besides ordinary Berawan speakers, the Berawan leaders on a regional and village level (Penghulus and village chiefs), other influential Berawan speakers such as educationists and clergy, and the Berawan Sarawak association (Persatuan Berawan Sarawak). To ensure acceptability of the unified orthography in the Berawan community, an orthography workshop was held in Miri in June 2018, organized by the Berawan community. About 35 Berawans were present, among them current and former village chiefs, and members of the Berawan cultural association. The author was invited as a linguistic consultant. The unified Berawan orthography reflects decisions that were made in that workshop. So, for example, the workshop participants decided to represent the glottal stop with an apostrophe ('), not with letter *q*, as in BB/LTu/LTn *tinyo*' and LJg *ténYo*' 'banana', not *tinyoq* / *ténYoq*.

Economical representation

The Merriam-Webster dictionary (n.d.) defines the term economical as "operating with little waste or at a saving". An economical orthography avoids strings of graphemes that are longer than necessary. For this purpose, geminate alveopalatal and velar nasals /ñ:/ and /ŋ:/, are represented as *nny* and *nng* respectively, instead of *nyny* and *ngng*. Thus, one letter is saved in each instance. Another issue is the representation of short versus long vowels. Instead of writing them *â* (short) versus *a* (long), they could be written *a* (short) versus *aa* (long). The advantage of the latter approach is that this would not require any diacritics, except for the mid-front vowel (*é*). The disadvantage is that one more letter is needed to represent long vowels. In Long Terawan, there is a phonemic length contrast for all vowels except schwa, so if the second alternative is employed, it would be *a* - *aa*, *é – éé*, *i – ii*, *o – oo*, and *u – uu*. In the other three lects, however, there is a length contrast only for low central vowels (*a – aa*), but not for any other vowel. So, in a unified orthography, the non-central vowels, which are long by default in the ultimate syllable, would have to be written with a doubling of the grapheme (*éé, ii*, *oo*, *uu)* even in the absence of phonemic contrast. This would not be economical.

Frequency of occurrence is another important criterion to arrive at an economical orthography. It is more economical to use diacritics for infrequent sounds than for frequent ones. The unified Berawan orthography accomplishes that by marking short vowels, which occur infrequently, with a diacritic, but not the far more frequent long vowels. The exception to this is the mid-front vowel, that needs a diacritic for the long vowel (é), and another one for the short one (*ê*). Furthermore, frequently occurring schwa (*e*) does not need a diacritic because it is always short. The historical analysis of Berawan also lends credence to this choice. The long Berawan vowels (or rather vowels of default length) are usually the ones that retain the proto form, whereas the short vowels (or rather extra-short vowels) are innovations that are only found in a limited set of lexical items. Furthermore, the extra-short vowels marked in bold in table 4 are only found in the Long Terawan lect. Table 4 contrasts uneconomical grapheme choices with the economical ones adopted in the Comparative Berawan Glossary.

Table 4 Uneconomical vs. economical representation of Berawan graphemes

	Phoneme	**Grapheme (uneconomical)**	**Grapheme (economical)**
Consonants	ñ:	nyny	nny
	ŋ:	ngng	nng
(Mid-)long vowels	a:, é:, i:, o:, u:	aa, éé, ii, oo, uu	a, é, i, o, u
Extra-short vowels	a, e, **é, i, o, u**	a, e, **é, i, o, u**	â, e, **ê, î, ô, û**

CONCLUSION

The first motivation for the Comparative Berawan Glossary is to document comparable vocabulary from all Berawan lects with an emphasis on endangered vocabulary in a unified orthography, supplemented by a spelling guide and description of the Berawan sound system to aid the Berawans in maintaining their lects, in raising cross-lectal intelligibility and in motivating them to write and further document their lects. The second motivation is aimed at linguists to provide them with a model for developing unified orthographies for other language families and with a useful set of language data for the reconstruction of PWMP forms. The comparative glossary is a balancing act between making it comprehensible and applicable for Berawan speakers and at the same time insightful for linguists. Challenges in elicitation were encountered when it came to ornamental items associated with traditional lifestyle and local fauna. A second round of elicitation with cross-lectal prompting through items collected during the first elicitation session generally proved successful to collect the missing lexical items across lects. The Berawan lexemes are presented in a unified orthography, which renders sounds that are pronounced the same way with the same graphemes across lects but also presents differences in a consistent way. The undergirding principles for the unified Berawan orthography are linguistic soundness (particularly a one-to-one correspondence between phoneme and grapheme), cross-lectal comparability, reproducibility and teachability, acceptability to all stakeholders and economical representation of sounds and words. It is hoped that the Comparative Berawan Glossary will serve as a stimulus to produce full-fledged Berawan dictionaries and Berawan literature in the future.

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Exploring the Role of Kenyah Traditional Culture in Upland Rice Cultivation

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ABSTRACT

Sarawak hill or upland paddy farming has sustained indigenous communities for centuries, deeply intertwined with their cultural identity and livelihoods. Preserving these practices is crucial for food security, sustainable agriculture, and potential agritourism development. This study explores the traditional culture of the Kenyah people in upland rice cultivation through a qualitative approach, involving purposive sampling of Sarawak's hill paddy farmers. Data were collected via in-depth interviews and participant observations. Findings reveal that cultural traditions such as Ramay Pelepek Oman (a festival marking the transition between harvesting and planting seasons, commonly held before the harvesting season), unique social structures, communal harvesting (senguyun), local delicacies, and handicrafts contribute to the sustainability of hill paddy farming. However, some animistic beliefs are fading due to some factors such as religious conversions, affecting traditional aesthetics but potentially improving farming efficiency. These findings highlight the Kenyah's people cultural role in upland rice cultivation, emphasizing the need for preservation efforts.

Keywords: Borneo culture; ethnic; hill paddy; Orang Ulu; Sarawak

INTRODUCTION

Kenyah peoples are one of the indigenous groups in Sarawak, Malaysia, with a distinct cultural heritage that passed down through generations. Their cultural traditions and expressions are a unique blend of animism, agriculture, and social organization that reflect their way of life, beliefs, and values.

Hill paddy farming is a traditional agricultural practice that has been carried out for centuries in many countries around the world, across the continents (Godfrey et al., 2025; Nayak et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2021). The unique features of this farming system, including swift farming, the cultivation of a wide range of crop varieties, and the integration of livestock and forestry activities, have allowed communities to adapt to mountainous landscapes and develop sustainable agricultural practices (Barah, 2010). This paper highlights the importance of recognizing and supporting the role of cultural heritage in sustainable agriculture and rural development.

Sarawak, one region of Malaysia that is situated in Borneo Island, has a unique upland paddy farming tradition and mechanisms. It is characterized by its traditional methods of cultivation, which have been passed down through generations of indigenous communities. This practice is closely linked to their cultural traditions and identity, and it plays a vital role in ensuring food security and sustainable livelihoods in the region. Beyond being a source of sustenance, hill rice cultivation also serves as a means of enhancing property and land ownership within families. By engaging in this practice, families can establish a lasting legacy that inherited by future generations, thereby promoting long-term security and stability (Dorairaj & Govender, 2023).

Culture and tradition play a vital role in facilitating the transfer of knowledge across generations and preserving traditional practices. This is particularly important in the context of agriculture, where sustainable practices and techniques have been developed over generations.

According to Yusop et al. (2021), the Sarawak hill paddy farmers have no access to modern farming tools; hence, the traditional tools such as *ketam*, *tepoh* and *parang* are the main farming tools. *Ketam* is used to harvest paddy, *tepoh* (a long-handled hoe) and *parang* (a machete), which are used for planting, weeding, and harvesting. For land preparation, traditional method slash-and-burn still practiced. Fertilization is very minimum and mainly uses organic fertilizers.

Interestingly, Sarawak hill paddy farming is characterized by its unique crop diversity. Following the burning process, farmers turned to growing vegetables and plants that can provide quick sources of food. In Sarawak, beside upland rice, farmers cultivate a variety of crops such as papaya, sweet potatoes, cassava, and various vegetables. The cultivation of diverse crops plays a crucial role in ensuring food security and promoting resilience in the face of climate change and pest outbreaks (Lin, 2011). By cultivating a range of crops, farmers can mitigate the impact of crop failures and disruptions to the food supply chain, ensuring that there is a consistent supply of food available for the local community.

The practice of hill cultivation in Sarawak is mainly concentrated among the Dayak ethnic groups such as the Iban, Orang Ulu, and Bidayuh (Allan et al., 2023; Robin et al., 2023; Sah et al., 2024). However, each of these ethnic groups cultivates different types and varieties of rice that are unique to their respective regions. Each ethnic group, and even individual tribes, cultivates their own heirloom paddy varieties. The significance of these specialty rice in enhancing food accessibility in Sarawak cannot be disregarded. It has the potential to compensate for the insufficient rice Self-Sufficiency Level (SSL), especially in the rural areas, while simultaneously decreasing the dependence on imported rice in the region (Omar et al., 2022).

Sarawak hill paddy farming is deeply embedded in the cultural traditions and identity of indigenous communities in the region. Hill paddy farming is associated with traditional rituals and ceremonies, such as the Gawai Dayak festival: an annual celebration among the Iban and Bidayuh communities, which held to mark the harvest season and promote social cohesion (Chua, 2012). This cultural tradition of the Dayak community is a way of expressing gratitude for the harvest and acknowledging the transition to a new season. The festival serves as a time for reflection, as well as a time for sharing and connecting with family, friends, and the wider community. By coming together to celebrate the harvest, the Dayak community strengthens their bonds and renew their commitment to support one another in the future.

The practice of hill paddy cultivation has declined in recent times due to the modernization of the agricultural system, which places a greater emphasis on high financial returns (Echoh et al., 2017; Omar et al., 2022). Encouraging the community to continue actively planting hill paddy is a challenge that is closely tied to the changing mindset towards agriculture, as hill paddy cultivation requires the involvement of a large group working together. Additionally, hill paddy cultivation in Sarawak faces several challenges, including changes in land-use patterns, government policies that prioritize modern agriculture, and limited access to markets and infrastructure (Echoh et al., 2017). However, despite these challenges, there is potential for sustainable tourism and eco-agriculture to provide new opportunities for farmers and contribute to the preservation of traditional practices. By exploring these new avenues, farmers can not only continue the practice of hill paddy cultivation but also generate new income streams while promoting the conservation of their cultural heritage.

METHOD AND APPROACHES

This study used qualitative method, employing distribution of questionnaires to selected respondents. This method chosen as it allows the collection of necessary information on predetermined variables at a single point in time from a uniform group of Kenyah communities. The research methods selected, as it is more appropriate for exploring cultural and social phenomena in depth.

The study used purposive sampling to select participants who are Kenyah hill paddy farmers in Sarawak, Malaysia. Individual interviews were conducted with 30 selected Kenyah farmers across the selected locations. The participants were selected based on their experience and knowledge of traditional hill paddy cultivation practices. In-depth interviews and observational method were used to gather data on traditional upland rice cultivation practices, as well as cultural and social factors that may affect the community. The interviews conducted in Kenyah language with the assistance of a translator and were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. The selected respondents for questionnaires were the same respondents participated in the in-depth interviews, ensuring consistency in the data sources.

The interviews were semi-structured and covered four major sections: processes of rice planting, rice planting equipment, taboos and beliefs. The subsections covered topics such as soil preparation, seed selection, planting, weeding, pest management, and harvesting, as well as cultural and social factors that influence Kenyah community.

Participant observation involved spending time with the farmers in the field to observe their cultivation practices. This also allowed for a deeper understanding of farmers' practices and experiences, complementing the insights gathered from individual interviews and enabling cross-verification of responses within the community. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the survey, the Kenyah's cultural tradition and expression in hill paddy farming highlighted in Figure 1 below:

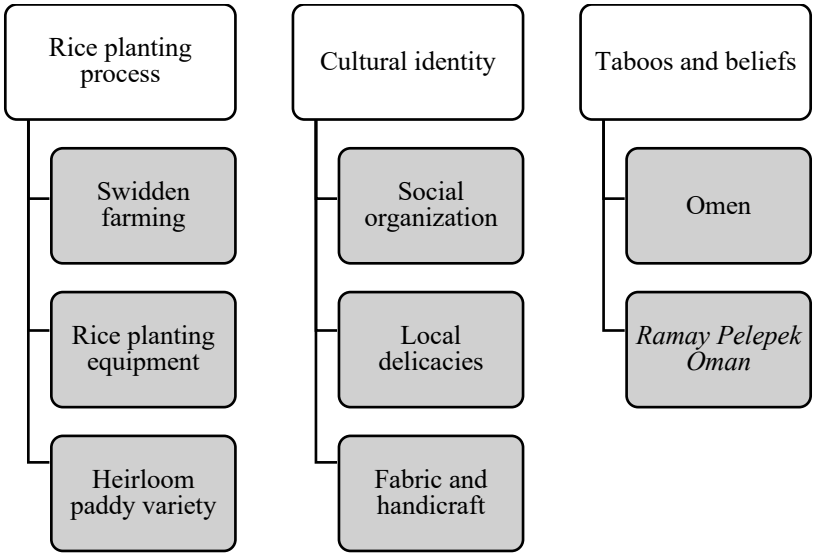

Figure 1. Kenyah's cultural tradition and expression in hill paddy farming

Rice Planting Process

Swidden Farming

One of the most important cultural traditions of the Kenyah people is their agriculture practices. They practice shifting cultivation or swidden farming, which involves clearing land by cutting down trees and vegetation, burning the land to release nutrients, and planting crops such as rice, corn, and vegetables. The swidden farming method, also known as slash-and-burn agriculture, is a traditional practice among the Dayak community that not only provides sustenance but also contributes to increasing land property and ownership (Imang et al., 2022). This practice instills a sense of pride in the Dayak people as it provides the foundation for the livelihoods of future generations of children and grandchildren. By preserving and promoting swidden farming, the Dayak communities can ensure the continuation of their cultural heritage and sustainably manage their land for the benefit of future generations.

Improve soil fertility

Soil fertility, as noted by Mishra and Ramakrishnan (1983) can be affected by the prior soil burn, which can cause an initial decrease in nutrients such as carbon and nitrogen due to volatilization,

but nitrogen recovery starts later in the cropping phase. Available phosphorus follows a similar trend to nitrogen. During slash and burn, soil pH and fertility level of soil may be altered positively due to burn of biomass and decomposition of organic matter, leading to reduced acidity and positive crop growth with minimal to none synthetic fertilizer (de Pinho et al., 2023).

Scientifically, the impact of slash-and-burn agriculture on soil fertility has been studied in various regions. In Kembera, West Kalimantan, Indonesia, Kleinman et al. (1996) found that swiddens had improved soil fertility after burning compared to fallows. Similarly, Kettering and Bigham's study (2000) revealed that soil carbon and nitrogen were only reduced at high burn severity levels. This suggests that the severity of burning in slash-and-burn agriculture has a significant impact on soil nutrient availability. At low to medium burn severity levels, phosphorus availability increases, making the nutrient more easily accessible to crops. However, at high burn severity levels, there is a reduction in soil carbon and nitrogen, indicating a loss of organic matter. Exchangeable calcium decreased to preburn levels, and aluminum saturation increased significantly. These changes could potentially impact soil fertility and plant growth in the long term. Exchangeable calcium (Ca) and aluminum (Al) are important components of soil fertility because they are both involved in regulating soil acidity. While exchangeable calcium is an essential nutrient for plant growth and is necessary for the structural integrity of plant cell walls, it also plays a critical role in regulating soil pH (Bache, 1984). Calcium can neutralize soil acidity by replacing hydrogen ions in the soil solution, which can improve nutrient availability and promote plant growth.

According to our survey, most paddy farms allow a substantial recovery period. During this time, the vegetation is allowed to naturally regenerate following the harvest, and the next planting typically occurs after a period of 10 – 22 years. Soil fertility indicators showed a positive correlation with fallow length, indicating that soil resources were not degraded by slash-and-burn agriculture (Kleinman et al., 1996).

Reduce dependence on pesticide

This study has revealed that none of the farmers included in our research reported using pesticides. This observation can be attributed to several factors, such as limited access to appropriate pesticides, inadequate financial resources and labor, and notably, relatively low pest incidence that does not warrant the use of pesticides.

Swidden farming systems typically involve growing a variety of crops, including traditional crops such as cassava, yams, and maize, as well as various types of beans, fruits, and vegetables. This diversity of crops and the use of crop rotation can help to reduce the prevalence of pests and diseases by disrupting their life cycles and reducing their ability to spread (Gurr et al., 2016). In addition, the use of natural pest control methods such as intercropping, crop diversification, and biological control agents can help to further reduce the need for synthetic pesticides.

Promote biodiversity and enhance food source for local community

The *Dayak* community typically practices swidden cultivation by clearing virgin forest that is deemed suitable for hill paddy cultivation. After cutting down trees and letting the leaves dry, they

burn the land, which encourages the growth of various plant species such as ferns, forest ginger, forest bananas, palms, and climbers that quickly dominate the area after the rice harvest. This change in the forest's ecology also attracts animals that prefer plant-based diets to inhabit the area.

Rice planting equipment

Ketam or *ilang asau/ ajau* is a traditional handcrafted tool used for harvesting rice in Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia and Indonesia. It is typically made from wood, often from the trunk of a coconut tree or other types of hardwood and is designed to make the process of harvesting rice much easier and more efficient.

The *ketam* consists of a long wooden handle with a curved metal blade attached to the end. The blade is usually made of high-quality steel and is sharpened to a fine edge, allowing it to easily cut through the rice stalks without damaging the grains. The blade is also curved to make it easier to reach the rice plants and to cut them cleanly.

In addition to its functional use, the *ilang asau/ ajau* (Figure 1) also often designed with intricate woodcarving on the handle, adding a decorative element to the tool. These carvings can range from simple geometric patterns to more elaborate designs featuring animals, plants, or mythical creatures. Creating an *ilang asau/ ajau* requires a skilled artisan who can select and shape the wood to create a handle that is both comfortable to hold and visually appealing. The metal blade is then attached to the handle using traditional techniques such as riveting or binding with rattan strips. Hence, *ilang asau/ ajau* has many significant roles in sustainable agriculture of hill paddy.

Figure 2. *Ketam* or *Ilang asau/ ajau*

Firstly, the use of *ilang asau / ajau* in harvesting rice is an environmentally sustainable practice: a manual tool that does not require the use of fossil fuels or other non-renewable resources. It is also a low-impact tool that minimizes damage to the rice plants and surrounding environment, allowing for a more sustainable and resilient agricultural system. Secondly, the art of creating *ilang asau / ajau* is a valuable form of traditional knowledge that passed down from generation to generation. By continuing to use and craft *ilang asau / ajau*, the communities are preserving their cultural heritage and knowledge, which can be shared and passed on to future generations. Moreover, the use of traditional tools like the *ilang asau / ajau* in agriculture also promotes local self-sufficiency and economic sustainability. It encourages the development of local industries and the use of local

resources, which can support the local economy and reduce dependence on external sources. The use of *ilang asau / ajau* in agriculture not only supports sustainable and environmentally friendly farming practices but also preserves traditional knowledge and promotes economic sustainability. By continuing to value and utilize traditional tools and knowledge, communities can create more resilient and sustainable agricultural systems for the future.

Although modern harvesting equipment has largely replaced traditional tools like the *ilang asau / ajau* in many areas, it is important to recognize that the *ilang asau / ajau* still holds great significance as a symbol of cultural heritage and agricultural traditions in Southeast Asia. In some villages, such as those studied, the *ilang asau / ajau* remains an essential tool for rice harvesting, and its use and craftsman-ship continue to be celebrated as an important part of local culture. It is important to conserve and document the use and craftsmanship of traditional tools like the *ilang asau / ajau* to preserve the cultural heritage and knowledge of local communities. By documenting the use and artisanship of the *ilang asau / ajau*, we can gain insight into traditional agricultural practices and the unique cultural identities of different Southeast Asian communities. This documentation can also serve as a valuable educational resource, allowing future generations to learn about and appreciate the traditional tools and knowledge that have been passed down for centuries.

Figure 3. *Kayu togan*

The *kayu togan* is a crucial tool in Kenyah paddy cultivation, playing an important role not only in planting rice but also in fostering community cooperation. This traditional equipment is primarily used by men to create planting holes by firmly punching it into the soil. Following this, women work alongside the men, placing a few rice seeds into each hole. Once the seeds are sown, the holes are left as they are, marking the beginning of the rice-growing process. This collaborative approach highlights the harmonious division of labour within the Kenyah community.

This tool holds significant value in Kenyah craftsmanship culture and contributes to environmental preservation. Designed specifically for creating planting holes, it relies solely on human labor, primarily from men, avoiding the use of machines that could disturb the soil structure and health. With sufficient experience, this tool allows planting holes to be created efficiently and

effectively. Furthermore, as hill paddy is typically cultivated in high-altitude areas, the use of heavy machinery is impractical, making this traditional tool an ideal choice for planting.

Thus, these rice-planting tools play a vital role in the Kenyah culture, particularly in the context of hill paddy cultivation. Their importance extends beyond their practical application, as they embody the community's dedication to preserving traditional knowledge, cultural practices, and sustainable agricultural methods. Passed down through generations, these tools are a testament to the Kenyah people's respect for their heritage and their harmonious relationship with nature.

Unlike commercial rice varieties, hill paddy is not yet cultivated on an industrial scale or marketed extensively, which limits the adoption of modern machinery in these remote agricultural areas. This has allowed the Kenyah community to maintain their reliance on traditional tools, ensuring that these methods remain valuable. The continued use of these tools not only preserves cultural identity but also supports environmental conservation by avoiding practices that could harm soil health or disrupt natural ecosystems. By embracing these traditions, the Kenyah people sustain a way of life that is deeply rooted in their history while promoting ecological balance.

Heirloom paddy variety

Upland rice cultivation has been a central aspect of the traditional culture of the Kenyah people in Sarawak, Malaysia for generations. The Kenyah community has preserved their own varieties of rice that are well suited to the upland conditions and have developed traditional knowledge and practices for soil preparation, seed selection, planting, weeding, pest management, and harvesting.

Among the heirloom paddy *(padai* in Kenyah language*)* varieties that the Kenyah communities take the most pride in *padai alek, padai kabe'ng* / *abeng, padai kerawing timai,* and *padai kerawing mempat*. *Padai alek*, a variety of rice grown by the Kenyah, characterized by its red, oblong seeds and fragrant aroma when cooked.

The term *padai alek* refers to a type of rice variety that is highly valued by Kenyah people, as the word *alek* in their language conveys the meaning of frequent and the idea of a craving that can never be fully satisfied. The Kenyah people treasure the *padai kabe'ng* or *abeng* variety for its fragrant aroma and the term *kabe'ng* in their language reflects its quality of quick consumption due to its delicious taste. The locals often joke about this particular rice variety, boasting that it is so incredibly delicious that when people eat it, the sounds of conversation muffled due to the mouth constantly filled with the delectable rice. Meanwhile, the villagers of Lebu' Kulit and Lepo' Badeng hold *padai kerawing* in high regard due to its delightful taste and aroma. Additionally, they appreciate its ability to stay fresh for a longer period after cooking.

Indigenous communities hold their paddy varieties and seedlings in high esteem, often treating them as heirlooms that are guarded and preserved. They are generally not willing to share them with other communities. As a result, these varieties are not widely known outside their respective villages and are at a high risk of disappearing from the biodiversity record.

Cultural Identity

Social organization

The Kenyah people, like most indigenous people in Sarawak, have a unique social organization based on the longhouse community. A longhouse is a communal dwelling that houses several families, with each family having their own living quarters but sharing a common veranda known as the *osey* in the Kenyah language. The longhouse is the center of social and economic activities and is where important decisions are made. This social organization fosters cooperation and mutual support among families and reflects the Kenyah people's emphasis on community and collective responsibility. Figure 3 shows the typical longhouse of Kenyah communities.

Figure 4. Kenyah longhouse at Lepo' Badeng Sungai Koyan Belaga

This form of social organization plays a crucial role in sustaining hill paddy cultivation by facilitating strong community involvement. In rural Kenyah communities of Belaga, paddy farming is often a collective effort, with families and neighbours working together during key agricultural stages such as field clearing, planting, and harvesting. This communal labour system, known locally as *senguyun*, is a long-standing tradition in rice agriculture. According to Liau and Ahmad (2022), such collaborative practices are deeply embedded in the social fabric of these communities. *Senguyun* exists in two forms: a permanent form (*nu'gan*) typically practiced during the sowing stage, and an incidental form, which is more spontaneous and involves mobilizing work force for other farming activities as needed (Sindju, 2003). These communal practices not only reflect cultural heritage but also support the intergenerational transmission of agricultural knowledge. Skills and techniques related to paddy farming are often shared orally, passed down from elders to younger generations through everyday interaction and cooperation. This knowledge-sharing process is context-specific, shaped by local environmental conditions and farming experiences. Similar practices are also found among other Kenyah tribes in Indonesia, where working collectively is regarded as an essential cultural value (Mary & Udau, 2025).

It is also important to highlight that Kenyah communities place elders and individuals with expertise in planting and cultivation in high regards. In the villages where this study was conducted, older farmers are particularly respected for their wealth of experience and knowledge, and their advice is frequently sought on critical agricultural matters. This practice not only ensures that the wisdom of older generations is passed down but also preserves the cultural heritage of the community. These traditional practices play a vital role in transmitting the skills and expertise necessary for sustainable and effective paddy farming. Furthermore, they help to strengthen the

community, ensuring the continuity of paddy farming traditions and the safeguarding of agricultural practices for future generations.

We observed that Kenyah paddy cultivation passed down from one generation to the next through a combination of oral tradition and hands-on experience. This transfer of knowledge and skills is an important aspect of cultural heritage and helps to ensure that the traditional practices and techniques of paddy cultivation are preserved and continue to be used in the future.

Local delicacies

The Kenyah community has long used their hill paddy harvest to prepare a variety of dishes, displaying the unique flavors and culinary traditions of their paddy cultivation process. However, in recent years, these dishes have also become a valuable source of income for local farmers and rural communities due to their distinctive taste and commercial appeal. Among the Kenyah's delicacies related to hill paddy are *adut, pusit, ubek, anyeh, empung kampung* and *kelupis*.

Adut is a traditional meal in the Kenyah community, made from glutinous rice that wrapped in *liris* (*tarit* in Kenyah Language) or *Calathea lutea* leaves. The rice is usually soaked overnight and then boiled until cooked in a pot. *Adut* is also used as a way of calling someone to engage in plowing activities to plant rice in huma / paddy fields. While *pusit* is, a popular snack made from rice grains that have started to form, but are still soft. The name *posit* refers to rice grains that have been opened, and the snack is usually eaten like sunflower seeds while chatting in the rice field.

Ubek (Figure 4) is another snack that made from half-cooked rice, typically from glutinous rice. The rice is separated from the seeds and stalks, then fried until some of the seeds start to explode, producing a fragrant smell. The fried rice then cooled and pounded in a wooden mortar, resulting in a flat, greenish-colored rice called *ubek*. The rice husk dust removed from the *ubek*, resulting in a clean and fragrant snack that can be eaten directly. *Ubek* is a unique snack that maybe considered a variation of *padi pengemping*, a traditional snack that originated from Indonesia, particularly from the Javanese community. While *padi pengemping* typically made from glutinous rice, *ubek* made from the freshly harvested immature grains of young rice. This snack holds great significance for the Kenyah communities as it symbolizes the beginning of rice maturation.

Figure 5. *Ubek*

The use of immature rice grains gives *ubek* a distinct taste and texture. The rice grains are pounded and flattened before after fried until crispy and golden brown. The resulting snack is light, crispy, and slightly chewy, with a subtle nutty flavor. Overall, *ubek* is a unique and meaningful snack that portrayed the cultural traditions and culinary heritage of the Kenyah community.

Anyeh is a traditional dish made from rice that has been soaked until slightly soft, and then pounded using a mortar or ground with a grinder. This process results in a unique texture and flavor that is distinct from regular cooked rice. Some people prefer to eat *anyeh* plain, while others mix it with sugar to add sweetness. Either way, it is a delicious and nutritious dish that is enjoyed by many in the community. *Anyeh* (Figure 5) is a beloved traditional delicacy among the Dayak people, particularly the Orang Ulu in Borneo. It is made using glutinous rice and is usually shaped into round or oval forms before being fried. To make *anyeh*, the glutinous rice is first soaked until it becomes slightly soft, and then pounded using a mortar or ground using a machine into rice powder called as *anyeh*. The resulting powder is then mixed with a little water to form a dough, which is then shaped into the desired form and fried in preheated oil. The crispy, golden-brown exterior and soft, chewy interior make *anyeh* a delicious treat that enjoyed by many in the Kenyah community. Sometimes, *anyeh* transformed into a sweet dessert by mixing it with coconut milk and brown sugar, then steaming it in banana leaves to create a compact and slightly sweet cake. This delectable treat is often served during festivals and special occasions. *Anyeh* has a soft and chewy texture, complemented by a subtle coconut flavor and a hint of sweetness from the brown sugar. The use of banana leaves to steam the mixture imbues it with an aromatic quality that enhances the dish's overall flavor profile. Overall, *anyeh* is a delicious and distinctive delicacy that highlight the Dayak people's rich culinary heritage in Borneo.

Figure 6. Making *anyeh*

Empung kampung is a traditional rice cake made from *anyeh* or rice powder, which is formed into a round or oval shape according to personal preferences. The cake is then boiled in water until it floats or becomes slightly transparent. Once cooked, it can be enjoyed with additional seasonings, such as milk and sugar, to enhance its flavor.

Kelupis is a popular snack among Kenyah and other indigenous communities of Borneo, often enjoyed during festivals and special occasions, such as weddings, Christmas, and *Ramay Pelepek Oman*. To make *kelupis*, glutinous rice mixed with salt as a preservative and a small

amount of oil to prevent it from sticking to the pan during cooking. The rice is then cooked in a pan with salt and oil until it is half-cooked. The half-cooked rice is then wrapped in banana leaves in an oval shape, steamed for 30 minutes until fully cooked, and served. *Kelupis* has a slightly sticky texture and a subtle coconut flavor with a hint of saltiness. It is often served with other traditional dishes such as smoked fish, *serunding*, *umai* (raw fish salad), and *ayam buluh* (chicken cooked in bamboo). The leaves used to wrap *kelupis* (Figure 6) may vary, but banana leaves are the most commonly used, imparting a unique aroma and taste to the snack. The wrapped husks then boiled in a pot of water for a few hours until the rice is fully cooked and the flavors blend, creating a delicious and flavorful snack.


Figure 7 & 8. *Kelupis* ready to be cooked (left) and *kelupis* ready to be consumed (right)

Fabric and Handicrafts

Another important cultural expression of the Kenyah people is their weaving and handicrafts. They are known for their intricate and colorful weaving patterns that are used to make textiles, baskets, and other household items. Their weaving techniques have been passed down through generations and are an important part of their cultural heritage. The Kenyah people also produce unique handicrafts such as beaded jewelry, woodcarvings, and traditional hunting tools. Figure 8, 9, and 10 show some of the handicrafts of Orang Ulu. With the passage of time, traditional handicrafts that were once solely used for specific purposes have evolved into products that can now be commercialized and adapted to modern styles. The shift in consumer preferences has driven artisans to innovate and update their techniques, while still preserving the cultural and historical significance of their craft. As a result, traditional handicrafts have become more widely recognized and valued for their unique designs and artisanal quality, providing economic opportunities for artisans and promoting the preservation of cultural heritage.

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Figure 9. Sunhat or *saung* (top) and *Tapan* (below)

Figure 10. *Engen* or basket

Figure 11. Handmade bags *(kopeh wai)* for the handheld bags in the shape of a box and *kerien* for round bottom bag (the front bag)

Paddy waste is often transformed into traditional indigenous crafts that carry deep cultural significance and historical value. Repurposing agricultural by-products like rice straw not only promotes sustainability but also highlights the potential for creativity and resourcefulness in building a greener future. For example, rice straw is a biodegradable and eco-friendly material that can be crafted into brooms, offering an excellent alternative to those made from plastic. This practical reuse of natural materials reflects the wisdom of the Kenyah people, whose lifestyle emphasizes respect for and sustainable use of environmental resources. Figure 14 shows a bundle of rice straw prepared for broom-making.

In addition to its functional uses, paddy waste also serves ornamental purposes. Dried paddy panicles are carefully arranged and placed in vases as decorative elements. These indigenous crafts not only demonstrate the creativity and resourcefulness of the indigenous people, but also serve as important cultural artifacts that reflect the rich history and traditions of the region. By utilizing paddy waste, artisans are able to reduce waste, promote sustainability, and preserve their cultural heritage.

Figure 12 & 13. Dried paddy panicles used for decoration

Figure 14. Rice straw bundle on a *tapan*

Beliefs and Taboos

Ramay pelepek oman

In many indigenous communities in Sarawak, religious ceremonies and rituals are performed before, during, and after the paddy planting season. These rituals are believed to ensure a successful harvest and to appease the gods and spirits of the land. However, as most of the Dayak community have now embraced Christianity, the way of celebrating thanksgiving after the rice harvest season has become much simpler and more relaxed compared to the old ways. The cultural and nutritional practices have changed significantly, leading to a new way of observing this tradition.

Gawai Dayak is a festival celebrated by the Dayak communities, who are indigenous to the island of Borneo, which shared by Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei. The festival typically takes place in May or June and is a time to give thanks for a bountiful harvest and to seek blessings for the upcoming planting season. The Gawai Dayak festival in the Kenyah community called *Ramay Pelepek Oman,* which celebrated a few weeks after the rice-harvesting season ended. The festival's date is determined by the villagers' consensus after the completion of the harvest, which means it is not fixed. However, in recent times, the Orang Ulu community has been increasingly following the official calendar to facilitate holiday planning and allow families to celebrate the festival together.

Gawai Dayak plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable agriculture and facilitating knowledge transfer within Dayak communities. This festival serves as a platform for community members to come together and exchange agricultural knowledge and practices, fostering a sense of unity and shared heritage. Traditional farming techniques, such as shifting cultivation, are celebrated during the event, while the younger generation is educated on the significance of preserving these time-honoured methods. This ensures the continuity of sustainable agricultural practices, safeguarding them from being forgotten over time.

Moreover, Gawai Dayak emphasizes the consumption and cultivation of traditional crops and varieties, such as rice and an array of local vegetables and fruits. By doing so, it helps to maintain regional biodiversity while reinforcing the cultural identity of the Dayak people. Beyond cultural preservation, the festival also promotes sustainable agriculture practices that support the livelihoods of local communities, creating a harmonious balance between tradition, environmental stewardship, and economic well-being.

These festivals often involve traditional music, dance, and food, and are an opportunity for families and communities to come together to celebrate their agricultural heritage. It becomes a platform for the exchange of knowledge and expertise in paddy farming. Farmers from different communities come together to share their experiences and exchange ideas, which helps to spread best practices and improve the overall quality of paddy cultivation.

Another important cultural expression of the Kenyah people is their music and dance. They have a rich tradition of vocal and instrumental music, accompanied by dance performances that often tell stories of their daily lives, myths, and legends. Their music characterized by the use of *sape*, gongs, bamboo instruments, and traditional percussion instruments, and performed during

festivals, weddings, and other important ceremonies. In context of hill paddy farming, cultural traditions and expressions have been identified as critical in preserving traditional practices. For example, in Sri Lanka, traditional festivals and rituals, such as the *Aluth Sahal Mangalyaya* and *Keth Gangul* used to promote sustainable agriculture and rural development (Coombe, 2005). In China, the celebration of traditional festivals, such as the Dragon Boat Festival, used to transfer knowledge about rice farming and promote cultural identity (McCartney & Osti, 2007). The study found that cultural traditions, such as the use of traditional farming methods and the celebration of festivals and rituals, were essential in maintaining the sustainability of rice farming and promoting rural development.

Omen

The Kenyah people have a rich history of animistic beliefs that have shaped their farming practices. Before the conversion to Christianity, there were various taboos and omens in paddy planting, which were closely linked to their traditional beliefs. The Kenyah people believe that spirits inhabit the land and must be appeased through rituals and offerings before any land clearing or farming activities can take place.

To maintain a harmonious relationship with the natural environment, the Kenyah people adhere to practices that respect spiritual beliefs and ecological balance. They believe that certain animals, such as pigs and chickens, hold spiritual significance within their agricultural traditions. During the planting season, rituals may include the sacrifice of a pig to appease the spirits of the land and to seek blessings for a successful harvest. Central to Kenyah cosmology is the belief in the interconnectedness of all living beings—humans, animals, and plants—which sustains a system of mutual dependence essential for survival. This worldview underpins their reluctance to use chemical pesticides and fertilizers, as such inputs are seen to disrupt the natural balance and harm the environment. Consequently, hill paddy cultivation among the Kenyah typically involves minimal reliance on agrochemicals.

In addition to these practices, the Kenyah people also interpret natural signs and omens as guidance for their daily activities, including farming and hunting. For instance, the flight pattern of birds is believed to convey messages from the spiritual realm: birds flying from right to left are considered a bad omen, prompting a halt in activity, whereas birds flying from left to right are interpreted as favourable, allowing work to proceed with confidence. Specific bird species are also associated with good fortune. For example, the *Embuas* (Banded Kingfisher) is seen as a positive sign when flying toward individuals working in paddy fields, while the appearance of the *Beragai* (Scarlet-Rumped Trogon) is considered auspicious during hunting. These beliefs reflect a deep cultural integration of spiritual and ecological knowledge in Kenyah agricultural life.

Overall, these animistic beliefs have played a significant role in the sustainable agriculture practices of the Kenyah people, promoting a deep respect for the natural environment and fostering a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. Since the arrival of Christian missionaries in Sarawak, Malaysia in the early 20th century, the Kenyah people have gradually converted to Christianity, leading to the loss of many traditional taboos and omen practices. As the Kenyah people adopted Christian beliefs and practices, their animistic beliefs and rituals became less important in their daily lives.

Today, while some Kenyah people still adhere to traditional animistic beliefs and practices, many have fully embraced Christianity and no longer practice their ancestral traditions. This shift towards Christianity has brought about changes in Kenyah culture and way of life, including changes in their farming practices and relationship with the environment. Despite the loss of some traditional beliefs and practices, the Kenyah people continue to maintain a deep connection with the land and the natural environment. They still practice sustainable farming techniques and prioritize the preservation of their natural resources. The Kenyah people have also found ways to incorporate their traditional knowledge and practices into modern agriculture and land management, ensuring that their cultural heritage and agricultural traditions preserved for future generations.

Conceptual Framework between Kenyah's Hill Paddy Farming Practice and Knowledge Transfer in Hill Paddy Cultivation

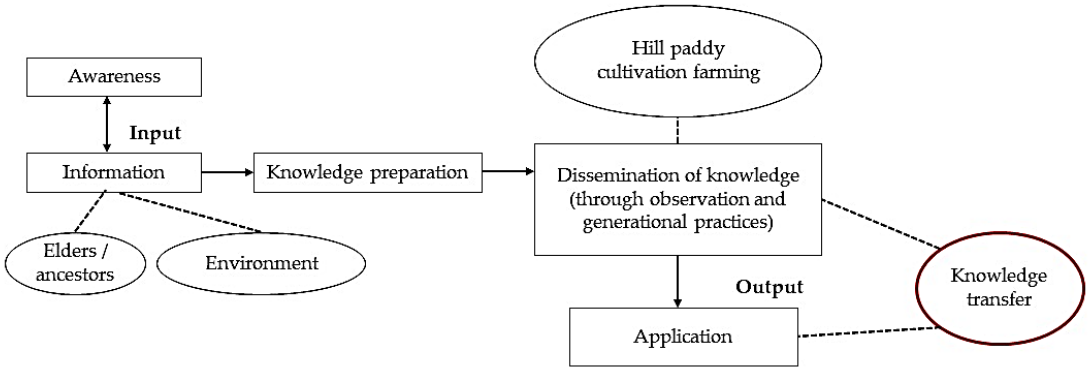

Figure 15. Conceptual framework on knowledge transfer from Kenyah hill paddy cultivation practices

The cultivation practices of the Kenyah communities are deeply rooted in generational or hereditary traditions, passed down through many generations. Knowledge of hill paddy cultivation is primarily inherited from elders, such as grandmothers and grandfathers, who share their expertise with their children and grandchildren, each family often cultivating their preferred heirloom paddy varieties. This knowledge transfer extends beyond the family unit to the surrounding community and environment, ensuring the continued dissemination of traditional agricultural practices. In line with their traditional lifestyle, the rice is commonly processed at home, fostering cooperation and unity within the family. Rice processing often becomes a shared activity, where family members work together, strengthening familial bonds. This sense of collaboration is also evident in their social organization, particularly in their use of shared spaces, such as the common veranda or *osey*, which serves as a communal hub for interaction and cooperation.

The process of knowledge transfer begins at a very young age through pure observation, where children learn by watching their elders. This dual process of knowledge exchange not only

ensures the survival of traditional practices but also influences how the younger generation perceives and internalizes this knowledge. As described by Kahneman (2003) and Slatter and France (2011), the knowledge imparted by the older generation plays a crucial role in shaping the perspectives and practices of the younger generation, ensuring the sustainability of Kenyah cultural and agricultural heritage.

SCOPE AND LIMITATION

Since Kenyah people practice swidden farming, slash-and-burn agriculture can be beneficial but it may also become detrimental under certain conditions. At high burn severity levels, there is a reduction in soil carbon and nitrogen, indicating a loss of organic matter. Aluminum too can become toxic to plants when present in excessive amounts in the soil (Rahman & Upadhyaya, 2021). As soil acidity increases, aluminum ions become more soluble and can be taken up by plant roots, leading to toxicity symptoms such as stunted growth and root damage. Additionally, aluminum toxicity can decrease the availability of other essential nutrients, such as calcium, magnesium, and phosphorus, further impacting plant growth and soil fertility. Therefore, changes in exchangeable calcium and aluminum levels in the soil can have significant impacts on soil fertility and plant growth.

Moreover, slash-and-burn agriculture, which involves clearing and burning a plot of land, followed by cropping and fallowing, can result in a decline in mineral nutrient stock over time (Juo & Manu, 1996). The ideal scenario for conserving the total mineral nutrient stock in the ecosystem is the equilibrium model, in which nutrient input and output are balanced. However, this is difficult to achieve in practice, as a significant portion of the mineral nutrients released from burning may be lost through erosion and runoff or leaching, including potassium, magnesium, calcium, nitrate, and sulfate. In addition, plant nutrients are removed during crop harvest, further reducing the nutrient stock in the eco-system. This gradual decline in nutrient stock over subsequent cycles of fallow and cropping is known as the depletion model. Therefore, to sustain the productivity of slash-and-burn agriculture, it is important to implement appropriate land use and nutrient management strategies to minimize nutrient loss and maintain soil fertility.

This can also be associated with a decline in biodiversity. For instance, Huijun et al. (2002) observed a reduction in floral diversity over a span of 50 years when a tropical forest was converted to swidden agriculture, resulting in a decrease in the Shannon Weiner index from 5.23 to 3.97 and a loss of 50% of the original plant species. Nevertheless, there are contrasting findings that propose floral diversity may not necessarily diminish and could potentially even rise (Ticsay, 2005; Rerkasem et al., 2009).

These has increased the resilience of the ecosystem in combating climate change. A study by Ziegler et al. (2009) evidenced that traditional swidden cultivation in Montane Mainland Southeast Asia has negligible hydrological and geomorphological effects compared to intensified replacement agricultural systems. These replacement systems include cash cropping, monoculture plantations, and greenhouse complexes, which have more significant negative impacts on the environment. These impacts result from various factors, such as the cultivation of large upland catchments, repeated cultivation with limited or no fallowing, direct connection of concentrated overland flow with the stream network, reduced root strength on permanently converted hillslopes, and the use of pesticides and herbicides. Additionally, the success of these intensified systems

depends on dense road networks, which further contribute to hydrological and geomorphological disruptions. Therefore, a new conservation approach is required to address the negative impacts of these intensified upland agricultural practices.

In social and cultural context, the rapid pace of social, economic, and environmental change in the region has raised concerns about the sustainability of these traditional upland rice varieties and the transfer of traditional knowledge to future generations. Many young people today are more inclined to purchase commercially available rice for consumption rather than engaging in farming activities. This shift in preference is attributed to various reasons, such as a lack of interest in farming, a lack of knowledge or skills in traditional farming methods, and the perception that commercial rice is more convenient and reliable (Saili, Saili, & Hamzah, 2018). As a result, there is a growing concern that traditional farming practices may decline, leading to a loss of agricultural knowledge and biodiversity.

CONCLUSION

As a way forward, it is essential to adopt a multi-faceted approach that integrates traditional wisdom with modern technologies and best practices. This integration can help ensure that the benefits of both traditional and modern methods are harnessed effectively, promoting successful knowledge transfer. Providing education, training, and access to resources is also crucial to support farmers in adopting new technologies and practices.

One key strategy is to build bridges between traditional and modern practices. By combining effective traditional knowledge with innovative technologies, farmers can maximize productivity and efficiency. For instance, traditional practices that have proven effective can be maintained while introducing modern tools, such as drones for fertilizer and pesticide application, when appropriate. Providing education and training to farmers is another critical step. These programs should emphasize the advantages of modern techniques while being culturally sensitive and respecting the traditional knowledge of local communities, ensuring that new practices are adopted seamlessly.

Improving access to information and resources is equally important. Establishing community-based organizations or networks can provide farmers with the necessary tools, information, and support to adopt modern farming methods effectively. Encouraging collaboration and networking among farmers can also play a vital role. Organizing agricultural festivals or events that bring farmers together fosters social networks, facilitates knowledge sharing, and helps transfer experiences from one generation to the next. Addressing economic barriers is another significant aspect of overcoming challenges. Financial incentives or support can help farmers afford the equipment and technologies required for modern paddy farming. By tackling these barriers, farmers can adopt modern methods more effectively without compromising their financial stability.

By implementing these strategies, it is possible to strike a balance between preserving traditional practices and embracing modern techniques in paddy farming. This approach ensures that farmers benefit from both worlds, adopting the best methods for their needs and unlocking the full potential of modern paddy farming techniques.

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Sultans' Palaces and Museums in Indonesian Borneo : National Policies, Political Decentralization, Cultural Depatrimonization, Identity Relocalization, 1950-2010[1]

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ABSTRACT

Keeping clear of polemology or irenology theories and the various explanations tendered about religious reasons for tribal war and headhunting practices, as well as of recent international conflicts, this essay describes the general Borneo setting and the particular situation of the Kapit-and-Baleh region as the meeting point of five of the island's major river basins. In an attempt to uncover features common to the island as a whole, it first focuses on its heartland, and examines the customs or adat relative to waging war and restoring peace among traditional peoples of the interior. Then, in a diachronic perspective, it tries to figure out how these peoples' assumed autochthonous methods of conflict prevention and resolution changed across historical periods, from pre-colonial times, insofar as they can be properly identified from both interviews with local people and data from the extant literature; via innovations progressively introduced by contact with and influences from coastal ("Malay") societies; to the sweeping effect of the colonial states' administrative policies; and the subsequent powerful impact of modern national (or State) societal practices and legal procedures. While the last phase has led to the local development of new forms of written adat corpuses, this essay also points to some other post-independence developments, and to what may remain today of ancient patterns regarding conflicts, their prevention, and their resolution.

Keywords*:* war, peace, Borneo, history, conflict, prevention, resolution, adat, Dayak, Malay

INTRODUCTION

After fighting an independence war in the 1940s and several armed rebellions in outer provinces in the 1950s, the unitary and centralized Indonesian state abolished the country's remaining kingdoms and seized their assets. From 1970 onward, in the framework of its sweeping nation-building policies and successive five-year development plans, it undertook the establishment of museums in all 26 provincial capital cities, a task completed by 1985.

The sultans' confiscated palaces were turned into state museums, the collections of which derived in part from the palaces' collections. The patrimonized buildings themselves—the central topic of this essay, which does not concern itself with the details of their architectural features, possibly the topic of another paper—were viewed as part of the nation's architectural heritage, with their collections meant to represent regional cultures. Museums were then assumed to constitute tools both for preserving and developing these regional traditions and for modernizing and unifying the country, not to mention their increasingly important role as tourist destinations.

After providing succinct background information on the colonial and post- colonial history of Kalimantan (see fig. 1), this essay reviews the development of second-generation museums (state museums) in independent Indonesia, and the state's policies regarding culture and museums.

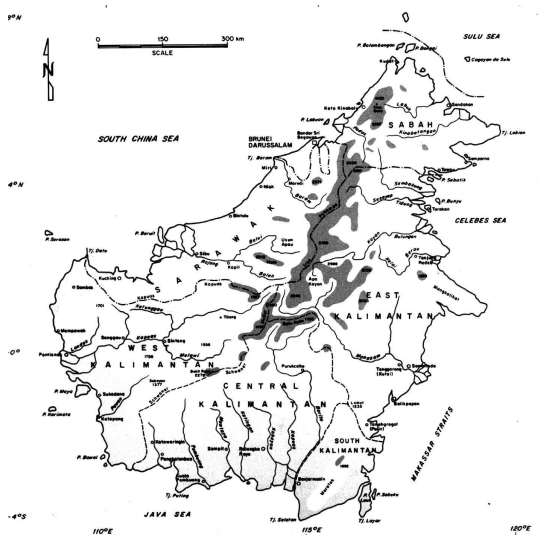

Figure 1. – Map of Borneo. Location of places mentioned in the text.

It then focuses on the specific case of Kalimantan, during the New Order period (1965-1998) and after the rapid decentralization that followed the demise of President Soeharto's regime. Then the advent of a third generation of museums in the early 2000s is described, as well as a process of depatrimonization of the palaces and their collections subsequent to the restoration of the former kingdoms. Finally, it briefly considers the future role of these palaces in the regions' cultures and increasingly lively political scenes, and discusses the "new museum" concept, meant to involve local communities, as applied to Kalimantan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kalimantan: Historical Framework in a Nutshell

In pre-colonial and colonial times, virtually all of Borneo's river basins were controlled by trading polities, whether powerful sultanates or petty polities, whose seats were located at river mouths and the confluences of major tributaries. Among some 300 such polities, small and large (see Hägerdal 2003, RAI 2012), in the territory that is now Indonesia, Kalimantan alone, up to the end of the nineteenth century, had over 25, forming a circular chain of relations of subordinates to

overlords all around the island's coastline and a similar chain, with a hierarchy of subordination, along river axes between the coast and the far hinterland (see Sellato 2013).

During Dutch times, particularly in the 19th and early 20th centuries, some of these polities fought against Dutch control (e.g., Banjarmasin) and were obliterated, while others collaborated (e.g., Kutai) and were left, until the 1930s, with a semi-autonomous status (Zelfbesturen, Swapraja, or Special Region; see Van Klinken 2006, Cribb 2000, 2010). On the island's east coast, the Dutch discovered petroleum, and sultans' cooperation was secured through the payment of royalties.

In post-Independence times, after 1949, the unitary Indonesian state, focusing on nation building, waged wars against rebel provinces, which favored a federal state. This culminated, in the 1950s, in the abolition of most of the country's semi-autonomous sultanates (Yogyakarta being an exception) and the appropriation by the state of their assets, privileges, and revenue. The same policy of building an Indonesian nation was pursued during General Soeharto's stretched New Order, from the mid-1960s to the late 1990s, leaving little initiative to provinces, especially outside Java (regarding Kalimantan, see a discussion in Sellato n.d.; also, Sellato 1998).

When the New Order came to an end in the late 1990s and the Reformasi period began, a policy of decentralization (Otonomi Daerah, regional autonomy), initiated earlier, was fully implemented, devolving some political power and much economic autonomy to provinces and districts (also called regencies). With a sudden afflux of financial means from local revenue, especially to districts, a more localized identity emerged, or re-emerged, everywhere.

A Brief History of Museums in Indonesia

While traditional societies in Indonesia, whether states or tribes, had long practiced the collecting and preserving of cultural artefacts in relation with local concepts of pusaka (cultural heritage with a valuable, spiritual, or sacred character; see Damais 1992, Kreps 2003, 2006, Guerreiro 2011, Njoto 2015, and below), Western ideas about museums and conservation of cultural artefacts were first expressed there in the mid-seventeenth century with the Dutch naturalist Georg Eberhard Rumpf's (Rumphius) Ambonese cabinet de curiosités (Amboinsche Rariteitkamer). In 1778, the Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen (Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences) was established in Batavia (now Jakarta), on the initiative of Dutch scholars, complete with a library and museum—it was well cared for by Thomas Stamford Raffles, the lieutenant-governor of Java, during the short British interregnum of the early nineteenth century.

From the Bataviaasch Genootschap to the Directorate of Museums

In 1862, the Batavian Society was housed in a new building, where it remained till after the country's independence. Around the turn of the twentieth century, some Javanese princes and regents began establishing their own private museums, as in Surakarta in 1890, Surabaya around 1900, and Mangkunegaran in 1918, to accommodate their pusaka articles, various collections, or local antiquities (see Njoto 2015). Starting in 1915 (or earlier?) and till 1941, the Dutch colonial government set up other museums, some of which were located outside of Java, in regions inhabited by demographically powerful ethnic communities with a robust regional cultural identity (Aceh, Batak, and Minangkabau in Sumatra, and Bali), and collections of objects from the Society were transferred there (DM 2011).

In 1925, as the Royal Batavian Society, it was reorganized as a center of "all cultural sciences" in Indonesia—i.e., "oriental studies," as they were then conceived—and contributed much to the study of Indonesian life and culture (UNESCO 1985). A law on cultural property, the Monumenten Ordonnantie (Monument Ordinance) No. 238, was enacted in 1931 (ICOM 2010).

Sixteen museums established by the Dutch were in existence on the eve of World War II (DM 2011)—none of which, apparently, was in Kalimantan (but see below)—or maybe as many as 24 to 26 by the end the war (Sutaarga 1990, cited in ICOM 2010; History 2014). Possibly not accounted for were several local museums that had, in the 1930s, been established, usually privately, by concerned civil servants and Christian missionaries—who had recognized the fading of indigenous material culture, "a gradual process of cultural impoverishment" (History 2014), as a detrimental consequence of colonization, as well as, probably, Islamization—but, praiseworthy as they were, such museums often lacked expertise and resources, and were often short lived (Rath 1997, History 2014).

After independence, in 1950, the Society became the Lembaga Kebudayaan Indonesia (Indonesian Cultural Institute). The state soon established cultural offices in several provinces (1952), then a Bagian Urusan Museum (Service of Museums, 1957), successively renamed Lembaga Museum-Museum Nasional, Direktorat Museum, and Direktorat Permuseuman in 1975 (DM 2011, History 2014). Meanwhile, in 1962, the old Batavian Society was handed over to the state, and its museum became the Museum Pusat (Central Museum, or National Museum), now considered one of Asia's oldest museums; the library attached to it, with its renowned collection of manuscripts, is now a part of the National Library in Jakarta.

As of late 2014, after various structural reshuffling episodes (see Kreps 2003, DM 2011), there is a Directorate of Conservation of Cultural Assets and Museums (Direktorat Pelestarian Cagar Budaya dan Permuseuman) under a Directorate-General of Culture (Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan), itself under the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan; Kemdikbud 2013), with "Tourism" having transferred to a another ministry. Military museums, it may be noted, are supervised by the Defense Ministry (History 2014).

Benefitting from the powerful economic impetus of the early 1970s, museum development gained momentum and the Directorate of Museums began a broad campaign to renovate some colonial monuments and upgrade the condition and numbers of provincial museums (Njoto 2015), the latter based on the European and American model, with professional staff trained in Western countries, and following the International Council of Museums' definitions and standard guidelines (Kreps 1994)—Indonesia joined ICOM in 1970 (Kreps 2003: 25). So, as early as in the first five-year plan (Pelita I, 1969/1970 to 1973/1974), the Directorate undertook the building and/or renovation of museums. Soon, in 1975, the "Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature Park" (Taman Mini Indonesia Indah, TMII), a theme park focused on regional architectural styles, was built in a Jakarta suburb to put the nation's cultural diversity on public display (see Guerreiro 2007; on provincial styles, see Sellato 1998).

By the end of Pelita III (1984), as many as 26 museums, one in each province's capital town, had been upgraded or established (to which a 27th was added in Pelita VI in East Timor). In 1990, there were some 140 museums, either public or private, in the country (Kreps 1998: 6). And by 2000, there were 262 (Kreps 2003: 25), including one Museum Nasional (Jakarta), 26 Museum

Negeri Provinsi (provincial state museums), four Museum Khusus (special museums, under the same Ministry), and 231 "other museums," unaffiliated to the Ministry (DM 2011). As of 2014, the number of provinces in Indonesia has soared to 34—although all probably do not yet have their own state museum, now called Museum Umum Provinsi (public provincial museum)—and Indonesia has almost 300 museums (Asosiasi 2013), of which some 80 are labelled as "state museums" (museum negeri; History 2014).

Historically, the dividing line between private and public museums seems to have been rather hazy. Since Indonesia's independence, a general trend has been for private museums to be taken over, for supervision, direct management, and funding, by state agencies, at varying administrative levels, in the same way that private schools, e.g., those founded and run by religious organizations, were progressively integrated into the state's standard educational system (dinegerikan). It may be assumed that scores of the "other museums" mentioned above benefitted, at provincial level, from some form of assistance, technical or financial, from state agencies.

In the course of time, the Directorate of Museums released various documents on legal and administrative aspects of the management of its museums (e.g., DM 1989, 2009c), as well as various "handbooks" or "directives" (pedoman), regularly updated, for use by provincial museums' heads and staffs (DM 1979/1980, Soemadio 1987b, DM 1989/1990, 1995, 1998, 2008). Altogether, although more recently established museums have already achieved higher standards, the increase in numbers of museums has yet to be matched by a progress in quality (History 2014).

DISCUSSION

National Policies on Museums

Following the abolition by the centralized state of almost all kingdoms and sultanates in Indonesia in the 1950s and 1960s, a number of the former rulers' palaces (keraton), taken over by the state, were turned into museums likewise, minor local museums were also taken over by the state. As Rath (1997) noted, it was important for the state to, at the same time, appropriate the supernatural power—as well as the dynastic regalia—associated with the keraton, and consolidate state power over the regional culture (see also Taylor 1994b, Kreps 2003, Njoto 2015). This was the case of the palace of the sultan of Kutai—which became the Museum Mulawarman, the state museum of East Kalimantan—as well as of other palaces, such as those in Pontianak and Ternate.

The Indonesian state's cultural policy, from the start, was part and parcel of its all-encompassing nation-building policy. Much has been written about this, and it will not be elaborated on here. Regarding culture, the 1945 Constitution's Paragraph No. 32 stated that "the government will promote the Indonesian national culture", and clarified it as follows: "The national culture is the culture which arises as the fruit of the entire Indonesian people" (ICOM 2010). Regarding museums, as early as 1950, Ki Mohd. Amir Sutaarga stressed that the new nation's museums were thoroughly neglected, and called for their being put to use for social-educational purposes (DM 2011). Sutaarga (1928-2013), the first head of the Museum Nasional (1962-1975) and of the Directorate of Museums (1966-84), and the pioneer of a Museology curriculum at the University of Indonesia in Jakarta, was instrumental in defining Indonesia's ideological and political agenda regarding museums, as well as in establishing, by 1984, the country's 26 provincial state museums (Asosiasi 2013; see also Sutaarga 1957, 1977). Later on,

several new laws were passed, including Law No. 5 of 1992, dealing with cultural property and meant to replace the 1931 Monument Ordinance (ICOM 2010).

In the context of the New Order's imperious "Development" (Pembangunan) policies of the 1970s, legislators asserted that the "best features" (i.e., those in line with the national ideology) of regional cultures should be "preserved and developed," so that they could contribute to the emergence of an "Indonesian national culture", as per the nation's motto, "Unity in Diversity" (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika; see, e.g., Sellato n.d., Taylor 1994a, Kreps 2003, Hitchcock et al. 2010). Then, cultural development being viewed as inseparable from overall national social-economic development, museums were conceived of as both symbols of modernity and tools of modernization (modernisasi), and as participating in the nation's development through their role as non- formal educational institutions—apart from providing local communities with recreational outlets (Kreps, 1994, 1998). So, in the 1970s, the importance of the diverse regional material cultures being recognized, provincial museums were meant as tools for unifying the country and for affirming local cultures.

However, as P.M. Taylor (1994a: 2) remarked, the "Unity in Diversity" motto's "obvious contradiction between the unity of a national culture and the diversity of local indigenous traditions reflect[ed] policies that sometimes crush[ed] and sometimes encourage[d] local traditions". Indeed, the state endeavored to carefully sort out the "good cultural traits" from the "bad," and promote the former while stamping out the latter. In its action over the first three five-year Plans (1973/1974 to 1979/1984) to establish provincial state museums, the state thus had a strongly normative character (as the "handbooks" mentioned above attest—and updated regulations on the preservation and utilization of museum collections were released till the late 1990s, e.g., Regulation No. 19 of 1995 (DM 1998, ICOM 2010).

From 1984 onward, however, subsequent to the new Plan Orientation of 1983 (RI 1983), new policies refocused the role and function of museums toward research and "education about culture and identity" (DM 2011). In practice, the focus shifted away from the preservation of culture toward the conservation of objects, or basic cataloguing, thus discouraging local cultural practices, customs, and traditions viewed as possible challenges to the state (see Rath 1997).

Later, the 1991 "Visit Indonesia Year" program motto, "Let's Go Archipelago," again emphasized the country's cultural diversity, albeit for more concrete purposes of promotion of tourism (Sellato 1998), which in the 1980s had become a crucial currency earner (on the uncomfortable relationship of tourism, nation building, and regional cultures, see Picard 1993, 1997). Indeed, the "Culture" component, for decades under the Ministry of Education and Culture, later was moved to a Ministry of Culture and Tourism, to return to the Ministry of Education in 2009 (DM 2011), and finally to a new Ministry of Education and Culture.

Altogether, considering that citizens construe and articulate anew what the state attempts to impress upon them, the role of museums in the Indonesian nation-building enterprise was really a complex one, as Adams (1999) correctly noted.

Figure 2. – The Borneo Museum, in Banjarmasin, was created by the Dutch in 1907 in the typical Banjarese high-ridged house (rumah bubungan tinggi) style, the only noteworthy museum in Dutch Borneo (the photo dates from the 1920s or 1930s). Plundered during the Japanese occupation, it was replaced in 1955 by a Kalimantan Museum, soon destroyed by fire, and later (1967) by a Museum Banjar. (Source: Tropenmuseum TM-60018759).

Although certain recent legal texts on the development of culture and tourism (RI 2005, 2009) do not even mention the word "museum", the Ministry of Education and Culture, following a 2010 presidential decree (RI 2010), has set up a "Strategic Program" (Rencana Strategis) for the 2010-2014 period, which features an energetic Revitalisasi Museum campaign, along with a cute "I Love Museums" national movement (Gerakan Nasional Cinta Museum), in order to upgrade the public image of museums and boost their frequentation (DM 2011). The year 2010 was coined "Visit Museum Year" (Tahun Kunjung Museum), and various booklets were published to support the campaign (e.g., DM 2009a). The Revitalisasi Museum targets the "revitalization" of 36 museums in 2011, and of a total of 80 by the end of the five-year period (Intan Mardiana, pers. com.).

Museums in Kalimantan and Decentralization

In colonial times, collections of material culture from Kalimantan were generally accommodated in the museum of the Batavian Society, and still constitute the bulk of the present-day National Museum's Kalimantan holdings. Large collections, however, whether natural history or cultural artefacts, were shipped to various museums, in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Western countries.

Museums in Kalimantan before Decentralization

It seems that the first and only important museum in Kalimantan during colonial times was the Borneo Museum (fig. 2), founded by the Dutch in Banjarmasin in 1907—though it does not appear in the lists cited above. The Dutch colonial administration is also reported to have, in 1922, established in Sintang, West Kalimantan, in collaboration with the Tropenmuseum of Amsterdam, a Sintang Cultural Center (see IS Sintang; and more below).

The Borneo Museum was later looted during the Japanese occupation. A new one, the Kalimantan Museum, was built in Banjarmasin in 1955, but was soon destroyed by fire. Another museum, Museum Banjar, was created by the governor of South Kalimantan in 1967, and later transferred to several successive locations.

As mentioned above, a second generation of museums, the independent Indonesia's state museums (museum negeri), was in the process of being established in the four Kalimantan provinces during Pelita II (1974/1975 to 1978/1979). By the end of Pelita III, Kalimantan already had two completed and operational state museums: the Museum Lambung Mangkurat in South Kalimantan and the Museum Mulawarman in East Kalimantan (out of ten nation-wide; UNESCO 1985).

In Banjarmasin, the city no longer having a royal palace (see below), the collections of the Museum Banjar were finally transferred to the new Museum Lambung Mangkurat (fig. 3), a modern building reminiscent of a traditional Banjarese house, located at Banjar Baru, some 30 km away from the city, and inaugurated in 1979. It houses an important collection of Banjarese and Dayak artefacts and a good selection of archaeological objects. In 2008, it received over 45,000 visitors (IS Banjarmasin).

In East Kalimantan, the sultans' old wooden palace in Tenggarong (fig. 4) was replaced, by the turn of the twentieth century, by a new one, also built of wood, and also known as Keraton Kesultanan Kutai Kartanegara ing Martadipura (fig. 5). This latter palace, damaged by fire, was dismantled and replaced in 1932, by a building made of concrete and in Art Déco style (fig. 6) by a Dutch architect named Estourgie, to be handed over in 1936 to Sultan Aji Muhammad Parikesit. After the sultanate was abolished in 1960, the palace was requisitioned during the Confrontation with Malaysia, as East Borneo sultans were then suspected of intending to join the Malaysian Federation (D.P. Tick, pers. com.). It was turned into a museum in 1971 by the East Kalimantan military commander, and finally transferred by the provincial government to the then Ministry of Education and Culture in 1976. It became a state museum, Museum Negeri Mulawarman, in 1979 (IS Kutai). The old mosque and the royal graveyard, both renovated, are located nearby, while a grand new mosque (Masjid Agung) has recently been built, along with a new royal palace (fig. 7), which is in a style reminiscent of the early- twentieth-century wooden palace and only used for official functions.

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Figure 3. – The Museum Negeri Lambung Mangkurat's main building at Banjar Baru, some 30 km to the southeast of Banjarmasin, and just off the road from Banjarmasin to Martapura. Building started in 1974, and the Museum was inaugurated in January 1979. Its architects gave the building a shape reminiscent of the typical Banjarese house. It houses collections of Banjar and Dayak artefacts and archaeological objects from Kalimantan. (Source: purnamatravel.files.wordpress.com; http://www.indonesia-tourism.com/forum/ showthread.php?520-Lambung-Mangkurat-Museum-Banjarbaru-South-Kalimantan&s=d5167cad49b630 1662278009d08376d5).

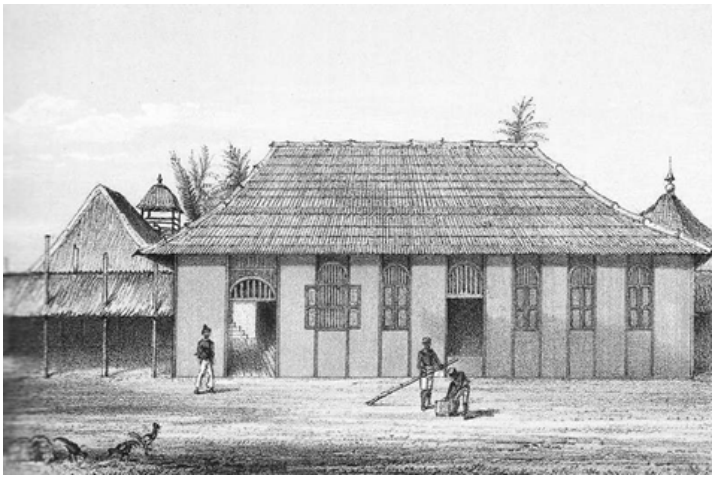

Figure 4. – The palace compound of the sultan of Kutai at Tenggarong, East Kalimantan (source: Bock 1882: 24, plate 1). Bock was in Kutai in 1879, in the times of Sultan Aji Muhammad Sulaiman Khalifat al-Mukminin, "one of the most intelligent rulers in the Malay Archipelago" (1882: 31). He described "a large, square, wooden building, approached through a long-covered courtyard, with two openings for doorways, and covered with a corrugated galvanized iron roof." Inside, "this Pandoppo … had large side galleries," "occupied by fat- tailed sheep," … "and another facing the door over a large platform; while part of the floor was occupied by subdivisions, or "rooms." There were "a few lamps, suspended from the lofty roof, which was supported by massive pillars of iron-wood." "I looked in vain, however for chairs or seats of any kind" (1882: 32).

Figure 5. – The Keraton Kesultanan of Kutai in the times of Sultan Aji Muhammad Alimuddin (r. 1899-1910). Alimuddin, who replaced Sultan Sulaiman, built a new palace, facing the river, also of ironwood, but with two stories. Around 1930, it was badly damaged by fire, and later dismantled, while a new palace made of concrete was built for Sultan Parikesit. (Source: http://kesultanan.kutaikartanegara.com/index. php?menu=Keraton_Kutai).

Figure 6. – The "colonial" Kutai Palace, built in concrete by a Dutch architect for young Sultan Aji Muhammad Parikesit at Tenggarong. Decorated in Art Nouveau style, it faces the Mahakam River across vast front grounds. Started in 1932, it was handed over to the sultan in 1936. After the abolition of the sultanate (1960), the palace was turned into a museum by the military commander of East Kalimantan (1971), then became a state museum, Museum Negeri Mulawarman, in 1979. The obelisk disappeared, but all sorts of fancy new monuments appeared on the front grounds, including a large replica of the winged Lembu Swana, the kingdom's symbol. The museum houses royal paraphernalia, court costumes, archaeological objects, historical documents, a large collection of ceramics, and an ethnographic section of Dayak artefacts (Photo: Bernard Sellato, 2010).

Figure 7. – The new palace, Kedaton Kutai Kartanegara, of Sultan H.A.M. Salehuddin II, Kutai's new sultan since 2001, was built by the government of Kutai Kartanegara District, in the style of Sultan Alimuddin's palace (Photo: BS, 2010). The aisle walls of the Throne Hall display scores of historical documents and photographs, as well as portraits of earlier sultans. (More information: http://kesultanan.kutaikartanegara.com/index.php?menu=Keraton_Kutai).

In Pontianak, West Kalimantan, the royal family—now headed, since 2004, by Syarif Abubakar Alqadri, the new and ninth sultan—continued to live in the sultan's palace, Keraton Kadriyah (fig. 8), originally built in 1771 by Syarif Abdurrahman Alqadri, a trader of Arab origin, who started the Kadriyah dynasty. The palace, reportedly in rather sad condition, houses the thrones and some regalia, a wooden mimbar, a few cannons, ceramic jars, as well as historical portraits and documents. Nearby stands the old Masjid Jami' Sultan Abdurrahman. The state established a Museum Negeri Propinsi Kalimantan Barat (fig. 9), built in a "mixed traditional and modern style" (see Sellato n.d.; on modern architecture in Kalimantan, see Sellato 1998), which was inaugurated in 1983 and became a state museum in 1988, during Pelita IV. Its exhibits include ethnographic collections, as well as an extensive collection of ceramic jars (see Lombard 1984, IS Pontianak).

In Palangkaraya, the capital city of Central Kalimantan, a new province created in 1957, where no sultanate or palace ever existed, the Museum Balanga (fig. 10) was first established as a regional museum (Museum Daerah) in 1973 by community members concerned about the preservation of their province's cultural heritage (Kreps 1998: 6; 2003: 26). It was designated as a state museum in 1989 and, as such, its 5,000-item collections include general- interest themes such as "geology, biology, numismatics, and philology" (see SEK 1989-90, IS Palangkaraya). The bulk of its regional-interest collections and its scenography (fig. 11), however, are rooted in the local Ngaju Dayak culture, as described in detail by C. Kreps (2003: 26, 2012).

Government policies regulated the contents (collections and displays) of state museums and, for a part, provided them. They attempted to balance contents between "general interest", focused on the Archipelago and national values and meant to boost national unity and identity, and "regional interest", focused on local cultures. Collections, as in the Museum Lambung Mangkurat, included the following categories: Prehistory, Archaeology, Coins, Ceramics, History, Manuscripts, Modern Arts, Contemporary Crafts, Geography, Astronomy, Geology, Paleontology, Zoology, Botany, Herbarium, and Ethnography.

Figure 8. – The Keraton Kadriyah of Pontianak in 1990. This sturdy, squat palace was originally built by the first sultan, Syarif Abdurrahman Alqadri, in 1771, on the bank of the Kapuas River, next to the Kampung Arab. The broad protruding reception area is a later extension. The royal family was massacred by the Japanese, along with the whole provincial intelligentsia, in the Peristiwa Sungkup (now called Tragedi Mandor). The last sultan, Hamid II, was jailed in 1950, and the sultanate abolished. It was restored in 2004 (Photo: Bernard Sellato, 1990).

Initially, the local collections often were limited to articles originating from palaces' collections, and therefore mainly reflected Malay- Javanese court cultures, but since the 1980s museum programs concentrated on documenting "tribal" (non-Malay) cultures and building basic (Dayak) ethnographic collections.

Such programs, known as proyek—variously called, e.g., "Inventory and Documentation of Regional Culture," "Inventory and Promotion of Cultural Values," or "Museum Development"—initiated and underwritten by the Ministry, gave birth in all provincial state museums to a number of publications (including catalogues) focused on specific local museum collections, or other cultural features, such as traditional architecture (see a review in Sellato in press).

Figure 9. – The Museum Negeri of West Kalimantan, in Pontianak, in mixed traditional and modern style (partly standing on stilts), was inaugurated in 1983 and is now considered one of the five best museums nationwide. Its exhibits include ethnographic collections (clothing, masks, weapons, brassware, basketry), models of traditional houses, archaeological objects, some 600 ceramic jars, manuscripts and historical documents, as well as collections of rocks and animals. (Source: http://www.skyscrapercity.com/ showthread.php?t=473704&page=5).

Figure 10. – The Museum Negeri Balanga, Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan (c. 1985). In a provincial capital with no historical palace, the Museum Balanga was founded in 1973 as a regional museum (Museum Daerah) by community members concerned about their province's cultural heritage. Built in a "mixed Dayak and modern" style, it was designated as a state museum in 1989 and inaugurated in 1990.
(Source: http://mahakam24.blogspot.fr/2014/02/museum-balanga-palangkaraya-kalimantan.html).

Considering that museum staff (civil servants) may or may not comprise participants in the local cultures, such publications are of varying quality. They also are very poorly distributed. Moreover, I never heard that local community members had a say in, or were consulted about what "regional-interest" collections should include.

Regarding "general-interest" collections, the Museum Mulawarman, for example, used to display a collection of traditional costumes of all provinces of Indonesia; miniatures of Java's Borobudur and Prambanan temples; textiles from Sumatra; traditional Indonesian weapons and musical instruments; and a superb collection of Asian and European ceramics, probably originating from the sultan's collection. But several "regional-interest" rooms were dedicated to displays of selected features of the various Dayak cultures, such as wooden sculpture, textile weaving, blowpipes, and basketry.

The Kutai Palace's most precious objects, viewed as part of the "national heritage," were transferred to the National Museum in Jakarta, such as some of the sultans' regalia (e.g., ancient gold objects, such as the two- kilogram gold crown, ketopong) or important archaeological pieces (e.g., the famous fifth-century-AD inscribed stone yupa steles). Some of these, however, may have been recently returned to Tenggarong. Other important objects of the palace's paraphernalia were not removed, such as the sultan's throne (singgasana, created by the Dutch maker Van der Lube in 1935), the Lembu Swana statue (a winged mythical animal and the kingdom's symbol, manufactured in Burma in the 1850s), a gamelan orchestra (presented by the sultan of Yogyakarta in 1855), ritual umbrellas, various historical documents and photographs, and official and court costumes and uniforms.

Figure 11. – The Museum Negeri Balanga, renovated after 2008. It includes a 5,000-item mixed collection, covering both general-interest themes, as provided for by the state, and local-interest, ethnographic themes, as initiated and emphasized by the founders. (Source: http://mahakam24.blogspot.fr/2014/02/museum- balanga-palangkaraya-kalimantan.html).

Interestingly, the transformation of a palace into a museum had not quite erased the spiritual and temporal aura of the sultans' offspring, who still lived next to, and sometimes in the palace. "Although the museum is officially owned by the state and thus intended to function as a public museum, […] the royal family still use the palace and some of the collection for royal functions and ceremonies. […T]he sultan's family also has considerable say in museum matters" (Kreps 2003: 57). A similar situation pertained to the palace of the sultans of Ternate in the Moluccas (Taylor 1994b). We shall see below how these royal offspring achieved their return to power.

I shall briefly describe here a few minor palaces-museums, which are not state museums and are managed by district (kabupaten) culture offices. These museums really are local history museums, and keep echoing the former kingdoms, which still have much sway over the local population. The physical buildings themselves, as former seats of power, still contribute to uphold strong local feelings of identity.

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Figure 12. – Sintang, the only kingdom of some importance in the far interior of Borneo, at the confluence of the Melawi with the Kapuas, in West Kalimantan, became a sultanate in the late seventeenth century, which was abolished in 1959. Replacing earlier palaces, the present Istana al-Mukarramah is located across the Kapuas River from the town of Sintang, at a place called Kampung Raja. It was built in 1937 by the Dutch for the new sultan, Panembahan Muhammad Jamaluddin, and comprised three main buildings, with ironwood pillars sunk in concrete blocks and an asbestos ceiling under an ironwood shingled roof. Nearby is the royal graveyard (Makam Kerabat Istana) and, right downstream, is an old wooden mosque, Masjid Jami' Sultan Nata. The palace's central building was turned by the state into the Museum Dara Juanti (c. 1970), and renovated in 1985. It displayed a Garuda (the kingdom's symbol), weapons, brassware, ceramic jars, painted and photo portraits of past kings and, on its grounds, bronze cannons and a coarse stone lingga called Batu Kundur. (Photo: Bernard Sellato, 1979).

Sintang, an important kingdom of interior West Kalimantan, probably was established before the fifteenth century. Successive palaces, Istana Kerajaan of the late seventeenth century, Istana Panembahan of the 1860s, and Istana al-Mukarramah built in 1937 (see Enthoven 1903, Lontaan 1975) were large wooden houses on stilts, in "Malay" style, generally with a broad veranda serving as a meeting hall. The kingdom was abolished in 1959, and the palace (fig. 12) turned into the Museum Dara Juanti in the early 1970s (Goenadi et al. 1977). Managed by the local government as a cultural heritage monument, the museum displays the former ruler's collections (a gamelan, ceramic jars, cannons, photographs), and some ethnographic objects (see IS Sintang). The palace has recently been renovated (fig. 13).

Pasir, an early (fourteenth century?) coastal polity of East Kalimantan, settled at Paser Belengkong in the sixteenth century under the name Sadurengas. It later became a sultanate, ruled by Bugis or Banjarese overlords. The present palace, actually a not-so-large wooden platform house quite superbly called Kuta Imam Duyu Kina Lenja, with elegant Bugis-style carvings and finials, was built in the mid-nineteenth century and formerly surrounded by ironwood fences (see Handleiding 1884: II, 149-151). In 1908, the sultan handed authority over Pasir to the Dutch, and was later arrested and banished (1918; see Eisenberger 1936: 89-98, cited in Bakker 2008: 154). The Dutch built a new administrative town at Tanah Grogot, leaving Belengkong a backwater place. The palace later became the Museum Sadurengas (fig. 14), with its adjacent old mosque, graveyard, and old cannons, and its collections (fig. 15-16) include ceramic jars, royal outfits, and domestic utensils. It was completely renovated between 2008 and 2010 (fig. 17; and see IS Pasir).

Figure 13. – The Sintang sultanate was restored (2003) and Muhammad Ikhsani Shafiuddin, in 2005, became its new king, Panembahan Kusuma Negara V, and occupied the recently renovated palace. The museum's collections were moved to the side buildings. Soon after this, the district government of Sintang initiated administrative procedures toward the creation of a new province, Kapuas Raya, to be carved out of West Kalimantan. (Source: http://melayuonline.com/ind/history/dig/431/istana-al-mukarrammah-sintang).

Kotawaringin, a Malay principality, was established on Borneo's south coast before the fourteenth century, then Islamized and taken over, as Kasultanan Kota Ringin, by the Banjarese sultan in the sixteenth century. A palace, Istana al-Nursari, was built in Banjarese style at Kotawaringin Lama, on the Lamandau River, in the late sixteenth century, and probably rebuilt several times. Its old mosque (Mesjid Kyai Gede, now renovated) and royal graveyard can still be seen there. In the early nineteenth century, Sultan Imanuddin moved his capital to Sukabumi Indra Sakti (later known as Pangkalan Bun), on a side stream and closer to the coast, where he built a new palace (fig. 18), with the glorious title of Keraton Lawang Agung Bukit Indra Kencana (but usually called Istana Kuning; see Handleiding 1884: II, 111-115, Pijnappel 1968, Gazali 1994, Vita & Rita 1994: 10-11, Suwedi 1994/1995: 15-20, and IS Kotawaringin). The Istana Kuning was renovated by the state as a museum between 1980 and 1985, damaged by fire in 1986, and rebuilt.

Recently renovated again (fig. 19), it houses collections of ancient weapons, ceramics, costumes, and documents.

Figure 14. – The palace of the sultan of Paser Sadurengas, at Paser Belengkong, Paser District, East Kalimantan (in 2010, before the end of renovation work). Built in the mid-nineteenth century by Sultan Aji Tenggara (1844-1873), and named Kuta Imam Duyu Kina Lenja, it is a wooden house on stilts, of relatively modest proportions, with elegant roof finials, surrounded by an old wooden mosque, a royal graveyard, and an enclosure with sacred cannons. Now a museum, Museum Sadurengas, it houses collections of ceramic jars, royal outfits, domestic utensils, and historical documents (Photo: Bernard Sellato, 2010).

Figure 15. – Inside the Museum Sadurengas, Paser: part of historical collections: uniform, photographs, brass trays (Photo: Bernard Sellato, 2010).

Figure 16. – Inside the Museum Sadurengas, Paser: part of ethnographic collections, mostly basketry artefacts (Photo: Bernard Sellato, 2010).

Figure 17. – Inside the Museum Sadurengas, Paser: the reception hall, with elevated platform and two winged creatures (Photo: Bernard Sellato, 2010).

Apart from such museums, rooted in local minor kingdoms' histories, small museums with a narrow thematic focus have recently emerged, like the Museum Waja Sampai Ka Puting (a.k.a. Wasaka, the motto of the local independence struggle) in Banjarmasin, housed in a converted traditional Banjarese house and inaugurated in 1991, with collections of some 400 objects related to the history of the independence war in South Kalimantan (see IS Banjarmasin).

Decentralization, the Museum Boom, and Depatrimonization

In the first decade of the new century, in the more open, more liberal context of decentralization, the restoration of a number of sultanates was wrested from and officially recognized by the Indonesian state—e.g., Kutai (2001), Sintang (2003), Pontianak (2004)—while Banjarmasin long remained the object of a dynastic dispute. Subsequently, a law was passed (c. 2008) to the effect that the traditional kingdoms' cultural heritage should be protected (D.P. Tick, pers. com.). Subsequent to such restorations, descendants of sultans everywhere in the country—and even in the tiniest former local polities—were enthroned, and some demanded the restitution of their forebears' palaces and property, and sometimes "territories" (on the Pasir case, see Bakker 2008), and these new kings now endeavor to also restore for themselves a focal position in the current increasingly lively and localized cultural and, quite importantly, political setting.

The post-New Order political and administrative decentralization laws also devolved much "cultural" autonomy to lower administrative levels (daerah: province and district; see RI 2000, 2004, 2007), whereby regional governments now have authority over policies of cultural development, including the establishment of "regional museums" (museum daerah).

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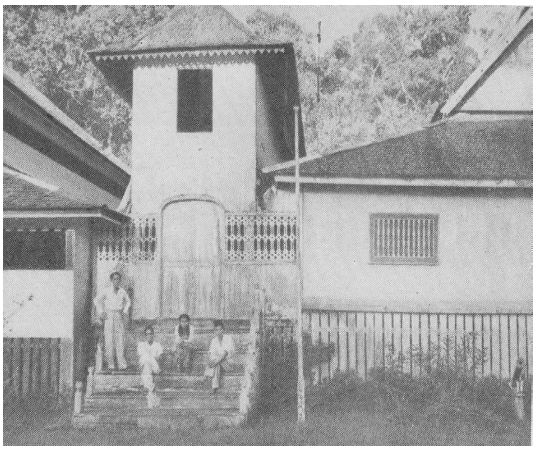

Figure 18. – The Istana Kuning, at Pangkalan Bun, Central Kalimantan, before 1950. An ancient kingdom mentioned in the Nāgara-kertāgama, Kota Waringin became a sultanate in the sixteenth century. The sultanate was abolished in 1959 but, in 2010, Pangeran Ratu Alidin Sukma Alamsyah was installed as its fifteenth sultan. This palace, also called Keraton Indra Kencana, was built in the first decade of the nineteenth century by the ninth sultan, Pangeran Ratu Imanuddin (r. 1805-1841), after he moved his capital from Kota Waringin Lama, on the Lamandau River, to Pangkalan Bun, on the Arut River. Made of ironwood, it is said to combine stylistic influences from Java, Banjar, Malay, and Dayak. The Istana Kuning was renovated by the state as a museum between 1980 and 1985, damaged by fire in 1986, and rebuilt. Recently renovated again, it houses a collection of ancient weapons, oars, jewelry, costumes, ceramics, and portraits, as well as a seventeenth-century Dutch cannon. (Source: RIK 1953: 434).

Figure 19. – The Istana Kuning, after renovation. The three main buildings, and the entrance and tower in the background. (Source: http://aditya-pbun.blogspot.fr/2013/07/kesultanan-islam-pertama-di-kalimantan.html).

At provincial level, in the framework of the post-2000 "new paradigm," state museums are now fully run by the provincial government, practically by a "technical executive unit" (UPT, Unit Pelaksana Teknis) of the Section of Museums and Antiquities (Bidang Permuseuman dan Peninggalan Sejarah) of the provincial Office (Dinas) of the Ministry of Education and Culture (DM 2011). Due to the recent centrifugal trends, however, administrative authority over state museums, as well as over policies, may be devolved to districts, and may vary with provinces, and even with districts. In any event, with increased economic affluence, provincial or district governments (PEMDA, Pemerintah Daerah), now in charge of keeping and displaying cultural collections, seem to spend much more liberally on "their" museums than did the state before decentralization.

In the first decade of this century, with an increasingly inward-focused cultural and political life at province (formerly propinsi, now provinsi) and district (kabupaten) levels, a strengthened local identity, and greater financial means, both museums and sultans' palaces have become important stakes. A third generation of museums, initiated and subsidized by local governments, newly enthroned sultans (or pretenders), as well as, most probably, corporate donors, is blooming, on a much larger scale than their predecessors.

In Kutai, a huge new museum has just been built, next to, and meant to replace, the old Mulawarman palace cum state museum. Next to the old mosque, Masjid Jami' Aji Amir Hasanuddin, said to have been built upon the coming of Islam to Kutai in the seventeenth century, the recently collapsed minaret was replaced by a modern-style tower. An ostentatious new palace, called Kedaton Kutai Kartanegara (fig. 7), was also built for the new sultan, Aji Muhammad Salehuddin II, who, on 24 November 2010, invited sultans from all over Indonesia to celebrate in grand style the 1,660th anniversary of the kingdom of Kutai (purportedly founded by Maharaja Sri Kundungga in 350 AD), thus establishing nationwide seniority among fellow sultans (Kaltim Post 2010).

In South Kalimantan, due to frequent moves of the seat of power, a war lost to the Dutch (1859-1865), and the subsequent official extinction of the sultanate (1905; see Van Rees 1867, Idwar 1958, 1975, 1982/1983), the old palace of the 1850s (fig. 20-21) was ruined and no new palace was ever built. As of 2012, no new sultan had yet been enthroned, but for Prince Khairul Saleh, then a leading wannabe sultan and a district head in Banjarmasin (RAI 2012), the city bought land and underwrote the construction of a new palace. Eventually, Khairul Saleh became sultan of Banjarmasin, district head of Banjarmasin City (and head of the Council of Borneo Sultans; D.P. Tick, pers. com.).

Interestingly, Banjarmasin architects had to turn to mid-nineteenth-century Dutch engravings for inspiration (e.g., Schwaner 1853-54), and the new sultan of Landak, West Kalimantan, used Dutch archive documents to design his new palace in the old 'Malay' style (D.P. Tick, pers. com.)—in Brunei Darussalam, as De Vienne (2012) reports, architects resorted to old British engravings (e.g., Marryat 1848) to rebuild the sultan's lapau ceremonial hall, which had been destroyed during World War II.

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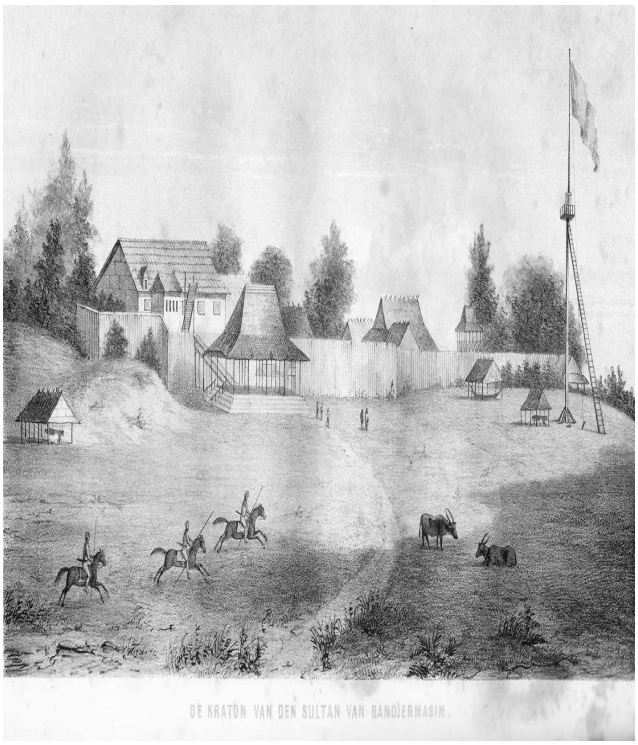

Figure 20. – The Keraton (or Dalem) of Martapura, the palace compound of the sultan of Banjarmasin at Martapura, c. 1845 (source: Schwaner 1853-54). C.AL.M. Schwaner travelled in the area between 1843 and 1847. This plate is probably one of the 27 tinted lithographs made by C.W. Mieling (see also Buddingh 1867).

The restoration of sultans involves important stakes for the political factions competing for power at provincial or district level. In South Kalimantan, long affected by dynastic disputes, one faction successfully lobbied for Khairul Saleh's choice as sultan, while another was supporting another claimant and had a new palace built for him in another town upriver. In Kutai, the faction that had supported Sultan Aji Muhammad Salehuddin II apparently became dissatisfied with his later, more independent stance and prompted, as a political alternative, the comeback of another dynastic line, that of Kutai Martadipura, a kingdom conquered and abolished by Kutai Kartanegara in the eighteenth century (D.P. Tick, pers. com.).

In this increasingly prestigious setting, for both sultans and local governments, customary "tribute remittance" festivals like the Erau in Kutai or Birau in Bulungan, which traditionally were held annually for hinterland tribes to renew their allegiance to sultans, have now been turned into huge, high-profile touristic events, with dance and music performances, handicraft sales, blowpipe contests, and longboat regattas, to boost regional status and local governments' revenue. Provincial and district tourism agencies (Dinas Pariwisata) endeavor to promote such events—as well as their museums, among other "touristic items" (obyek pariwisata)—to national and international customers, now through websites.

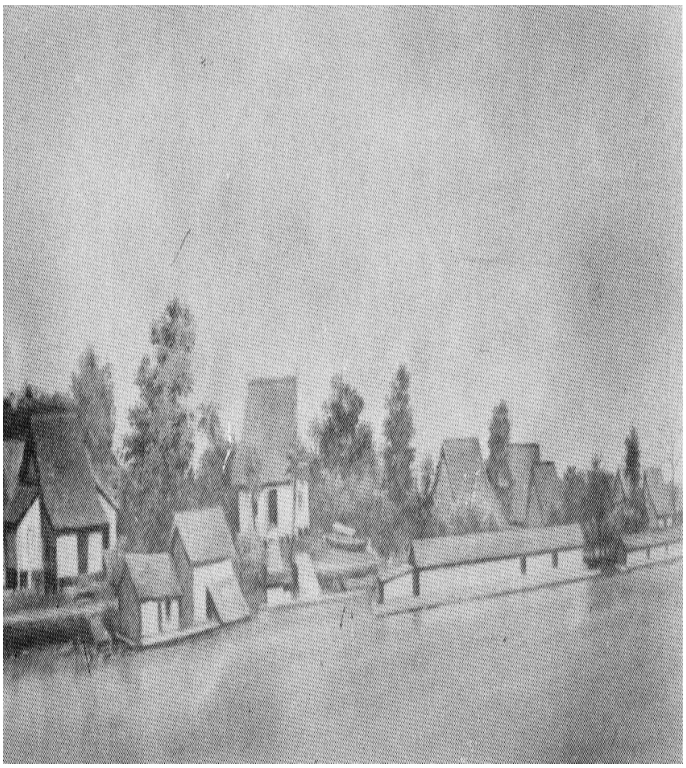

Figure 21. – A waterfront view of the last palace of the Banjar sultans, at Sungai Mesa, c. 1857. This was Sultan Tamjid's (Tamjidillah's) palace, from where he tried to rule, from 1857 to 1859, before he was exiled to Bogor. It was standing across the Martapura river from the Dutch resident's office (source: Idwar Saleh 1982/1983: 39; Museum Negeri Lambung Mangkurat, Inv. No. S. 3559). This scene was possibly reproduced by the Museum from Werdmüller von Elgg's Schetsen uit Bandjarmasin (1863).

In smaller towns, mostly district capitals, the palaces of minor sultanates have recently been renovated—or, sometimes, totally rebuilt—and house small non- state museums. In coastal East Kalimantan, a Museum Kesultanan Bulungan (fig. 22-23) has been established, and both the twin and rival Sambaliung and Gunung Tabur sultanates' palaces in Berau were renovated, the latter housing the Museum Batiwakkal. In the southeast, Bugis principalities of the Tanah Bumbu area are now in the process of reinstalling themselves (D.P. Tick, pers. com.). In West Kalimantan, the Matan Palace (fig. 24-25), the Mempawah Palace (fig. 26-27), and the Sanggau Palace (fig. 28) were renovated or rebuilt, each including a small museum. Palaces in Sekadau, Sambas, Mempawah, and Tayan, all in West Kalimantan, also were renovated, while the six minor principalities in Kapuas Hulu District very recently showed some signs of revival, initiated by the local government (D.P. Tick, pers. com.).

Such local museums, which may be visited, display regalia, old weapons, and historical documents and photographs. They also attest to the converging interests of impoverished royal families in quest of resources and affluent district governments in quest of spiritual aura (see below) and legitimacy (and, possibly, tourism revenue). Interestingly, renovated palaces of ancient Indianized kingdoms often were painted a rich golden yellow, while those of more recent (or historically Bugis- or Makassar-controlled) sultanates were painted green.

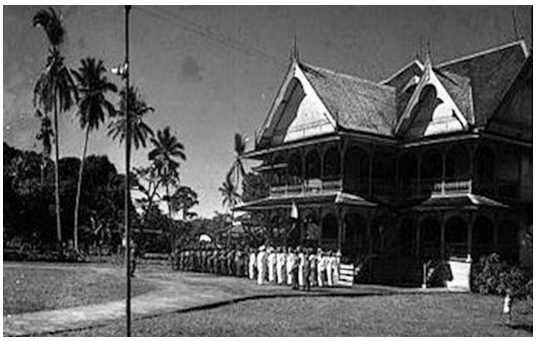

Figure 22. – The palace of the sultan of Bulungan, at Tanjung Palas, across the Bulungan (or Kayan) River from Tanjung Selor, the capital of Bulungan District, East Kalimantan, c. 1950. After the death of Sultan Jalaluddin (1958), the sultanate suffered the 18 July 1964 "Tragedi Bultiken," in which an Indonesian army unit massacred and abducted royal family members, and looted and burnt the palace. (Source: http://www.bulungan.go.id ; in http://muhammadzarkasy-bulungan.blogspot.fr/).

In Sintang, Kesuma Negara V (installed in 2005 as panembahan and in 2006 as sultan; RAI 2012) and his family now occupy the old Istana Al Mukarramah's main building, and only side buildings housing the Museum Dara Juanti remain open to visitors (fig. 13). A renovation project by the Sintang district government, in the early 2000s, was abandoned, probably due to the sultan's averseness. Instead, a new project, the Sintang Cultural Center (Pusat Kebudayaan Sintang; fig. 29), was jointly initiated in 2004 by the Sintang district government and the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) of Amsterdam, as part of a "New Museum" program (C. Kreps, pers. com.; see also Fienieg 2007). Its museum cum library, Museum Kapuas Raya, was inaugurated in 2008. This center is conceived of as an educational and recreational cultural focal point for local residents. Ecumenically representing the region's three peoples (Dayak, Malay, and Chinese), its collections include ceramics, weapons, daily utensils, musical instruments, and old photographs (fig. 30; and see IS Sintang).

Figure 23. – The new Museum Kesultanan Bulungan was built in c. 2000 at Tanjung Palas, in a style reminiscent of the old palace, "but in [much] smaller size." Old cannons are set on the front grounds, facing the Kayan River. Collections include what was salvaged from the looting and destruction: some furniture, Malay krisses, ceramic jars, and photographs. A new sultan, Maulana al-Mamun Ibni Muhammad Maulana Jalaluddin, was inaugurated in 2013. (Source: http://springocean83.wordpress.com/author/springocean83/page/2/).

Figure 24. – The Matan Palace, called Istana Matan Tanjung Pura or Istana Mulya Kerta, at Ketapang, in the southwest of Kalimantan, in the early 1970s. It was built in the second half of the nineteenth century by Muhammad Sabran, fourteenth panembahan of Matan, totally rebuilt in the early twentieth century, in "a more European style," by the Western-educated Panembahan Gusti Muhammad Saunan, and recently renovated. While the tower was meant as a watch post, a cannon called Meriam Padam Pelita is set on the grounds. (source: Lontaan 1975: 92; http://syawalcueexs.blogspot.fr/2013/08/kerajaankeraton-matan- tanjung-pura.html).

Figure 25. – The Matan Palace in 2010, after renovation. Collections include thrones, furniture, batik and other textiles, and portraits and photos. (Source: http://liveinbalikpapan.blogspot.fr/2012/09/kerajaan- tanjungpura.html).

Figure 26. – The Mempawah Palace, called Istana Amantubillah Mempawah, on Borneo's northwest coast (c. 1930). It was built c. 1770 by Panembahan Adiwijaya Kesuma, a successor to the Bugis founder of the Amantubillah sultanate (c. 1750). The last sultan died in 1944 at the hands of the Japanese, but a new prince, Mardan Adijaya, took the throne in 2002. The palace was damaged by fire in 1880, renovated in 1922, and again very recently. (Source: KOI in http://dedy-afriyanto.blogspot.fr/).

Other rich districts, in their turn, are now funding the creation of local museums, sometimes in relation to particular regional economic or cultural features, as with the Museum Kayu Tuah Himba in Tenggarong (see IS Kutai), dedicated to forests and forestry, and a museum project in Sangatta, East Kalimantan, focusing on the history of the region's coal exploitation and on the more recent palm oil industry (A. Guerreiro, pers. com.). One may imagine that local business corporations contributed heavily to the funding. More often than not, foundations (yayasan) are established to raise funds and run these projects. Another project, also in Sangatta, focuses on recent archaeological discoveries in nearby caves (Chazine in press). In Amuntai, South Kalimantan, a Museum Candi Agung was recently established around a fifteenth-century Hindu temple, most probably involving expertise from the National Archaeological Center and funding from Jakarta.

Figure 27. – The Mempawah Palace c. 2010, after renovation. The main building serves as a museum, exhibiting regalia, a large set of weapons, documents, portraits, and photos. Located nearby are an old mosque and the royal graveyard. (Source: http://www.wisatakalbar.bl.ee/index.php/history-tourism).

Figure 28. – The Istana Kuta of Sanggau, West Kalimantan, c. 2010 (after renovation). An old kingdom, claimed to date back to the early fourteenth century, Sanggau is located some distance up the Kapuas River from Pontianak. This is Istana Kuta, the older of two palaces, as Sanggau, since c. 1740, has had two royal branches, Istana Kuta and Istana Beringin, alternating in the sultan's position. The Istana Kuta was originally built by Sultan Zainuddin (r. 1722-1741). The sultanate was abolished in 1960, and the palace was found in a sorry state of decay in the 1980s. Now called Keraton Surya Negara, it was renovated in 2009, as Pangeran Ratu H. Gusti Arman Surya Negara was installed as the new sultan of Sanggau. The compound comprises several buildings (Rumah Laut, Rh. Balai, Rh. Penghulu, Rh. Wredhana, etc.). In its Rumah Darat are kept historical collections, including royal costumes, umbrella, krisses, royal seals, musical instruments, manuscripts and photographs. Although the palace may be visited, it is not a public museum. (Source: catur prasetyo sp, http://www.panoramio.com/photo/28009151).

The central Directorate in Jakarta, anticipating a continuing explosion in the numbers of local museums and wishing to mediate as a guide and referent in their establishment, has recently issued a booklet of advice to interested parties: "How to Start a Museum" (DM 2009b).

However, beyond an obvious quest for prestige, as expressed in the new museums' often grand physical buildings, regional governments' true long- term commitment—with follow-up funding for staff development, collection acquisition, and proper maintenance—may be questioned, as well as their continuing pursuit of the central state's earlier explicit, though ambiguous, policy of "preserving and developing regional cultures."

New trends and the palaces' future

Sultans' palaces in Indonesian Borneo have experienced a long period of progressive patrimonization in the course of a half century of nation-building policies (1950/2000), and are now being reverted to the descendants of their former owners in a rather abrupt process of depatrimonization over about a decade, subsequent to extensive decentralization and regional autonomy.

Figure 29. – The new Sintang Cultural Center (SCC). The Dutch administration, in collaboration with the Tropenmuseum of Amsterdam, reportedly established, as early as in 1922 a Sintang Cultural Center. In September 2004, a new project, the Sintang Cultural Center (Pusat Kebudayaan Sintang), was jointly initiated by the Sintang district government and the (Catholic) Kobus Foundation, and implemented by the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) of Amsterdam. The SCC is an educational and recreational structure, meant as "a symbol of peace, harmony and tolerance in an area where ethnic violence was once strongly felt," complete with archives, library, and exhibition space. (Source: http://www.culturalheritageconnections.org/ wiki/Pusat_Kebudayaan_Sintang).

Palaces and Power

Sultans' palaces had been turned into museums, and their contents—their owners' somewhat private familial and historical heritage and collections— appropriated by the state, removed, studied, catalogued, and exhibited to the public. During that period, palace buildings were properly maintained (or not) by relevant state agencies, renovated or left to collapse, and their collections were (or were not) properly and securely cared for. Meanwhile, sultans' descendants, usually large extended families, having also lost a hefty portion of their traditional revenue, were left politically powerless and economically impoverished—but sometimes only relatively so.

With the reversion of palaces to these sultans' offspring, we have come to realize that sultans' power has never been totally lost, and that the spiritual aura of the palace, albeit as a "democratic museum," has never really waned in the minds of the local population. Moreover, the existence of an ancient "royal graveyard" (makam raja), as well as of special sites or objects (e.g., old cannons) viewed as sacred (pusaka or keramat), located in the vicinity of a palace, adds to its spiritual aura. With palace restitution and sultan enthronement, the re-creation of the sultan-palace symbolic pair is tantamount to resurrecting the sultanate.

Figure 30. – Inside the Sintang Cultural Center, the Museum Kapuas Raya Inaugurated in 2008, it is meant to represent the three local ethnic cultures (Melayu, Dayak, and Chinese) and to strengthen and revitalize them. These groups were involved in the making of the museum, and staff was trained in Sintang and the Netherlands. In its three fine main exhibition rooms are collections of ceramics, costumes, ikat textiles, weapons, musical instruments, domestic utensils, ritual objects, documents, and photographs. (Source: http://kerajaan-indonesia.blogspot.fr/2008/12/opening-museum-of-kapuas-raya-of.html).

As Van Klinken, in his excellent "Return of the Sultans" article (2007), writes: "The sultans play a symbolic role in an emerging local dynamic in which the stakes include bureaucratic power and control over land." We now see sultans' descendants rather easily gaining access to modern positions of power, for instance, as district heads, and in any case wielding much influence, directly or offstage, over regional politics. Throughout the Indonesian republic's history, modern leaders, including presidents, consistently strived to attain the status of, and be regarded as, traditional leaders—i.e., "kings" or sultans—complete with the required spiritual inspiration (wahyu) and collections of pusaka, whether ceramic jars or old portraits. With the reversion of their palaces, the sultans' descendants ipso facto recovered that power in the eyes of "their" people, who now often are their constituency. Many new sultans had books published, illustrated with historical documents and photos, to strengthen their legitimacy and their kingdom'sstature, prestige, and antiquity, and exalt its spiritual aura (e.g., Bilfaqih 2006).

Today, therefore, with depatrimonization, palaces are starting a new life— or, rather, somehow resuming their pre-colonial life—as the focal points of power and of local and regional political and cultural life and identity. It does not matter, actually, whether it is the old palace or a new one, provided that all the necessary rituals are carried out to make it spiritually efficient, and that all the important, potent historical pusaka are present.

Palaces as both traditional and "New Museums"

Over the last few decades, scholars and the civil society alike have stressed the need to involve the local people in the elaboration of the museums meant to represent them (see Tan 2010). The "New Museology" movement, intended to help "decolonize" museums, promotes community-based museum development: Museums should grow out of the communities in which they exist, and their purposes and meanings should be determined by these communities, in the process of defining themselves (see Kreps 1998). This is, indeed, how community members initially established the Museum Balanga of Central Kalimantan (Kreps 1998, 2003; see another case study in Andini 2011). Features of this new model of museums seem to have, in Indonesia, been endorsed

readily by the Directorate of Museums, which stresses that a museum must be a forum and a "contact zone" (DM 2011).

Students and promoters of "non-Western models of museums" envision certain traditional practices, such as collecting and storing valuable objects, which tell us about what local people view as important, as alternative curatorial practices. Such curatorial-type behavior, focused on traditional forms of heritage management, is a cross-cultural phenomenon of great historical depth, as Kreps (1998) noted.

The descriptions provided above of the collections housed in sultans' palaces are explicit enough: ceramic jars, gamelan orchestras, precious regalia articles, royal paraphernalia (throne, ritual umbrellas), bronze cannons, state insignia, and the like. Some are permanently exhibited to visitors, others are only visible during royal rituals, other still, as "private" collections, are stored away in back rooms.

Investigating the "collections" of ceramic jars and bronze or brass gongs of the tribal Kenyah Dayak in the remote interior, C. Kreps saw the Kenyah family rice barn as "functionally analogous to the museum both in terms of a place to store and protect valuable property and a structure that embodied conservation principles and techniques" (Kreps 2003: 132; see also 2005). Such collections, however, are never exhibited (Kreps 2006: 457), although individual items may serve as bridewealth goods or to pay ritual fines.

In both the sultanates' and tribal society's cases, these collections are pusaka—although there is no such term in Kenyah languages—and almost solely comprised of imported prestige articles, procured through trade with the coastal polities and following their example, at the exclusion of all types of locally manufactured objects. While they clearly are the result of an indigenous selection of "what is important," it may be argued that they hardly reflect the indigenous culture. In fact, they rather reflect the view of these societies' elite classes, the nobility and wealthiest families in both cases.

So, what we are considering here is "court arts", in its broadest sense, even in the case of Kenyah granary, not "folk arts and crafts." Contrasting the Mulawarman Palace and the Museum Balanga, then, is revealing enough. The Yogyakarta keraton or Buckingham and Versailles palaces are not meant for displaying folk arts. Where, then, should folk arts and crafts be displayed, both for regional cultural "conservation and development" and for the local younger generations' education? Will modern educated elites now in regional government spheres at some point come to recognize that a carved wooden spoon or a bamboo fishing basket is as important, if not more, than a Ming dynasty ceramic jar in the maintenance of regional cultural traditions, and start building ethnographic collections revealing daily-use artefacts and techniques?

It should be noted here, with Njoto (2015), that the concept of "heritage" translates differently as warisan in state agencies' legislation and publications and as pusaka among heritage NGOs, which promote the use of the latter word in their endeavor to protect the Indonesian heritage, as in their 2003 "Indonesian Heritage Year" (Tahun Pusaka Indonesia; Njoto 2015). While pusaka (from Sanskrit) and warisan (from Arabic) are close synonyms, the former tends to refer to heirloom as treasure, often with a spiritual component, whereas the latter appears more mundane. The choice

of terms by either party, then, is probably not totally innocent (for discussions of pusaka, see Damais 1992, Soebadio 1992, Kreps 2003: 50-56, Njoto 2015).

To conclude with an open-ended question, it appears, twenty years after Kreps' (1994) remark, that what actually constitutes "culture" and how it should be developed, on both the national and regional levels, is and will continue to be a matter of debate in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

To conclude with an open-ended question, it appears, twenty years after Kreps' (1994) remark, that what actually constitutes "culture" and how it should be developed, on both the national and regional levels, is and will continue to be a matter of debate in Indonesia.

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Notes

[1] This is an expanded version of a paper given at the conference on "Cultural Tourism in East and South-East Asia: Perspectives and economic, political and identity stakes," organized by CEFURDS (Center for Urban and Development Studies, Ho Chi Minh City), CAPAS (Center for Asia and Pacific Studies, Academia Sinica, Taipei), Département d'Etudes Asiatiques (Université de Provence, Aix-en-Provence), IRSEA (Institute for Research on Southeast Asia, Marseille), and Maison Asie Pacifique (Université de Provence & CNRS, Marseille), in Dalat, Vietnam, 3-5 January 2011.

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[Abbreviations: DM = Directorate of Museums (Jakarta); ICOM = International Council of Museums; RI = Republik Indonesia]

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UNIMAS
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Engagements and Encounters with Professor Rodney Needham: Retrospective Thoughts on Correspondence 1971-1997

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ABSTRACT

Rodney Needham was an outstanding scholar and someone who embarked ambitiously on fieldwork among the Penan in the early 1950s, when they were a remote hunting-gathering population in interior Sarawak. He also spent time with Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia and then went on to undertake a study in Sumba, eastern Indonesia. However, he gained his reputation from his meticulous and exacting work in structural anthropology, symbolic classification and the examination and understanding of the "fundamental structures of the human mind". He did much more, in bringing French and Dutch structuralism to an Anglophone audience and promoting the work of those he felt to be neglected in anthropological circles, and those whose work he translated and edited from Dutch, German and French, including Claude Lévi-Strauss. This paper records edited correspondence with Rodney Needham from 1971 to 1997, which expresses his humanity, his propriety, his willingness to guide and advise and to give his time freely. It gives expression to some of the developing thoughts and perspectives of a leading scholar of anthropology in the second half of the twentieth century. It also demonstrates his sustained interest in the Penan, Sarawak and the wider Borneo during his long career from 1950.

Keywords: Rodney Needham, Penan, structuralism, symbolic classification, human thought, correspondence

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Some of Rodney Needham's Achievements

Professor Rodney Needham (born Rodney Phillip Needham Green) was an enormously significant presence in Southeast Asian anthropology, which included Borneo ethnography, and more importantly structural anthropology, the analysis of symbolic classification, relationship

terminologies and categories, and an examination of "the fundamental structures of the human mind" (although subsequently, he had major differences with Claude Lévi-Strauss (see, for example, Needham 1958, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1973a, 1973b, 1975a, 1986; Lévi-Strauss 1967 [1969]; and see also Dumont 1971; Fox 2019; Hugh-Jones 2008, Korn and Needham 1969; Leach 1970). Needham says, in his Editor's Note and *postscriptum* to the 1969 translation of Lévi-Strauss's *Les structures elementaires de la parenté* (1947, 1949, 1967),

> In the new preface, which he modified especially for this edition and which was not supplied until after the translation and editing had been reported complete, Professor Lévi-Strauss indirectly charges the editor with a `fundamental misunderstanding' of the very title and subject matter of the book, and imputes to him (admittedly in excellent company) a fallacious assimilation of elementary structures to prescriptive marriage which is alleged to have seriously misled later commentators on the theory. Readers who may therefore be justifiably uneasy that the editor should have assumed particular responsibility for the theoretical accuracy of the rendering of the argument will doubtless appreciate the assurance, for the present, that wherever the idea of prescription appears in this edition (see index s. v.) it is a literal translation from the French. For example, when in the opening lines of the work Professor Lévi-Strauss defines `elementary structures' as `those systems which prescribe marriage with a certain type of relative' (p. xxiii), this is a direct translation of his original and unamended words: 'les systèmes prescrivent le mariage avec un certain type de parents' (1949: ix; 1967: ix). It may be found informative, also, to refer to the only place at which Professor Lévi-Strauss has previously defended his argument, where he writes that if an alternative theory proposed by certain critics, in terms of psychological `preference', were correct, matrilateral marriage would indeed be more frequent `but it would not need to be prescribed' (Needham 1969: xx).

Rodney Needham also provided an important connection between Anglo-French structuralism and that which emerged from the Netherlands in the 1930s in the work of J.P. B. de Josselin de Jong (1935, 1952) and then later P.E. de Josselin de Jong (1972, 1977, 1985, de Josselin de Jong and Schwimmer 1993; King 1978a, 1983a; and see Barnes 1985a, 1985b; Fox 2002; Oosten 2006; Visser and Moyer 1999). His mentors during his early years in Oxford had been A.R. [Alfred Reginald] Radcliffe-Brown, as his supervisor for his BLitt/MLitt thesis on the Nagas of the Indo-Burma Border (1950), E.E. [Edward Evan] Evans-Pritchard, as the senior professor at the Institute of Social Anthropology, Oxford from 1946 to 1970, and Louis [Charles Jean] Dumont, his doctoral supervisor (Needham 1953; and see, Radcliffe-Brown and Forde 1950; Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940; Dumont 1970 1966, 1980). They turned to Émile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, Robert Hertz and to those who published in *Année Sociologique,* and then to Claude L*é*vi-Strauss for inspiration.

One of Rodney's masterpieces which impressed me in my early days as an anthropologist, was *Structure and Sentiment: A Test Case in Anthropology* (1962). Louis Faron says of this, in his review, "This is a scrupulously argued essay, containing an imposing array of finely articulated data which demonstrates the heuristic merit of structural analysis as against the so-called 'psychological explanation' of social institutions and their supposed genesis" (1962: 217). Faron continues, [Needham's] book is "a trenchant, head-on criticism of Homans and Schneider's *Marriage, Authority and Final Causes: A Study of Unilateral Cross-Cousin Marriage…*[1955]…. [Needham] maintains a devastating proposition 'that its conclusions are fallacious, its method

unsound and the argument literally preposterous'' (Faron, ibid; Needham 1962: 1, 1963; also see Coult 1962, 1963, 1965; Löffler 1964; Maybury-Lewis 1965; Wilder 1964). Perhaps it is worth mentioning an extract from Richard Milner's sympathetic obituary of Allan Coult, bearing in mind Coult was critical of Needham; it addresses Coult's very sad premature death.

> On my desk is Allan's obituary, clipped from the *San Francisco Chronicle.* The article mentions the 1966 Meetings of the American Anthropological Association in Pittsburgh at which he organized a special session on "Psychedelic Anthropology". According to the *Chronicle*, "Dr Coult caused a flurry (at the meetings) when he said his own use of drugs had convinced him the experience helped him understand the mainsprings of human culture". Then a member of the faculty of the State University of New York, he said: 'The anthropologist's first field trip should not be to Africa or South America or Japan, but into the hidden primitive layers of his own mind" (Milner 1970: 51).

For me, Needham's other influential publications included the Introduction to his edited volume *Rethinking Kinship and Marriage* (1971a), followed by *Belief, Language and Experience* (1972), and then *Remarks and Inventions*. *Skeptical Essays about Kinship* (1974a). His paper on age, category and descent in the BKI, was so relevant and exemplary to further our understanding of the social organization of Borneo and other cognatic societies in Southeast Asia (1966a); and his thoughtful essays on Polythetic Classification" (1975a) and "Skulls and Causality" (1976a). My admiration for Rodney Needham's work is boundless and I should have written more about this in earlier years. Nevertheless, he influenced me greatly, though I was not one of his students (see King 1977a, 1980a, 1985a, 1985b; King and Wilder 2003: 117-118, 122-130).

His thought-provoking short essays, in his later years, which demonstrated that he had a strategy to impose himself on the development of anthropology, also guided me in my teaching and research, and I used these regularly in my second-year undergraduate courses, Principles of Social Organisation and Social Change in South-East Asia, and my first- and third-year lectures on The Peoples and Cultures of South-East Asia and The Anthropology of Southeast Asia at the Universities of Hull, Leeds, Chiang Mai, and Universiti Brunei Darussalam (Needham 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1987a).

In addition, I referred regularly to his translations and editions of prominent anthropologists, philosophers and scholars in my teaching and research, including Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss (1963 [1903]); Robert Hertz (1960 [1907, 1909]); A. M. [Arthur Maurice] Hocart (1970a [1952], 1970b [1936]; Needham 1967a, 1987b; Beidelman 1972; Laughlin 2018); Claude Lévi-Strauss (1964 [1962], 1969 [1947, 1949, 1967]; and see de Josselin de Jong 1952; Fox 2019; Hugh-Jones 2008; Korn 1973; Obadia 2012; Scheffler 1970); Dr. P.H. [Pieter Hendrik] Pott (1966 [1946]); Hans Schärer (1963 [1946]); Carl Nicolai Starcke (1976 [1888]); Arnold [Charles-Arnold Kurr] van Gennep, the Franco-German-Dutch ethnographer (1967 [1911]); though Needham also much admired van Gennep's *Rites of Passage* (1960 [1980, 1909]) he did not translate it; and see Belmont (1979 [1974]; Kertzer 1980; Rearick 1975; Rothem and Fischer 2018; Szakolczai and Thomassen 2019: 23-43); F.A.E. van Wouden (1968 [1935], 1956; and see Fox 1980); Charles Staniland Wake (1967 [1889], 1870; Needham 1975b, 1975c); and see Holmes for generous reference to Wake and to the poet-anthropologist Algernon Swinburne (2016).

Charles Staniland Wake

In my view, Charles Wake, an early inspirational anthropologist, rescued from obscurity by Needham, makes telling points about evolutionary theory in his 1870 essay, and in his later study of the development of marriage and kinship (1967 [1889]). It has relevance for certain later debates in anthropology on the relationships between biology, evolution and culture (see below). He says, "Let the law of evolution of organic forms be once established by the application of the principles of biology, and then anthropologists may apply that law to the phenomena presented by man [sic], to see whether it furnishes a key to the problem of origin. Anthropology, in its strict sense, has to do with man [sic] only when he appears with the structure and faculties which constitute him man [sic], and when the principles which govern the origin of organic life have been established, then alone can anthropology by the application of those principles hope to account for human origin" (1870: 17). In the late 1860s and early 1870s he served as Director of the London Anthropological Society, then as the first Director of the new Anthropological Institute. Holmes proposes that, at that time "Wake was one of the most prominent anthropologists in Britain…..with considerable institutional authority" (2016: 22-23). He had a particularly difficult time in arguing for his views and criticism of the prevailing evolutionism of the later nineteenth century, and perhaps because of disillusionment and the trans-Atlantic opportunities presented elsewhere he then departed for the USA.

I have a particular affection for Charles Staniland Wake. He was born in Kingston upon Hull, East Yorkshire on 22 March 1835, where I have lived, studied and worked for over 50 years. Wake spent much of his time there in a museum and scholarly environment. But before his departure for the USA, where he died in Chicago on 21 June 1910, he had happened to purchase a plot of land in Newland Park, a newly emerging middle-class suburb in the 1870s on the outskirts of Hull. So far as I am aware he never built a house on it or lived there, but it happens to be two minutes-walk from my house where I have lived for over 30 years and five minutes-walk from the University of Hull, founded as a University College of London in 1927.

Obituaries, remembrances and the Anglo-French-Dutch connection

Following Rodney's very sad and much-missed departure in December 2006 there were numerous obituaries and subsequent references to his contribution to anthropology and intellectual life. There is no need to summarize these here. With regard to the interests of scholars of Borneo Studies the most important are those by Clifford Sather, in his Notes from the Editor in the *Borneo Research Bulletin (BRB)* (2006a), and the Memorials in 2007 in the *BRB* comprising Kirk Endicott's "personal remembrance", as a postgraduate student of Rodney Needham (2007), and Clifford Sather's publication, with minor editing and with the assistance of Jayl Langub, of Joella Werlin's transcription of her interview with her former tutor on 9 February 2000 in his residence in Oxford concerning his field research among the Penan (Sather 2007).

Both Sather and Endicott celebrate Rodney's considerable contribution to anthropology through his teaching, postgraduate supervision and research, but also provide us with a touching reminder of how supportive and generous he was to his students and to those, like me, who wrote to him and visited him in Oxford for his advice and guidance. Endicott probably provides the most intimate obituary, and was one of his most prominent postgraduates (1970, 1979, 2007; and see Endicott and Endicott 2008, and see King 1981a); though there were many others including Barnes

(1974, 1996, and see King 1976a); and Fox (1968). Among other obituaries and references to Rodney's life and work which are worthy of note are those by Barnes (2007); Fox (2008; and see 1977, 1979, 1997 2013; and see King 2001a); Kidd (2019); Lyons (2011); MacClancy (2006, 2007, 2013); Pickering (2007); The Telegraph (2006).

However, it is appropriate to single out some observations of Rodney as a scholar. Colin Kidd said of Needham, in his online entry in *Oxford Bibliographies* (2019), "Rodney Needham (b. 1923-d. 2006) was a brilliant and daring anthropologist possessed of considerable imagination and theoretical sophistication, a facility for languages, both European and Asian, and a broad-ranging comparative outlook that transcended his immediate specialisms in Borneo and Indonesia". Furthermore, in his tribute in *Durkheimian Studies*, William Pickering captures Needham's academic character in these words "[A] scholar of great precision with a razor sharp and precisely ordered mind. Very widely read in various languages and demanding in conversation, he created a presence that one seldom left without being edified or challenged in one way or another" (2007).

Perhaps James J. Fox, a former doctoral student of Rodney Needham, in his affectionate obituary (2008: 401-403), provides the most apposite perspective on Rodney's vision for anthropology. Fox says "Needham articulated his view of social anthropology most emphatically in his Oxford Inaugural Lecture, in which he envisaged 'an integrated semantic discipline, architectonics of significance'. Quoting Kant, Rodney proposed a discipline that would chart the limits of human understanding, a venture that would not only be cognitive but would engage the imagination and the passions. He went on to describe social anthropology as 'the practice of an empirical philosophy' whose benefits would be 'an expansion of the sympathies, a revision of conventional judgements, the provocation of alternative possibilities of conduct, a vision of man [sic] as he might otherwise be, or else a characterization of man [sic] as he can newly be seen to be' [Needham 1981: 27-28].....As an ethnographer of Southeast Asia, an assiduous author, translator, and editor, and a professor in social anthropology at Oxford University, Needham offered his own distinctive cast to anthropology focusing on the analysis of social categories [and relationship terminologies] in a comparative effort at comprehending human thought and action" (Fox 2008: 401; and see Palmquist on Kant 1986).

Needham had an enormous influence on the ways in which perspectives in anthropology developed in the Anglophone world, as did Professor Sir Edmund Leach, particularly in translating French, and in Needham's case, J.P. B. de Josselin de Jong's Dutch structuralism as well, to an English-speaking audience. Professor Dame [Margaret] Mary Douglas too was a champion of French sociology, though probably rather unsung in the French scholarly world, according to Buton and Soriano (2018; Douglas 1966, 1970, 1973, 1975 [1999], 1980, 1986; Fardon 1987, 1999, 2019; Iyenda and Fardon 2007). Buton and Soriano say "Though poorly known in France, the work of the anthropologist Mary Douglas is nonetheless essential for understanding the elementary forms of social organization and daily life. By shedding light on her academic career and personal life, this portrait rehabilitates the thought of a major intellectual…. Unquestionably, the work of Mary Douglas (1921-2007) does not enjoy the recognition it deserves from French readers. Best known for two books published twenty years apart – *Purity and Danger*, 1966 (first translated into French in 1971) and *How Institutions Think*, 1986 (first translated in 1999)" (2018:1).

Returning to Leach, as an Asianist anthropologist, among many other interests, he most certainly deserves a mention here. I remember vividly his chairing a lecture given by Professor Claude Lévi-Strauss in London in 1971 when Leach introduced it by stating that he was probably the only person in the audience who understood what Lévi-Strauss was saying, and that this was not merely translating what he delivered from the French language. I then met Edmund Leach in Cambridge in 1972 and the first question he asked me, knowing that I came from an area studies, sociology and geography background, "Before we engage in conversation, do you take anthropology seriously". I am sure I said "Yes". We then discussed his field research in Sarawak and his work on the Kachin and Highland Burma (and see Anderson 2007; Sadan 2013; Sadan and Robinne 2007; Tambiah 2002; King 2002).

I shared a considerable amount of time with Edmund Leach when we were both members of the London-based British Academy Management Committee of the British Institute in South-East Asia, first established in Singapore and then in Bangkok, and sadly no longer operating in the region. Dr Milton [E]dgeworth] Osborne was the first Director from 1976, succeeded by Dr John [Francis Hyde] Villiers from 1979 to 1985; the Institute was closed in 1986 in Bangkok and then managed by a London-based committee, of which I was secretary, and working with three formidable chairpersons: William Watson, Professor of Chinese Art and Archaeology, and Director of the Percival David Foundation, SOAS, University of London (Scott 2009); and then Professor William G[erald] Beasley, an historian of Japan and East Asia, Emeritus Professor of the History of the Far East, SOAS, and Professor C. D. [Charles Donald] [Jeremy] Cowan, Emeritus Professor Southeast Asian History and former Director of SOAS (King 2013a; and see Carey 1986, 2023). In our frequent committee meetings, Leach presented me with a copy of his *Social Science Research in Sarawak* (1950), which I continue to treasure and then a copy of his *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (1954). Over time I also sent him papers that I had written on Highland Burma in response to Friedman's and Nugent's interventions (Friedman 1979 [1998]; Nugent 1982; King 1981b, 1983b, 2001b). Leach kindly sent me his critical notes on Friedman's thesis, which, decidedly, confronted and dismissed a Marxist-oriented perspective on the relations between Kachin and Shan. At this time, he was also supporting the earlier work of Dr Roxana Waterson at Cambridge and her major achievement in the anthropology of architecture in Southeast Asia (1990, 1998; and see King 1997a, 1998), which she undertook during the mid-1980s and received funding from The British Academy.

During my stay in Cambridge, I also managed to meet and work with Anthony Richards, who was then the Secretary-Librarian at the Centre for South Asian Studies. Generously, he gave me access to his Iban-English dictionary which he was working on at the time (Richards 1981; King 1982a). His personal papers and part of his library are appropriately now safely in store at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) as the "A.J.N. Richards Collection".

Correspondence and Meetings

The reason for writing this paper is quite simply that, as a senior citizen, I am in the process of tidying up my academic papers and I happened to come across correspondence with Rodney Needham going back to 1971 through to 1997, comprising some 60 letters. What the correspondence does, to my mind, is provide the occasion to access some of the thoughts of one of the most outstanding, innovative and productive anthropologists of the twentieth century, who happened also to have undertaken his first major fieldwork in Borneo. The letters cover the period

from November 1971 up to September 1997, from when he was a Lecturer in Social Anthropology in the Oxford Institute (1956-1976) and a Fellow at Merton College (1971-1975), and then into the later 1970s and 1980s when he was Professor of Social Anthropology and Fellow of All Souls College (1976-1990) at Oxford and then his early years of retirement. Nevertheless, during this correspondence and even after 1997 we kept in touch by 'phone.

In our correspondence he addressed me variously as "King, Mr King, Dr King, Victor, Terry". I was identified as "King" and its variations up to the early 1980s, then became "Victor" in 1982 and "Terry" in 1986. I have a number of identities, but the later use of "Terry" by Rodney Needham, when he got to know me better, possibly came from two of his close colleagues in Oxford who were also scholars of Southeast Asia. Peter Carey and Bob [R.H.] Barnes knew me as "Terry" and not "Victor" from my Hull University days. Moreover, my letters and 'phone calls, up to 1986, were directed to "Professor Needham", but then I adopted a form of address, "Rodney", from November 1987, as he had begun to sign himself in this manner, or simply "R" or "RN".

I had quite forgotten the content of these letters and on re-reading them, I thought that a summary of their content might be of interest to those readers interested in Borneo and to what exercised us in anthropology in the 1960s through to the 1990s. It was a rather emotional experience to go through these exchanges and remind myself of Rodney's great kindness, guidance and attention when I was attempting to develop a career in anthropology and the study of Borneo. I became very fond of him through our exchange of letters, though it took a while to meet him in person. The correspondence captures Rodney's character, humanity and his unfailing properness and politeness. I have selected key moments in our exchanges and I decided not to reproduce the full range of what we discussed. I have judiciously, I hope, edited the correspondence, excluding any material which I considered to be personal and which Rodney would not have wished to enter the public domain. I am fully conscious of Rodney's sensitivities in regard to unpublished material and to the way in which he guarded his Oxford postgraduate theses during his lifetime.

I contacted Clifford Sather about my intentions in regard to the correspondence with Rodney, and he reminded me of the delicate terrain that we have to traverse in recording in print anything of Rodney's which had not been published. Cliff says "[Rodney] often said that we should be accountable only for what we publish in print" (pers. comm. 22 July 2023). Cliff reminded me that his correspondence with Rodney had been deposited in the Borneo Research Council archives. He indicated that Traude Gavin had digitalized her correspondence with Rodney prior to and during the writing of her doctoral thesis at Hull on Iban textiles. Joella Werlin, one of Rodney's postgraduate students, sent her correspondence, excluding anything personal, to Merton College, Oxford.

I trust Rodney will not mind my reproducing extracts of his correspondence with me, in that he was so generous with his time and his advice about how to go about anthropological research. It places him in a very positive light. I remember asking him, in one of my visits to Oxford in the 1980s, whether or not he would permit me to make reference to extracts of our correspondence in some of my future publications on Borneo. He hesitated then said, "Provided, they are accurate, precise and to the point and do not contain embarrassingly personal material, then I don't mind. If you wish you can send the relevant material to me before publication".

I spent time with Rodney at All Souls College, Oxford in the 1980s, and at his apartment in Holywell Street where, on one occasion on 4 March 1988, he suggested that we should sit for a while, and in relaxed mode, gaze out of his first-floor window, sip a glass of wine, and contemplate a tree on the street immediately beneath his window which Rodney found "quite exquisite". We sat there in gentle conversation, gazing at a tree. I then thought about the possibility that we might be engaging in a discussion on symbolic classification and the world of natural symbols. The biblical references to trees and their life-giving capacities struck me (The Tree of Life in the Paradise of God, The Book of Revelation 22: 1-21; and see Douglas 1970). Rodney, then informed me that he liked my book on Hendrik Tillema and the Apo Kayan, but thought that some of the translations from Dutch could have been a bit improved and that I had missed a reference in my bibliography (King 1989a [1990]; Tillema 1938a, 1938b). There was good reason for that, which I explained to Rodney, and I indicated that Peter King, Professor of Dutch Studies at Hull, his student, Alan Deighton, and Drs Jan Avé, a fluent Dutch and English speaker, and Conservator of the Indonesian and Southeast Asian Collections at the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden had assisted me with the translation. Mrs Noor Boeseman-Pluymert, the photo-archivist at the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden also helped translate the captions to the photographs. Rodney simply gave me a genial smile.

He then talked about his drafts on the Penan, and showed me some pieces that he had been working on. Some were in his distinctive hand-writing, others were delivered on his faithful Smith-Corona typewriter. Rodney never took to email. He then invited me to his favourite Oxford pub "The Turf" where we discussed the future of anthropology which he thought, in British higher education, had a rather uncertain future, and he said "You have to make up your mind where you are going. You seem to flit from one thing to another without a focus, but I am not suggesting that breadth of interest is necessarily a bad thing". I think Rodney got it right, located as I was in Area Studies where we attempted to be multidisciplinary.

At this point of time Rodney had been residing, researching and writing in All Souls College for some twelve years when he had withdrawn from regular interaction with his colleagues in the Institute of Social Anthropology (from 1978). So, we did not visit the Institute. Following my presentation of a seminar paper on rural development in Sarawak at the Institute I stayed with Rodney for two nights at All Souls on 4-5 May 1988. Over dinner at All Souls on the first night I said to Rodney, "I don't think my paper in the Institute went down all that well; it was too applied and not sufficiently theoretical. I think Bob Barnes [who chaired the session] rescued me". Rodney responded, "I haven't given a paper in years in the Institute. It really doesn't matter. Just carry on with what interests you".

Needham and the Penan

Needham made a most significant contribution during the 1950s and 1960s to our understanding of Borneo societies with a series of papers on the Penan. He undertook a twelve-month period of fieldwork among the Penan in 1951-1952 with a brief return visit in 1958, which, at that time, must have been a physically and mentally demanding experience. Yet he never managed to bring to publication a monograph on the Penan, though he often referred to his determination to do so. At one of my last meetings with him in late 1988, in his residence in Holywell Street, he showed me a draft of a chapter that he had produced on the Penan; the paper was on the longevity of Penan dart poison, which was subsequently published in the *BRB* (1988; and see Zahorka 2006). In the

abstract of his thesis, he writes "The quality of a report depends much on the way the ethnographer sets about his work, and the reception given to what he presents as facts about a strange people depends to some extent on the reader's imaginative realisation (however far short this may fall) of what it costs the observer to obtain them. A man must judge his labours by the obstacles he has overcome and the hardships he has endured, and by these standards I am not ashamed of the results (1953)".

A substantial amount of research on the Western and Eastern Penan in Sarawak followed on from Needham's intensive study, primarily from the early 1970s. Lars Kaskija, who studied the Punan Malinau in East Kalimantan, provides a very useful overview of hunter-gatherer research in Borneo, including that on the Penan (2017: 128-132, and see references, 147-158). Among many others Kaskija draws attention to the important work on the Penan of J. Peter Brosius (see, for example, 1986, 1991, 1992, 2007), Harmut Hildebrand (1982), Peter Kedit (1982), Jayl Langub (see, for example, 1989, 1996), Johannes Nicolaisen (1976a, 1976b), and Stefan Seitz (1981, 1988).

Rodney also undertook a brief period of ethnographic research among the Siwang/Chewong of Peninsular Malaysia between 1953 and 1955 and provided published notes on other Orang Asli groups (Needham 1956, 1964a [including the Penan], 1964b, 1974b, 1976b, 1984a, 1984b). He also supervised Signe Howell's research on the Che Wong (Howell 1984 [1989], and Endicott on the Batek (1979). He referred to the Siwang as a "semi-nomadic tribe" of central Malaya and one of the complexes of Orang Asli in what was to become after 1963 Peninsular Malaysia (*Semenanjung Malaysia*) (and see Lye Tuck-Po. 2011). He also refers to Charles Ogilvie's brief paper (1940), and says, "Ogilvie, our only source of information to date, renders the name of the tribe as 'Che Wong'. I should prefer not to begin with a disagreement, but I have to record the name as 'Siwang'" (1956: 49; and see Ogilvie 1949; though Rodney later used the term "Che Wong" in his association with Signe Howell's research (1984a, 1984b). Nicole Kruspe refers to them as Ceq Wong (2009).

It should be noted that, in traversing various parts of island Southeast Asia, Needham also visited Sumba and specifically the Mamboru in northwestern Sumba in 1955, and subsequently published a monograph on them (1987c; and see Forth 1989).

What interested me about Rodney's publications on the Penan is that he was looking to record and understand categories, classifications and terminologies, and he found them in naming terms. His major publications on the Penan focused on mourning or death names, friendship names and the structure of close social relations in terms of relative age, category and descent (and terminologies), not on hunting-gathering ecologies or livelihoods and the Penan engagement with the forest (1959, 1965, 1966a, 1971b). His accomplished paper on category and relative age included comparative material, not only on the Penan and Siwang, but also on the Andamanese, Kariera, Mapuche, Murinbata, Nuer, Pul Eliya, Tikopia, and Wikmunkan (1966a).

He had already read Claude Lévi-Strauss and was familiar with Dutch structuralism before embarking on his field research. We might ponder why he chose hunter-gatherers for his doctoral research rather than a more structured social system? At least, he moved subsequently from the Penan (1953) and Orang Asli to the "structured" Mamboru (1987c),

Kirk Endicott's remembrance is especially revealing. Endicott is, in my estimation, among his most prominent doctoral students; there were many others, too numerous to list (see Endicott 1970, 1979; Barnes 1974; 1996, Fox 1968, 1977), and he says of Rodney "Strangely enough, Borneo and the Penan did not play a big part in Rodney's teaching. In his course on "Relationship Terminologies" he mentioned the Penan as an example of a people with a cognatic system, but he had little interest in cognatic terminologies, and he quickly moved on to societies with prescriptive alliance systems". (2007:16). Though, in my view, his ethnographic summary of western and eastern Penan is particularly useful (Needham 2007[1972]).

Endicott has grasped the issue precisely, and it is revealed in letters and conversations which I had with Rodney. His letter of 10 February 1975 (provided in detail later), sticks in my mind. "[T]he interpretation of Penan life depends not on systematic structural analysis but on the comprehension of a range of cultural particulars" and "I find it hard to think about the Penan in terms of 'bilateral systems' or to concede that they have a 'kinship system'".

Endicott says, "Rodney often said that he regretted he had never published a general ethnography of the Penan. He obviously didn't consider his doctoral thesis a suitable basis for one, or he would have merely revised it into a book….I have discussed with various friends the question of why Rodney newer completed his ethnography of the Penan. It may simply be that he found that his data were inadequate to answer all the questions he had, and it was no longer possible to get the information he needed" (2007: 16-17).

The Letters (My additions are in square brackets/parentheses)

I first wrote to Rodney on 15 November 1971 at the Institute of Social Anthropology in Oxford when he was a lecturer there and a Fellow at Merton College, asking for his advice about how I might develop my proposed research on Borneo and whether a study of the Iban of West Kalimantan might be worthwhile which was my supervisor's, Professor Mervyn Jaspan's preference, as an Indonesian specialist, or the Punan Ba[h] in the Upper Rejang in Sarawak which was suggested to me by Dr H. [Stephen] Morris, then at the LSE and his wife, Barbara E. Ward, my former MA supervisor at SOAS, then at Clare College, Cambridge, and Paul Beavitt, supervised by Stephen Morris, and Lecturer in South-East Aian Sociology at Hull, whose post I took over in 1973 after his departure to Leicester University (Needham 1954, 1955). On reflection I think I might well have opted for the Punan Bah, though, subsequently, Ida Nicolaisen provided excellent ethnographic material which I do not think I could have matched (see, for example, 1976, 1977). I received a memorable letter from Rodney on 30 November 1971 (Rodney would always date his letters in the style 30.xi.71), as follows:

> *Dear Mr King:*
> *Thank you for your interesting letter about your projected research in Borneo.*
> *I suspect that an intensive analysis of symbolism among the Iban would indeed be fruitful. I myself once nearly finished a book on the analysis of symbolism in all the tribes of the southeast of the island, and to judge by even that literary adventure there is much to be done. You will, of course, need to learn Dutch first, and possibly German, or even French and Italian. Naturally, too, you should write to Derek Freeman, at Canberra.*
> *For some recent information on work in Kalimantan and in Sarawak, write to Herb Whittier (Dept. of Anthropology, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48823).*

As for relative age, the latest and most major application of that technique that I devised is to be found in Peter Rivière's Marriage among the Trio [1969)]. *I have done some work on the topic, but it won't appear in print until the production of a forthcoming volume of essays.*
*I find it hard to respond with further references to things that I have done. I have published between sixty and seventy papers, and I don't know which of them you know and which you don't. May I just refer you to some titles that you don't mention and which I think rather well of still? "Terminology and Alliance, I and II (*Sociologus *1966* [1966b] *and 1967* [1967b]*); "Right and Left in Nyoro Symbolic Classification" (*Africa, *vol. 37, 1967, pp. 425-51* [1967c]*); "Introduction"* and *"Remarks on the Analysis of Kinship and Marriage" in* Rethinking Kinship and Marriage *(London: Tavistock Publications, 1971, pp. xiii-cxvii, 1-34* 1971a]*).*
The most beautiful analysis that I know of in recent literature is Francis Korn's "A Question of Preferences" in Rethinking Kinship and Marriage, *chap. 5* [1971].
On Bornean symbolism, you don't mention, but you should certainly read in case you don't know it: Hans Schärer's, Ngaju Religion *(The Hague, Nijhoff,* [1963]*). And on the ritual basis of society see the new edition of A. M. Hocart*, Kings and Councillors *(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970 [1936]; paperback edition forthcoming in February 1972* [1970a, 1936, 1972]*).*
Do let me know what you decide to do, and how you get on, and stay in touch.
Your sincerely,
Rodney Needham.
P.S. I should add that I agree with Stephen Morris: the Punan Ba[h] would make a nice study (I suppose you have read my paper on them? see Needham [1954, 1955]*). But it may be that your interests develop elsewhere.*

[I corresponded with Rodney during the next few years during and after fieldwork in the early 1970s, but there is not much of consequence in these exchanges, and there are some personal matters which would be inappropriate to record].

[Our exchanges then took off from the mid-1970s, following my return from fieldwork. I wanted to read Rodney's Penan thesis to examine how a senior anthropologist addressed his field material, and I asked if I could access a loan copy of his thesis from the Bodleian Library, Oxford in a letter of January 27th 1975. At that time, in writing up my doctoral thesis, I wanted to question him on relative age, category and descent, as well as more general queries about cognation and what I referred to as "bilateral kinship"].
[Rodney's response on 10th February 1975].

Dear King,
Your letter of January 27th took its time to get here, for some reason, and reached me only after I had told the Bodleian that I did not wish my Penan thesis to be consulted.
Even now that I know whom I am dealing with, the position is that I should prefer not to publicise that tyro description. You will in any case find a fair part of it in the various papers listed in T.O. Beidelman, ed., The Translation of Culture [1971; Needham 1971b] *and more especially in my* Remarks and Inventions *(London: Tavistock, 1974), ch. 2* [1974a]*). I have more work on the Penan in press, and next term I shall be returning to*

intensive writing about them. And it is no quibble when I say, also, that I find it hard to think about the Penan in terms of "bilateral systems" or to concede that they have a "kinship system"!
If there are special queries that you would like to put about the Penan, do write them to me. If they can be economically dealt with I shall certainly do so. Otherwise, I shall keep them in mind as I rewrite my Penan materials. On the whole, though, I must say that with the exception of the insight that led to "Age, Category, and Descent" (1966 [1966a]*) the interpretation of Penan life depends not on systematic analysis but on the comprehension of a multitude of cultural particulars.*
Yours,
Rodney Needham.

[This letter has resonance with Kirk Endicott's remark, in pondering why Rodney did not publish a definitive monograph on the Penan, in that he records much later on from the mid-1980s that Rodney had been working on the monograph from 1985 but by 2001 he had put it to rest, and that for particular medical reasons. He worked on it over many years, but, given his demanding scholarly standards, he never managed to bring it to print. There were just too many unanswered questions and the Penan, in his own words, had "no system". Endicott records his wife, Karen's view, with which I agree. "She [Karen] thinks that the Penan probably have a fluid, amorphous worldview and social organization, like many other nomadic hunting and gathering peoples in Southeast Asia, and thus are not amenable to the kind of ordered structural analysis that Rodney was so good at doing" (2007: 17)].
[We move on. When I took over as Honorary Secretary of the Association of South-East Asian Studies in the United Kingdom (ASEASUK) in 1976, I noted that Rodney had been a member, but his membership had lapsed, and I asked him whether or not he wanted to continue. I sent a letter to him on 16 March 1977 to this effect. I also raised the matter with him of my article on the concept of the kindred, in a publication edited by George Appell, and directed to Derek Freeman's interpretation of Iban social organization (King 1976b; Appell 1976, 2001). Rodney provided some comments and then some advice over the 'phone, which subsequently led me to modify my view (1978b). I also conducted a correspondence with Derek Freeman which was entirely amicable and constructive (see, for an intensive examination of this correspondence from 1972 to 1994, [King 2013b]). In the letter to Rodney, I also remarked on his paper "Skulls and Causality" (1976a), and on the book on Iban religion published by his former doctoral student, Erik Jensen (1974; and see Jensen 2010, and King 2011; and see Freeman 1975; King 1976c, 2017: 88-90). Rodney responded, on 21st March 1977, as he always did. And there is a reference to the Penan monograph].

Dear King,
Thank you for your kind letter of March 16th. I do indeed still have interest in South East Asia and am resident in the U.K., but I hope you will excuse me making an application to re-join the Association. I fear I am not by temperament a joiner (for example, I do not belong to the ASA any more) and find my commitment to my college the fullest satisfaction I need. On the other hand, if there is any professional occasion for the Association to turn to me on any matter, I shall, of course, be always ready to do what I can.
I am glad you liked "Skulls and Causality" [1976a]. *It took me a while to write this. As for the likelihood of my publishing more on Borneo in the near future, the one grand question is*

whether I shall be able to publish anything on anything at all. I am still desperately trying to finish a technical but straightforward analysis of an Indonesian system that I began six months ago, and it is now more than a month since I was last able to add a line to it. I hope to be able to despatch an Indonesian monograph during the long vacation [I assumed he was referring to his book on Mamboru, 1987c] *and thereafter my over-riding concern will be at least to complete a straightforward monograph on Penan, though what with the pressures of teaching and administration, I cannot estimate how long that may take. I wish for my own sake that I could give you a more encouraging reply.*
Thank you again for writing,
Sincerely,
Rodney Needham.

[I then had exchanges with Rodney in my review of his publications. I reviewed his *Right and Left* which he received in cordial fashion (King 1976d)].
[Rodney wrote to me on 18 April 1977 in regard to my review of the book].

Dear King,
The University of Chicago Press have just sent me a copy of your review of Right and Left [1976b]. *While I suppose I cannot thank you for it, I think I can say that it is a remarkably serious and professional examination of the book. The one analytical point on which I would not have you think me lax is the "vertical associations". These have greatly occupied me since I became interested in dual classification, and I think I have indeed something useful to say about them. A starting point is to be found in Jim Fox's "On Binary Categories and Primary Symbols" (in* The Interpretation of Symbolism, [1975]*), which as Fox says starts in its own turn from a long analysis that I once made of Ngaju (and other south Bornean) symbolic classification. I wrote the latter in the mid-sixties, but there has been no respite from teaching since then in which I could write it as a monograph. I am afraid that brings us back to where we were in connexion with the U.K. Association of Southeast Asian scholars. Anyway, this note will stress that I am indeed concerned with the problems that you emphasise. It is not work that is in question but time!*
Yours ever
Rodney.

[Somewhat later, in a brief card on 10 April 1981, he writes]: *I forgot to mention in my letter the topics of analogy and vertical linkages. See my* Reconnaisances *(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, ch. 2: "Analogical Classification"* [1980]*).*
RN

[At this point we were discussing the possibility of structural analysis and symbolic classification in a range of Borneo societies. Rodney's letter indicates that he had done work on this, which developed from his translation of Hans Schärer's *Ngaju Religion* (1963), but that it was unlikely to appear in print. In a letter that I sent him on 25 April 1977, I wrote]:

Dear Professor Needham,

I was also interested to read in your letter that you have made an extended analysis of Ngaju symbolic classification. Again, I regret that your other commitments have not enabled you to produce a monograph. We are desperately lacking this kind of work for Borneo….
In sum, I would simply like to stress that despite my critical comments on Right and Left, *my teaching and research have been constantly informed and inspired by your work and that of your contemporaries in Oxford. Indeed, I am somewhat saddened that your energies, particularly on "things Bornean" are being taken up in other directions. Still, let us hope that your research on Penan and south Bornean symbolism, in particular, will reach fruition in the not-too-distant future.*

[I then added in a later letter: *I very much appreciate your sending me the columnar table of Ngaju symbolic classification…My* Sociologus *paper would not have been possible without the inspiration which I gained from this work* [see later, King 1980a].

[And then, following my review (King 1976e) of Rodney's edition and introduction of Arthur Maurice [A. M.] Hocart's *Kings and Councillors: An Essay in the Comparative Anatomy of Human Society* (1970b [1936, 1972]) (and see Needham 1987a), Rodney wrote on 16th May 1977]:

Dear King,
If I may not thank you for your review of Hocart's Kings and Councillors, *I am allowed to say how pleased I am to see his work given the measured attention that you paid it in* Cultures et développement [1976e]. *As a quasi-technical exercise, and at any rate a professional undertaking, the review is a fine piece of work.*
Yours
Rodney

[Then Rodney wrote on 10 July 1978].

Dear King
Someone told me a little while ago that you were expected in Oxford but I neglected to put down or was not given the date. I should like to see you if you do come, I trust you will get in touch if you have the time; if I am not here [at All Souls College] I am at home in the evenings. You have my address and telephone number.
Yours
Rodney Needham

[I eventually wrote back on 5 September 1978, rather tardily. Staying with Drs Jan Avé in Leiden, I had been working in the archives in The Hague and visiting the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde and the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (KITLV) in Leiden, the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam and the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Amsterdam, visiting Professor Otto van den Muijzenberg, in my summer vacation. At that time, I was collaborating on a bibliography of West Kalimantan with Jan Avé and Joke de Wit (Avé et al 1983)]. Jan Avé also took me to the Indonesich Ethnographisch Museum Delft, where he had been involved in the preparations for an exhibition on Kalimantan in 1973 and written the introduction to the exhibition catalogue (Avé 1973)].

Dear Professor Needham,
Many thanks for your letter of 10 July 1978 Yes, I was expecting to come to Oxford and spend some time with Anthony Shelton, one of the students I taught in sociology and anthropology at Hull. Unfortunately, there was a change of plan and I was unable to make it. However, should I decide to come there in the near future I will certainly contact you.

[Anthony Shelton took his BA in Sociology and Anthropology at Hull, and then went on to a BLitt/MLitt and DPhil at Oxford in Social Anthropology. He is now Director and Professor at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia].

[The letter of 5 September continued]:

There is also one question I have for you. At the moment I am writing a paper on Borneo classification, which touches on some of your work and which I have been prompted to write partly as a response to an article by Gerald M. Erchak entitled 'Dusun Social and Symbolic Orders' in The Sarawak Museum Journal, *1972, 20: 301-313. He is critical of some of your work on classification and alliance, but, in my opinion, has misunderstood your argument. I have been going through your papers on this subject, but I am having difficulty tracing one of your analyses. I have applied through our inter-library loan service for your article 'A Synoptic Examination of Anal Society' in* Ethnos *1964, 29: 219-238* (1964c]. *Apparently, for some reason, our library cannot find this reference. Therefore, I was wondering whether I have the correct bibliographic details. I would be very grateful if you could provide me with the reference, or even better, if you have an offprint or spare xerox copy. I would be pleased to pay for any costs you might incur.*
Sincerely,
Victor King

[Rodney replied on 11 September 1978].

Dear King,
Thank you for your letter. I am sorry you were not able to get here after all. As for the Anal reference, the paper was published in 1964, but bore the date 1963 (usual with Ethnos*): otherwise, the particulars you have are right. I have just one offprint here which I enclose; perhaps you will let me have it back in due course.*
My compliments to Ian Cunnison (who was to have dined with me at the end of last term but whom I was sorry to have no chance to see for some reason).
Yours,
Rodney Needham

[Ian Cunnison was the first Professor of Social Anthropology at Hull University (1966-1989), and my tutor and lecturer in my undergraduate days (1967-1970), as was his colleague from Khartoum, Dr Talal Asad, now Distinguished Professor of Anthropology and Middle Eastern Studies at the Graduate Center of City University New York (see Asad 1970, 1973 [1975]). Cunnison wrote his DPhil thesis at Oxford on the Luapula peoples of the then Northern Rhodesia (now the Republic of Zambia), where he worked at the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (1959). He taught for a time with Professor Max Gluckman in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of

Manchester (1955-1958), and also served as Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Khartoum (1959-1966) where he undertook a study of the Baggara Arabs (1952-1955) (1966). He is probably best known for his translation of Marcel Mauss's *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (1954 [1950, 1966]).

[I replied on 3 October 1978].

> *Many thanks for the Anal paper. I took a photocopy of it and have returned the offprint. My article entitled 'Structural Analysis and Cognatic Societies: Some Borneo Examples' is near completion, and I am sending it to* Sociologus.
> *I have passed on your regards to Ian Cunnison and he returns his warmest best wishes.*
> *Sincerely,*
> *Victor King*

[In response to my paper in the *Borneo Research Bulletin* on the Iban-related Mualang of West Kalimantan, the neglect of P[ater]. Donatus Dunselman's work in Dutch (1950, 1954, 1955, 1958, 1959a, 1959b, 1961; and see Maxandrea [P. J. Hoek] 1924) and the Sarawak-centred approach to Iban(ic) Studies (1978c), which I sent to Rodney, he writes in a letter of 1 January 1979]:

> *Dear King*
> *Let me open the year by wishing you well and by commiserating with you in your plea to our colleagues that they should learn Dutch if that's the language the evidence is in. Only beware: if you go so far as to enable it to be seen that a colleague not only has ignored Dutch sources but also materials in French and German and Italian you will find you acquire the reputation of a very difficult fellow!!*
> *I trust we shall meet each other in the coming year, and since I never leave here* [Oxford] *unless I am forced that means that I hope you will have occasion to come here.*
> *Yours*
> *Rodney Needham*

[We then moved into the 1980s, still in a more sustained structuralist mode, and a paper that I sent to Rodney on Structural Analysis and Cognatic Societies (King 1980a), and earlier pieces on Transition and Maloh Birth (1976f]), following Arnold van Gennep, and Unity, Formalism and Structure: Comments on Iban Augury and Related Problems (1977a]), with Erik Jensen in mind (1974, and then see 2010; and see Metcalf 1976, 1977; and also Metcalf's admirable monograph 2010).

[Rodney's response on 10 April 1981]:

> *Thank you for your paper on structural analysis and cognatic societies. Before I got far enough into it to appreciate the kind attention you had paid to my own work, I was wondering how we might bring about a meeting at last.*

[There was a longish gap in our communications].
[Then personal matters were discussed….and Rodney's suggestion of my applying to Oxford for a Visiting Fellowship for one term in 1982-83].

I shall look forward to hearing from you soon. If you care to telephone, mornings are the best.
Good wishes,
Rodney

[I responded on 27 April 1981].

Dear Professor Needham,
My apologies for the delay in replying to your nice letter of 10 April. I have only just returned from a visit to my parents in Norfolk.
Your suggestion of a Visiting Fellowship is very appealing. Unfortunately, it will be difficult for me to get time off from Hull for the 1982-83 session. As you may know my colleague Lewis Hill, whom you supervised for his BLitt on the Kuki-Chin peoples of Upland Burma, and I are the only lecturers in Southeast Asian sociology/anthropology, and we are committed to teaching four courses per annum, plus supervisions of MA and doctoral students. Lewis is hoping to spend some months in Indonesia and Malaysia during 1982-83 studying the history, manufacture and symbolism of the keris. This necessarily leaves me holding the fort for part or all of that session. I have had a word with Ian Cunnison, my Head of Department, and David Bassett, the Director of the Centre for South-East Asian Studies, about your proposal, and while both of them are enthusiastic, they feel that there would be problems in covering teaching for 1982-83. However, we wonder whether an application for the following session (1983-84) would be in order.
This arrangement would, if it is agreeable to you, would fit nicely with my future research programme. I am hoping to embark on a new project in Borneo in the next few years and I have a visit arranged to Sarawak this coming summer. I have exhausted much of my Maloh material both in publications and my doctoral thesis (I have plans to revise it for publication (and see King [1985a]*), and I am particularly anxious to undertake another field study. Therefore, by 1983-84 I would welcome a period of writing and reflection in Oxford.*

[I then dealt with other matters and the possibility that I would be in Oxford briefly for a meeting in May, and could possibly contact him].

Yours as ever,
Victor

[Rodney replied on 30 April 1981].

Dear King,
Thank you for your letter. I quite understand the case you are in. I am pleased that you are coming to Oxford on May 14th and I shall look forward to meeting you. I shall give you the applications forms for 1983-84 then I shall show you the college. If you will, as you say, telephone me as soon as you are here, we can make a time. I am afraid I have to dine out on the evening of the 14th, and I have a committee meeting the afternoon of the 15th, but I shall arrange pupils and other matters so as to leave time to talk.
Yours,

RN

[In the event we managed to find two hours to meet on 14 May in Oxford, we talked about our joint interests and the Visiting Fellowship and toured the college. We also found time for refreshments in "The Turf"].

[I wrote on 21 May 1981].

> *Dear Professor Needham,*
> *May I take this opportunity of saying how much I enjoyed our pleasant and constructive meeting last Friday in Oxford. Unfortunately, I cannot say the same for the meeting of the Co-ordinating Council of Area Studies Associations which I attended there. The prospects for area studies look distinctly difficult, and I came away feeling rather depressed.*
> *I think I have not as yet sent you a copy of my Occasional Paper. It is the second number in a new series which we have recently launched in the Centre for South-East Asian Studies, Hull. It is something of a preliminary effort, and I have since reworked it for publication in a forthcoming special issue of the* Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science. *This latest piece tries to confront, rather more directly than the Occasional Paper certain issues which Edmund Leach raised in his Highland Burma Study.*
> *Unhappily I did not meet Bob Barnes during lunch at St Antony's. The college provided us with a special buffet in separate rooms.*
> *Thank you again for showing me All Souls. I hope we can meet again in the not-too-distant future.*
> *Sincerely,*
> *Victor*

[We then telephoned quite frequently from 1981, particularly in regard to what Rodney was then writing on and had completed, including his *Circumstantial Deliveries* (1981) and further down the line *Against the Tranquillity of Axioms* (1983), and *Exemplars* (1985) and that he had in mind a series of "succinct statements", and in a comparative frame, about the nature of human thought and its relationship to cultural behaviour and social organization].
[Correspondence then lapsed for a while. I became involved in visiting former students and colleagues in Sarawak, Sabah, Brunei and Peninsular Malaysia during the early and mid-1980s and then following up various possibilities that had presented themselves in Sarawak and Brunei. In the event I sent Rodney my Occasional Paper (1979a), much later than anticipated, and subsequently the follow-up piece on ethnic classification and relations in Borneo (King 1982b). I also mentioned to him that I had come across a paper I had been given in 1972 by Drs. R. Wariso of Universitas Tanjungpura in Pontianak].
[Rodney replied on 24 March 1982].

> *Many thanks for your interesting paper on ethnic classification: most clear and useful. But do tell me where one sees a copy of R. Wariso,* Suku Daya Punan (1971), *a surprise to me.*
> R.

[I replied on 28 March 1981].

Dear Professor Needham,
Unfortunately, I do not have a personal copy of Wariso's report on the Punan. It was in the form of a typed manuscript and only a limited number of copies were produced at Universitas Tanjungpura. I had access to a manuscript and took notes from it. I enclose a paper on forest nomads in KalBar which refers, in a little more detail, to the report. I think I've extracted the most significant information from it [King 1979b].
With best wishes,
Sincerely,
Victor

[A reply from Rodney on 1 June 1981].

Many thanks for the Punan paper; I had not seen it and I am glad to possess it. Do you know of the report by Stephen Headley on the Mahakam? "Report on a Mission to East Kalimantan" (he is at CeDRASEMI, 44 rue de la Tour, 75016, Paris) [Headley 1981].
R.

[I did know Headley's report. Rodney then renewed his invitation to All Souls College and reminded me of the Visiting Fellowship in 1983-84. Rodney's message (29 March 1982) in regard to the Fellowship dwelt on the process of application]:

Among your reasons for wishing to come to Oxford you might state my own presence here and also the possibility of collaboration with Bob Barnes and Peter Carey (the latter is at Trinity College).
I should like to have you here and am prepared to do what I can. You will understand, as I have explained to you when we met, that no one can guarantee a Fellowship or even, in advance of knowing the field of competition, estimate the chances of election.
Let me know what you think.
Yours ever,
Rodney

[I replied on 19 May 1982].

Dear Rodney,
Sincere apologies for my late reply to your letter of 29 March. I have delayed writing to you because I have been waiting for a decision on a grant application to the British Academy to undertake fieldwork in Sarawak in 1983-85. The possibility of a Visiting Fellowship to all Souls College still interests me, but I am also anxious to get back to Sarawak in the near future. Unfortunately, I shall not hear from the Academy until mid-June, so I should like to hold back my decision about the Visiting Fellowship for a while.
Perhaps you will remember when we talked together, I visited Sarawak for two months last summer. I had a very profitable stay, and I managed to get up to Belaga. The Museum is initiating research projects in connection with the planned resettlement of long-house communities in the Upper Rejang and the Balui. If the work goes ahead to construct dams for the generation of hydroelectric power on and around the Bakun rapids – and it seems

likely that approval will be given – a large area will be inundated. The Museum wishes to survey the populations there and undertake anthropological studies of various of the groups in the region prior to resettlement. Lucas Chin has invited me to investigate Ukit, Bukitan or Sihan communities there, and I am keen to do so. If I can get funding, then I will go to Sarawak for some months during 1983 and 1984.
I much appreciate your interest in my coming to Oxford, but I hope you will understand my reasons for not making up my mind just yet.
Thank you once again,
Sincerely,
Victor

[I wrote to Rodney on 19 August 1982].

Dear Rodney
Just a line to let you know that I have been awarded a Leverhulme Fellowship by The British Academy to undertake fieldwork in Sarawak during the summer vacations, 1983, 1984, 1985. I also plan to extend these vacations with a period of study leave.
All this means that regretfully I must postpone an application to All Souls. I hope that if I have free time after the Sarawak project, I might still be able to approach the College. May I thank you warmly for your interest and assistance.
I shall try to keep you informed about the situation in Sarawak.
Best regards,
Victor.

[Rodney's response on 24 August 1982 is interesting].

Thanks for letting me know about your plans and possibilities. Felicitations on the chance to make a study of the Bukitan or Ukit. Really it is I who should be doing that – but then there are many things in that area that I should have done already and have not done. Do keep me informed of your plans in Sarawak and if you can call in here before you leave next summer. The college and its VF [Visiting Fellowship] *programme will last for some time yet so nothing immediate is lost.*
Thanks for letting me know where you stand. There is no hurry, for our closing date is not until September. Of course, it is more important that you should return to Sarawak, especially if they are really going to build those dams. No doubt it is what I should doing!!
I have interested Peter Metcalf in coming here in T.T 84, if the College can be persuaded to elect him. I plan to be writing exclusively about Penan at that time. Perhaps you could fit a term into your sabbatical year?
Yours Rodney.

[Unfortunately, though getting to Belaga in the company of Tuton Kaboy from the Sarawak Museum, I did not manage a study of the Bukitan or Ukit, though one of my doctoral students did take this on some years later and produced a fine study of the Ukit (Bhuket), principally in Sarawak. But she also managed a visit to West Kalimantan (Thambiah 1995, and see 2016)].
[We then exchanged letters through the early 1980s when I was working in Sarawak from 1983 to 1985, and then I received an important letter from Rodney on 29 January 1986].

Dear Terry
I have just received through Virginia Matheson the greetings you sent, and want to reciprocate. You have been in my mind recently in any case, for with two books in press (plus an edition of Hocart papers [1987a]*) and two terms of sabbatical yet ahead I am now deep into the Penan book. It all looks exceedingly difficult to me at the moment and I am not sure how I am going to make it. The great drawback, as you know, is that there is no structure to organise the account (as it did for my Mamboru monograph) and that they lack practically everything in the way of institutions that people are accustomed to look for. So, I don't know what good it would do even if I could talk to you about it, but all the same I have been wondering if you were ever likely to get so far south as this. It would be good to see you, in any event. As things are, I have spent the last month regaining a command of the language(s) and ordering notes and reading others, so I am now at the point from which I can begin active writing. With luck the thing could be done this summer: historical ethnography, of course, but in view of what has happened in Sarawak perhaps especially useful in the end for that reason.*
Yours ever,
Rodney Needham

[My contact with Virginia Matheson, Professor Emeritus and Fellow in the Department of Political and Social Change, College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University, was through her husband Professor M. B. [Barry] Hooker, Senior Associate of the Centre for Indonesian Law, Islam and Society at the University of Melbourne Law School. We enjoyed a close relationship when he was a Professor in the Centre of Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Kent, Canterbury and when I was in the Centre for South-East Asian Studies at Hull].

[I wrote to Rodney on 11 February 1986].

Dear Professor Needham,
I am so pleased to hear that you are engaged in your Penan book. I would indeed like to talk with you about it, but I do not think I shall be able to get to Oxford in the immediate future. However, I have agreed to provide Leslie Palmier (an old friend and he was our external examiner at Hull for three years [King 2013c]*) at Bath University in his Development Studies programme with a paper on rural development in Sarawak, probably May this year, or perhaps in the first half of 1987, so I may be able to arrange a stop off in Oxford on my way back from Bath.*
I have recently managed to complete four papers arising from my research on rural development in Sarawak, all in press, one of these is an assessment of the Batang Ai resettlement programme above Lubok Antu, two others provide a broad survey of the Sarawak land development boards and the issues relating to government-funded and -directed land development, and finally a survey of the relation between anthropology and rural development in Sarawak [1986a, 1986b, 1986c, 1986d; and a later summary paper 1988]. *I am finding all this very absorbing. I am hoping to return to Sarawak this summer. I understand from a recent item in* The Borneo Bulletin *January 18, that the Bakun Dam project is being reconsidered by government and could be shelved, though this is unlikely and there is no final decision. At present Lucas Chin energetically is taking every*

opportunity to send social scientists to Belaga to undertake research on behalf of the Museum, whether or not the Bakun development goes ahead. As you may know Simon Strickland, lately of Cambridge, has now completed his research on the Kejaman, Ida Nicolaisen has just sent into the Museum an interesting report on the Sekapan, and Vinson Sutlive did a brief survey of Iban-Kajang relations downriver of Belaga. This last summer I met Peter Brosius from Michigan who has been given the Penan as his project. No doubt he has been in touch with you. Peter Kedit is engaged in a Sihan project, and a recently arrived Japanese student is intending to examine a Kayan community upriver of Belaga. Quite a formidable research effort!

Unfortunately, for various administrative and personal reasons I was unable to participate in the Bakun studies so that my work, under Sarawak Museum auspices, has been redirected to government rural development programmes in general, and the difficulties experienced in the implementation of these in specific instances. It has taken the prospect of a dam and resettlement scheme for the government to begin to commission studies on some of the most important peoples and changes in Sarawak. Arriving at the Sarawak Museum this last summer reminded me of what it is was like in the heady and lively days of the early 1970s when it was difficult to reserve a desk and working space in the Museum Library. More recently, not only was the Museum jostling with anthropologists working on Bakun, but there were ecologists undertaking a conservation survey on behalf of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and other scholars such as Allen Maxwell and Carol Rubenstein working on other aspects of Sarawak cultures.

Very best wishes to you, and I wish you well in your renewed work on the Penan.

Sincerely,

Terry

[Then Rodney wrote on 14 February 1987].

Dear Terry,

Thank you for your long reply and for all the news. A visit next term would be splendid; it is not possible to be quite certain at the moment but it ought to be feasible to find you a room overnight on your way to or from Bath. You could dine here, sleep overnight, and be on your way after breakfast the next morning, and that should be enough time for talk about Borneo.

On the Penan, the changes sound very deep; children go to school, so people speak Malay, and longhouse life for them must make differences as well.

I admire your professional persistence and your resilience to return there.

My Sumba monograph ("Mamboru") was formally accepted for publication by the Clarendon Press earlier this month. Otherwise, no news except that from time to time I have been reading drafts of Berawan prayers for Peter Metcalf in preparation for a new book on them [Metcalf 1989].

I look forward to seeing you here.

Yours ever,

Rodney.

[Rodney then wrote on 8 March 1987].

> *Dear Terry*
> *A note to compliment you on the weeping-forest book by yourself and Jan Avé; it arrived just the other day and I was much impressed by the clear density of information in it* [Avé and King 1986a, 1986b]. *When you next write to Avé, whom I have not met for many years (we were students together once at Leiden), do give him my regard. Your expostulations against the environmental changes caused by the timber companies are very telling.*
> *That issue has been brought very close to me by two recent occasions. First a Kenyah friend of mine sent me a colour photograph, taken from the air, of the Akah valley; when I lived in it with Penan, on each of my visits, it was thick primary rainforest, but now it is nearly all a kind of scrub, marked here and there with red gashes showing where the land has eroded and slipped, and timber standing only on the steep ridges that the loggers could not well exploit. Then I had on Thursday last a visit from a pleasant young Dutchman, Jenne de Beer from Amsterdam, who had just returned from Borneo* [see, for example, De Beer and McDermott 1989]. *He spent some months in Kalimantan, looking at Punan Batu, and then five or six weeks in the Fourth Division of Sarawak, where he visited the Penan Mago. What he told me, and the slides that he showed me, left me shaken and depressed, as I still am. We agreed on the character of the eastern Penan, and I remarked that they were shy and unresisting, so that when they encountered something they did not like they would retreat, but de Beer responded that now there is nowhere for them to retreat to. The Penan L. Buang have had their surrounding forest stripped and have been forced to move quite a distance to the southeast, though what resources they can have found there is not evident.*
> *I wish there were some occasion for you to come here, perhaps when you visit London. I should much like to talk to you about your findings in Sarawak. I have proposed to de Beer that he might work with the Savup (Sebop)* [apparently now rendered locally as Chebup] *in the ulu Tinjar – if they are still Savup and still there- and he seems keen on that.*
> *Yours,*
> *Rodney*

Jenne [Joannes Henricus] de Beer served as the Executive Director of the Non-Timber Products Exchange Programme for South and Southeast Asia from 1998 to 2010. NTFP—EP produced the publication Voices from the Forest].

[I replied on 18 March 1987].

> *Dear Rodney,*
> *Thank you for your letter of 8 March and your encouraging remarks about* People of the Weeping Forest. *I shall certainly inform Jan Avé that you have been in touch with me when I next write to him. Unfortunately, Jan and I have not been in contact much in the last year but I am still in touch with his son, Marek and daughter Wanda who are still in the Netherlands. Wanda is working for the WWF and studying medicinal plants in Indonesia* [Avé and Satyawan Sunito 1989]. *Jan retired from the Museum some months ago and promptly departed for the south of France. He is a fluent speaker of Frenc as you, but then, English, German and Dutch, and some Polish/Russian (from his wife) and, of course,*

Indonesian/Malay. He has a retirement house there and he wants peace and quiet for a while.
I think our efforts to get something out to accompany the exhibition in Leiden exhausted us. It was a rather desperate affair. We only managed to get the Dutch edition of the book from the printers on the very day of the official opening by Sir David Attenborough. I, for one, was somewhat unhappy with the Dutch text; it was very rushed. We had rather more time to work on and expand the English version; but even so, the Museum's schedule left me little time to translate Jan's sections from Dutch into English and edit them [and see King 2012].
Interestingly I have just come across an advertisement for a recently published book by Evelyne Hong (one of Cliff Sather's former students from Penang) [1987] *which would seem to have similar concerns as our weeping-forest:* Natives of Sarawak: Survival in Borneo's Vanishing Forests (1987) .... *The issue of forest destruction is a particularly sensitive one now. I have seen recent copies of the* Straits Times *and the* Borneo Bulletin *which have featured stories on Bruno Manser, who has been charged by the authorities of inciting the Penan of the Fourth and Fifth Divisions to protest about the exploitation of forests in their homeland. A close friend of mine in Kuching has recently written that Manser is still at large and is being "sheltered" by the Penan. I have no idea what his status is or what conditions he is living in* [Manser 2004, 2007].
Perhaps I shall learn more soon. I am leaving for Malaysia Friday week to spend about four to six weeks in Sarawak. I am hoping to secure a formal academic link between our Centre and the Sarawak branch of Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (UPM) in Bintulu [now Universiti Putra Malaysia]. *I shall be visiting one of my PhD students there, who is currently conducting field research on the transition from swidden cultivation to commercial agriculture among Bidayuh communities in the Serian area* [Abdul Rashid bin Abdullah]. *Also, to spend a few days with another of my PhD students in Kuala Lumpur who is working on political development among the Ibans, particularly in the lower Rejang, his homeland [*Jayum A. Jawan].
With my very best wishes, It was certainly good to hear from you again and I hope we can meet soon.
Yours,
Terry

[Drs Jan Avé was Conservator of the Indonesian and Southeast Asian Collections at the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden. From 1972, when I first met him, until 1990 we enjoyed a productive relationship (Avé et al 1983, Avé and King 1986a, 1986b; King 1989b, 1990, 2012). He left the Netherlands for retirement in the south of France in the mid-1980s but we continued to cooperate on projects].

[Professor Abdul Rashid bin Abdullah was later to become Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS); PhD University of Hull, 1993]. Professor Jayum A. Jawan (PhD Hull 1991) *was appointed to a senior Professorship in Politics and Government at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and then to the Distinguished Tun Abdul Razak Chair (the 15th Professor to be appointed) at Ohio University, and most recently to the inaugural Tan Sri Empiang Jabu Research Chair in Dayak Women's Studies at UPM].*

[Bruno Manser was a Swiss environmentalist and human rights activist who lived among the Penan in the headwaters of the Limbang between 1984 and 1990 "to live a simple life", and then revisited periodically thereafter (2004, 2007). He was instrumental in organizing the Penan to establish blockades on the roads in their homelands from which logging companies were operating].

[Rodney replied on 22 March 1987].

> *Dear Terry,*
> *Thanks especially for letting me know about the book by Evelyne Hong. I shall send off an order tomorrow. As for Manser, no doubt you will keep your ears open. Do let me know on your return, what you hear about him and the fate of the Penan. And in that connection perhaps you can find the occasion to pass on my compliments to Abang Yusuf Puteh at the Sarawak Foundation in Mosque Road; he has expressed a particularly sympathetic interest in the Penan in the ulu Tutoh, and has said he may be writing something about them.*
> *Another matter is the young Dutchman de Beers, whom I must have mentioned to you. I mentioned to him what a good idea it would be to make a study of the Sebop, and I said that as far as I knew they were still in four longhouses in the upper reaches of the Tinjar. If the opportunity ever rises in your coming visit, will you very kindly see what you can find about their current situation? What with recent disruptions they may not be there at all, let alone in a convenient grouping of longhouses.*
> *Have a good time, and do get in touch on your return. I very much hope you will be able to return here.*
> *Yours,*
> *Rodney*

[I responded on 6 May 1987 after my return from Sarawak].

> *Dear Rodney,*
> *Many thanks for your letter of 22nd March. I received it just before my departure for Sarawak. I arrived back in Hull a few days ago. Fortunately, I met Jayl Langub in Kuching. He now works in the State Planning Unit and continues his interest in the Penan and other orang ulu groups.*
> *I also chanced to meet Peter Brosius in Kuching, who is continuing his work on the Penan until the autumn. I mentioned the Sebop to him and he confirmed that there are still communities in the Tinjar. He is also of the opinion that the Sebop would make a very worthwhile study. He is of the view that there are about four villages or so there, but the Tinjar basin has been subject to intensive logging activities.*
> *Unfortunately, I did not meet Abang Yusuf Puteh in Kuching. The state elections were on at the time I was there, and several prominent people were dashing here and there to canvas votes. The new Dayak party (PBDS) did very well, but though still wishing to remain a member of the Barisan Nasional at federal level, though in opposition to Abdul Taib Mahmud* [now Tun Pehin] *and the BN at the state level. These issues were being discussed when I left Sarawak.*
> *I have enclosed offprints which may be of interest to you, and recent newspaper cuttings.*
> *Yours,*
> *Terry*

[Rodney followed up on 18 May 1987].

Dear Terry
I am very grateful to you for all of your help in the midst of your own implications in Sarawak, and for the offprints and especially for the photocopies on the Penan in the press. Good news about the Sebop, though I have no pupil in prospect who might be willing to take them on.
Thank you again. Do look for some way to get down south and in that case come over to Oxford.
Yours ever,
Rodney.

[Then from Rodney on 14 November 1987].

Dear Terry,
I was taken aback yesterday when Tony Reid told me that you had been in Oxford. I do wish I had known you were coming, and I am sorry indeed we did not meet. I understand that there was some inconvenience with your rail journey, but perhaps nevertheless you could have come to stay in college overnight and we could have had a chance to talk in detail at last on Borneo matters. Let us make sure we do so on another occasion.
Yours,
Rodney.

[I replied on 18 November 1987].

Dear Rodney,
I am sorry not to have contacted you while I was in Oxford. Peter Carey had invited me to participate in a discussion at Trinity College about a European Newsletter in South-East Asian Studies with representatives from the Netherlands, Germany and France. It had then been arranged for us to attend Denys Lombard's seminar at St Antony's and to dine at the college thereafter. After some difficulties British Rail got me to Oxford at 2pm on Tuesday, just in time for the meeting. I had to leave Trinity promptly the next morning to be back in Hull by early Wednesday afternoon for a staff meeting. I had hoped to find time to 'phone you on the Tuesday but I was swept along by events, and it would have been difficult for me to disengage myself from the company to visit you at All Souls. Nevertheless, you were in my mind, but time and prearranged commitments were against us meeting.
I did see Bob Barnes at St Antony's and he has invited me to present a seminar at the Institute on 4 March next year. Perhaps that might provide the occasion for us to meet. Apologies for appearing thoughtless. It was not my intention.
As ever,
Terry

[Rodney replied on 21 November 1987].

Dear Terry
I am glad to hear that you may be here on March 4th. Please let me know in advance what your timing will be and whether you would care to stay here overnight. I shall at least hope that you will have the time to come in for something, and shall look forward to seeing you.
Yours,
Rodney.

[And then on 3 December 1987].

Dear Terry,
May I ask a favour of you. Gathorne Cranbrook tells me of a piece by Labang and Medway in Trans 6th Aberdeen-Hull Symposium on Malaysia Ecology, ed. A. G. Marshall, and published in 1979 as Univ. of Hull Department of Geography Misc. Series 22 [D. Labang and Lord Medway 1979]. *Would it be possible for you please to obtain for me a copy of the article, or if it not too bulky or horrendously expensive, of the monograph itself? It is surely somewhere in the Radcliffe Science Library, but I should prefer if feasible to have a copy from the source. I hope this would not be too much of a trouble to you; perhaps you need only pass on this note to a colleague in Geography, with your assurance that I shall send him the money by return.*
The Borneo book still progresses, painstakingly: working on linguistic issues at present; it takes forever to be half-way sure of some lexical questions – but it is great fun to be reading the Busang dictionary, just for its own sake.
Yours ever,
Rodney

[I did not pursue it, but I assumed he was reading J.P.J. Barth's *Boesangsch-Nederlandsch Woordenboek* (1910). Or perhaps also Southwell's work (1980).
Gathorne Cranbrook also published an interesting anthology on the *Wonders of Nature in South-East Asia* in an OUP series in the 1990s (Earl of Cranbrook 1997; Foreword, King 1997b).

[I replied on 9 December 1987].

Dear Rodney,
Many thanks for your letter of 3 December. The Geography Department can supply a copy of Paper No 22 in its Miscellaneous Series. I have therefore purchased it on your behalf for the price of £3. Which I hope is acceptable to you. I am content to cover the cost, but if you wish to recompense then a cheque in my name, but no urgency. Until your letter I was unaware that Gathorne had written a paper in the Aberdeen-Hull Series. I have just read it with interest.
I will be in touch again before 4 March.
With best wishes,
Terry

[From Rodney 13 February 1988].

Dear Terry
Would you like to let me know of your plans for your visit to Oxford on Friday March 4th. To begin with will you be here in time for lunch at 12.30? Then would you like a bed for the night or two nights plus breakfast? Or otherwise, what did you have in mind and when might I hope to see you for a talk?
Yours ever,
Rodney

[I replied on 18 February 1988].

Dear Rodney
Many thanks for your letter of 13 February. I have only just been in touch with Bob Barnes about arrangements for Friday 4 March. Unfortunately, I will not be able to make it at 12.30. The most convenient train for me leaves from Hull at 8.31am and arrives, after several changes, in Oxford at I.44pm. The British Rail system does not really cope with cross-country travel from Hull. I am to report at the Institute at 4pm and I gather that Bob would like to take me for a drink after the seminar. So, as I see it, I shall have time early afternoon, and also after the pub on Friday evening. I should be most grateful for a bed, evening meal and breakfast, and depending on your programme, I could drop in immediately on my arrival, say, just after 2pm. I am not sure how long the seminar will last and the refreshments afterwards, but sometime later on the Friday evening is also possible. Perhaps you could let me know how you are placed on Friday.
With best wishes,
Terry

[In the event I stayed for two nights in Oxford].
[Rodney replied on 22 February 1988].

Dear Terry
Thanks for your letter. I have had to wait until this morning to make the arrangements and then reply. You will have a guest room waiting for you on Friday March 4th (and 5th if you wish). I don't know what your commitments are for that evening but I have put you down provisionally for dinner; if you are not dining elsewhere that will mean being back here by about seven, I shall expect to see you first sometime around two or thereafter on the Friday afternoon. Much looking forward to your visit.
Yours ever,
Rodney

[I replied on 25 February 1988].

Dear Rodney,

Many thanks for your letter and for your kindness in making arrangements for me. I shall come to All Souls direct from the station. I would like to make dinner on the Friday evening, provided I am not too delayed at the Institute.
Look forward to seeing you after so long.
Sincerely,
Terry

[I managed to get to the dinner and had long discussions with Rodney and other senior professors at All Souls, at the end of an exhausting day.
[I thanked him in a letter on 16 March 1988].

Dear Rodney,
Just a note to thank you for your generous hospitality while I was in Oxford. It was good to see you and to have time to talk with you about Borneo and the wider Southeast Asia.
Your question about palms, their use and indigenous perceptions in Central Borneo.
Checking a Maloh word-list I have doun sang *as the large, long leaves of the palm* Teysmannia altifrons: *a short-trunked palm found especially in the upper Embaloh region and used in a variety of rituals. Does this square with your identification?*
Sincerely,
Terry

[Rodney replied on 21 March 1988].

Dear Terry
Thank you for your letter. It was good to have you here and for once to have a chance to talk. I have since read your Maloh monograph also; apart from its ethnographic value it tells me much about the direction of your own interests (as well as how far in some respects they diverge from mine!!). As for saang, I have it as the fan palm (Licuala) for both eastern and western Penan; Kedit's list of palm names does not confirm this. Elshout identified it as Cordyline Jav. And this name is reported from Busang. Brosius will no doubt sort it out..
What the Penan whom I knew called sang did not look, in the leaf, like Teymannia altifrons: which I think was called anau. The Penan did not use the leaf in ritual, though of course all the longhouse peoples did.
Yours,
Rodney.

[I then asked him whether my Maloh monograph (King 1985a) was available in the Bodleian. He replied on 25 May 1988].

Dear Terry
I cannot be sure without ordering up your Maloh monograph in the Bodleian but it may be that you have not exploited this; so, just on the merest off-chance, here is their reference (the figures are the Bodleian shelf mark). Very dense and detailed material, ordered with admirably Germanic thoroughness.

PS I enclose a photocopy of a couple of photographs of Maloh traditional dress which you may not have come across. Meant to do so long ago. The photographer walked through Embaloh country.

[So, Rodney and I then were exchanging photographs on Borneo peoples to test one another. Rodney sent me images of West Kalimantan and suggested I might try to identify their source. I sent him images of Punan in West Kalimantan. These were photographs from the Dutch colonial period].

[His letter on 3 June 1988].

Dear Terry
Well done; you passed. It was indeed Maxandrea's [P.J. Hoek], De Dajaks in de Binnenlanden van Borneo [1924]. *As for the photographs you test me on: I am afraid I cannot help you, for I never knew the provenance of the pictures. Odd pictures do turn up in works on Kalimantan, especially in the early decades, and without attribution. I have not even the German originals of* Die Gottesidee [Schärer 1963, 1946] *any more, but I am sure that if there had been information on the illustrations, I should have included it in the English edition.*
Yours ever,
Rodney Needham

[I contacted Rodney on 8 June 1990 about Italian students who might wish to see him in Oxford].

Dear Rodney,
Sorry for the short notice. At present we have five Italian students with us in Hull who are studying Indonesian language and literature with Professor Luigi Santa Maria at the Istituto Universitario Orientale in Naples. Two of the students - Gabriella Ranno and Patrizia Decurione – will be spending a few days in Oxford studying some of the Malay manuscripts there, from 11-14 June. They asked whether they might meet scholars of Indonesia in Oxford. We thought of you, Bob Barnes and Peter Carey. This is all rather rushed, but they may attempt to contact you while they are in Oxford.
We explained that you are very busy and that we did not have the time to arrange a meeting in good time. However, if they do 'phone you at All Souls and you have a moment, perhaps you might be able to see them. They are very bright and enthusiastic students and their Indonesian is good.
With warmest regards,
Terry

[Rodney responded on 13 June 1990].

Dear Terry
I am sorry to have just missed your telephone call this afternoon. I had gone down to tea with a pupil only a minute before. This is merely to say that of course it will be all right if

your students call me. These are busy days and they may be out of luck, but, if we can meet, I shall be only pleased to do so.
Yours ever,
Rodney
PS. I shall look forward to seeing you after Sian Jay's viva and trust you will be able to leave a little time before returning to Hull. My apartment is in Holywell and only two minutes' walk from college. I should like to take you to my local pub, if there is time, and to catch up on Sarawak news.

[On 25 June 1990 I wrote].

Dear Rodney
Thank you for your kind letter of 13 June. In the event our exchange students from Naples had to shorten their stay in Oxford and spent their time in the Bodleian. They therefore did not have the opportunity to contact you.
It was good to see you, however, briefly at the pub, after Sian Jay's viva. We had an interesting time with Peter Rivière as the internal examiner.
Yes, I also hope to see you in the autumn, and I have your telephone number at Holywell.
As always, with my best wishes,
Terry

[Sian Eira Jay was a graduate of the University of Hull in social sciences and also took courses in South-East Asian Studies. She then went on to complete a DPhil at Oxford on Priests, Shamans and the Cosmology of the Ngaju Dayak of Central Kalimantan in 1991. She was formerly a researcher in the Departments of Ethnography and Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum and an editor for the Macmillan Dictionary of Art. She then spent much of her career in working as an editor and lecturing in Singapore].

[Subsequently, I also sent Rodney a copy of Jan Avé's paper on "Contributions to Borneo Studies in the German Language" (1990) in late 1990 accompanied by a brief note on 20 December 1990, and wishing him well and a relaxing time during the Christmas period].

[Rodney responded on 16 January 1991].

Dear Terry,
Your note of December 20th awaited me when I returned from San Francisco at the end of the year, but since then I have been confined mostly to my bed with a nasty virus and this is the first day on which I have felt fit enough to get up and try to do something about my desk. I am sorry for the delay. You allude to a review article by Jan Avé, but I cannot find it in the pile of untended matters and must assume that it is somewhere there. Anyway, thanks for your part in sending it, and for your communication. I had a fine Christmas with my sons, thanks, but have no news. Beatrice Clayre has written of the confusion and changed circumstances of her return to Sarawak, and I am due to examine Monica Janowski on the Kelabit in April, it appears, but that's about it. I too much hope that our paths will cross in this new year; do give me a telephone call if there seems at all a chance that you may be in Oxford and free to call in here.

Yours ever,
Rodney

[Dr Monica Janowski is currently a Research Associate at the SOAS Centre of South East Asian Studies, University of London, and the Curator of the Southeast Museum at the University of Hull from 2022 (as I am still Hull-based, we are working together to sustain and develop the collection). She was also a Research Fellow and Advisor at the Sarawak Museum (2017-2022). Her research interests are wide-ranging, but she has a particular focus on the anthropology of food and kinship and relatedness through food, the symbolism of crops and animals, and most recently cosmological beliefs and symbolism on "dragons" in island Southeast Asia. Her major publications include *The Forest, Source of Life: The Kelabit of Sarawak* (2003), *Tuked Rini, Cosmic Traveller* (2014), her paper on the hearth-group (1995) and edited books with Fiona Kerlogue (2007) and Tim Ingold (2012).
Her doctoral research, supervised by Maurice Bloch at the LSE, resulted in a thesis on Rice, Work and Community among the Kelabit of Sarawak, East Malaysia (1991)].

[Rodney also wrote on 19 February 1991].

Dear Terry,
Just a note to tell you that now I am up and about [after a period of ill-health with a lung infection], *I have discovered that the first copy of Jan Avé's review article did arrive at All Souls lodge. I am passing it on to Beatrice Clayre (that is to await her return). Thanks again and, I am sure, on her behalf as well, for it is a most interesting piece.*
Yours ever
Rodney.

[Dr Beatrice Clayre took her MA and PhD in prehistoric archaeology at the University of Edinburgh. She studied and worked in Germany, Spain and Portugal and received homage from the University of Seville for her contribution to Spanish archaeology. From 1964 to 1968 she lived in Sabah and Sarawak with her husband, and studied the languages of Dusun, Lun Bawang, Penan, Kayan and Sa'ban as a Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM) Bible translator (see, for example, 1996). She was instrumental in bringing a substantial amount of Stephen Morris's unpublished research on the Oya Melanau to fruition (Morris 1997). She was guest editor of the 1997 Sarawak Museum publication (also see Morris 1991). She has had a long involvement with Sarawak and the Sa'ban (see her wide-ranging paper on the languages of Borneo 1996)
Iain F.C.S. Clayre, who worked closely with Stephen Morris, was awarded his PhD on the Melanau language at Edinburgh University (1972). Their son, Alasdair Clayre, born in Sa'ban country at Long Banga is currently studying for his PhD on the Sa'ban in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) (see, for example, Clayre 2020)].

[Rodney wrote to me on 12 August 1991].

Dear Terry,
Just in case you have not been sent a copy. I am writing to let you know that Alexander Adelaar has in press a long examination of the Tamanic languages (inc. Embaloh/Maloh). which so far as I can gauge such a matter, proves that they are cognate with Southern

Sulawesi and proposes that the original speakers were from there. Naturally, he cannot be particular about how they ever got to the ulu Kapuas, but all in all it is a most interesting demonstration. I cannot pass on to you the copy which I have myself been lent, but no doubt Adelaar would let you have one.
No news: I am doing my best to resume work, but it is not much of a best so far.
Yours as ever,
Rodney
PS Beatrice Clayre, by the way, after enduring rather awful living conditions in lowland Sarawak, has some most interesting findings on Sa'Ban, Lun Dayeh and eastern Penan.

[K. Alexander Adelaar "The Classification of the Tamanic Languages" (1994), I had also communicated frequently with Ülo Sirk on the close relationship between Maloh (Embaloh, Taman) and Bugis (1979; and see Lander and Ogloblin 2008). And see the excellent work on linguistic classification of Smith (2017).

[I responded on 22 August 1991].

Dear Rodney,
Sincere thanks for your welcome letter of 12 August. I do know of Alexander Adelaar's work, which I much admire, and I have seen an early paper of his on the Tamanic languages. I shall write to him to ask for a copy of the publication to which you refer.
I am busy at the moment with a general book entitled The Peoples of Borneo [1993] *for a Blackwell series edited by Peter Bellwood and Ian Glover on* The Peoples of South-East Asia and the Pacific. *Frighteningly they want me to include a chapter on prehistory. I am madly reading up on this without much success. Wish me luck.*
I hope we can meet up soon. With my best wishes,
Terry

[Rodney had read my Borneo book, and wrote on 5 July 1993].

Dear Terry
I have just begun reading your new book on Borneo, marvelling the while at your determination and professionalism in ever undertaking such a task, and have come upon the name of Wyn Sargent. It occurs to me that you may well never have come upon a letter of mine prompted by one of her reports, published as it was seventeen years ago, so here it is.
Now for chapter 2……
Yours ever,
Rodney

Wyn Sargent, My Life with the Headhunters (1974); I was undertaking fieldwork in West Kalimantan at the same time as she was pursuing her adventures in other parts of Indonesia].
[And then again from Rodney on 8 July 1993, bearing in mind the meticulous approach with which Rodney read books and manuscripts. He would always find something to draw your attention to].

[I responded on 12 July 1993].

Dear Rodney,
Thank you for your two letters of 5 and 8 July. They arrived while I was involved in organising the 9th European Colloquium on Indonesian and Malay Studies here in Hull. It was an excellent conference, but it has meant my mail has been placed in a large pile ready for answering this week. I have included a programme for the Colloquium which might be of some interest to you.
The high point for me was to chair a session by Professor Sartono Kartodirdjo, a scholar I had admired from my early interest in rural protest movements in Indonesia [1966, 1973, 1988, 1997; King 1973, 1975a, 1977b; see also 1978d, 1978e, 1980b].
Thank you for your kind words about my Borneo book. As you probably realised it is not solely directed at an academic audience. I was advised not to enter into any details of scholarly debates in anthropology or archaeology, not to use too many anthropological terms unless I defined them in simple and straightforward terms, and I had to keep footnotes to a minimum. In the event I managed to do without them altogether.
I enclose the title page of Chadwick and Courtenay for information
Thank you for your useful piece of information on Wyn Sargent's book.
With my best wishes, as always,
Terry.
PS You have probably heard that Beatrice Clayre has received a grant from the British Academy to continue her linguistic work in Sarawak.

[Rodney followed with a note on 14 July 1993]

Dear Terry
A note to say that I found your new book just what it is meant to be: comprehensive and sound and even-handed, and altogether most useful. Not a single misprint, that I detected either. There is one little quibble about one expression but as it touches only me I need not specify; but I can say that there is a related point in your statement that there are certain very powerful symbols and that "spiritual forces ..... emanate from them," (p. 249). Which likewise I jib at. Passing over that, can you please help me with a reference? You cite Chadwick and Courtenay on "Punan Art" [1983] *which I do not know, and I wonder if you have any further particulars (centrally the ISBN) by means of which I can ask the Bodleian to acquire it* [King 1987]. *I don't even know, to tell the truth, where James Cook University is. What a relief it must have been to you to have completed such a demanding work, even if there could be no doubt that it would be worthwhile.*
Yours ever,
Rodney

[And he corrected me on 16 July 1993].

Dear Terry,
A note about your book; at page 44 (I think Beatrice Clayre has borrowed my copy) you allude to the Sebop in connection with the Kenyah. But it seemed to me that the reference was ambiguous. One reading, as I recall it, was that the Sebop are a main group within the

Kenyah. This could well be maintained so long as it was premised on the admission of western Penan and eastern Penan also as "Kenyah" (as I have labelled their isolects); otherwise, they would be distanced as, according to western Penan, former Penan and therefore distinguishable from the Kenyah.
As ever,
Rodney

I decided not to include some of the letters in the early 1990s. There were messages about Rodney's health and his month-long visit to New Zealand, and various matters in our correspondence from April-May 1990 to do with the examination of the thesis on the Ngaju of Central Kalimantan, supervised by Rodney].

[Much of the correspondence was in connection with Traude Gavin's doctoral research on Iban textiles and her revisions for publication (1995, 2003 [2004]; and see 1996). I was her supervisor, but in conversation with Rodney, he generously agreed to read her draft chapters. She says, in her acknowledgements, "I am grateful to Professor Emeritus Rodney Needham for giving so generously of his time and for commenting in great detail on all draft chapters. His queries were invaluable in pointing out gaps in data, especially when I returned to the field in 1993. I profited greatly from his advice and his criticism helped to avoid a number of errors and misrepresentations…He further pointed out many references, which helped to deepen my approach to the field data" (2003: ix-x).

She also acknowledged the support and advice of Derek and Monica Freeman. "I thank Professor Emeritus Derek Freeman and his wife Monica for seeing me at a time when he was occupied with other work, for I benefited greatly from his remarks and observations. He kindly allowed me to quote from his notes and to include some of Monica's drawings in this publication" (ibid.: x; Appell-Warren 2009; King 2010).

Gavin drew upon the advice and guidance of two of the most prominent anthropologists who had undertaken research in Borneo (see, for example Needham 1964b, 1966, 1976; and Freeman 1967, 1968, 1979). Subsequently Needham and Freeman went their separate theoretical ways in the understanding of indigenous cultures in island Southeast Asia, including Borneo, following Freeman's "conversion" from British social anthropology in Kuching to what he referred to as an "interactionist paradigm" and his critical examination of Margaret Mead's Samoan research (Mead 1928; Freeman 1983a, 1983b, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1991, 1992, 1994-95, 1997, 1998, 1999a, 1999b; and see his criticisms of Needham 1968, 1975; and see Appell 1984; Appell and Madan 1988; Jarvie 2012, 2017, 2018). Freeman's paradigm "recognizes biological as well as cultural variables" (see Shankman 1998: 36), and deploys perspectives from evolutionary biology and evolutionary psychology; the key triad is culture, biology and evolution (Shankman 2000; and see Hempenstall 2017; King 2019).

It should be noted that Freeman's paradigm and his dissection of Mead's findings and conclusions and the conduct of her field research (see Freeman 1983a, 1998, 1999a), in turn, have not escaped criticism (see, for example, Acciaioli 1983; Brady 1983, 1991; Caton 1990; Côté 1992, 1994, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2005; Foerstel and Gilliam 1992; Holmes 1986 [1987]; Leacock 1992; Levy 1984: Mageo 1988; Orans 1996; Patience and Smith 1986; Paxman 1988; Scheper-Hughes 1984; Shankman 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2006, 2009a, 2009b, 2013a, 2013b, 2018;

Young and Juan 1985). Clearly Needham and Freeman differed significantly on the ways in which human cultures should be interpreted and analysed; (compare, for example, Freeman 1980, 1992 and Needham 1978, 1979, 1980). And the Mead-Freeman controversy is approaching its fortieth year.

In my experience, controversies spawn controversies; there is one specifically in Borneo Studies, which also arises from different anthropological modes of interpretation and analysis. This is in regard to Traude Gavin's thesis on Iban ritual textiles. The issues have been extensively debated and there is no need to return to them in any detail (King 2017, 2018a; Heppell 2018a, 2018b; and see Gavin and Heppell below). Gavin examines "the names of patterns, [and] "the different ways in which these names are used and their relation to ritual efficacy", for which Rodney Needham's advice and guidance was invaluable, particularly the matter of naming, categories and classification. She was critical of evolutionary approaches for the understanding of textile forms and of the notion that patterns were pictographs "telling a story" (2003:1; and see Gavin 2005, 2008, 2012 [a paper in which Gavin draws attention to the problems of a Sarawak-centred approach to Iban and Ibanic studies and the problems of defining "Ibanic"], 2015a, 2015b, 2016).

There has been a critical counter-argument provided by Michael Heppell, a former doctoral student of Derek Freeman (2006a, 2010, 2014, 2016). Heppell attempts to integrate biological-genetic, technological and cultural variables into an evolutionary framework to explain Iban weaving and textiles in terms of Darwinian sexual selection, reproductive success and the survival of the fittest. He also connects his criticisms of Gavin with Freeman's critical view of Margaret Mead's Samoan research (2014: 149, 153; 2016: 24). Heppell et al's *Iban art: Sexual selection and severed heads* (2005), including elements of Freeman's paradigm and a reference to Freeman's paper 'Severed heads that germinate' (1979) has been subject to critical review (Wadley 2006; and see Heppell's response 2006b; and see Sather 2006b) as has his *The Seductive Warp Thread* (2014) (see, for example, Gavin 2015a; King 2017, 2018a; Heppell 2016, 2018a, 2018b). The main thrust of Wadley's review is that "art is a form of communication and, as with language, we use it in multiple ways" (2006: 263). For me certain kinds of evolutionary approach are unconvincing and certainly a thesis of "sexual selection" is untenable. I return to Charles Staniland Wake and his 1870 essay on the problem of evolution in the social sciences. And perhaps Marshall's paper captures the problem of a claim to "ethnographic" authority (1993).

Nevertheless, the debate does continue and, in my view, can never be resolved, and though I regret the more recent exchanges between colleagues whose knowledge and expertise I value, I have to continue to question claims to authority (Sutlive and Appell 2018; King 2020; and see Sather 2018a, 2018b)

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The last written message I received from Rodney, though we were still in contact over the 'phone, was not about anthropology at all. I mentioned to him in the mid-1990s that my eldest son was taking piano lessons, and he immediately recommended some suitable music for him, and gave me CDs for him to listen to.

He sent a card on 26 September 1997, accompanied by a CD.

Dear Terry,

I got this for a friend the other day and was nicely impressed by it (for all that Naxos is a cheap range of CDs), recalling the [Camille] Saint-Saens that you once bought here in Oxford, I thought your son might care to have it. I do not much take to No.2, I must say (too close to No. 1, beginning with the tempo of the opening theme, and then rather blaring and imprecise, as though the composer did not really know what he wanted to do), but this No. 1 is a classic.

Yours
R.

My final thoughts on our exchanges, bearing in mind, during this whole period, Rodney was writing, translating and editing, and teaching and supervising students, is that I was but a very small part of his prodigious correspondence with so many others.

What I also take from our correspondence is Rodney's continuing interest in and commitment to Borneo Studies, Sarawak and the Penan, though clearly, he had moved into broader fields of anthropological interest in his case-studies of prescriptive alliance and his theoretical work on the ways in which human thought is structured. Jayl Langub's paper (2017) demonstrates Rodney's continuing engagement with the Penan and what they thought of him fondly as a stranger who entered their lives. I talked with him frequently about my work in Sarawak; eventually a reminiscence appeared in print, unfortunately after his death (King 2018b). Rodney continued to publish on the Penan and Orang Asli into the 1980s whilst pursuing his other interests in prescription, alliance and symbolic classification across a range of Southeast Asian societies and those beyond Southeast Asia. In addition, he edited and also translated several volumes written by scholars whom he was convinced should be exposed to an Anglophone audience, or, if written in English, should be rescued from neglect.

I suppose you could style him an English gentleman-scholar, always polite and proper, but he drew you into his enthusiasm for anthropology and his desire to engage with what his correspondents were working on, and particularly seeking news on Borneo as he remembered it in the 1950s and as it had changed in the 1980s and 1990s. In the academic world there are those you like and take to, and those you probably want to distance yourself from. I was genuinely fond of Rodney and I thoroughly enjoyed our correspondence and his company.

My one deep and lasting regret is that I was unable to apply for a Visiting Fellowship at Oxford and work with him. It was my loss. Endicott succinctly identifies Rodney's spirit and soul (if this distinction can be made). "[H]e also treated his former students – at least those I know - like extensions of his family. He genuinely cared about us, our spouses, and our children and was concerned about the ups and downs our lives went through. It's ironic that a man who made his reputation distinguishing structure from sentiment in kinship should have had such a strong sentimental attachment to his kin and quasi-kin" (2007: 14-15). Though I was something of a "distant relative" he took an interest in my work and career development and even my son's music lessons and his progress with the piano.

And a footnote to one of his last letters to me, and an amusing one, mentioning no one in particular, but reflecting on anthropology as a discipline and those who practice it. “Our anthropology colleagues can be odd. We are worse puzzles than our exotic subjects”.

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