Borneo, with its tales of White Rajahs and tribes of headhunters, has long excited the Western imagination. Today, however, there is another, green, imagination at work. Mention of the island is more likely to evoke images of tropical deforestation and concern about the cruel dispossession and displacement of indigenous peoples who once lived in relative harmony with their environment.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that most books dealing with the nomadic hunter-gatherers of Borneo have principally been pictorial studies. There is indeed a dearth of scholarship regarding these peoples, a situation that this first ever, comprehensive review of nomadic groups in the Borneo rain forest aims to rectify.

Presenting a wealth of new research contributed by an international team of scholars, the volume covers all those parts of Borneo where nomads (called Penan, Punan or by various other names) are or were known to exist, and provides a comparative historical-ecological study of these groups.

The study is primarily concerned with issues of modernization (including the monetary economy, formalised institutions, centralized power structures, contractual relationships and extraction activities) and development policies. The impact of these policies is analysed with special regard to the natural environment inhabited by these small-scale societies, as well as the use of its resources.

The book has no stiff theoretical orientation but informs ongoing debates about changing forms of ethnicity, relations between minorities and the state, minorities' rights and survival, native discourse, the sustainability of tropical forest use, and the neo-romantic environmentalist myth of so-called wise traditional peoples.
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BEYOND THE GREEN MYTH
Hunter-Gatherers of Borneo in the Twenty-First Century

Edited by
Peter G. Sercombe & Bernard Sellato

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are pleased to extend our heartfelt thanks to Professors Ida Nicolaisen, Kirk Endicott, Michael Dove, and Clifford Sather for their encouragement and support; to Kirk Endicott who responded with enthusiasm when we asked him to write a foreword to this book; to Lars Kaskija and Rajindra Puri for their useful input to our introductory chapter; to Professor Rodney Needham and Dr J. Peter Brosius, as well as the Human Relations Area Files Press, Dr David Akin, the journal *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, and Cambridge University Press for their kind permission to reprint the two earlier articles included here; to Jayl Langub, who should have participated in this book; to two anonymous reviewers for their extensive and pertinent critiques and suggestions; to Janice Leon, Leena Höskuldson, and the publishers at NIAS Press for their patience and equanimity; to Kelly Donovan, Sabine Partouche, and Fred and Patrick Lépine for their redrawing of some of the maps; and to the Punan, Penan (Western and Eastern), Bukat, and other communities of nomads and former nomads in all parts of Borneo, with whom we have all been acquainted for extended periods of time, and whose warm hospitality we, contributors and editors alike, have had the chance to enjoy. Needless to say, without the friendly assistance of scores of informants in many settlements, the present book would never have come into being.
FOREWORD

By Kirk M. Endicott

For most of human history, our ancestors supported themselves by hunting, fishing, and gathering naturally occurring foods and resources. The hunting and gathering way of life has not been static, however. Plant cultivation and animal husbandry arose about 10,000 years ago in the Middle East and slightly later in China, Mesoamerica, and New Guinea, and food-producing societies expanded rapidly thereafter. Farmers and pastoralists soon became important components of the environments of the remaining hunting and gathering societies. Some hunting and gathering societies on the borders of the agricultural expansion were absorbed, others exterminated, and still others displaced into regions that were inaccessible or unsuitable for food production. However, many of the hunting and gathering societies that persisted into the late twentieth century established trade relations with nearby food-producing peoples and adjusted their social and economic practices as necessary to maintain these mutually beneficial ties.

Today the world’s few remaining hunting and gathering societies are rapidly disappearing, either being driven to extinction – like the Batak of Palawan Island, The Philippines – or transformed by external pressures into farmers, commodity producers, or wage labourers. The lands on which these peoples live and the resources found there are now coveted by powerful business interests, such as mining and logging companies, and by national governments eager to turn resources into profits. In Southeast Asia only a handful of tiny groups continue to practise full-time hunting and gathering, though others have only recently given it up. One of the most urgent needs in anthropology is to understand and document the hunting and gathering way of life, in all its variations, before it disappears entirely.

The island of Borneo – which is politically divided today among the nations of Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei – is home to a significant portion of Southeast Asia’s current and recent hunting and gathering societies. Yet, until the last few decades, scholars knew little about their ways of life. As late as the early twentieth
Foreword

century, the far interior of Borneo, the homeland of the nomadic hunter-gatherers, was largely terra incognita to the outside world. British and Dutch colonial administrators encountered indigenous village-dwelling farming peoples – the so-called ‘Dayak’ – in coastal areas and on the lower reaches of the main rivers, but their contact with hunter-gatherers of the interior was sporadic and fleeting. Intensive modern ethnographic fieldwork on Bornean hunter-gatherers did not begin until the early 1950s, with Rodney Needham’s studies of the Penan of Sarawak. Only since the 1970s have a substantial number of professionally trained anthropologists focused their attention on the Penan and other Bornean hunting and gathering peoples. The contributors to this volume make up a large portion of the scholars currently studying hunter-gatherers in Borneo. Although their chapters focus on different groups and address different research questions, they all provide valuable new information on the ways of life of Bornean hunter-gatherers and the ways they have adapted to their rapidly changing circumstances over the past few centuries. Their research also sheds new light on such important theoretical questions as whether the hunter-gatherers of Borneo became nomads in order to collect forest produce for trade and whether hunter-gatherers in tropical rainforests can sustain themselves on wild resources alone.

The picture that emerges in this volume conforms, in part, to the standard image of nomadic tropical forest-dwelling hunter-gatherers, whether they live in Africa, South America, South Asia, or Southeast Asia. Like other such peoples, Borneo’s hunter-gatherers live in small, flexible, closely related groups (bands). Those who still depend mainly on wild foods occupy temporary shelters and move frequently to gain access to variable food sources. They are egalitarian and cooperative in their social relations, and they share food and other consumable resources throughout the community. They value mobility over material possessions, have flexible notions of ownership of land and resources, and maintain a readiness to exploit unexpected and transient opportunities. In short, they typify what James Woodburn calls ‘immediate-return foragers’, those who gather the food and materials that they need on a regular basis and consume them immediately, rather than storing and rationing them. One of the major contributions of this book is its demonstration that the Bornean hunter-gatherers’ immediate-return approach to life is rooted in a set of values, attitudes, and practices that tends to persist even among those who have settled down and adopted some farming.

However, these chapters also show that Bornean hunter-gatherers contradict the stereotype of nomadic, immediate-return tropical forest hunter-gatherers in interesting ways. For example, they do not always harvest their resources in a
sustainable manner; under some circumstances their immediate-return approach leads them to exhaust a resource, as they did with some sources of incense wood and edible birds’ nests when competing with outside collectors. Also, contrary to Western assumptions, hunter-gatherers do not seem to know as much about rainforest plants as some of the local farming groups, apparently because the hunter-gatherers do not use as many different types of plants as foods, medicines, and building materials. And not all Bornean hunter-gatherers are meek and non-violent; some groups have aggressively defended themselves and their lands from intruding groups of Dayak headhunters. Most importantly, despite their immediate-return approach to life, they are not averse to settling down and taking up farming under favourable conditions. When farming, however, they have often retained the values and practices that mark them as hunter-gatherers, such as a readiness to take up new opportunities as they arise and a level of mobility that is alien to full-time farmers. This reminds us that the rigid distinction anthropologists tend to make between hunter-gatherers and farmers, as categories, does not necessarily exist in actual behaviour.

One unusual feature of the economy of Bornean hunter-gatherers gives them special importance in the comparative study of tropical rainforest-dwelling hunter-gatherers in general: their staple carbohydrate is sago palm starch rather than wild tubers. Extracting starch from the trunks of sago palms may well have formed the basis of pre-agricultural economies of the earliest human immigrants into eastern Indonesia and New Guinea. Understanding the sago-based economy of the Bornean hunter-gatherers may prove to be an invaluable aid to archaeologists trying to reconstruct the economies of those ancient pioneers.

A striking feature of these chapters is that they take full account of the distinctive histories of individual hunting and gathering groups. Until recently anthropologists have tended to ignore the histories of tribal peoples, giving the impression that these societies were unchanging until disrupted by European contact. Some of the founding figures in British and American anthropology deliberately refused to try to reconstruct tribal histories, dismissing orally transmitted histories as unreliable myths. But since the 1960s, some anthropologists have worked to restore histories to peoples without written records by using oral traditions in conjunction with linguistic, archaeological, and biological evidence and written records from colonial administrators and other literate outsiders. However, reconstructing the histories of hunting and gathering peoples has proved especially difficult, as such groups often do not preserve elaborate oral histories, leave few traces in the archaeological record, and usually live in areas remote from centres of government and the concerns of
Foreword

record-keeping bureaucrats. Following the lead of co-editor Bernard Sellato, the authors of this volume have made special efforts to restore histories to the groups they have studied. They have done this by collecting detailed oral histories from older people, cross-checking accounts between informants in the same and different groups, and tying these accounts into events recorded in written records whenever possible. The results counter the illusion that hunting and gathering societies were static before European contact and reveal the dynamics of culture change in these groups. This book documents that some groups have migrated over long distances, not just moved about in an annual round. Groups have frequently split or fused, and identities have often changed. Under some circumstances groups have settled down, and under others they have become more nomadic. When settled, some have assimilated and merged with nearby farming peoples, while others have not. And trade relations with outsiders have varied and fluctuated, ranging from equal partnerships to slavery. Unfortunately, however, these histories are limited in time depth to the last few centuries. Answers to such questions as whether all Bornean hunter-gatherers have common ancestors and whether some or all of them are ultimately descended from farming peoples must await further evidence and analysis from archaeology, linguistics, and comparative ethnology.

By providing these histories and, in one memorable chapter, presenting a Punan leader’s own understanding of their situation, the authors bring out the basic humanity of the hunting and gathering peoples of Borneo. There is a strong tendency in hunter-gatherer studies to analyse hunting and gathering groups as though they are like animal communities, adapting to particular environments in ways determined by such abstractions as ‘carrying capacity’. This book shows them as the intelligent, multi-faceted individuals they are, with interests, hopes, and values, making decisions on the basis of what they know and want. The book also shows that they do not passively acquiesce to pressure from powerful outsiders, rather they actively manipulate and negotiate with outsiders in attempting to achieve their goals. For example, they readily adopt the ideas and rhetoric of environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) when it helps them make claims to land and resources that they value. They have even adopted new religions and created new customs when they have seen the need. The histories revealed in this book help to answer the basic questions of why Borneo’s foraging peoples chose to be hunter-gatherers in the first place and why they have sometimes chosen to incorporate elements of trade and farming into the economic mix.

Despite their impressive skills, knowledge, flexibility, and resourcefulness, the hunting and gathering peoples of Borneo now face formidable challenges to
Beyond the Green Myth

their way of life and perhaps to their very existence. As in most other Southeast
Asian countries, Malaysian and Indonesian leaders are eager to generate income
from the lands occupied by their indigenous tribal peoples. As this book shows,
in Borneo logging, mining, and dam construction are rapidly destroying the
forest, land, and rivers that hunter-gatherers depend on for subsistence and trade
goods. In Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo) land is also being turned over to
immigrants from overpopulated parts of the country, especially Java. In some
places outsiders now compete for resources, such as edible birds’ nests and incense
wood, that were once hunter-gatherer monopolies. The Punan Malinau lament
that they are ‘permanently at the bottom’ of the emerging social order in East
Kalimantan, even below the recent immigrants. This book shows clearly how
national laws and policies often conflict with the needs of hunter-gatherers,
and the authors suggest some of the changes that must be made if they are to
prosper in their new circumstances. Unfortunately, there is ample evidence from
all parts of Borneo that government officials often support the business interests
now destroying the bases of hunting and gathering economies. However,
many well-intentioned officials are simply unaware of the likely consequences of
government actions or inaction. They mistakenly believe, for example, that
hunter-gatherers would be better off practising full-time farming in resettlement
villages near towns than practising a mixed economy in the forested interior.
For the sake of Borneo’s hunting and gathering peoples, let us hope that those
officials will read this book before proceeding with their development plans.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION
Borneo, Hunter-Gatherers, and Change

By B. Sellato and P.G. Sercombe

This book focuses on the nomadic and formerly nomadic groups of hunter-gatherers of Borneo’s tropical forests, comprising about 30 distinct clusters, for a total population of some 20,000 people. It presents new research contributed by scholars who have been and are currently involved in this field, and most of whom have spent substantial amounts of time with nomadic or formerly nomadic communities. Covering all those parts of the island where nomadic groups, called Penan, Punan (or by various other names), are or were known to exist, it offers a comparative historical–ecological study of these groups, situated in the political–economic context of modernisation and development policies, the impact of which is analysed in relation to these societies, especially their effects on the natural environment and the use of its resources. While not assuming any stiff theoretical orientation, the volume also informs the ongoing debates on the changing forms of ethnicity, the relations between minorities and the state, the minorities’ rights and survival, the sustainability of tropical forest use, and the neo-romantic environmentalist myth of wise ‘traditional peoples’.

Forest hunter-gatherer groups in Borneo are spread out over Sarawak (Malaysia), the three northern provinces of Kalimantan (Indonesia), and the sultanate of Brunei Darussalam, but are absent from Sabah (Malaysia). They are all of Mongoloid stock and speak languages of the Austronesian family.

Among indigenous groups of Borneo, those that were pursuing and, in rare cases, continue to practise nomadism have been most affected by the material and social changes that have come about on the world’s third largest island. Among others, these changes particularly include the advent of the monetary
Beyond the Green Myth

economy and centralised power structures, the rise of contractual relationships, and the rapid development of large-scale extraction activities. Remaining nomadic, shifting to semi-nomadism, or even to a sedentary existence, sometimes as a result of external forces, are positions that reflect hunter-gatherers’ attitudes and responses to the inroads of change on Borneo. The aim of this collection is to both describe and explain the form and manner of directions being taken by hunting-gathering groups in Borneo at the commencement of the twenty-first century. The varied contributions consider the extent to which various such groups have accommodated themselves, or reacted, to new ways of life proposed to them, whether through religion, economics, cultural realignment, social organisation, local and regional politics, language, or a combination of these.

While this is not the place for a comprehensive review of hunting-gathering peoples worldwide (see Lee and Daly 1999), it is important here to provide the wider Southeast Asian context of Borneo’s forest nomads. Southeast Asia is or was home to a number of different clusters of forest hunter-gatherers (see Endicott 1999). In mainland Southeast Asia, there are today relatively few such groups; apart from the Mlabri of Thailand, only the elusive Saoch in Cambodia and Tac-cui (or Nguoi-La-Vang; see LeBar et al. 1964) in Vietnam can be mentioned. The Mlabri (Yumbri, Khon Pa, or Phi Tong Luang) live as several scattered groups in the far north of Thailand, usually above 1,000 m elevation. Traditionally, they avoided contact with outsiders. They are of Mongoloid stock and speak a Mon-Khmer language (see Bernatzik 1958, Pookajorn et al. 1992). In Peninsular Malaysia, there are the Orang Asli, who comprise a variety of different groups, totalling over 100,000 at the close of the twentieth century (Nagata 1973, Dunn 1975, Carey 1976, Dentan et al. 1997, Nicholas 2000, Lye 1997 and 2001, Nagata and Dallos 2001, Dallos 2003). Among these, only the so-called Negritos, often also referred to as Semang, are indisputably hunter-gatherers. They total about 2,500, and are found in the states of Perak, Pahang, and Kelantan (see Schebesta 1928, Evans 1937, Benjamin 1967, 1987, Endicott 1974, 1979, 1984, 1999, 2000). The Asian languages form part of the Mon-Khmer family.

Insular Southeast Asia, however, displays a wide array of hunting and gathering groups. These occur in the Philippine archipelago, Borneo, Celebes (the Toala, see LeBar 1972), Sumatra (the Kubu or Orang Dalam, see LeBar 1972, Sandbukt 1988, Persoon 1989), and the Moluccas (see Ellen 1988, Taylor 1990). Hunter-gatherers in the Philippines amount to around 30,000 (see Warren 1964, Nicolaisen 1974–75, Peterson 1978, Griffin and Estioko-Griffin 1985, Eder 1987, Griffin and Griffin 1999, Headland and Blood 2002). They are located in the Visayas (Negros and Panay): the Ata or Ati; in Mindanao: the Mamanua and Ata;
in Palawan: the Batak; in Luzon: the Zambales groups, including the Pinatubo, in the west, and the Agta and others in the northeast. Some of these groups are Negritos (Luzon, Mindanao), others are Mongoloids (Palawan), and others still are known as ‘mixed’ (Visayas). All speak languages of the Philippine group of the Austronesian language family. A substantial number of these nomads have now shifted to a sedentary farming existence, at least partially.

Borneo’s eastern coastline and offshore islands are home to scattered communities of maritime nomads, of whom the best known are the Bajau Laut (or Sama Laut; see Sopher 1965, Sather 1997). Whereas these Sea Nomads traditionally earned a living off the sea, the nomads of interior Borneo, often included in the generic category of Dayak, have traditionally lived off wild resources in the humid tropical rainforest.

In total, those in Southeast Asia who are (or were until relatively recently) forest hunter-gatherers may number about 50,000 (following Endicott 1999: 281). As hunter-gatherers, all the above-mentioned groups have much in common culturally, socially, and economically, despite the geographical distance between them. Their basic technological kit, quite limited because of portability constraints, has been sufficient to allow for the adequate exploitation of wild resources available in their natural environment and, often (as in Thailand, Borneo, and Peninsular Malaysia), full self-sufficiency, in spite of their historical lack of metals. Implements have included a digging stick, a harpoon, a pike, and a blowpipe and/or bow-and-arrow, as well as baskets, mats, and carrying nets. They have also displayed an egalitarian social organisation, based on autonomous nuclear families grouped in small-sized bands, usually scattered widely over territories remote from centres of large population. This optimal access to resources has allowed some flexibility in their recourse to a variety of available economic choices, according to time and place. Finally, although they have lived in relative isolation, most eventually established trade relations with their settled neighbours.

While this may lead one to ponder a common cultural background, and possibly even a common ancestry, among all Southeast Asian hunting and gathering groups, it should be kept in mind that they appear phenotypically divided into Negrito and Mongoloid, and that their languages belong to two separate language families, Mon-Khmer and Austronesian.

HUNTER-GATHERERS IN BORNEO

This section introduces the island of Borneo, its population, and its nomadic inhabitants, and gives a summary account of earlier studies of hunter-gatherers
Beyond the Green Myth

in Borneo (see Map 1.1). In addition, a tentative clarification of these groups’ ethnonyms, classification, and origins is provided.

In the following, we refer, minimally and classically, to hunter-gatherers as groups of people whose subsistence is secured, on a permanent basis, by ‘hunting of wild animals, gathering of wild plant foods, and fishing, with no domestication of plants, and no domesticated animals except the dog’ (Lee and Daly 1999: 3). For convenience, we also use the term ‘nomad’, interchangeably with ‘hunter-gatherer’. Unlike some scholars (e.g., Humphrey and Sneath 1999), we feel that ‘nomad’ continues to have currency for describing a lifestyle, in both cultural and social terms, which, while rapidly disappearing, provides a useful counterpoint to a standard traditional way of life, followed by many indigenous
Introduction

rural dwellers in Borneo, revolving around more permanent settlement and rice farming. These nomads’ way of life, indeed, is what, in their own eyes, constitutes a primary contrast to their neighbours, and therefore a primary criterion of self-identification: ‘That is their way of life (inah pengurip irah); this is our way of life (iteu’ pengurip amee’)’ (Langub 1993: 109). In the following, a nomad is thus seen as a person primarily subsisting on wild resources – the exploitation of which entails some degree of residential impermanence; and forming part of a group that, until relatively recently, has lived ‘without the overarching discipline imposed by the state’ (Lee and Daly 1999: 1), and which then could be seen as ‘stateless’ (Trigger 1999: 473).

The Setting

The island of Borneo, straddling the Equator, occupies an area of about 750,000 sq. km and has a total population of about 15 million people. It is divided politically among three nations. The Indonesian portion comprises two-thirds of the island’s total area (with 11 million people, according to the 2000 census). It is made up of four provinces, West Kalimantan (145,000 sq. km, population 3.7 million, capital Pontianak), South Kalimantan (40,000 sq. km, population 3 million, capital Banjarmasin), East Kalimantan (200,000 sq. km, population 2.4 million, capital Samarinda), and Central Kalimantan (150,000 sq. km, population 1.8 million, capital Palangkaraya). There are also two states forming part of the Federation of Malaysia: Sarawak (125,000 sq. km, population 2 million, capital Kuching) and Sabah (75,000 sq. km, population 2.1 million, capital Kota Kinabalu); and the independent sultanate of Brunei Darussalam (5,700 sq. km, population 350,000, capital Bandar Sri Begawan). Indonesians refer to the whole island as Kalimantan, while Bruneians and Malaysians generally distinguish between the island’s different political divisions by name, and both Sarawak and Sabah are together referred to as East Malaysia.

The majority of Borneo’s total population are Melayu (or Malays) and they number some nine million. The groups collectively referred to as Dayak number around three million. There are also two important groups of more recent newcomers: the Chinese (about two million), whose 200-year presence on the island has played an increasingly important role in various major aspects of the island’s economy; and the Javanese immigrants to Indonesian Kalimantan (amounting to probably over one million), either through officially initiated ‘transmigration’ schemes or personal motivation. Small minorities of Indians and Europeans are also present, as are minorities of migrants to Kalimantan from various other Indonesian islands – some came as early as the seventeenth
Beyond the Green Myth

century, e.g., the Bugis, while others arrived a decade ago, e.g., the Toraja – and to Sabah from the Philippines.

The current ethnic composition of Borneo results from successive arrivals, in a slow trickle rather than as ‘waves’, of sea-faring peoples. The prehistory of Borneo is not yet very well understood, and this is not the place for a complete summary of Borneo’s archaeology (see Bellwood 1985, 1997, 1999). Its current autochthonous peoples (now referred to as Melayu and Dayak) are believed to have begun arriving from regions further north several millennia ago. These ‘Austronesian’ peoples were of Mongoloid origin and their languages were part of the Western Malayo-Polynesian branch of the Austronesian language family. They are believed to have brought to Borneo a variety of cultural novelties, including rice agriculture – a date for the earliest known occurrence of rice in Borneo is 2500 B.C. (see Ipoi 1993). During the last few millennia, many groups have so migrated to or transited through Borneo, interacting culturally and linguistically with various earlier settlers, and attempting to establish clear-cut ethnic categories proves a thorny problem (for further discussion see, e.g., Rousseau 1990).

The name Dayak, generally carrying the meaning of ‘upriver (people)’, is commonly used by outsiders (including Melayu) to refer to non-Muslim tribal groups. There is no single Dayak entity in Borneo and, in fact, hardly any group claims Dayak as its original name. There are hundreds of Dayak (here construed as non-Melayu) ethnic groups, each with its own, specific ethnonym(s), distinctive language (or dialect), culture, and traditions. Nomadic groups often are lumped together by outsiders under the Dayak label.

The term Melayu, conversely, is often indiscriminately applied (by Dayak and non-Bornean peoples) to all autochthonous Muslim groups. Many Melayu groups, particularly in Kalimantan, do not call themselves Melayu, but rather refer to a toponym: Orang (or Urang) Banjar (around Banjarmasin), Orang Kutai (in the lower Mahakam), or Orang Senganan (in the upper Kapuas). Some, however, use the term Melayu followed by a toponym, e.g., Melayu Pontianak, or Melayu Kuching. Although important coastal Melayu sultanates’ dynasties usually claim descent from the Prophet – and some, indeed, were founded by Arab traders – the bulk of Melayu populations have derived historically from local Dayak groups that converted to Islam, mostly in coastal and lower-river regions, and locally in the larger upriver settlements. In fact, there are dozens of such Melayu groups, each with its own dialectal and cultural specificity, primarily due to its distinctive ‘Dayak’ background. Malay languages seem to have originated in West Kalimantan, where a number of Dayak groups
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still speak Malay dialects (Adelaar 1985, Collins 1998). All the Melayu groups have in common their religion and the use of the Arabic script, specific styles of costume and housing pattern, and their organisation in the form of petty trading polities or larger sultanates, with a pyramidal structure of vassal-overlord relations. Besides these, there are Islamised Dayak groups that are unwilling to be viewed as Melayu (e.g., the Melanau in Sarawak, part of the Mualang in West Kalimantan, or the Bekumpai in South Kalimantan).

Forest hunting-gathering groups are known by names that vary according to the regions in which they are found. The term ‘Punan’ (which may also be articulated locally as ‘Penan’) has long been, by far, the most widely used by Borneo’s settled peoples, Dayak and Melayu alike (not to mention foreign administrators), to refer to various nomadic groups of hunter-gatherers. ‘Punan’, here, stands in contrast to ‘Dayak’, a term that, in turn, has long been most commonly used by coastal, Islamised peoples to refer collectively to settled or itinerant tribal farming groups. Contrary to Dayak groups, most of whom have retained their specific respective autonyms, nomadic groups have readily endorsed the exonym ‘Punan’ or ‘Penan’, which to them was something of no great relevance (see the discussion of ethnonyms below). Not all nomadic groups, however, refer to themselves as Punan or Penan: The Bhuket (or Bukat, Ukit; see Thambiah in this volume), the Lisum, the Beketan, or the Kereho (see Sellato 1989, 1994a) have always referred to themselves by their own names, despite being called Punan Bukat or Punan Kereho by their settled neighbours and the state administration.

In the course of time, and increasingly over recent decades, Borneo hunter-gatherers, like other hunting-gathering groups worldwide, have established more permanent settlements, shifting to a more sedentary way of life oriented towards certain forms of agriculture, and have demographically thrived (Sercombe 1996a; but see Headland and Blood 2002: xx). It is likely that quite a number of today’s farming groups in Borneo have derived historically from nomadic peoples. Nowadays, with most nomadic groups at least partly settled, the total number of genuine hunter-gatherers in Borneo is unlikely to be more than a few hundred.

Earlier Works

Regarding both Kalimantan and Sarawak, the literature of the colonial times, a huge body of documentation, yields relatively little about Borneo’s hunter-gatherers. While some of the older sources hint at the existence of nomads, sometimes described as having a tail, in the interior of the island, very little in the literature prior to 1900 provides more than occasional brief notes about
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these peoples, and it is almost always based on second-hand information. Only
in the last few years of the nineteenth century, which saw the first major Dutch
expeditions across Kalimantan and the consolidation of the Brooke administration
in Sarawak’s far interior, does a more reliable body of first-hand data begin to
emerge. Even this rarely consists of more than a few paragraphs, at best a few
pages (e.g., Low 1882, Hose 1894–1895, Roth 1968 [1896], Nieuwenhuis 1902).
Only seldom was an article actually devoted to nomads (e.g., Stolk 1907).

The most isolated groups of hunter-gatherers were first visited by Western
explorers as recently as the first two decades of the twentieth century and, in the
1920s and 1930s, more substantial and reliable information began to appear
(e.g., Lumholtz 1920, Elshout 1926, Pauwels 1935, Tillema 1939). Curiously,
interest in nomads arose earlier in Kalimantan than it did in Sarawak or Brunei –
indeed, in the latter state, nomads were not to be found until relatively
recently.

The data made available in sources before World War II, some of extraordinarily
high quality (such as the four sources referred to above), were gathered by
explorers, military officers, colonial administrators, and missionaries. It was
subsequent to this period that an era of professional social scientific research
emerged.

By the year 1950, the first important works about nomads in Sarawak began to
appear, including T. Harrisson (1949a), I.A.N. Urquhart (1951a, 1951b, 1954, 1955,
W.H. Huehne (1959–60). In the late 1960s some nomad-oriented research activity
was observed in Kalimantan, with reports and memoirs by M. Simandjuntak (1967),
Sulaiman Ring (1968), Marcus Sinau (1970), and R.A.M. Wariso (1971); while

In the 1970s, more of Sarawak’s nomads came under closer scrutiny by
scholars such as D.B. Ellis (1972), Jayl Langub (1972a), Tuton Kaboy (1974),
while, during the same period, H.L. Whittier (1974) and V.T. King (1974, 1975a,
1975b, 1979) also reported on nomadic groups in Kalimantan, and A.B. Hudson
(1978) included Sarawak nomads’ languages in his classification.

After 1980, nomadic groups became the subject of more intensive long-term
studies, with new Ph.D. dissertations devoted to them, first in Kalimantan
(C.L. Hoffman 1983 and B. Sellato 1986). Other notable works of the 1980s
include those of M. Heppell (n.d.), S. Seitz (1981), P.M. Kedit (1982), and
J.P. Brosius (1986), as well as H.K. Hildebrand’s (1982) useful compilation of
earlier sources, and J. Rousseau’s review of theses on nomads (Rousseau 1984)
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and his Central Borneo bibliography (1988). One of the projects in and for the Gunung Mulu National Park in Eastern Sarawak also triggered interesting work on nomads who inhabited the area (Anderson et al. 1982).

During the 1990s, scholars such as Langub, Brosius, Seitz, and Sellato, continued to research Borneo’s nomads and, in the second half of the decade, new investigators – including L. Kaskija (e.g., 1998), Mering Ngo (e.g., 1996b), R.K. Puri (e.g., 1997a), P.G. Sercombe (e.g., 1996a), S. Thambiah (e.g., 1995), and R.A. Voeks (e.g., 1999) – moved into this field of study, helping to construct an increasingly substantial corpus of scientific data about nomads. Related works include those of J. Rousseau (1990) and C. Sather (1995), while Dollop Mamung (1998) published an extensive dictionary of the Punan Tubu (or Tubu’) language, and J. Langub (2001) a collection of Penan folktales in Penan and English.

It should be noted that, in addition, a specific body of literature on Bornean nomads, much with a strong emphasis on environmental issues and human-rights advocacy, has also appeared (by, among others, E. Hong 1987, D. Lau 1987, P. Chen 1990, Khaidir Ahmad 1994, and B. Manser 1996), as well as a number of films (e.g., Blowpipes and Bulldozers 1988, Tong Tana 1989).

At the present time, there are several research programs focused on nomadic groups, with specific interest in their traditional environmental knowledge and resource tenure – in Malinau District in East Kalimantan, and Bentuang-Karimun (Betung-Kerihun) National Park in West Kalimantan.

Despite the research undertaken to date, there is still much to be understood about nomadic groups in Borneo. Of the entire clusters existing, about which very little ethnographic data has been gathered, a comprehensive inventory of present-day nomadic groups still remains to be undertaken (see Sellato 1989 and 1994a). And research on the history of Borneo’s nomadic groups can be described as still being in relative infancy.

We have chosen to include in this volume reprints of two important works among those listed above. They reflect successive situations in Borneo, set almost a half century apart from each other. Firstly, Rodney Needham’s pioneering thesis on the Penan of Sarawak (1953) was summarised in the 1972 compendium edited by F.M. LeBar. This brief text dealing with Penan actually constitutes a very systematic useful and comprehensive introduction to the nomadic and formerly nomadic groups of Borneo. And secondly, J. Peter Brosius’ recent article (1997) on contrasting responses of Eastern and Western Penan to the industrial logging of their forests quite clearly exposes the challenges that modernisation brings to small-scale forest societies, in Borneo as elsewhere, and the ambiguous attitudes these adopt in coping with those challenges.
Names, Groupings, and Origins (see Map 1.2)

As mentioned, due to a relatively meagre array of historic and ethnographic sources, our understanding of nomads throughout Borneo, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically, remains fairly limited. Extended and multiple contacts between nomads and various groups of (settled) Dayak over time, have, moreover, resulted in considerable cultural and linguistic overlaps between the languages and cultures of the different nomadic groups and those of their settled neighbours. At the same time, the splitting and independent migration of related nomadic groups to associate with distinct, geographically distant settled groups have also led to increasing divergences among nomads, and the resulting subgroups’ cultures and languages are now found to display considerable variation across the island (a point discussed by Thambiah in this volume).

Map 1.2. Location of Groups Studied
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The common absence of permanent autonyms (or endonyms, or names by which groups refer to themselves), and nomads’ frequent long-distance migrations over time, make it problematic to correlate or distinguish between groups referred to in the literature at the beginning of the twentieth century and those of today. Earlier literature shows a considerable number of ethnonyms, old and new (in the form of exonyms, or names imposed and used by outsiders), which correspond to a smaller number of actual groups (see Hildebrand 1982; on ethnicity and ethnic labelling and self-labelling in Borneo, see, e.g., Needham 1955, Babcock 1979, King 1982, 1989, 2001, Langub 1987, Maxwell 1996).

A variety of terms have been and still are used by farming groups in the different regions of Borneo to refer to their nomadic neighbours. There appear four main impressions of nomads held by farmers: nomads live farther upstream (than farmers); they live in the mountainous interior; they inhabit climax rainforest; they have no permanent villages and thus are continually on the move. As a result, the most common terms of reference are: ‘upriver people’ (olo ot), in Central Kalimantan; ‘mountain people’ (ukit, tau ‘ukit, bukit) in Sarawak and West Kalimantan; and ‘forest people’ (tau toan) in West Kalimantan. In addition, the terms penan, pennan and punan are used in Kalimantan, Sarawak, and Brunei, which are of controversial etymology, but which have been defined as ‘to wander and subsist in the forest’.

All these terms are exonyms; frequently, a first-order exonym is followed by a second-order name, usually a place name, distinguishing the group or band more precisely; for example, the Olo Ot Nyawong (nomads of Mt. Nyawong) or the Punan Serata (nomads of the Serata River). When the Serata band left this river to make their home elsewhere, new neighbours referred to the band differently, and so later they were successively called Punan Langasa, Punan Nya’an, and finally Punan Merah. Likewise, Olo Ot Nyawong is the name given in Central Kalimantan to the Kereho, who are also known as Punan Keriau in West Kalimantan. It becomes, therefore, an uncertain task to isolate particular groups referred to by different, successive names (for further detail, see Sellato 1994a).

Nomads themselves, who rarely seem to mind a great deal about the name given to their or other bands, have often confirmed an exonym (or successive exonyms) by which others refer to them, and this compounds difficulties of distinction between social historians and other interested parties. In Kalimantan, nomads have generally endorsed the generic exonym Punan, while in Sarawak and Brunei Penan became the default term of reference for most nomads. In some instances, a toponym has become an autonym, while the first-order
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exonym is not used, thus resulting in Lisum (cf. Punan Lisum), or Kereho (cf. Punan Kereho/Keriau), in the case of two particular groups.

There are, or used to be, dozens of small nomadic groups across Borneo, and their linguistic and cultural interrelationships are yet to be definitively established. There have, nonetheless, been some attempts at classification. These occurred in Sarawak, with strict reference to Sarawak groups, and with a striking ignorance of or contempt for the rest of the island. One example, a now slightly dated assertion, contrasted the terms Punan and Penan (e.g., Needham 1954b) with reference to nomads in Sarawak, which was relevant to the area, although this distinction appears insufficient with regard to the larger Borneo picture, and is therefore not considered relevant for our purposes here.

From the available ethnohistorical data and on the basis of apparent linguistic affinities, the following groupings can be tentatively proposed.

1. The Bukat-Ukit-Beketan-Lugat-Lisum probably originated in the border region of western Sarawak and West Kalimantan and spread over to the upper Mahakam, the Tabang area, Apo Kayan, and even the Malinau area, all in East Kalimantan.
2. The Punan Aput-Busang-Merah-Kohi may be closely related to those above and seem to have spread from the Rajang and Baleh river areas of Sarawak into the Apo Kayan and the middle Mahakam regions.
3. The Western Penan include nomads of eastern Sarawak, between the Rajang and Baram Rivers, and some groups of the northern part of East Kalimantan, who at some point moved east from Sarawak (e.g., the Penan Benalui of the Bahau River).
4. The Eastern Penan, including those in Brunei, probably migrated across watersheds into Sarawak from north-east Kalimantan and progressively dispersed throughout areas across north-east Sarawak, east of the Baram River.
5. The Punan Tubu-Malinau-Mentarang possibly include the Punan Sekatak (or Punan Berusu’) and other minor groups and may have formed an autochthonous population of coastal north-east Kalimantan.
6. The Punan Kelai-Segah in Berau Regency may also include the Punan Batu and perhaps the Basap in the central coastal regions of East Kalimantan (but descent from slaves of extraneous origins brought to the coastal edible-swiftlet-cave areas should not be discounted).
7. The Müller-Schwaner Punan include the Kereho (Punan Keriau), Hovongan (Punan Bungan), and Seputan, as well as the nomadic component of the Aoheng, in the upper reaches of the Kapuas, Barito, and Mahakam rivers.
8. The Punan Murung-Ratah comprise bands along the border of East, South, and Central Kalimantan. Today, there exist only groups along the Murung
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and Ratah rivers, in the north, as well as, perhaps, the now-settled Bukit of the Meratus Mountains, in the south.

A classification such as the above must remain hypothetical as long as ethnohistorical data remain incomplete, and until a systematic linguistic survey of all nomadic or (known) formerly nomadic groups is undertaken.

Since Western observers first reported on Borneo’s nomadic groups, hypotheses have been put forward regarding their origins and their associations to Dayak (farming) groups. As early as Low’s propositions (1876), it was recognised that nomadic communities were gradually shifting towards a degree of settled existence, and that a number of settled (Dayak) groups are closely related to nomads, and some of them can thus be regarded as former nomads who adopted a settled way of life (see Hose and McDougall 1912: 193). More recently, it has been proposed that the settled Kenyah, now dedicated swiddeners, have derived from nomadic Penan who, two or three centuries ago, opted for a sedentary existence (Urquhart 1958: 206, Whittier 1973: 22, Brosius 1988a: 84). It is clear that Kenyah and Penan languages belong to the same linguistic subgroup (see Needham in this volume; see also Blust 1974). It is likely that the Kenyah (or at least some of the groups currently labelled as Kenyah) are not the only case of this kind, although little sound research or documentation exists on linguistic links between settled and nomadic groups in Borneo.

The economic, social, political, and cultural processes via which nomads settle have been investigated and described for a number of groups, both over recent periods (see Chan, and Sercombe in this volume) and during the more distant past (Sellato 1994a). As mentioned earlier, there is no doubt that there has been an increasing trend, particularly over the last century, for the nomadic hunting and gathering way of life to give way progressively to a more settled mode of existence involving some form of agriculture. This process of sedentism among nomads may be referred to as a historical trend within a given time frame. This does not necessarily mean that nomads always make a total (or even irrevocable) shift to agriculture, much less to rice farming, which continues to be the main means of subsistence among other settled peoples in rural parts of Borneo. However, while tubers and fruits remain important to settling nomads, it is notable that many sago-eating peoples have been shifting to the cultivation and consumption of rice, not only in Borneo but also throughout insular Southeast Asia (see Avé 1977: 28).

This recent historical trend, however, implies no assumptions of what may have taken place in earlier centuries or millennia. Theories about the ultimate
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origins of Borneo’s hunter-gatherers (such as Hose and McDougall 1912; Kennedy 1943 [1935], Urquhart 1959) have tended to view nomads as cultural vestiges of a general evolutionary process of conversion to agriculture. Other theories, such as those of Vrocklage (1936), Von Heine-Geldern (1946) and, more recently, Nicolaisen (1976a, 1976b) claimed that Borneo’s hunting and gathering culture is original, and independent of farmers’ cultures. This claim was made on the basis of incompatible traits between the cultures and social organisation patterns of hunter-gatherers and farmers. It should be noted, however, that the two theoretical positions above are not altogether contradictory or incompatible.

Recent hypotheses regarding migration to Borneo, over four millennia ago, of peoples speaking Austronesian tongues (e.g. Blust 1976, Bellwood 1985, 1997) have intimated that people who came to and spread across the island were already agriculturalists (on the antiquity of rice in Borneo, see Ipoi 1993). According to these hypotheses, since Borneo’s hunter-gatherers are phenotypically similar to their settled neighbours (see, e.g., Leach 1950: 38) and they too speak Austronesian languages, it follows that they are the remote descendents of farmers who moved into primary forest and switched to a hunting and gathering way of life. Reasons for such a switch could be either political (e.g., warfare and insecurity, internal political strife) or economic (e.g., specialisation in the exploitation of forest resources). Bellwood (1985: 130, 1997: 71) has in fact suggested that Borneo’s ‘Austronesian-speaking hunters and gatherers have probably adopted this way of life as a result of change from an agricultural ancestry’; they would thus be ‘secondary primitives’, as a result of ‘cultural devolution’ (see Seitz 1981; Hoffman 1986, 1988, Sather 1995).

This last hypothesis does not take account of certain other considerations. One of these is that genetic stock, language, and material culture are by no means necessarily linked. Prior to the Austronesian expansion to Borneo, the island was inhabited by non-Mongoloids who spoke non-Austronesian tongues (Adelaar 1995), and these people certainly were hunter-gatherers, as excavations at Niah Caves and elsewhere have shown, such that a hunting-gathering culture predated the arrival of the earliest Austronesian speakers. Moreover, Austronesian-speaking immigrants may have been fishermen, strand and forest collectors and/or, possibly, horticulturalists, rather than full-fledged agriculturalists (see Bellwood 1999: 287).

Rather than assuming the complete extinction of the non-Mongoloid population following the arrival of Austronesian-speaking populations in Borneo, it seems more plausible to infer the gradual spread inland of certain forms of
horticulture (see Sellato 1993a, 1994a: 187–191), perhaps along with the development of new hunting and gathering techniques. Across different groups, there probably arose a range of economic situations comprising a variety of subsistence techniques, among which an original hunting and gathering culture survived, in specific niches, in either an original or modified form. It is also probable that some hunting and gathering groups actively traded with their settled neighbours from early times (see Needham in this volume). At the same time, it is likely that horticulture gradually extended over most of the island’s interior, in the absence of rice cultivation (as swiddening could not have spread inland without metals), and is liable to have survived until after the middle of the second millennium A.D.

Since the earlier, pre-Austronesian autochthonous population had probably been quite sparse, its genetic pool would have been absorbed by newcomers, with the result that nomads developed physically to resemble farmers as Mongoloids. Likewise, the autochthonous languages could have been overwhelmed by Austronesian languages (cf. Griffin 2002: 42, and the likelihood of a similar occurrence with regard to the Agta in the Philippines). Nevertheless, both pre-Austronesian genes and languages must have left traces, which may one day be more fully revealed. Human phylogenetic surveys in Borneo should yield interesting results; while, regarding languages, Adelaar (1995) has proposed that the Land Dayak or Bidayuh languages are derived from those of a local pre-existing Aslian-speaking community in Sarawak (see also Sellato 1993a).

The cultural similarities across Borneo’s hunting and gathering groups have frequently been remarked upon, as is implied by the common use of the terms Penan or Punan, by either local farming peoples or foreign scholars, to refer to nomads across the island. In conjunction, ethnohistorical investigations point to one area (among others possible) of origin for hunter-gatherers in Borneo: the north-western tip of the island, for a number of now widely scattered groups (Sellato 1994a). Moreover, the languages of most, if not all nomadic groups appear to be more or less closely related (Hudson 1978, Sellato 1993a). In addition, as mentioned above, connections with the languages of Bidayuh groups (who occupy western Sarawak) and those of some Orang Asli groups in peninsular Malaysia hint at a remote common non-Austronesian linguistic substratum among hunting-gathering groups of Borneo. This, however, remains to be more thoroughly investigated. Finally, some important elements across these Bornean hunting and gathering groups include a common means of subsistence (central to which is the harvesting of sago palm) and, perhaps even more fundamentally, an ideological core (see below), for want of another term,
that is quite unlike that of farmers. This ideological outlook common to numerous nomads remains in evidence among many communities of former hunter-gatherers, who today are either partially or fully settled, as described in a number of the contributions in this volume.

Despite the above suggestions, in the present state of our knowledge about Borneo’s nomads, it does not seem possible to confirm any single hypothesis (see Martin and Sercombe 1992) regarding the origins of Borneo’s nomads, much less ascribe to it the validity of a general model. What is more, in principle, there is presently no solid reason to prohibit the coexistence in different parts of the island of two or more of the processes described above or, in fact, a succession of these within a single region.

NOMAD CULTURE AND OUTLOOK

This section, much of which is written in the ethnographic present tense, briefly describes patterns pertaining to the culture and outlook of Borneo’s nomadic groups across the island. While certain details may not be specific to all nomadic groups, they nevertheless have general application.

It has been argued (Sellato 1994a) that Borneo’s traditional hunting-gathering societies, with their nomadic way of life and fluid social organisation, are open, individualistic, pragmatic, opportunistic, egalitarian and little inclined to formal religious belief and philosophy. Individuals are equal within society, and free to make choices that they feel are best for them. Practically, this is realised in a high level of autonomy for each nuclear family, vis-à-vis the band.

Outlined below are the following: nomads’ natural environment and their subsistence strategies; their social organisation, in relation to subsistence; their trading patterns; their material and spiritual culture; and the relationship between their economy and regional politics. The section concludes with some considerations of a distinctive ideological core (which causes nomads, and even former nomads, to feel, think and live quite differently from farmers) and of nomads’ sense of identity in a broader ethnic setting. These generic data serve as a backdrop to subsequent discussions of change.

Environment and Subsistence

While relatively few in number, nomads are distributed thinly across vast expanses of the interior of Borneo. Depending on altitude, several major ecological zones of the rainforest can be distinguished in this part of the island: lowland rainforest
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(below 500 m), also known as Dipterocarp forest; mountain forest (above 1,000 m), with a different plant species composition; and, in between, forest of intermediate or mixed composition. Further differentiation depends on the local geological substratum, climate, and other physical environmental factors (for an in-depth description and analysis of the Borneo forest environment, see MacKinnon et al. 1996).

The nomads’ territory is first ecologically determined: a region of climax rainforest, generally lowland and intermediate forest, containing adequate food resources. But much of the lowland forest is occupied by communities of Dayak farmers, whose slash-and-burn use of this land results in the growth of secondary forest and, eventually, through intensive use, in loss of soil fertility and the emergence of grasslands. Due to the combination of these ecological and social factors, nomads’ territory therefore most commonly consists of a mountain massif forming the water divide between two or more river basins, and it lies beyond the territories of their nearest settled neighbours and is confined by them. Most often, a nomadic group’s territory is an enclave with precarious boundaries, since farmers may encroach by expanding their farmlands into it and felling its forest for farming or by establishing further outlying settlements. Conversely, farmers may withdraw to areas farther downstream, thus leaving more space to the nomads.

For nomads, the rainforest is an essential economic niche, with its rich animal and plant life. It has been argued that the tropical rainforest environment is not rich enough in plant carbohydrates to allow for nomads to achieve food self-sufficiency (Headland 1987, Bailey et al. 1989). First, there is no such thing as a ‘generic’ tropical rainforest, as one of us has argued elsewhere (Sellato 1994b). Not all forests are alike. Furthermore, rainforests in Borneo, as in other parts of the world, most often have undergone some degree of anthropisation, they are hardly ever pristine, and a continuum is found from ‘climax’ forest to ‘agro-forest’ (id.). Second, it has been shown, for various regions of Southeast Asia, that hunting-gathering groups can indeed achieve food self-sufficiency from their forested territory alone. This is the case for the Batek in Peninsular Malaysia (Endicott and Bellwood 1991), the Mlabri of northern Thailand (Pookajorn et al. 1992), and for Borneo nomads (Sellato 1989, 1994a, Brosius 1991a, Chan in this volume). Indeed, apart from their main staple food, nomads complement their diet with ‘lots of little things’ (Dentan 1991), a range of smaller creatures, including lizards, frogs, water molluscs, and palm grubs.

So, unlike other rainforests, Borneo’s is rich in sources of carbohydrates. The island’s humid equatorial climate has no marked seasons and these energy
resources are available all year round, allowing nomads a constant dependence upon the forest and autonomy in their food supply. Nomads rely principally on one staple food for their daily subsistence, sago, a starch extracted from palm trees (see Puri 1997b).

Until recently, nomads had no domestic animals, which would have hampered their mobility. The only exception is the dog, yet there is evidence that at least some groups of nomads only recently began to use dogs. Being dedicated hunters by necessity, they are widely acknowledged by Dayak for their skill in obtaining arboreal animals (birds, squirrels, and monkeys) with their blowpipes and poisoned darts (see Sloan 1975). Their favourite prey is the large bearded wild boar, an important source of animal proteins and fat, which they commonly hunt with dogs and spears. On a daily basis, however, they also rely on catching ‘lots of little things’.

Traditionally, fish were not a central part of hunter-gatherers’ diets, and they possessed no lines, hooks, fishing nets, or fish traps (see Bailey 2002: 10, on the same point, regarding the Efe of the Congo). Fish were obtained with a harpoon, or bow and arrow, or occasionally caught by hand after being stunned by plant poisons distributed in certain parts of a river. Since nomads seldom came close to large streams, they were, until recently, quite unskilled regarding the construction of a dugout canoe and, generally, were unable to swim.

Varying with groups and regions, some 100 to 200 forest plant species are collected for food by nomads, among which are edible roots or tubers, leaves, ferns, bamboo shoots, flower buds, mushrooms, and some 50 types of fruits (see, e.g., Puri 2001; Voeks, in this volume, discusses ethnobotanical knowledge of Penan in the transition from nomadism to settlement; on this, see also Fowler and Turner 1999). The task of food gathering is performed mostly by women, children, and elderly men. Fruit, particularly, plays an important role in the diet of nomads, especially those types rich in nutrients, such as the different varieties of jackfruit and durian.

Storage of food has always been difficult in a humid climate (for those without access to modern technology). Sago flour quickly becomes mouldy, dried or smoked meat generally lasts only a few days, and salt is seldom available. Only honey, wild boar lard, and some nuts can be preserved for future consumption. As a result, food tends to be consumed quite rapidly by nomads when plentiful. When food is scarce nomads often go hungry.

In spite of a seemingly sporadic dietary intake, nomads have been found to be in better health than many settled farming group (Huehne 1959–1960, Ellis 1972). Furthermore, the general isolation and mobility of nomads often allows
them to avoid diseases that sweep through settled communities, such as measles or cholera epidemics, which have decimated farmers in the past. Nomads treat their limited suite of illnesses with a narrow range of plant medicines (see Voeks and Sercombe 2000; see also Voeks in this volume). Conversely, nomads have little opportunity to develop resistance to ailments that occur among larger population groups and are thus especially vulnerable to infectious diseases, and a host of others.

Even though some bands have long remained extremely isolated, nomads generally are not completely removed from the outside world. They are often part of, directly or indirectly (e.g., through other nomads), a network of economic relations and commonly engage in trade with their settled neighbours. It should be stressed, however, that the exploitation of the rainforest by traditional nomads is oriented first and foremost towards subsistence, and only secondarily towards trade. In the course of their history, however, many nomadic groups became professional collectors of forest products for trade, resulting from the pressing demands of coastal markets (for Peninsular Malaysia, see Dunn 1975). Recently, some even abandoned sago collecting, and began purchasing rice from downriver neighbours or consuming rice provided by expedition sponsors, in order to become full-time collectors.

In the field of economics, it should be made clear here that nomadic groups share certain features with their settled neighbours. Most of Borneo’s swidden farmers also hunt, fish, and gather forest foods, either on a routine basis or in times of famine, and are often readily at home in the forest. Farming groups like the Iban organise long expeditions into the forest to collect forest products for trade, and there they live like nomads, subsisting on wild sago. Some particular men of Kenyah and Aoheng farming communities have been known to live permanently alone in the forest, as nomads. Conversely, we know that nomadic groups exploit sago groves in rotation and practise a form of stewardship that contributes to the regeneration of palms (see Brosius 1993a; the Phi Tong Luang leave in the ground a portion of each Dioscorea tuber that they dig up, so that it will grow again, see Pookajorn et al. 1992; on rice and yams in Thailand, see also White 1989). This, and the habit some groups have of dropping fruit seeds near their camps suggest that, in Borneo as elsewhere, the boundary between hunting-gathering and horticulture is somewhat hazy (Sellato 1994a, 1994b; see also Chan in this volume). In practice, one may encounter between Punan and Penan groups today a variety of ‘mixed’ subsistence systems combining in varying proportions hunting-gathering, horticulture, and settled swidden farming; the specificity of such systems is that they can be fairly stable in the long term,
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and that there is no necessary (‘evolutionary’) unidirectional shift (see Sellato 1994b; on swiddening, see Chin 1985 and Dove 1985; on roots and tubers, see Boomgaard 2003).

Society and Way of Life

Each ethnic group or tribe of nomads is made up of a varying number of autonomous bands. Although these bands are related to one another by blood and marriage and often share a territory, the tribe as a whole shows no form of political organisation, and bands remain fairly isolated from one another, except for occasional bartering and some degree of intermarriage.

Each band is a loose congregation of some 20–50 people (larger groups not being viable with regard to subsistence constraints), grouped in nuclear family units, which reside and migrate together. They also produce and consume food together. Under the informal leadership of an experienced, male or female elder, the band constitutes an egalitarian community, in which each individual or family participates in decision-making and remains free to leave the band and join another, if they so wish. Under the influence of farming neighbours, however, nomadic bands can establish more formal patterns of hereditary leadership (see Langub 2004 and Brosius in this volume), and even sometimes a loose form of social stratification.

Camps, consisting of simple lean-tos for one night, or more elaborate huts for longer periods, are generally built at specific locations along a network of traditionally used footpaths. From a given camp, band members are able to exploit a number of sago palm groves in the vicinity.

As the band’s main concern is to secure its subsistence, nomadism has proved, until relatively recently, the most advantageous means of doing so (cf. optimal foraging). And as the band always needs to be within a fairly short distance of a grove of sago palm, the size and distribution of these groves govern the frequency and range of a band’s movements. Other factors, such as headhunting raids by neighbouring groups, may also affect movements (and this was the case until the early twentieth century).

Each hut within a camp shelters a single married couple and their young children, and perhaps a widowed parent. After marriage (a very informal affair), a young couple establish a new hut. Marriage generally occurs between members of the same band, and the band thus gains cohesion through its members’ multiple kinship bonds. This does not preclude the occurrence of conflicts over economic choices, and a band may undergo fission, each new group going its separate way, often as a result of internal squabbling or pressure on inadequate subsistence resources in an area.
Introduction

Forest and Trade

Borneo has been known well for over a millennium as a source of valuable forest products such as benzoin and camphor (for a description of early regional trade and trading polities, see Wolters 1967, Manguin 2004; for an inventory of early commodities in the Chinese trade, see Wheatley 1959). Trade in forest products gradually developed significantly in the first half of the second millennium between the archipelago and China, India, and the Middle East. As early as the fifteenth century, European markets began seeking these products, resulting in struggles among European powers for access to the regional trade networks in Southeast Asia (on this period, see Van Leur 1955, Reid 1988–1993, Lombard 1990, Boomgaard 1998). Indigenous trading polities, mainly the Taosug from Sulu (see Warren 1981, 2002) and the Bugis from Celebes, thrived in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but were finally marginalised by European intervention (e.g., Cleary 1996).

In Borneo, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, through coastal ports controlled by local sultans (see, e.g., Lindblad 1988, Magenda 1991), exports of forest products to Europe expanded steadily, along with the growth of colonial exploration of and political control over the hinterland, which boosted exploitation of more remote regions for forest products (see Sellato 2001, 2005a).

Borneo’s nomads have long been suppliers, through various intermediaries, of commercial non-timber forest products to the island’s coastal markets (for an inventory of these products, see Peluso 1983, De Beer and McDermott 1989, Fox 1995, Brosius 1995a, Puri 1997a, Van Valkenburg 1997, Sellato 2001). These products have varied through time, following demand. As for timber, only after World War II did it become a truly important commodity; and this was to become particularly significant for nomads by the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Today, world market prices influence nomads’ levels of motivation in collecting certain products. For example, copal was widely collected in the 1960s, but as prices fell nomads switched to collecting rattans. They shifted again later, when the prices for rattans declined while that for gaharu (aloe wood, also called eaglewood or incense-wood, used for making incense) rose. In the 1970s, few groups collected birds’ nests, but the price of these skyrocketed in the early 1990s and quickly became a major source of revenue for nomads (mainly in Kalimantan), who controlled caves where swiftlets dwelt (and Ngo, in this volume, considers some of the conflicts that have arisen in connection with this lucrative trade). However, while certain products such as gutta percha and aloe wood (for which
the people of Borneo had little use) were earmarked for export, others, such as honey, animal hides, and feathers, were restricted to local markets and traded widely to Dayak groups.

Trade patterns, too, have varied through time, along with the stages of integration of nomads into regional trade networks. As nomads traditionally were shy of direct contact with outsiders, even their nearest Dayak neighbours, barter was first carried out via what was called ‘silent trade’, i.e., trade without face-to-face meeting. Groups of Dayak slash-and-burn farmers acted as middlemen between nomadic bands and downriver traders, deriving substantial economic and political benefit from this business activity. On the coasts and at the mouths of main rivers, trade entrepôts were established, often at the initiative of Chinese traders. The colonial powers began to take control of these entrepôts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while several of these later emerged as major cities on the island, such as Pontianak and Kuching. Such entrepôts were called at by inter-island trade ships, and later by long-distance freighters.

Dayak farmers managed to lure nomads by creating new needs among them, ensnaring many in a credit system (known widely as *utang*). Consequently, some nomads became trapped in a perpetual cycle of debt with farmers, leading them also into a politically subordinate role. At the local level, this resulted in various patterns of client–patron or vassal–overlord bonds, as well as lasting economic and political affiliations or, in extreme cases, deep subservience bordering on slavery of nomadic groups to their settled neighbours. In fact, patterns of farmer–nomad relationship occur in the form of a continuum, depending on the intensity of trade that has taken place between them and on the proximity of nomads and their middlemen traders to coastal urban centres. Nowadays, the situation is different and farmers are bypassed, as nomads most often deal directly with downriver traders, generally coastal Chinese and Arabs, or their designated agents. However, nomads are little better off, as they are frequently in debt to these traders, who use the same strategies as their Dayak predecessors. Merchants frequently make a massive profit by buying forest products at low prices, and selling at high prices to nomads imported goods that are of little long-term practical use (such as stereo sound systems).

**Material and Spiritual Culture**

Traditionally, mainly for practical reasons, nomads in Borneo had very little in terms of material culture. Personal belongings included a loincloth of bark, a few plaited baskets and mats, and some bamboo containers. Nomads had no metals,
and their weaponry comprised only wooden implements: a spear, a blowpipe, a harpoon, and perhaps a bow and arrow – there is no evidence of stone tools having been in use among nomads (on this, see Dove 1989). They had no domestic animals (apart from dogs), no fishing implements, and no canoes.

With the establishment and development of trade, nomads acquired new cultural and technological items, ranging from bush knives and tin pots to dogs (regarding dogs, see Nicolaisen 1976a) and chickens, all of which have helped to improve their livelihoods. Some nomadic groups eventually became successful dog breeders or expert blacksmiths, even selling their products to the settled groups from which they had acquired these skills or resources. Nomads have also acquired a taste for personal ornamentation and tobacco, and many have become inveterate smokers (apart from those who have adopted Christian evangelist beliefs, mainly during the latter half of the twentieth century and generally located in Sarawak).

Nomadic groups maintain corpora of oral literature that include songs, myths, and folk tales. Although most now play their settled neighbours’ three-stringed lute, nomads’ musical instruments in the past were probably limited to those that could be manufactured on the spot or were easily portable: the flute, the Jew’s harp, and the bamboo zither. Dances, which some nomads do not actually practise, most often appear to have been adopted from neighbouring settled groups.

As with hunter-gatherers in other parts of the world, those in Borneo traditionally have the following in common: sharing of perishable goods (generally food); a view that the earth is the source of all their benefits; and all that occurs naturally in the world is imbued with spiritual force (see Lee and Daly 1999). Nomads, like farmers, seem to acknowledge the existence of a personal soul, or sometimes more than one. At the death of an individual, the soul becomes a spirit or ghost, which is potentially dangerous. Unlike farmers, who defuse risk to themselves by ritually escorting a spirit to an after-world, nomads prefer simply to flee from a place where a death has occurred. The simplicity, both material and ritual, of nomads’ funerary practices may no doubt be linked to their vague and non-dogmatic notion of what happens to the spirit (see Voeks and Sercombe 2000). Even after a period of close contact with farming peoples, sometimes entailing the adoption of belief in a final abode for spirits of the dead and of certain funerary rituals, the practice of abandoning the site where a death has taken place still persists among nomads.

Other expressions of nomads’ ritual life are generally just as minimal as those relating to death. Neither birth nor marriage is a ritually important event, and
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no rites of passage are performed for these or other stages of the life cycle (see Sercombe in this volume). Contrary to farmers, for whom all activities related to rice agriculture are highly ritualised, nomads have few traditional prohibitions taboos, charms or amulets, auguries, or rituals relative to food production, i.e., the extraction of sago, hunting, or gathering. Also, farmers have numerous rituals linked to the house, its erection, cleansing, and spiritual welfare, while nomads have none.

Many of the beliefs and rituals that may be observed today among half or fully settled nomads seem to have been borrowed from one or another of their farming neighbours, and generally occur in considerably simplified forms. This is the case with regard to a belief in omen birds, commonly found among many nomadic groups, and to shamanic healing or exorcism ceremonies for the sick, when the expertise of neighbouring Dayak may be called upon. Particular rituals (selamatans) and taboos, related to the collection of forest products for trade, have clearly been introduced by coastal outsiders (Sellato 2001: 99).

Some groups of nomads recognise two creator deities, whose relationship and gender vary. Most nomads, however, view these gods as having withdrawn a long time ago from the affairs of the world, and they rarely mention, invoke, or call upon them for blessings or assistance. More generally, they appear much less concerned than farmers do with their own gods, while nomads’ gods do not appear to be recognised among farming groups.

The remarkable near-absence of rites, and possibly the existence of a specific pantheon, suggests that the religion of nomad societies in Borneo represents a system of belief and practice distinct from those of the farming groups. It is probable that all the nomadic groups of Borneo have in common a core of religious beliefs unique to them. Nevertheless, nomads clearly tend to constitute a rather secular society, practical and pragmatic in its outlook, and little consideration is given to religious conviction or activity (see Endicott 1979).

Economy and Politics

Historically, many nomadic groups of the interior of Borneo have had only sporadic contact with outsiders, including their nearest neighbours. Such contact may have arisen in the form of conflict, not over abstract concepts of territory, but rather over forest resources, on which nomads have long been reliant for their basic subsistence. Thus, nomadic groups sometimes clashed over sago groves. As trade contacts developed between nomads and farmers, conflict came to focus on commercial forest products. Having vested interests in reserving such resources for themselves, farmers often prompted their nomad partners to fight off collectors
from other ethnic groups encroaching, in order to exploit these products, on
territories that they considered theirs (see Sellato 1994a). In recent decades, some
nomads have reacted angrily to outside parties coming to their territories to exploit
rainforest resources, solely for commercial reasons and in an excessive fashion
from their point of view (see Brosius in this volume for a discussion of this issue,
with regard to Penan groups in different areas of Sarawak).

Most nomads began trading with neighbouring farming groups acting as
middlemen for coastal traders, and farmers have tried to form lasting bonds with
nomadic bands, so as to guarantee a steady supply of forest products. Through
trade, farmers have introduced new technological elements (such as metal tools
and dogs), allowing nomads to minimise the time and effort spent in subsistence
activities. Nomads have, as a result, been able to devote more time to commercial
collecting. However, such goods have become indispensable needs and nomads,
dependent on trade, have been obliged to undertake more collecting to satisfy
these needs.

Farmers’ profit from trade and their regional political power depend much on
their supply of forest products. They have often tried to bind nomads to them
through debt, blood pacts, and intermarriage. Where nomads have become
subordinates, they have performed all sorts of chores for their patrons, including
headhunting and slave-raiding. Another result of this nomad–farmer relationship
has been the establishment of a trade hamlet, where several nomad families reside
and become involved in basic horticulture (the production of low-technology
crops). With an increasing number of men leaving their families at the hamlet
and gathering forest products, trade itself becomes maximal. This situation, a
profitable one for both farmers and nomads, can lead to a stable mixed economic
system, which may be maintained over a long period.

The introduction of rice cultivation to nomads occurred relatively soon after
that of horticulture. Some groups of nomads may become full-time farmers and
assimilate to their neighbours’ society. A consequence, however, can be that rice
farming hinders collectors’ mobility, and the yield of forest products decreases as
nomads settle in earnest. Some groups of nomads have therefore not committed
themselves to serious rice farming, considering commercial collecting a more
advantageous activity. Indeed, some of today’s so-called nomads are often semi-
settled, deriving their subsistence from horticulture and an income from
commercial collecting.

Finally, the orientation of nomads’ social organisation, as they settle, depends
on a number of factors, one of which may be the type of organisation of their
nearest settled neighbours. The influence of farmers’ societies has led in some
instances to the borrowing by formerly nomadic groups of the concept and practice of social stratification and the establishment of hereditary leadership. Many groups, however, still maintain their egalitarian organisation, sometimes explicitly.

Significant features, which Borneo’s nomads share with hunter-gatherers worldwide, are pragmatism in economic choices and a preference for immediate-return economic strategies (see Woodburn 1982). Nomads tend to opt for what they believe is the most profitable short-term enterprise with regard to both subsistence and commercial fields. Even after settling down, nomads often continue to show a taste for spatial mobility and occupational variety (see Kaskija in this volume). The result is that they are generally flexible in their economic pursuits, as long as these do not entail long-term labour investment and a delayed return in terms of profit realisation (which is a prerequisite of rice farming). Their mobility with regard to time and space allows them to seize opportunities where and when they occur, especially if an immediate profit can be derived from these (see Headland 2002: 28, on Agta lowlanders of the Philippines, previously hunter-gatherers, whose main form of livelihood is now wage labour). This kind of economic versatility enables nomads to vary their activities from one month to the next: Traditional food gathering, commercial collecting, gold panning, commercial hunting, handicraft making, horticulture, salaried work as lumberjacks, and tourist guides are some of the activities in which they are often involved. Clearly, permanent residence in a resettlement village is not likely to be compatible with this approach to life. The emerging view is that economic versatility, as opposed to a more focused occupational approach, such as rice farming, is a safeguard against a risk of starving, not too unlike hunter-gatherers’ previously full-time nomadic way of life.

Identity and Ideology

Nomads’ sense of identity at the level of the local ethnic group often remains vaguely defined, despite the sometimes shared memory of an ancient centre of dispersal, of a traditional territory, which may give a group a certain sense of place, but sometimes this recollection itself is lost. Local identity, nevertheless, is important as the group’s history is rooted in a terroir, a landscape (see Brosius 1986), and this is especially relevant in the nomads’ modern circumstances (see Brosius in this volume).

More importantly, however, Borneo’s nomads, even when fully settled, tend to remain quite distinct from their farming Dayak neighbours. This distinction,
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recognised by former nomads themselves, as well as by farmers – who generally continue to look down upon them as (former) primitives (see Rousseau 1990) – is based on ideology, an implicit theme of a number of chapters in the volume, particularly Sellato’s (on the Kalimantan Punan).

Each farming group have their own ideological premises: Some tend to form a largely egalitarian society, like the Iban; others operate within a strict system of social stratification, like the Kayan; others still strive to achieve status in an open, competitive society, like the Ngaju. Apart from the type of social organisation, group ideology generally revolves around rice farming – just as it may be focused on boats and the sea among maritime peoples.

Likewise, Borneo’s nomads have their own ideological premises. Contrary to farmers, however, these premises are rarely elaborated upon in ritual or in discourse. Their neighbours are not interested in nomads’ discourse, and it is only recently that anthropologists have come to take a substantial interest in how nomads think about themselves (see Bird-David 1990, Barnard 2002, and Klimut and Puri in this volume, an extensive and eloquent monologue by a Punan elder). Significant aspects of nomads’ ideologies are ‘immediacy’, ‘autonomy’, and ‘sharing’ (Ingold 1999: 408), which are often at odds with the principles of modern civil societies. These aspects are best gleaned from observation of nomads’ informal and flexible approach to the world.

Although modes of production have changed much in the last half century, certain basic ideological features have tended to persist among Borneo’s former nomads, through technological, economic, and political change. What has often remained unchanged is a general nomadic outlook, or ideology. This is tied to philosophy and social organisation, which are often similar across many past (and present) hunting and gathering groups (see Lee and Daly 1999). While this permits the adoption of new economic strategies, these in turn may help preserve basic Punan values and world view in the modern age. Almost without exception, nomads in Borneo have a feeling of ‘Punan-ness’ (Sellato 1994a) or ‘Penan-ness’, based on the kind of shared outlook described above.

This ideology need not be legitimised by custom, or upheld by reference to a body of oral tradition. Rather, it is rooted in each individual, a form of socio-cultural acquisition, which is confirmed in daily social and cultural practices. Common to all nomads, this feeling affirms a ‘nomadic identity,’ in contrast to the identities of farmers. As Kaskija (1998: 356) noted: ‘[t]he flexible, forest-oriented way of life, built on self sufficiency, family autonomy, mobility, sharing and immediate return, gives a very distinct sense of identity and continuity to Punan society’.
In his study of the Punan Tubu, Kaskija listed eight interdependent aspects of culture, ‘intricately interwoven into a very complex pattern or process, [...] that is distinctly and uniquely Punan’ (Kaskija 1998: 355). These are: orientation toward the forest; flexibility, opportunism and immediate return; openness to the outside world; external inferiority; internal social equality; generosity and demand sharing; nostalgia and self-pity; conservatism and resistance. Whereas generosity and demand sharing are features found among nomadic groups worldwide, nostalgia and self-pity might be more specific to Borneo’s nomads. This involves a clear tendency for people to sit in idleness together and brood silently over or complain aloud about hardship and misfortune (*pelulup urip*), in an ‘emotionalization of group solidarity’ (ibid.: 351; see also Kaskija in this volume). Punan Tubu *pelulup urip* displays some similarity to the ‘learned helplessness’ that Dentan (2000: 33) describes about the Semai of Malaysia, a syndrome that he views as resulting from an experience of powerlessness. The common recourse to painkillers and alcohol (see Chan in this volume), although not restricted to Borneo, could be viewed here as a related response.

In the course of historical and modern change, nomads have borrowed from neighbours socio-cultural elements that they have carefully selected and flexibly adapted to minimise challenge to their societies’ intrinsic features and, even, help preserve them. For example, the choice of favouring and developing commercial collecting, rather than becoming full-time farmers, may be viewed from this perspective of the preservation of a particular type of society. More generally, such ideologies promote the persistence of nomadic societies in the modern world.

The contrast proposed by Kaskija (1998), between ‘external inferiority’ and ‘internal social equality’, recognises an embedded nomadic culture, beneath external layers of culture, or a public face, a trait noted among other hunting-gathering groups around the world (see, e.g., Turnbull 1961). This ‘internal culture’ has been correlated (Sellato 1994a) with the Weberian and Durkheimian concept of *habitus*. It is a system, of lasting and transferable patterns of thought and behaviour, which regulates social and economic activities and is passed on from generation to generation through all the vicissitudes of history and the changes taking place in the ‘external culture’, and which has come to concur today with the common definition of ‘culture’ as a symbolic system or world view. With that ‘core of culture’, which Dumont identified with ideology (e.g., Dumont 1986), the reproduction and continuity of society may be guaranteed. With reference to some Borneo nomads, attention is also drawn (by Kaskija, in
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this volume) to a common process of cultural ‘code-switching’ (a chameleon-like strategy), whereby people shift with facility from their internal culture to that of another group, and back, according to context.

The persistence of this internal culture, which is manifested in a contrast between nomads and historically full-time farmers, lies at the core of nomads’ feeling of ‘Punan-ness’, and this feeling continues to persist widely, among many groups of former nomads, as is evidenced in many of the chapters in this volume.

NOMADS AND CHANGE

This section deals with issues related to change and some of the various ways in which we perceive it to have affected nomadic groups in Borneo.

Nomadic societies change. Challenging Woodburn’s assertion (1982) that egalitarian societies are relatively stable, Brunton (1989) has shown that true egalitarian societies (that is, immediate-return hunting-gathering societies) are always potentially unstable, because of their openness, cultural fluidity, susceptibility to acculturation, and low levels of collective representation, and that cultural loss can go as far as causing these groups to move across cultural and linguistic boundaries (e.g., the Mbuti Pygmies, Batek Negritos, Paliyan, and Hill Panderam). There is no doubt that the nomadic societies of Borneo fit well into this picture – although we will refrain here from following Brunton’s blunt and definitive statement that true egalitarian societies are just not viable.

After briefly considering nomads’ relations with their farming neighbours and the colonial and post-colonial state, we summarise below nomads’ current circumstances in terms of the challenges that they presently appear to face from the imposition of development (as generally conceived and realised by those in positions of state or national authority), wider (and often global) market pressures, and the responses of Punan and Penan groups to these challenges, as the twenty-first century takes hold.

Again, it should be stressed here that variation (among different groups, often according to region) is sometimes striking, e.g., between the Penan of Brunei (see Sercombe in this volume) and the Punan of Kalimantan (see Sellato in this volume). In eastern Sarawak, responses to logging by Eastern Penan and Western Penan have been strongly divergent (see Brosius in this volume). Moreover, intra-group variation is also often significant, as between the Punan of Tubu and Malinau (see Kaskija in this volume; see also Kent 1996).

In order to prevent ambiguity in the use of the terms Punan, Penan, and ‘Borneo nomads’ (given that few are nomadic today), we have chosen, in the pages below, to
use the term ‘Pnan’ to refer collectively and indiscriminately to nomadic groups of Borneo, whether in Sarawak, Brunei, or Kalimantan, whether they are now still nomadic, semi-nomadic, or completely settled, and irrespective of their past or present ethnonyms (autonyms or exonyms; this includes groups that never referred themselves as either Penan or Punan). The transcription Pnan reflects the phonological rendition of Penan and Punan, uttered with a schwa after the initial unvoiced bilabial.

The term Pnan is thus used here generically to include all those groups known to have been nomads, unless reference is being made to a specific (named) group or, intentionally, to ‘nomads’, ‘nomadic groups’, or ‘former nomads’. The relevance of the use of Pnan, which should be obvious with regard to their common, past or present, way of life, also stands with regard to present ideas and images that these groups have of themselves, and particularly in the current context of a growing, island-wide awareness of ‘Pnan-ness’, which expresses itself through the emergence of socio-political associations, cross-island meetings, and other cultural displays of a common identity.

**Historical Background**

In the course of the last few centuries, the circumstances of nomads in Borneo, or Pnan, have changed enormously (and Chan, in this volume, provides a salient example) as have ideas about and images of them. Their sole relations, at the local level and in the ‘tribal’ mode, with their settled farming neighbours have persisted, but have progressively given way to contact of another type, with centralised power structures. To begin with, this outside contact was with colonial powers, whose policies were enacted principally at a provincial level, often through an administrator based in a district seat. More recently, following national independence (in Indonesia and Malaysia), contact of a higher order has emerged with representatives of the nation-state, and seemingly (to Pnan at least) with more abstract, globally oriented priorities (see Early and Headland 1998, on three major stages of Casiguran Agta history).

Let us first consider the pre-colonial situation. Most nomadic groups had developed trade relationships with neighbouring farming groups, focused on forest products in demand by coastal markets. This led to various patterns of client–patron or vassal–overlord bonds and to economic and political affiliation of nomadic groups to their neighbours. Patterns of farmer–Pnan relationships show a gradation, based on the intensity of trade and proximity from coastal trade ports (see Healey 1985, Rousseau 1989, 1990).
In coastal regions, petty states controlled trade at the mouths of rivers, and groups of ‘nomads’ – more or less nomadic, since many were assigned the task of guarding bird’s nest caves – were subordinated to a coastal king. Upstream along the same rivers, farming tribal groups had ‘their’ Pnan closely affiliated, though not enslaved, who exploited bird’s nest caves and other commercial forest resources for their patrons’ benefit. Further inland, nomadic groups were often under the direction of a prominent farming group, but as ‘allies’ or partners rather than as dependent labour. While farming chieftains had ways of coaxing nomads into collecting forest products and conducting trade exclusively with them, they could not coerce nomads, lest they withdrew from trade contacts. Such partnerships could be quite stable through time, and some Pnan bands willingly followed their partners in migrations to new lands. Finally, in the most isolated areas, other nomadic bands freely ranged vast stretches of uninhabited mountains between major river basins, maintaining shifting associations with various farming groups across water divides, according to the economic and political situations of the time. Thus, relationships between Pnan and farmers were influenced by patterns of trade that existed between them and by their geographical locations (Rousseau 1990, Sellato 2001).

In terms of ethnicity, the type of social organisation of tribal farming groups appears to have been a major factor in their evolving relations with their nomadic trade partners and in the latter’s historical shift to a more sedentary way of life and the adoption of agricultural practices. A strong contrast between stratified societies, such as the Kayan, forming ‘closed’ or bounded groups, and non-stratified societies, such as the Iban, forming ‘open’ groups, accounts for distinct social attitudes towards nomads, to the effect that nomads, through trade and cultural intercourse, have assimilated more readily into non-stratified groups than into stratified groups. In fine, the ‘open’ versus ‘closed’ factor appears to determine the loss or retention of nomads’ ethnicity (see Sellato in this volume). Not surprisingly, the general area where distinctive hunting-gathering groups are now located or have been known to exist in the last century is approximately the same as the area of settlement of stratified farming groups (see Map 1.1; also, Rousseau 1990).

While it is not relevant here to dwell on Borneo’s colonial history (for recent works, see, e.g., Black 1985, Lindblad 1988, Magenda 1991 for Kalimantan; and numerous classic works on Sarawak and Sabah), it should be stressed that only in the 1920s did remote interior regions come under full control of colonial administrations, whose impact should therefore not be overestimated (see Bodley 1999, for a global account). In Kalimantan and Sarawak alike, the colonial powers’ policies tended to allow local social organisation and customs to retain legitimacy
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and for local leaders to retain their authority, provided they acknowledged the new rulers and did not revolt.

Throughout the period of their authority, the colonial powers extensively explored their new domains, pacified the hinterlands and subdued independent tribes, abolished headhunting and slavery, established military and administrative posts, conducted censuses, opened or reopened and maintained trade routes, facilitated river traffic, established market places, improved health facilities, introduced technological innovations and formal education, eased the way for the incursion of foreign religions, and levied door or head taxes (directly or through local sultans). They significantly affected interethnic relations by setting external constraints on their ongoing local dynamics, such as the deliberate eradication of headhunting, by both the British in Sarawak and the Dutch in Kalimantan. For the sake of communities’ improved access to facilities, as well as for that of the administration’s better control over them, they also altered traditional settlement patterns.

Through farming groups, the colonial powers came into contact with scores of nomadic groups in remote areas. Since the first expeditions to the far hinterland in the late nineteenth century, both the British and Dutch recognised these nomadic groups as separate ethnocultural entities, ethnic groups in their own right, whereas the farming groups had viewed nomads as appendages of their own world (see both Thambiah and Sellato in this volume). In the early twentieth century, the colonial authorities set out to resettle Pnan in permanent locations, both out of a sense of their civilising mission and out of pity for nomads being taken advantage of in trade by farmers (on changing European ideas of hunter-gatherers, see Barnard 1999). The role of colonial governments, in this process, in identifying and naming Pnan groups and in developing a new perception of their own ethnocultural identity should be stressed.

By the end of the colonial period, many Pnan groups had become disenclaved and a substantial portion of them were already half-settled, positioned in the uppermost settlements of their river basins, not far upstream from the last farming villages.

The first 15 years after World War II realised little official interest in Borneo’s nomads, in either Sarawak or the young Republic of Indonesia, both of which were engaged on other fronts. It was the Confrontation between Indonesia and the newly created Federation of Malaysia that strongly contributed to the re-opening of the interior regions and, later, a renewed interest in their development. In the late 1960s, official agencies intervened at village level to bring improvement in the fields of health and education. Programs were established to encourage nomadic or
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half-nomadic groups to gather, settle, and take up agriculture. A further reason was that nomads projected a poor image of the nation abroad, one of backwardness and primitivism. In the name of development, hunting and gathering was a way of life to be eradicated. Programs to this end continued through the 1970s and 1980s. Eventually, rice-husking mills, electricity, agricultural extension assistance, among other projects, reached many isolated villages of former nomads and only small numbers of nomads remained clinging to their traditional life ways.

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw the beginning of the timber boom, which hardly affected the Pnan. It was only in the early 1980s that logging first began to penetrate the regions in which Pnan lived. Some Pnan groups participated eagerly in the exploitation of their territories, while some resisted.

From the mid-1980s onwards came the non-timber-forest-product boom, with prices for some products rising hugely, reaching unprecedented prices in the 1990s (e.g., birds’ nests and aloe wood), a phenomenon in which many Pnan groups were involved. One important side effect, a result of the Pnan’s economic opportunism, was that settled or half-settled groups, deserting their villages, returned to the forest.

Furthermore, in the 1980s and 1990s, nature reserves and national parks were established in Sarawak and Kalimantan. With the advent of these, came a handful of environmentalist organisations, set to protect the rainforest from logging companies. These were followed in turn by organisations geared towards social and economic development and poverty alleviation, as well as by rights advocacy organisations, some to defend the traditional people’s rights against loggers, and others, ironically, to protect them from nature conservation programs. Through contact with international non-government organisations (NGOs), flocks of local, grassroots NGOs were also born.

Early in the twenty-first century, Pnan have become more educated, and more aware of the ways of the machinations of the modern world. They are likely to use the Internet more often than the message sticks that their forefathers placed in the forest. But Pnan find themselves in complex situations, where many outsiders are eager to seize the lands that Pnan previously roamed and the resources that these contain, and just as many outsiders are eager to ‘assist’ Pnan communities. Consequently, it is not easy to ascertain which parties are most likely to bring them some benefit (as discussed by Kaskija, and Klimut and Puri, in this volume, with regard to different Pnan communities). Their social landscape includes a range of government agencies, sometimes with conflicting goals; loggers, mining companies, and plantation estates; outside church and lay organisations – national and international – active in nature conservation, economic development, and rights
advocacy, including cultural rights; and their own, local organisations, often also with conflicting goals. The Pnan’s socio-scape today may be likened to a large market place, in the same way that the forest may have appeared to their hunting and gathering grandfathers, albeit the choices open to them may seem opaque, with unforeseeable results.

**Facing the Twenty-First Century**

Despite their wide geographical dispersion and differences in their local and national circumstances, most Pnan groups have been facing similar kinds of challenges. This section considers these circumstances and challenges, and some of the responses of Pnan groups, in recent times.

The modern world has intruded ubiquitously upon the lives of nomadic peoples, and there can no longer be any nomadic community whose way of life has not been threatened or, at least, challenged by the circumstances of the industrial and post-industrial world (see Sahlins 1974 [1972]; Salzman 1982: ix; and Hitchcock and Biese 2000). Interestingly, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers* (Lee and Daly 1999) devotes a whole section to their circumstances in the modern world, with three chapters considering dimensions of the interface between hunting and gathering peoples and outside forces, and the effects of the latter. Change, however, is not just a feature of modern times. Pnan have been adapting to incursion and innovation throughout the history of their contact with other peoples (e.g., the introduction of iron).

Social change, nonetheless, is generally incremental, not sudden. No pre-iron, pre-dog, hunting and gathering band in Borneo had suddenly and without warning, for example, to confront bulldozers intruding in its forests. Major social changes are quite likely to result from accumulated smaller shifts over long periods, e.g., when nomads have become sedentary, they have generally done so progressively, over a protracted period, and have often retained social and cultural features of their past life ways subsequent to settlement (see Seitz 1981, Sercombe and Chan in this volume). The Pnan groups had already long been familiar with the lives of their settled neighbours and with swiddening by the time they themselves were induced to take up farming.

Settling down, in conjunction with social and political influence from their neighbours, has resulted in many significant changes in nomads’ lives. Not the least has been the transformation of residence patterns, from a transitory nomadic camp of shelters (with a shelter being home to a nuclear family), to a permanent village of houses (each house accommodating an extended family). Another
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change has been reduced cooperation, in some cases, among families in food-production activities and, in many instances, the decrease or disappearance of traditional forms of sharing or exchange of goods or services (see Sercombe 1996a). The sexual division of labour has also begun to take on different forms, with women devoting their time to tending gardens and growing crops while men are in the jungle. New concepts of ownership have begun to apply to foodstuffs, produced or acquired separately, and to plots of farm land, and subsequently certain notions of private property have developed.

Three key factors are crucial in understanding Pnan’s situations, as is the case for many ethnic minorities around the world: top-down ‘development’ forces, liberal market forces, and social groups as free agents. In the case of most Pnan groups, these three factors have been extant for centuries, as has been described above. Farming groups, colonial powers, and modern nation-states have each, at different stages, encouraged nomads to settle and take up full-time collecting activities, farming, or salaried work, each for their own reasons (commercial, economic, political, ideological, or philosophical); regional (or global) markets demand certain types of products from the tropical rainforest and these demands have had a range of positive and negative effects on Pnan; Pnan as free agents have had to consider for themselves, often at the nuclear family level, what is most appropriate and beneficial for them, and to try and achieve their goals (as discussed by Kaskija in this volume). This triangular dynamic has been in constant fluctuation, particularly in the last half century, when the range of choice has broadened. More recently, a fourth factor, in the shape of NGOs, has entered the equation, and these have been ambiguously positioned: some are undoubtedly in a top-down role, although they might repudiate this view; others (or the same) assume a role of representation of Pnan, although Pnan would not always endorse their stated position. Some of the ways in which NGOs can contribute to the welfare of Pnan are discussed by Ngo in this volume (see also Sellato 2001).

Regarding the circumstances of Pnan at the present time, it is particularly important to comprehend their relations with centres of power, chiefly institutional power. The modern nation-states of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei have imposed change, generally under the banner of ‘development,’ on minorities occupying often remote areas of their territories. While it is not our intention to discuss general concepts of ‘development’, it is pertinent to quote Dentan et al.’s (1997: 3) definition, with reference to Southeast Asia: ‘the process by which a country harnesses its natural and human resources to produce wealth rather than merely leaving its citizens to provide for its own needs. This has
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usually meant replacing subsistence economies with a market economy.’ The importance ascribed to development by those in power has become not only a way of replacing (or eradicating) traditional cultures, but also a way of abating obstacles to development, which may exist within the framework of traditional cultures. Such a narrow idea of development linked to national priorities, economic (in the form of industrialisation) and political (here, ideological), contrasts considerably with Sen’s view of development as freedom, seen ‘as a process for expanding the real freedoms people enjoy’. Such freedoms need to be enhanced, Sen (1999: 4) suggests, because ‘achieving development depends on the free agency of people’.

The most common political reason for imposing development on minority groups has focused on ‘national economic progress’ and ‘national unity’, which have what Winzeler (1997: 2) has termed a ‘sacred aura in the civic discourse of developing states’. What is more, social change, seen through the official prism of development, has tended to be understood as not only a natural but also a uniform process – witness Indonesia’s highly centralised, standardised system of civil administration. Programs designed for the economic development of a region have often had a negative impact on the minority peoples whose homelands are ‘developed’, a consequence of the state’s failure to consider these peoples’ interests (see Tan 1997). Domination of minorities through ‘state paternalism’, however, has generally been seen as in their best interests, and officially prescribed action as inevitably bound to make life better for groups upon whom it is imposed.

Another political reason for the imposition of development has taken, ever since colonial times, a more humanitarian colour. It is a legacy of colonialism and assumes that materially poor, isolated nomads have to be brought into the mainstream of civilisation. It is inconceivable that nomads should not benefit from government education and health facilities (see Headland 2002: 28–29, on the reasons for the failure of a Philippine government free lunch project among the Agta). Related to this, is the notion that the very existence of hunting and gathering nomads is an embarrassment to a modern nation. Nomadic groups are officially seen to portray a backward image and this has influenced states’ determination to settle nomads and, often, to settle them downstream, closer to administrative centres, schools, hospitals, and markets, i.e., away from their traditional territories (see Trigger 1999: 476). Consequently, governments have often argued for the necessity of displacing rural indigenous peoples in order that they can gain better access to government-provided facilities and become incorporated into mainstream society (see Nicholas 2000: 48).
A corollary of development has been the opening of areas occupied by minority groups to the commercial exploitation, on an industrial scale, of their valuable resources, which are believed essential for the economic development of a country. Mineral deposits, timber, and large bodies of water (for hydroelectric dams) are valuable assets for the state to exploit, and so is land itself, for plantation estates (e.g., for oil palm) or, in Kalimantan, for settling ‘transmigrants’ from other islands. Whether or not the land, and what it contains, is constitutionally the property of the state, its utilisation by the state for the sake of national economic development has been viewed as perfectly legitimate. In certain parts of Borneo, as in many other countries, this exploitation may have been carried out illegally by corporations benefiting from a government’s tacit approval. In some instances, these resources themselves no longer exist, as village territories, e.g., in West Kalimantan, have been converted to large state-owned plantation estates. Villagers have, in some cases, even become plantation coolies on lands that were previously their own, and thus unequivocally marginalised. The more successful the development, i.e., the more resources are extracted, as Dove (1996: 42) has noted, the less likely indigenous inhabitants of an area of rainforest will retain any kind of jurisdiction.

A further adjunct to development has been the use by the state of general structures of administration, education, religious ideology and specific development programs, as conduits to promote national ideologies and the dominant political parties (e.g. Golkar in Indonesia, and UMNO in Malaysia) to minority groups (see, e.g., Doolittle 2001), thus sidelining or even denigrating these groups’ own social and cultural priorities in the process.

The overall result of composite state action in ‘developing’ minority groups has been a partial integration of these groups into mainstream national cultures, with some associated improvement in terms of education and health and the evanescence of traditional cultures (locally, an almost total cultural loss; see Sercombe in this volume); and, often, a displacement of these groups away from their lands, coinciding with access to, appropriation and exploitation of these lands by the state and/or officially or unofficially related parties. While some minority groups become more involved in mainstream networks (see Ngo in this volume), they may also have become economically disenfranchised and cut off from their traditional resources (as exemplified by Chan, in this volume).

The trend described above has variously been called ‘internal colonialism’ or ‘fourth-world colonialism’ (for a general reference work on the subject of indigenous peoples and the state, see Maybury-Lewis 1997). The underlying point is that the state does not want its indigenous peoples to remain who they
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are, and that it wants access to the resources that these peoples’ marginal lands contain.

In the last 50 years, Pnan groups have experienced intensively the effects of their respective country’s modern administration. To a greater or lesser extent, they have been censused, medically immunised, sent to school, made to join the national workforce as agricultural extension workers, and turned into village dwellers.

Probably less than 50 per cent of the total area of the island of Borneo remains under forest cover today, and deforestation keeps progressing at an alarming rate. Logging companies dramatically increased their activities in the late 1970s, concessions now cover three quarters of extant forested areas, and loggers have steadily moved inland from coastal and lower-river regions, building roads to gain access to the most remote areas of the island (see Chan in this volume, for a case in point). The export of timber products, in the form of logs and, more recently, plywood earned states controlling Borneo’s forests an estimated seven billion US$ in 1996. More recently there has been the establishment of large wood pulp factories in parts of Kalimantan. Enormous plantation estates of oil palm and rubber have multiplied, spreading over broad expanses of forest. Other industrial incursions, in the form of major coal and gold mines have been established, along with giant hydro-electric dams (see Chan in this volume) and transmigration resettlement sites, which have also contributed to the huge reduction in forest acreage. Furthermore, major forest fires in Kalimantan in the 1980s and 1990s (either deliberate or accidental) have caused much irretrievable damage. All this has entailed the erosion of watersheds and, subsequently, both severe droughts and floods in coastal regions. (On deforestation and its socio-economic impact, see Dove 1993a, 1996, Brookfield et al. 1995, Padoch and Peluso 1996.) In several regions, the Pnan’s lands have significantly shrunk (but see Sellato in this volume) and their languages and cultural traditions are now endangered (see Nettle and Romaine 2000).

Wherever their lands and resources have not been reduced, destroyed, or seized by the state or other outside parties, the minority groups of Borneo, including Pnan, continue to utilise them themselves. It is here that Dentan et al.’s (1997) comment on ‘replacing subsistence economies with a market economy’ must be qualified. Most Pnan groups have long been participating in a market economy and, in the last few decades, they have certainly become more involved in the regional modern market economy at the expense of traditional subsistence activities. The reason for this lies in the increase in the trade in non-timber forest products (see Peluso 1983, De Beer and McDermott 1989, Fox 1995, Brosius 1995a, Puri 1997a, Van Valkenburg 1997, Sellato 2001).
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Many Punan groups, at some point in their history, became commercial collectors of non-timber forest products (see Sellato 1994a). Until the 1970s and even well into the 1980s, they remained virtually left alone in their territories, vast expanses of forest beyond the farmers’ world, to exploit these products, principally because collecting was hard physical work and profits were small. Traders from downstream arranged for the purchase and shipping of these products to coastal markets (on the modalities of this trade, see Sellato 2001). Although competition did occur locally between Punan and professional collectors from downstream, outsiders often contented themselves with reaping the profits from their role as middlemen.

In the late 1980s, an unprecedented boom in non-timber commercial forest products occurred, concerning mainly edible birds’ nests and aloe wood. In 1995, top-quality aloe wood was fetching from US$ 500 to US$ 1,000 per kg, and top-quality birds’ nests could earn about twice as much (sometimes leading to conflicts over resource ownership, as described by Ngo, in this volume). Traders, in order to secure supplies, sponsored Punan collecting activities, creating new needs among them and keeping them in debt; many Punan began to live on credit, some even subsisting on purchased rice and no longer farming or collecting foods for their own subsistence. Although often cheated, Punan have tended to feel that they were making a good living and that they were relatively wealthy because they owned outboard engines, chainsaws, cassette-players, and wristwatches, all purchased on credit. Those Punan who have settled not infrequently fail at growing rice (both qualitatively and quantitatively) and see their economic situations deteriorate significantly, with the consequence that many choose to carry on or revert to collecting wild forest products.

The issue of sedentarism and of the lack of success at converting Punan to farming is also associated with their involvement in the commercial collection of forest products, which largely predates the advent of colonial times. Since the 1960s, government programs in Sarawak and Kalimantan have attempted to settle Punan, often trying to convert them to full-time rice farming. Sedentarism has tended to be viewed as a necessary stage in an evolutionary process and studies have considered closely how long it takes for nomads to make a ‘full’ transition to settlement (e.g., Langub 1974a, Nicolaisen 1976b, Chan’s and Sercombe’s chapters in this volume). Various reasons, mostly economic, account for failure in their settlement process, among which Langub (1996a: 116) has noted that, for three out of six groups under his scrutiny, lack of adequate access to and control of land (i.e., tenure rights) has been significant in hindering sedentarism. The Punan Tabang underwent three consecutive, yet unsuccessful,
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resettlement programs (Sellato 2002b). In many cases, via their reluctance to commit to permanent settlement, Pnan make explicit where their priorities lie.

Today, as noted before, many Pnan are official residents of resettlement villages but, sometimes, part of the population may be away in the forest, collecting forest products for trade. When their village is too far from their traditional collecting lands and no new forested lands have been allocated to them, Pnan communities may split. Such is the case of the Punan Tubu, leading to one group elder’s comment that neither resettling downstream nor remaining in or returning to upstream lands is perceived as of particular benefit (as described by Klimut and Puri, in this volume). One case of prompt and almost total sedentarism is worth mentioning, that of the Penan of Brunei. While still nomadic until a few decades ago, they have become largely estranged from the forest, one cause being that collecting forest products is not commercially viable in Brunei, another being the government’s social and religious policies (Sercombe in this volume).

The potential profits, not just from trading but also from collecting, have brought hordes of outsiders – from downriver Dayak and coastal Muslims to job seekers from other islands – into Pnan territories, competing with them for commercial collecting. These outsiders, more numerous, better equipped, and often with strong political backing in coastal towns, have competed efficiently with Pnan (see Trigger 1999, for an international perspective on this kind of occurrence). This has prompted a rush, which the Pnan have also been compelled to enter, and has led to the systematic overexploitation and serious depletion of commercial natural resources in Borneo’s rainforests (see Momberg et al. 2000). One example, from the late 1990s and the early years of the new millennium in Kalimantan, has been the recommencement of wild-cat logging in the interior, due to Indonesia’s relative law-and-order vacuum. Gold rushes have also occurred in several regions of Borneo. Outsiders have flocked in, replacing traditional panning with new technologies, which have resulted in heavy erosion of river banks, the muddying of waters, and the extinction of certain fish species.

In cases where outsiders have arrived in Pnan territories and established camps, even temporarily, a frontier-town atmosphere has tended to develop, along with its usual negative effects – the ‘three evils of civilisation’: alcohol and drugs consumption; gambling; and prostitution and venereal diseases (see Chan’s chapter on the issue of drugs as a result of the contacts between Penan and traders in the commoditisation of forest resources). Pnan, for fear of seeing all their resources appropriated by outsiders, and powerless to stop them, have in many instances been pulled into competition, often with both environmentally
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and socially damaging results. While this may be of little consequence to outsiders, who soon move on to other regions, Penan remain with depleted resources, a damaged environment, a weak economic position, and fractured communities. Furthermore, they have gained little in terms of health, education, or general welfare, since monies will often have been used to repay debts to traders (for a recent assessment of Penan health situation, see Dounias et al. 2004).

Penan, the World, and Themselves

The fate of hunter-gatherers throughout the modern world is, in many respects, a similar story played out in different contexts: loss of access to resources, socio-economic deprivation, and cultural depletion (see Bodley 1999). The recent intensification of Penan contact with the state and the wider world, particularly through attempts at appropriating the lands and resources that they consider theirs, has resulted in conflict becoming a more common occurrence in their lives. Penan, until recently, had tended to avoid direct confrontation, withdrawing further into the forest rather than fighting for abstract notions such as territory (see Sellato 1994a), let alone for principles. They now have become (or been made) aware that they exist as distinct social groupings, and have rights and a voice to express publicly their needs and aspirations – the role of NGOs in this new awareness has been examined in detail elsewhere (and see Brosius in this volume) and will not be dealt with here. While some communities, such as the Penan of Brunei (Sercombe in this volume) have remained politically passive, many groups, in Sarawak and Kalimantan, have become active in voicing their positions as marginalised members of society.

Sentiments among indigenous people regarding attempts at appropriating their lands and resources have varied from resigned acceptance, or ‘acquiescence’, sometimes amounting to full participation in the exploitation of their resources with outside parties, to outright opposition (see Brosius in this volume; Winzeler 1997: 2). In Sarawak, where deforestation has been intense, some still nomadic Penan groups of the Baram and Limbang river areas have come into open conflict with logging companies. For these nomads, logging has been gradually destroying the local environment and their way of life, i.e., the traditional food resources and non-timber commercial forest products that they exploit. Blockades and sometimes violent altercations have occurred. The state government, mediating between the parties but often in fact on the side of outsiders, has been set on bringing nomads, viewed as a cultural anachronism, into check. These Eastern Penan have demonstrated unified political action, and have become ‘an icon of resistance for
environmentalists worldwide’ (Brosius in this volume), despite some bickering within communities regarding courses of action. A short distance away, however, Western Penan have willingly participated in the logging of their lands, partly in order to benefit from compensation for this, although, at the same time, there has been bickering among different Western Penan communities regarding their respective involvement in such projects and the accompanying compensation. Somehow, as Brosius states, ‘[…] the Western Penan [acquiescence] stands as a kind of mirror for interpreting Eastern Penan resistance’ (in this volume).

According to Winzeler (1997: 62), it is attempts to make a living with diminishing resources that have often raised indigenous minorities’ levels of political awareness and brought them into confrontation with institutions of power. Possibly, it is rather the occurrence of conflict that has contributed to raising Pnan awareness of themselves as social groupings above the level of the nuclear family at which they previously functioned. Conflict, of course, was formerly present in the form of competition for resources among different indigenous groups. However, while Eastern Penan have been and may still be concerned with food resources, Western Penan, like Punan in Kalimantan, have been probably more concerned with trade resources (see Sellato 2005a).

In Sarawak, the Native Customary Rights (NCR) system has offered some guarantee that the indigenous peoples of a territory can occupy and work their traditional lands, although most land has remained ‘untitled’, i.e., not officially recorded as being under the tenure of these nomads (see Tan 1997; Cleary and Eaton 1992: 175–189, regarding Penan customary rights and land conflict in Sarawak; more generally, see Hitchcock 1999). The situation in Kalimantan has been similar: The Indonesian Constitution declares that land belongs to the ‘People’, but that the state may dispose of it, unless it is ‘titled’. Recent court cases in Sarawak established jurisprudence, however, by sustaining native groups’ customary rights to their lands (e.g., Chan 2001). Likewise, certain Kalimantan Punan groups have been granted the right to manage their natural resources (see Kaskija in this volume), although conflicts have arisen with neighbouring farmers who have claimed that, according to the ‘Central Borneo’ syntax of social relations (i.e., a set of stratified farming groups; see Rousseau 1990), these Punan were only ever guests in farmers’ territories (see Sellato in this volume; also, see Headland 2002: 30, on the Philippines’ 1997 Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act).

Conflicts of another type have arisen with Pnan in opposition to certain protected areas (nature reserves and national parks). For example, some Punan Tubu communities in East Kalimantan, because forest conservation is not among their priorities and in order to remain able to benefit financially from their timber,
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refused to see their territories becoming part of the Kayan Mentarang National Park (C. Eghenter, pers. comm.). In West Kalimantan, Pnan groups have, again, been caught between a local national park’s conservation priorities and global market pressure. This has been in a context of intense competition for scarce, valuable resources (in this case, birds’ nests), combined with an imbalance of power and abuse of official authority (see Ngo in this volume). An Integrated Conservation and Development Project (ICDP) has been established, aimed at empowering local communities to both improve their welfare and manage their resources in a sustainable manner. The value of traditional resource tenure in community-based natural resource management has been widely documented (see, e.g., Poffenberger 1990, Kottak 1995, Folke and Berkes 1998; with reference to Borneo, see Redford and Padoch 1992, Abdoellah et al. 1993, Padoch and Peluso 1996, Colfer et al. 1997, Brosius et al. 1998) – yet results remains to be assessed. The question of conflict resolution is now at the top of many international institutions’ and NGOs’ agendas.

The Penan of Brunei have tended to view the past and future as ‘insignificant extensions of the ever-changing present’ (Sercombe in this volume), which appropriately fits with a general lack of interest in history and the past, and a certain notion of timelessness in nomads’ lives, observed among many Pnan groups (see Sellato 1994a). However, the increasing occurrence of conflict has led some Pnan to reconsider the views they hold about their historical traditions and, more generally, the relevance of history. In Kalimantan, many Pnan groups are now discovering that they badly need (their own) histories, to support their claims to rights over their lands, i.e., they must prove that they have been occupying those lands for an extended period of time. Likewise, such groups that were previously less concerned with customary law (the local traditional legal system, known as adat or, more precisely, hukum adat, throughout Borneo among indigenous groups, and comprising important sets of legally-oriented precedents and edicts), since many lived under farmers’ adat, now find that they must show that they do have an adat system of their own, in order to claim that they are ‘traditional people’, and the allegedly knowledgeable and wise wardens of their forest and resources. Many Pnan groups have thus set out to formalise, reconstruct, or altogether create ex nihilo the traditional adat that they now need (e.g., see Sellato 1993b), often with the assistance of NGOs aiming at helping them secure rights of tenure.

Regarding what is now called ‘traditional environmental knowledge’ (see Ellen and Harris 1997, Brosius 1997), a kind of paradox appears. While in a biodiversity assessment with Punan Tubu 330 plant taxa were reported to have known uses (Puri 1998b), it seems that Pnan groups often actually do collect only a narrow
range of wild vegetable foods, and very few medicinal plants (Kaskija in this
volume), in which they have little interest (Brosius in this volume). This apparent
paradox may actually just reflect an undocumented discrepancy between broad
environmental knowledge and restricted current use of plants. Contrasting with
the Punan Tubu, Voeks (in this volume) describes the very narrow range of
ethnobotanical knowledge found among the Penan of Brunei, in comparison to
that of their farming neighbours, a fact that he finds consistent with earlier studies
elsewhere. Voeks interprets this as being a consequence of the restricted nature of
Penan material culture and the lesser impact of diseases in the isolated forests that
they occupy. He also records that this narrow knowledge tends to increase with
sedentarism and contact with farmers (see also Voeks and Sercombe 2000, Fowler
and Turner 1999). Divergent results among Punan Tubu and Penan of Brunei may,
pro parte, be attributed to significant differences in the number of informants and
length of survey (R. Puri, pers. comm.).

It should be noted that, for Pnan, international, foreign, or national NGOs are
simply new outsiders to be taken into account when assessing their own situation;
however, the role of NGOs will not be dealt with at length here. Pnan view such
NGOs as part of their social landscape and gauge them by the profit or support that
can be derived from them. Having remarked that, sometimes, NGOs are competing
locally for indigenous peoples’ attention and participation in their programs, Pnan
have learned to exploit their relationships with these organisations. For Pnan,
NGOs amount to new opportunities for benefits – fresh new goods available from
their ever broadening ‘supermarkets’. In the now classic procuring vs producing
paradigm, Pnan have learned how to expand their opportunities to gain from the
social as well as the natural environment (see Kaskija in this volume). These
opportunities, however, have led to the local emergence of an ‘assistedness’ attitude
among Pnan, whereby no collective action is taken without outside financial
assistance, which paradoxically leads to more dependency (Sellato in this
volume).

Many Pnan are now, more than previously, aware that they are free agents.
They navigate across a modern sea of social networks in the same way as they
formerly navigated in the forest. Often less shy, more self-assertive than previously,
many have begun to set their own priorities and manoeuvre towards achieving new
goals: From among the various partners extending assistance, they select those
whose options fit their goals. A clear example in Kalimantan is the Pnan response
to environmental organisations’ attempts to convince them that protecting local
rainforest amounted to guaranteeing the future resources of the Pnan. Driven by
their immediate-return frame of mind, some Pnan groups declined, and wanted
their forest logged. Pnan, drawn into the race for forest products, often have actively participated in exploiting, and damaging, their natural environment – a notable exception is Sarawak’s Eastern Penan. In fact, while Pnan groups strive to be granted right of tenure over their lands and resources, few among them really aim for the long-term, sustainable exploitation of their resources, and many in effect harvest their resources in the same ruthless and unsustainable way as outsiders, which appears a rational economic strategy given their circumstances (on this, and on the myth of the sustainable use of forest resources, see Sellato 2001 and 2005a). However, having become familiar with what NGOs expect from them, they have often adopted the ideological universe of their NGO allies (Albert 1997), and now make full use of their partners’ support potential (Sellato 1999), and this ‘code-switching’ strategy has proved very useful (see Griffin 2002: 44, on Agta adaptations, in the Philippines). While adoption by Pnan of NGO values is part of NGOs’ goals, in practice there may be a striking discrepancy between Pnan discourse and deeds.

In the course of the last two decades, Pnan have needed to look back at their history and tradition (or a dearth thereof) and look at themselves from the perspective of a variety of new social agencies with which they now interact. While they are still, as in the past, looked down upon by farmers and government agencies, they are no longer necessarily objects of pity, derision, or embarrassment. In fact, they may even be revered as the recipients and holders of some timeless knowledge and wisdom, by all sorts of NGOs and, following suit, by the general public. While notions of the ‘ecologically noble savage’ and of ‘traditional peoples as born conservationists’ have come under critical scrutiny (see Redford 1991, Ellen and Harris 1997, Sellato 1999), as well as the neo-romantic myth of the Punan as ‘children of the forest, symbols of a life in harmony with Nature, and guardians of the forest against evil outsiders’, and the innocent victims of development (see Sellato in this volume), the nomads’ image in NGO and public eyes constitutes for Pnan, potentially at least, a considerable economic asset.

Although Pnan are not known for their introspective leanings, the challenges that they have had to face and the varying responses that these have brought about have necessarily induced them to look inward in order to try and understand who they were and the reasons for this change of fortune (see Klimut and Puri in this volume). Between dependency and acceptance, on the one hand, and hostility and resistance, on the other, they have come to look upon their own customs and way of life in a new manner (see, e.g., Winzeler 1997; on nomads’ ‘self- and other-images’, see Stewart et al. 2002), whereby hitherto implicit cultural patterns have become objectified or externalised. Such a reification may in part be an effect of
world religions and their politicisation – church organisations in Borneo often constitute forums for ethnocultural self-identification and political and economic claims – and, in some places, the influence of tourism. This ‘cultural reflexivity’, in the words of Kaskija, has led to an awareness of their ‘cultural uniqueness’ and to the invention or revitalisation of ‘traditional’ culture, serving as a means of self-identification, a political tool, and a commercial asset (Kaskija 2002: 91–93; see also Kaskija in this volume).

CONCLUDING REMARKS: PNAN FUTURE

Borneo nomads and, mostly, former nomads commonly see themselves as the most disadvantaged group, ‘stuck at the bottom’ of modern society (see Kaskija in this volume). It is true that, since settling, one can perceive little overall economic progress for many Pnan groups, contrary to the professed expectations and claims of those in power (see Hitchcock and Biesele 2000: 2). Evidence worldwide shows that many past and present foragers live near or below absolute poverty levels (ibid.: 8). Moreover, the beneficiaries of development in Borneo have been concentrated in urban areas, while those who perhaps have lost the most are from outlying areas where their lands and what they contain are that which the politically and economically powerful have taken over and exploited in the name of national development (see Dentan et al. 1997: 6–7; also, Salzman 1982).

The Pnan, however, might be in a better situation, overall, than other similar groups elsewhere. First, contrary to farmers’ folk perceptions, they are undoubtedly intelligent, and quick learners (Lucy Bulan, pers. comm.; Lucy is the Kelabit head-teacher of Bareo secondary school, in the interior of Sarawak). Half-settled Pnan children, to everyone’s astonishment, commonly are top of the class, and Pnan all over Borneo are known as first-class linguists, often mastering five or more languages. Then, the basic tenets of their traditional nomadic views and way of life, which have been maintained unchanged through the dramatic technological, economic, and political changes of recent decades, allow them to adjust to changing social and economic situations and take advantage of what comes their way (on this, more generally, see Kent 1992, Riches 1995). Whereas the Penan of Brunei and some communities in eastern Sarawak may, indeed, have little opportunity for progress, many Pnan groups have managed to adapt reasonably well to changes thrust upon them, when considering the powerful agencies that they have had to deal with, as the contributions to this volume indicate. Finally, especially in the Indonesian context, forest-dwelling Pnan are clearly better off than a huge mass of urban poor (Sellato 2001 and in this volume).
Introduction

Outsiders' images of Borneo Pnan can also work to their advantage. Although settled, they often continue to be perceived as hunter-gatherers by neighbouring farming groups, due to resilient remembrance of their past life ways and attitudes (see Thambiah in this volume), and by the official agencies, due to a common bureaucratic proclivity to continue to use established labels. Marked as hunter-gatherers, they can often be seen as repositories of traditional knowledge and wisdom and may be highly valued by NGOs (and tourists). This apparent cultural capital can be turned to economic advantage, yet it is fragile one, which might be easily damaged (see Sellato in this volume).

In the last decade, the terms Penan and Punan have met with renewed interest as ethnic labels, both in Kalimantan and Sarawak (as did the term Dayak or Daya’ in Kalimantan some years previously), as a result of action by local and foreign organisations with a political agenda of collectively promoting indigenous groups, particularly nomads. Consequently, a large spectrum of people, whether or not their original autonym was or included Punan or Penan, have agreed to endorse these exonyms, which may previously have been derogatory terms, as a means of identification in their fight for political and social recognition (see both Klimut and Puri and Kaskija in this volume). While Thambiah’s argument (in this volume) that the Punan category is irrelevant to Bhuket self-identification in the West Kalimantan context is undoubtedly correct, it nevertheless remains that Punan and Penan labels (and possibly our ‘Pnan’) are gaining momentum in the new political arena, where minor ethnocultural specificity is or will be readily put aside in order to promote broader common agendas.

Prospects for the indigenous people of Borneo, including the Pnan, seem to vary widely. The Penan of Brunei may be facing a bleak future; however, in certain instances, in Sarawak and Kalimantan, small but significant progress, in terms of land and tenure rights (as articulated by Sellato in this volume), appears encouraging and, thanks to their many allies, the future of the Pnan seems negotiable, in certain economic areas, if not yet politically.

Cultural survival, however, is another question. Most Pnan do not appear to desire reservations, where they could carry on with a traditional way of life. Many, especially among the younger generation, understandably wish to become consumers, to benefit from the possibilities that the modern world offers (see Kaskija 1998: 350). In order to take advantage of these possibilities, they would need to become increasingly involved in mainstream society. Quite how this can happen remains uncertain.

As developed earlier, ideological features of Pnan societies have played a crucial part in allowing them to both retain their internal specificity and adjust
Beyond the Green Myth

to changing external circumstances. The Pnan ‘way of life’ is grounded in a very resilient ‘core’, an ethos, a *habitus*, the basic tenets of which have been detailed above. While we do not view Pnan as an essentially distinct category, we believe that there is an ethos that determines certain patterns of behaviour of peoples whom we would include as Pnan. Among these are attitudes toward animals, as either game or pets, and their reluctance to eat the meat of domestic animals (Seitz in this volume; see also Sellato 1994a, Puri 1997a: 184; more generally, on the symbolic relation of humans and animals, see Kent 1989). Seitz argues that animal husbandry strategies can only develop if Pnan undergo a psychosocial shift in their attitudes toward animals they keep. Another Pnan trait is a unique expression of melancholic fatalism among the Punan Tubu, mentioned earlier, a brooding over the hardships of life (see Kaskija 1998: 349, and in this volume). Without entering into a theoretical debate on this subject, it makes sense to believe that such features common to groups, which require further investigation in order to be better understood, may have a major role to play in their future, as may the outcome of Pnan groups’ own ‘cultural reflexivity’.

In the economic field, Pnan ideological *habitus* has been found to foster certain strategies based on individualism, pragmatism, and flexibility. Economic versatility and immediate-return strategies appear to Pnan as guarantees against hardship and starving, but also hamper a commitment to full sedentarism and rice farming. Likewise, attempts to benefit from the modern world involve adjusting to its current premises, i.e., ‘developing’ along mainstream lines, which will in turn probably entail, in the long term, abandoning some of the basic tenets of a hunter-gatherer outlook. Until recently, these mainstream lines intimated settling down and becoming agriculturalists, which were viewed by outsiders as development. Even well-meant recent plans, such as making Pnan ‘managers of their own forests’, may be doomed due to Pnan highly resilient sense of individualism and their tendency towards immediate-return strategies, as has been frequently demonstrated.

Can Pnan, then, enjoy the material benefits of the modern world and, at the same time, remain Punan or Penan without their ideological premises being affected? In the past, many nomadic groups have switched for good to farming (see Sellato 1994a), to the point of a total loss of the hunting-gathering outlook and of their Pnan identity – the current situation of the Penan of Brunei is a fascinating case study of ideological loss in the process. But, in many regions of Borneo, Pnan are now trying to preserve their cultural traditions, through the establishment of Pnan associations – of which some bring together a dozen Pnan groups, and through which some groups for the first time came into contact with
Introduction

one another (e.g., East Kalimantan Punan Association) – and the staging of cultural festivals (e.g., Festival Budaya Punan, held in Malinau in 1994; see Klimut and Puri, and Kaskija, in this volume; similar festivals were held again in 1998 and 2002). The risk, of course, is that they settle for soulless, ‘folklorised’ versions of their cultures, like many other groups before them (see Sellato 1990b).

‘The year 2000 will have seen the vast majority of former foragers settled and encapsulated in the administrative structures of one state or another,’ R.B. Lee and R. Daly wrote (1999: 2). Is there any room left in our world for nomadic ideologies and life-ways? Will Pnan find an alternative, ‘hunting-gathering’ mode of development, an alternative way to benefit from the modern world and preserve those Pnan values that, in many cases, they wish to maintain?
Chapter 2

PENAN

By Rodney Needham

Abstract: This chapter is a brief, but systematic and comprehensive introduction to the nomadic and formerly nomadic groups of Borneo, following the frame set by F.M. LeBar for his indispensable 1972 compendium on the peoples of insular Southeast Asia.

Synonyms. Pennan, Punan, Poonan (Dutch Poenan, French Pounan)

ORIENTATION

Identification

The Penan are an indigenous people of forest-dwellers in the interior of Borneo. There has long been confusion in the ethnographic literature about their identification. For the most part they have been identified as ‘Punan’ and have thus been aggregated with a number of other people, mostly forest nomads, in widely separated parts of the island. As late as 1947, the existence of any distinct Punan people was called into question by an authority who had sought them in vain in Central Borneo (Cole 1947). Later investigation confirmed the published indications that there are a number of nomadic people in Borneo, mostly known as Punan, of whom the Penan forms one group. The Penan refer to themselves as such (pɔnʌn), and distinguish themselves by language and institutions from the various nomadic Punan groups and from the longhouse Punan Ba (Needham 1954d and 1955). They compose two tribes, Eastern and Western, separated
Penan

in the main by the Baram River. Although the tribes recognise each other as true Penan, i.e., as culturally similar forest nomads, there are marked differences between them. These linguistic and social disparities are sufficient to justify the ethnographical separation of the Eastern and Western Penan into two distinct societies. There are also characteristic physical features which make a further general difference between the tribes, but the Penan population as a whole is not racially distinct from the other people from interior Borneo. They exhibit no Negroid or Vedoid traits. Culturally, they belong to the middle Borneo grouping of people, distinguished from the Lun Daye (including Muruts) to the northeast and from the Iban to the southwest. Their cultural affinities are with the conglomeries of related people known as Kenyah.

Location

They are located approximately at 2°45´–4°15´ N and 113°25´–115°50´ E. They are mostly in Sarawak; some are in Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo), and a few in Brunei. There is no Penan territory, but the groups are interspersed between settlements of other people. The Penan have tended to move towards the coast of the China Sea; one Eastern group and 16 Western groups have settled in the Baram and Tinjar valleys and in the lowlands between the Kemena and Bakong rivers. A few Eastern Penan groups have in recent years moved west of the Baram into the region of the Kalulong massif.

Geography

Primary rainforest, cut by numerous streams and rivers. Stands of wild sago grow at lower levels and in pockets of soil in the mountains. Fruits include durian, rambutan, and mangosteen. The chief wild animals of importance are pigs, monkeys, deer, shrews, snakes, and ant-eaters. Rhinoceros have become practically extinct within the lifetime of older men. Fish are plentiful, and there are many species of birds, including the hornbill.

Linguistic Affiliation

Two fairly contrasted dialects, Eastern, and Western, which are not always mutually intelligible. Eastern is the more homogeneous. The Western Penan dialect is practically identical with Sebup. Both dialects belong to the Kenyah family of languages, although both tribes tend to adopt words from the settled peoples with whom they come into contact, e.g., Kayan, Kelabit, Kenyah,
Beyond the Green Myth

Iban, and Malays. There is no indigenous form of writing, nor can any Penan leading the traditional life either read or write in any medium. Fronded sticks (saang) with appendages of leaves, cane, or firewood are thrust into the ground in order to convey messages about travel, food, numbers, health, and so on (Arnold 1958).

Demography

There is no exact census of the Penan, but in 1952 they were numbered at 2,626, divided as follows: Eastern Penan, 906; Western Penan, 852; settled groups, 868. The total population is probably less than 3,000, divided into about 70 groups (Needham 1953). There are indications that the Penan have been constantly increasing in numbers and that they continue to do so.

History

Culturally the Penan form part of the general movement of peoples from the upper Kayan River, over the central chain of mountains, and down the Baram and Tinjar valleys towards the coast. The Western Penan have a tradition that they originated from Bateu Kéng Sian (‘Turtle-shell Rock’) in the upper reaches of the Lua River, a tributary of the Peliran, in the headwaters of the Rejang. Genealogies extend back to about 1810, and the subsequent moves and fissions of groups between the Balui to the west and the Ivan, Pejungan, and Luda rivers to the east, can be plotted by reference to these. The Eastern Penan do not share this tradition, and their genealogies are far shallower. They have much less knowledge of their past, but they appear to have come from the Pejungan and through the Lio Matu area, at the headwaters of the Baram, and thence north-westward through the mountains that form the right watershed of this river. They have expanded in that direction as far as the Medalam, a major tributary of the Limbang River, and into the interior of the Brunei state. Politically, the bulk of the Penan fall under the government of Sarawak. There has long been a trend to abandon nomadism and to practise agriculture in fixed settlements. This has latterly been intensified at the urging of colonial administrators. The oldest Penan settlements in Sarawak – those on the Niah, Suai, and Buk rivers – date probably from the first two decades of the nineteenth century. There are indications that assimilation to the settled people is taking place at an increasingly rapid rate, and it is probable that the Penan will eventually vanish as a distinct group of people.
Penan

Cultural Relations

Penan of both tribes, but the Western more than the Eastern, are influenced by the longhouse peoples in language, dress, tattooing, and in many of their ideas. Each nomadic group is under the dominance of the headman of a longhouse, and individual families are in turn subject to upper-class members of these settled tribes. The latter express great contempt for the Penan, refer to them as animals, and claim them as their property. The Penan are timid and abashed in their presence. They need to trade with the settled people, however, in order to remain nomads, and the goods they bring in are a source of much profit to their patrons. Before firm government was established, the Penan were under protection, secured by blood pact, of the patrons, who jealously guarded their own economic rights in Penan trade against headhunting or intrusion on the part of other longhouse groups (Pauwels 1935: 351–352). The only reported form of incursion into Penan society is when an Iban battens on a group, sometimes taking one of the women, in order to acquire very cheaply a store of bezoar stones and mats. Individual Kenyah sometimes journey into the forest to trade with Penan, outside the regular meetings and free of the government price levels maintained at them, but they do not stay.

SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND HOUSING

Settlement Pattern

Local groups range in size from 15 to 75 persons, with a mean of about 32. They are named after the rivers with which they are associated historically or culturally, e.g., Penan Akah, Penan Silat. The Eastern Penan build a main camp in the territory that they exploit, and then move as a group from one temporary camp to another, using the main camp as a base and for the storage of forest products until it is time to move to another area or to go to a trading meeting. The Western Penan live in a main camp for up to two years and exploit the area in smaller groups of a family or two, while the old and sick and certain others stay behind. In each tribe, the main camp consists of dwellings; there is no temple or bachelors’ house. The disposition of the huts follows no special or symbolic form, but there are distinctions between Eastern and Western main camps. The Eastern Penan build in a close cluster, high on a ridge, but within ready reach of water. The Western Penan build on level ground near a river, often in a line, and sometimes with the huts placed end-to-end in the form of a longhouse.
Beyond the Green Myth

Housing

The huts are made of saplings, with roofs consisting of mat-like stretches of dried fan-palm leaves sewn together; these are sometimes supplemented by green leaves of the same kind, and the sides may be partly closed against rain and wind with leaves or bark. The Eastern hut is built some feet off the ground on piles; among the Western Penan it is based directly on the ground, with only a few inches between the sapling floor and the soil. There is no completely standard arrangement of the interior in either; e.g., the hearth (made of earth with stones to support the pan) can be at any point. Generally there are no partitions inside a hut, and when among the Western Penan a number of huts are built in line, they afford a clear view right through. There are no movable furnishings.

ECONOMY

Traditionally, and still for the most part in fact, the Penan are hunters and gatherers. A few groups grow small and precarious supplementary crops of cassava. The settled groups plant dry rice. The staple food for the forest dwellers is the wild sago palm, exploited throughout the year. The most prized game animal is the wild pig; the most common prey is monkey – primarily gibbons and macaques – but practically any creature (with the exception of omen animals and leeches) may be hunted and eaten. All food, from sago flour to the smallest bird, is shared with scrupulous equality among all members of the group. Game is hunted with blowpipe and spear; the darts are poisoned, but not the spear. In recent years, an increasing number of individuals have acquired shotguns; ammunition is obtained at the trading meetings. Among the Western Penan, fish are caught by hook and line or by dam and [poisonous] Derris root. Fruits are abundant in season, and animals are fatter at this time. The only domestic animal is the hunting dog, often acquired from the settled tribes. The Western Penan make blowpipes with an iron bit, and they are skilled smiths. Today the iron comes in foundry-produced bars through trade, but these Penan claim that they have always known, like the Kenyah (Arnold 1959: 124), how to smelt ore and how to work it with stone hammers and anvils (see Pfeffer 1963: 129). They also carve excellent sheathes and hilts. The Eastern Penan do not have these skills, and protest that they are unable to acquire them, so that they rely more directly on trade. Both tribes weave cane mats which fetch good prices (for the middlemen) in the lowland
Penan markets. Baskets, mats, roofing, bamboo containers, and domestic utensils are all made by the Penan from local materials. There is no distinct status of artist or craftsman.

**TRADE**

Trading meetings are held about three times a year with Kenyah and other overlords at their longhouses on the rivers. In recent decades, they have for the most part been conducted under government supervision, which checks the more extreme forms of cheating. The Penan bring in cane mats and unworked forest products such as damar, wild rubber and bezoars, hornbill feathers, anteater scales, and, formerly, rhinoceros horns. They exchange these, on disadvantageous terms, for spearheads, cutting implements, cooking pans, beads, earrings, bracelets, loincloths, skirts, matches, etc. There are no Penan markets, nor is there any other form of regular internal trade among Penan groups. There is much gift exchange, but goods earned by trade are not subject to the rule of equal sharing.

**Property**

There are no rights in land or in its resources, except that bezoar stones, hornbill feathers, etc., belong to the hunter and that damar and wild rubber belong to those who collected or worked it. The return on these forest products, in the form of what Penan call ‘hard’ goods acquired by trade, is individually owned. There are stated punishments for theft, but no actual cases are known. Huts are built by the families who sleep in them, but they are not negotiable property. The group has no bounded territory of its own, and for another group to hunt in the neighbourhood would not be a trespass.

**KIN GROUPS**

**Descent**

Kinship is reckoned cognatically, with a patrilineal emphasis; an individual takes the father’s name, and in a genealogy masculine connections tend to be remembered more readily than feminine.
Kin Groups

There are no discrete groups defined by descent. The local group usually consists of close relatives. All Penan are regarded as kin, whether or not genealogical connections can be established.

Kin Terminology

The terminology is non-lineal and is applied in a widely classificatory fashion. There are slight differences between the Eastern and Western terminologies.

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Teknonyms are employed, and also a system of ‘death-names’ which are prefixed to the personal names of those who have lost relatives by death (Needham 1954a, 1954d, 1959, 1965).

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Mode

Ideally there is a bridewealth, higher among the Western Penan than among the Eastern, consisting of swords, blowpipes, clothes, etc., but in practice, little if
anything is ever given when the marriage takes place within the group. There is no ceremony, nor is any official or group consent ever required.

**Form**

Preponderantly monogamous, but not obligatorily so. There is no preference for sororal polygyny or for polygyny itself. Polyandry has been alleged (Hose and McDougall 1912, II: 183), but is said by the Penan to be impossible.

**Marriage Prohibitions**

Penan of either tribe may in general marry a person of any category, other than *tamen*, *tinen*, and current *kivan*, provided the relationship is at the second degree. An exception, and a difference between the two tribes, affects the cousin. The Eastern Penan may marry the first cousin and frequently do so; the Western may not. There is no prescribed or preferred category. Marriage often takes place between genealogical levels, e.g., between *né* and *abong*; usually it takes place between individuals of roughly the same age, and this factor overrides category. Marriage between individuals of disparate age is much disapproved and does not occur (Needham 1966).

**Residence**

Marriage usually and by preference takes place within the group. When the parties belong to different groups, the man should remain within his wife’s group for a year or so, or until a child has been born, but the decision depends in each case on the particular circumstances and it may not be practicable to fulfil this expectation.

**Domestic Unit**

Nuclear family – rarely, polygynous family – with the addition of dependants such as widowed parent, visitor, etc.

**Inheritance**

There are no fixed rules, and there is little property to inherit that an individual will not already possess. Siblings and children have first claims, which they adjust among themselves according to need.

**Divorce**

By mutual consent, or at the instance of either party, without ceremony or any authorisation. Causes include adultery, idleness, and bad temper, but not barrenness.
Secondary Marriage

There is no widow-inheritance, levirate or sororate.

Adoption

Possible but not common. There are no prescribed categories. An orphan may be adopted by either a brother or a sister of the deceased parent. A childless woman may beg a baby from another woman who already has a large family; the promise can be made before the child in question is born.

SOCIOPOLITICAL ORGANISATION

Political Organisation

The group is usually headed by a recognised elder, but he has no real power. The office is not in principle hereditary, but it is frequently transmitted from father to son. There is no council or any other form of organisation of the group, nor are there any institutions transcending the level of the community.

Social Stratification

There are no social classes, though certain Western groups speak in terms (copied apparently from longhouse tribes) of aristocrats, maren, and commoners, panyin, in describing the difference between elders and others. There are not, and never have been, any slaves (ripen) among the Penan. Relative age is the most general and the most important social differential, but there are no age sets or recognised age-grades. There is no formal training and no initiation into manhood. Among the Western Penan, and perhaps less commonly among the Eastern Penan, a youth will assume the penis pin when he begins to lead an active sexual life; this involves perforating the glans penis and is done either by the youth himself or with the help of a friend. The shaft of the pin is thrust through the holes when it is healed, and the apparatus is worn in intercourse to increase the stimulation of the girl. Tattooing is not a general practice. Western Penan sometimes adopt simple designs on the shoulders and the throat, such as worn by the Iban; the Eastern Penan do not usually tattoo at all. The lobes of the ears are punctured for earrings, and a hunter who has killed a clouded leopard wears the fangs in holes bored in the helices of the ears, but these are not signs of stages in initiation. None of these tokens of maturity involves ritual or any kind of collective participation.
Penan

Social Control and Justice

There is no formal control of a Penan group, nor is any individual who has an alternative obliged to stay with it. In matters of communal concern, the general will of the mature men, backed by the women, prevails. Forms of ordeal, divination, oaths, and conditional curses are referred to in connection with the resolution of disputes, but they are practically never put into effect.

Warfare

The Penan claim that they have never initiated attacks on others, and not even their longhouse neighbours report it of them. They themselves have until recently been prime targets for headhunters, of whom they are still in dread. There is no cannibalism. Contemporary Penan, especially the Eastern tribe, are remarkable for their pacific character and their abhorrence of physical violence.

RELIGION

Christianity has spread among the Penan since the end of the Second World War, evangelical Protestantism among the Eastern Penan and Roman Catholicism among the Western, but a large proportion of the groups, both nomadic and settled, remain pagan. The longest settled groups in the coastal lowlands are Muslim. The major characteristics of the indigenous religion of the Penan are in general, and in a somewhat impoverished form, those of the Kenyah religion as described by Elshout (1923 and 1926). There is neither totemism nor an ancestor cult. Shamanism, in a form common in central Borneo, is practised. Omen creatures (deer, snakes, and a number of birds) are recognised, as among the Kenyah.

Supernaturals

There is a supreme creator-divinity, Peselong, sometimes credited with a wife, Bungan. He has little concern for human affairs, and these are most influenced by innumerable spirits (balé); some of these are malevolent, but most of them animate the environment and account for noteworthy things and events.

Practitioners

Shamans (dayung) cure illness by summoning their spirit familiars and by chanting against the spirits who are responsible. There are no priests.
Beyond the Green Myth

**Ceremonies**

There are no major religious ceremonies, and there is no religious calendar. Blood taken from the petitioner’s foot is sacrificed to a thunder god, Baléi Liwen, to avert storms brought on by mockery of animals (Needham 1964). Chicken feathers offered in cleft fronded sticks serve as surrogates for real victims in expiation of wrongdoing, such as adultery. Human hair is also offered in this way after a funeral.

**Illness and Medicine**

Disease is caused by specific classes of spirits, bringing fever, bellyache, etc. These are mollified by the shaman. Headaches, as well as the unease consequent upon bad dreams, can be relieved by making a fronded stick with a rudimentary human face (butun); the pain, or the inauspiciousness, is transferred to this stick, which is left in the forest, sometimes near a stream which will carry the influence away. There are very few indigenous medicines. Certain leaves may be chewed or macerated and placed over a cut, but in general wounds and boils are allowed to suppurate. The usual remedy for sickness is to sit by the fire. Penan of both tribes readily accept Western medicines.

**Soul, Death and Afterlife**

Among the Eastern Penan, the individual possesses three souls (sahé), associated with the pupils of the eyes, the hair of the head, and the trunk of the body. The Western Penan speak of only one soul (beruwen). After death, souls go to the land of the spirits above the sky, where they lead a life like that on earth, only with easeful abundance and no pain or illness. The body is buried, either under the hut in which the death occurred or in the forest; in either case the camp is abandoned and the group moves a few miles away and does not return for some months.

**EDITORS’ NOTE**

Chapter 3

RESOURCESFUL CHILDREN OF THE FOREST: THE KALIMANTAN PUNAN THROUGH THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

By Bernard Sellato

Abstract: This chapter describes the present situation of the Punan of Kalimantan, which strongly contrasts with that of the Penan of Sarawak, such as it has been popularised by general-audience media and non-governmental organisations, and with their positions in the pre-colonial regional social fabric of this part of Borneo. In the twentieth century, many groups of hunter-gatherers here have gained ground in visibility and land acreage, and economic advantages, through their demands for the recognition of their traditional rights over the lands they occupy.

INTRODUCTION

Current and (mostly) former forest hunter-gatherers of Kalimantan, usually called Punan (rather than Penan, as in Sarawak; other local ethnonyms are also used), have been gaining ground, in both visibility of land acreage, as well as important economic advantages, through their demands, often by proxy, for the recognition of their traditional rights over the lands they occupy. Indeed, they have come to occupy incredibly vast expanses of interior territories, to be recognised by the Administration as the _de jure_ holders of those territories and, increasingly by the day, to be acknowledged as their rightful, exclusive users and managers.
Beyond the Green Myth

The purpose of this study is to expose the actual situation of Kalimantan Punan – which is quite different from that of Sarawak Penan, such as it has been popularised by general-audience printed and audiovisual media and environmental and advocacy non-governmental organisations. Although I do not claim that this situation has contributed much to improve the Punan’s true social and economic welfare, it stresses that they, in Kalimantan at least, are generally not, and by far, the poor, helpless wretches that they are often portrayed as or that they themselves want to be viewed as. It does not profess to offer new, ready-made solutions to their current problems; rather, it proposes to look at these problems in a different light.

This study is based on a number of periods of fieldwork, in the Upper Mahakam, Tabang (Mahakam), Upper Kapuas, Upper Busang and Upper Murung (Barito), Malinau, Apo Kayan, and Pujungan (all three in Bulungan), between 1974 and 2001. It also builds upon a published corpus of my earlier work on the subject of Punan, to which the reader is referred, but which is only briefly summarised in passing where it seemed relevant. Figures, although often of potentially dubious accuracy, are mainly derived from government reports.

My starting point is, as implied above, the striking fact that tiny Punan communities occupy and, at least \textit{de jure}, control huge tracts of forested hinterland, the wealth of which in terms of natural resources makes them a prime target for a variety of often predatory outside parties.

PUNAN AND LAND: THE SITUATION TODAY

I shall first consider the current situation of several clusters of formerly nomadic groups in the interior of Kalimantan with regard to the lands they officially occupy. The reader may wish to skip lengthy and tedious descriptions and go straight to the final sub-section of this section.

The Indonesian administration recognises the smallest administrative unit, the \textit{desa} or village (entities beneath the level of the \textit{desa}, the \textit{dusun} and the \textit{Rukun Tetangga}, or RT, have but little relevance to my argument). Each \textit{desa} has an exclusive territory, \textit{wilayah desa}, the boundaries of which are set by the government, albeit very roughly in the case of unmapped interior regions. In principle, the people of a given \textit{desa} farm, hunt, fish, and collect within their \textit{wilayah desa}, but this is not necessarily true everywhere, and particularly in the case of Punan. In any event, however, a \textit{desa} has official jurisdiction over its \textit{wilayah desa}.
I shall consider here the three most important clusters of Punan communities (in terms of numbers of people) in the interior of Kalimantan (see Map 3.1): (A) the cluster of the upper Malinau and upper Tubu (or Tubu', Tubo', etc.) rivers, Malinau District, Bulungan Regency, East Kalimantan (see Map 3.2); (B) the cluster located in Kayan Hulu and Kayan Hilir districts of Bulungan Regency, Tabang District of Kutai Regency, and Segah and Kelai districts of Berau Regency, East Kalimantan (see Map 3.3); and (C) the cluster of the uppermost Kapuas River, Putussibau District, Kapuas Hulu Regency, West Kalimantan, and adjacent river basins across the Müller Mountains in Central and East Kalimantan (see Map 3.4). It should be noted that here I am using the administrative divisions prior to the last years of the twentieth century, when the boundaries of some districts were altered and new regencies were created.

Map 3.1. Location of Three Clusters Studied
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A note of warning is necessary here. Available maps, including recent government maps (e.g., *Peta Indeks* 1994), although computer generated, are unreliable, especially for interior regions of East and Central Kalimantan (but good maps of West Kalimantan were drawn during the colonial period). Map scales appear whimsical; regency and district boundaries are approximately correct, but provincial boundaries remain irreconcilable; and limits of *wilayah desa* were obviously drawn straight across rivers and mountains with no concern whatsoever for actual relevant geographic features; also, surfaces of districts (e.g., *Ikhtisar Statistik* 1998) are very rough approximations, and surfaces of *wilayah desa* (e.g., *Data Jumlah* 1995) are sometimes simply random. I relied mainly on my own maps, and only on a spot basis on government cartographic documents, whenever they appeared consistent with reality.

Malinau–Tubu

This area used to be home to the largest single cluster of Punan in Kalimantan and, possibly, in the whole of Borneo. These people refer to themselves as Punan Tubu and Punan Malinau and now tend to consider themselves a single ethnocultural entity, although this is probably derived from the conglomeration of several earlier groups of diverse origins although this is beyond the scope of the present study (see Sellato 2001, Kaskija 2002; also, Kaskija and Klimut and Puri, in this volume). A notable proportion of the Punan communities living in this area has now moved out to large resettlement villages downriver (see Kaskija 1998, 2002). By about 1960, prior to downstream migration and later resettlement, there were probably over 3,000 Punan in the Tubu drainage and the upper Malinau area. Today, there may be between 3,500 and 4,000 Punan distributed in Malinau and Mentarang districts (see Map 3.2).

As of the closing decade of the twentieth century, there remained five *desa* in the upper Malinau (Halanga, Punan Mirau, Metut, Long Lake', and Long Jalan) and five more in the upper Tubu (Rian Tubu, Long Titi, Long Pada, Long Nyau, and Long Ranau; see Kaskija 2002), inhabited almost exclusively by Punan. Those are the official *desa*, acknowledged by the government. In practice, the Punan communities may live elsewhere in the vicinity. Again, in practice, although Punan communities having relocated downriver no longer hold official rights over their former territories – formal jurisdiction over land now lies solely with the upriver *desa* – they still retain customary (*adat*) rights of use over land and resources and, often, spend more time there, collecting forest products, than they do in their resettlement village.
Altogether, the current official upstream Punan population amounts to 1,124 people – 688 in the upper Malinau and 436 in the upper Tubu (Kaskija 2002) – an average of hardly over 100 people per desa. This represents about five per cent of the whole population of Malinau District (almost 20,000 in 1997; see *Ikhtisar Statistik* 1998).

The land areas, as described in government reports, of the wilayah of those ten desa, are quite inaccurate. In remote interior regions, they never were properly measured or calculated, and often were never even visited by government agents. Although even recent editions of maps (e.g., *Peta Indeks* 1994) are unreliable in this matter, an idea of the size of Punan wilayah desa can be obtained, against a better cartographic background, to at least figure out their total in terms of a percentage of the district’s surface. If the figure of 5,238 sq. km for the whole of Malinau District is correct (*Ikhtisar Statistik* 1998) – and it does seem about correct – then Punan wilayah desa in the upper Malinau and upper Tubu drainages would amount to a total of about 40 per cent, that is, some 2,000 sq. km (see Map 3.2).
This means that five per cent of the district’s population occupy 40 per cent of its territory. Population density in Punan areas is just above 0.5 person per sq. km, in contrast to a figure of almost six for the rest of the district, or an average of about four for the district as a whole.

If we exclude the urban section of the district’s population (Malinau Kota, now probably around 5,000 and other, smaller centres), the Punan represent less than ten per cent of the rural population. The average wilayah of a Punan desa in the upper Malinau and upper Tubu areas amounts to over 200 sq. km. Excluding, again, the urban population, the remaining 50-odd rural desa of Malinau District each control a wilayah of an average 50 sq. km for a population of over 200 per desa.

To the northeast of this ‘Punan’ area, along the eastern boundary of Malinau District, the case of the Punan of Gong Solok and Bengalun only confirms, on a smaller scale, the picture above: less than 300 souls occupy another five per cent of the district’s area (Peta Indeks 1994 and Ikhtisar Statistik 1998).

Across the district boundaries, smaller Punan territories are found in Long Pujungan District (Punan Benalui of desa Long Lame), Long Peso District (Punan Bahau, part of desa Long Telenjau, Naha Aya’, and Long Lasan; see Sellato 2001), and Kerayan District (Punan Tubu of desa Pa Ibang). In Tanjung Palas District, several villages of Punan (known as Punan Sekatak; see Appell 1983) are found across the boundary from those of Gong Solok and Bengalun.

**Kayan–Tabang–Segah–Kelai**

This area (see Map 3.3) includes the headwaters of the Kayan I’ut (or Kayan ’Ok), a major tributary of the main Kayan River (Bulungan Regency), of the Belayan (or Tabang) and Boh rivers, both major tributaries of the Mahakam (Kutai Regency), and of the Segah and Kelai, the two branches of the Berau River (Berau Regency). This mountainous massif, with several peaks above 2,000 m, is actually inhabited by two distinct Punan clusters, the Punan Kelai in the east and, in the west, a set of groups ultimately originating from western Borneo.

In Kayan Hilir District, the Punan Haput, a group related to the Western Penan of Sarawak, live in two settlements, Long Metun (known as Long Metun II) and Long Pipa (or Long Kipa), on the Kayan I’ut River. As of 1995, these two settlements totalled less than 600 people – of which a substantial part comprised outsiders who came to reside there to collect forest products. Their combined wilayah desa amounts to some 30 per cent of the total district’s surface of about 13,000 sq. km, i.e., about 4,000 sq. km. As a whole, however,
Kayan Hilir District, due to massive out-migration, is now very thinly populated (about 1,400 souls; Data Jumlah 1995), with a density of 0.1 persons per sq. km.

In Kayan Hulu District, one Punan village, Long Top, formerly on the Uhu’ (or Oho’) River, is now located on the Boh River, a tributary of the Mahakam. These Punan are Lisum who came from Sarawak in the nineteenth century to seek the protection of the Kenyah of Apo Kayan against headhunting Iban. The wilayah of desa Long Top comprises about 20 per cent (about 1,200 sq. km) of the whole area of the district (5,800 sq. km).

The population of Long Top, however, is only 73 (Data Jumlah 1995), an extremely low number, whereas the district, although it has lost a substantial part of its population to out-migration since the 1960s, still retains over 5,000 people in the remaining 80 per cent of its area, with a density of over one person per sq. km.
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In Tabang District, on the upper Belayan River, five Punan desa occupy over 60 per cent of the total surface of the district, that is, over 4,000 sq. km of a total 7,150 sq. km. In the early 1990s, the combined population of the five Punan desa reached less than 600 (Data Jumlah 1995). These Punan are Lisum and Beketan, who have come from western Borneo, in several groups and by several different routes, in the course of the last 150 years. (In 2001, their population had soared to about 1,000 persons, of whom more than 25 per cent were non-Punan transient residents involved in the trade of edible birds’ nests.)

It should be noted that these people, although they have been the object of several official resettlement programs since the 1960s, have to date not totally resettled (Sellato 2002b). A proportion of them live in the compound village of Sungai Lunuk, near Kota Tabang, but many have returned to their old lands. In any event, their traditional wilayah desa appear to have been officially preserved as such.

Thus, with 600 persons ‘occupying’ 4,000 sq. km, the virtual population density is less than 0.2 per sq. km. Meanwhile, for the remaining 12 desa of Tabang District, totalling almost 10,000 persons, the density reaches over three persons per sq. km.

To the southwest, in the eastern corner of Long Bagun District, the Punan Merah hamlet of Long Merah (comprising about 100 Lisum) still occupies a good part of the Merah river drainage area. Long Merah, once a Punan desa, has now, for all practical purposes, become a Kenyah desa.

In Berau Regency, two districts, Kelay and Segah, are home to a number of Punan settlements. In Kelay District, six Punan settlements (L. Kaskija, pers. comm. 1993) collectively comprise about 800 people, or about one-third of the district’s population (2,440), occupying over 60 per cent, or 3,500 sq. km, of the district’s total area of 5,900 sq. km (Peta Indeks 1994, Data Jumlah 1995).

Segah District shows a less extreme situation, with three or four Punan settlements, totalling around 600 people, or 25 per cent of the district population (2,500), occupying 40 per cent, or 2,000 sq. km, of the district’s total area of 5,100 sq. km (ibid.). Adjacent to Segah District, the south-western tip of Long Peso District, in Bulungan Regency, has one Punan village, Long Yiin (also known as Long Pelaah), with an extensive wilayah desa and only about 100 inhabitants.

There is, therefore, a large cluster of Punan settlements, distributed through six districts in three regencies. This Punan territory also encompasses the north-western part of Muara Wahau District and the northern tip of Muara Ancalong District, both in Kutai Regency. It covers a total area of over 15,000 sq. km, all of it heavily forested, with a total population of certainly less than 3,000 (and an overall population density of 0.2 per sq. km).
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Upper Kapuas and Müller Mountains

In West Kalimantan, the Putussibau District of Kapuas Hulu Regency is home to two main groups of former nomads, the Bukat (see Thambiah in this volume) and the Punan, the latter including the Hovongan (or Punan Bungan; see Ngo in this volume) of the Bungan River and the Kereho (or Punan Keriau) of the Keriau River (see Map 3.4). The combined relocation of remote hamlets and alteration of administrative divisions in the 1980s led to a situation whereby only two desa now remain (Registrasi 1994): Bungan Jaya, comprising three dusun (Nanga Lapung, Bungan, and Tanjung Lokang), totalling 650 persons, mostly Hovongan; and Beringin Jaya, comprising dusun Sepan Satu (Kereho, 151 persons), dusun Metelunai

Map 3.4. The Upper Kapuas River Area
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(Bukat, 173 persons), and dusun Nanga Balang (mixed, 275 persons). Another Bukat group formerly had its own desa, Nanga Hovat (or Obat), on the upper Mendalam River. It has now become a dusun (of 264 persons), part of the Kayan desa of Datah Dian, and those vast traditional Bukat territories have come under Kayan jurisdiction. (Regarding this area, see also Sellato 1986, 1989, 1994a, 1995a.)

According to official documents, Putussibau District covers approximately 9,500 sq. km and had in 1992 a total population of 23,500 (Registrasi 1994), thus a density of 2.5 people per sq. km. The wilayah of desa Bungan Jaya and Beringin Jaya, not including the territories occupied by the Bukat of dusun Nanga Hovat, amount to over 60 per cent of the district’s area, or about 6,000 sq. km. Considering a total ‘Punan’ population of about 1,500, this area is thus controlled by slightly over five per cent of the district’s population (with a density, in ‘Punan’ territory, of 0.25 persons per sq. km).

In adjacent Central Kalimantan, to the southeast, another Kereho group, the Kereho Busang, occupies the upper half of the Busang River (Sumber Barito District of Barito Utara Regency). As of the year 1980, about 300 Kereho lived on the Busang (Sellato 1994a). In the course of time, however, they mixed with their downstream neighbours, the Ot Danum, and their separate desa became integrated into larger, mainly Ot Danum desa, with the exception of desa Tumbang Jojang, predominantly Kereho, which controls the headwaters of the Busang River, a region of about 1,000 sq. km.

In the upper Mahakam area, to the east, the Long Apari District of Kutai Regency includes one Bukat village, Noha Tivap (with a population of less than 200). In earlier times, these Bukat lived upstream from the last Aoheng settlement and controlled the headwaters of the Mahakam (Sellato 1980, 1986, 1994a). In the course of the twentieth century, however, they were relocated downstream and the broad territories of the headwaters became part of the wilayah of the Aoheng desa of Long Apari. Noha Tivap, although it has remained a separate desa, now has a tiny wilayah.

Altogether, the groups of former nomads of the Müller Mountains, now amounting to a total population of about 2,000 or less, still occupy some 7,000 sq. km of forested mountainous territories, which, moreover, are rich in gold, birds’ nests, and various other forest products.

The Overall Picture

Altogether, with 1,100 Punan scattered across 2,000 sq. km in Malinau District, 3,000 Punan on 15,000 sq. km in the Apokayan–Tabang–Segah–Kelai region,
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and 2,000 Punan on 7,000 sq. km in the Müller Mountains area, it appears that some 6,000 persons are in a position of formal jurisdiction over territories (their official wilayah desa) amounting to almost 25,000 sq. km, all or most of it forested uplands holding much sought-after trade products.

The average population density of 0.25 per sq. km (with a range from 0.1 to 0.5) seems consistent throughout the regions under scrutiny.

The three cases put forth above are the most prominent, but not the only ones. One could cite the Punan group controlling the upper Murung River (Sumber Barito District, Barito Utara Regency, Central Kalimantan) and a good part of the Ratah River (Long Iram District, Kutai Regency, East Kalimantan; about this Murung-Ratah group, see Sellato 1986); or, less noteworthy, the group, mentioned above, controlling the upper Sekatak river drainage and adjacent streams in Tanjung Palas District (see Appell 1983).

Those 25,000 sq. km computed above account for five per cent of the total area of Kalimantan (see Map 3.1), the population of which reached almost 11 million according to the 2000 census. By this standard, those Punan communities that have chosen to remain upriver rather than relocate downstream are (officially, though often only virtually) the biggest landlords in Kalimantan.

Phrased in this way, this may sound quite striking, or even provocative, but, in itself, the situation is not new and thus should not surprise one, for the fact that, to the extent of my knowledge, quantitative data had never before been computed, other than in very crude terms (see Sellato 1994a), nor had the issue been described in terms of the Punan’s official jurisdiction over their lands.

I shall now investigate the historical processes – involving both traditional, pre-colonial social and political patterns and colonial and post-colonial administrative choices – that have led to the current situation. We will first review the question of ethnicity, then that of territoriality.

PUNAN, FARMERS, AND ETHNICITY

By the turn of the twentieth century, the Dutch finally penetrated the mountain ranges of the remote hinterland of Kalimantan and came into contact with the most isolated nomadic groups (see, e.g., Molengraaff 1902, Nieuwenhuis 1900, Stolk 1907, Van Walchren 1907).

The data collected by the Dutch, as well as reconstructions derived from oral histories collected among nomads and former nomads (e.g., Sellato 1986, 1994a, 2001, Kaskija 1998, 2002), allow us to form an idea of the pre-twentieth-century regional social fabric and how nomadic groups fit into it.
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In the course of time, nomadic groups developed trade relationships with neighbouring non-nomadic groups, based on barter of commercial forest products, which the coastal markets demanded (Sellato 1994a, 2005a). Trade relationships, in time, led to certain patterns of client–patron or vassal–overlord bonds and to economic and political subordination (Sellato 1994a: 164 et sq.) – and even, locally, deep subservience bordering on slavery – of nomadic groups to their neighbours. Such situations began prevailing as early as trade relationships intensified between given nomadic and settled partners, and continued into the colonial period.

The fact that some remote nomadic groups, according to their own historical traditions, remained without iron, salt, or dogs till some time in the nineteenth century attests that trade networks reached them much later than they did other, more accessible groups. Patterns of farmer–nomad relationships thus show a gradation, based on the intensity of trade and proximity from coastal trade ports. This gradation is a function of both distance and time. Here, of course, the island’s geography and morphology play a prominent role, from coastal regions to remote water divides, along the axes of major rivers. This continuum of patterns has been broken down into three categories as described below.

In relatively easily accessible coastal and lower-river regions, petty states controlled trade at the mouths of rivers (see Healey 1985, Rousseau 1989, Hall 1995). Groups of ‘nomads’ here were totally subordinated to a coastal ruler. For a substantial part, they were likely to have been slaves imported through the inter-island trade networks (Warren 1981, Needham 1983, Sellato 2001), whom the ruler had acquired to work on his lands. This was probably the case, among others, of the Punan Batu in Berau, some Basap along the northern east coast and on the lower Mahakam, and part of the Punan Bengalun. A major reason for the use of slave or enslaved labour in these coastal areas was to expedite more easily the exploitation of birds’ nest caves (Sellato 2001 and 2005b).

A similar situation pertained to lower- and middle-river regions, where farming tribal groups had ‘their’ Punan, strictly affiliated – albeit not enslaved – nomadic groups, which were used, as in the case of the coastal kingdoms, to exploit birds’ nest caves, as well as other commercial forest resources, for their patrons’ benefit. (The farming chieftains also imported slave labour, which the coastal rulers pushed on them in order to boost production and, therefore, increase trade revenue.) This was the case of the Punan Ga’ai, under the control of the Ga’ai in the lower Kayan; the Punan Bahau, under the control of ‘Kayan’ groups (see above), also in the lower Kayan; the Punan Sekatak, under the control of the Berusu’ in the Sekatak River; the Punan Ratah, under the control of the
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Bahau in the middle Mahakam (Sellato 1986); and, possibly, some of the Punan Malinau, under the control of the Merap in the Malinau River.

Further inland, along the upper reaches of a major river, nomadic groups were under permanent control of a locally prominent farming group, but as ‘allies’ or partners rather than dependent labour. Farmingchieftains had certain ways of coaxing nomads into collecting forest products and conducting trade exclusively with them, but they could not coerce nomads, as this would result in their withdrawal from trade contacts (Sellato 1994a). These ways included a relative lack of alternative trade outlets for the nomads, for reasons of distance or warfare, which made them dependent for manufactured goods on their settled partners; the establishment of marriage and blood-brotherhood bonds between nomads and farmers; some degree of cultural assimilation; and, in some cases, the need for a nomad to supply an expensive bridewealth to marry into the farming group.

For example, several Bukat bands associated with the Kayan on the Mendalam River, upper Kapuas, while another Bukat group associated with the Aoheng on the uppermost Mahakam; one Lisum band took refuge with the Kenyah Leppo’ Tau around Apo Kayan; one Penan Geng group followed the Kenyah Badeng into the Bahau; the Punan Mentarang associated with the Tebilun (or Abai) in the Sesayap, and part of the Punan Tubu also associated with the Tebilun in the lower half of the Tubu River; the Punan groups in the Kelai and Segah rivers associated with the Segai of Berau. In the same way, bands of Beketan (or Ukit) associated with certain upriver Iban communities in central Sarawak.

These partnerships were sometimes quite stable through time, and Punan bands sometimes willingly followed their farming partners along the latter’s migrations to new lands. If, however, the farming chieftain treated ‘his’ Punan unfairly in trade or made excessive demands on them (e.g., corvées or expeditions), the nomadic band would simply move away and find a better partner. For example, the Punan Kohi of the Langasa River, associated with the Busang Uma’ Suling on the upper Mahakam (Sellato 1994a: 170), felt they were treated as slaves by the Busang chief and migrated east, to end up on the Merah River (see above) in an association with the local Bahau group.

Nevertheless, in the most isolated areas, other nomadic bands were relatively free to range vast stretches of uninhabited forested mountains between major river basins, maintaining shifting associations with various farming groups over water divides. For example, the Kereho of the Busang River traded to the upper Kapuas, as well as with their Ot Danum neighbours downstream (Sellato 1994a: 75–100); the Punan of the upper Murung, Central Kalimantan, traded with the people of the region above the rapids of the Mahakam as well as with their Murung
neighbours downstream (Sellato 1986). Considerations of the current economic opportunities at the time – e.g., types of trade products and their prices – and of practical constraints – distance or insecurity – governed trade patterns.

Trade thus fashioned the patterns of relationships between nomads and farmers. While nomads, once they had adopted iron axes and dogs, could no longer satisfy themselves with their old subsistence techniques, farmers needed the revenue of forest-product trade in order to acquire imported prestige goods (ceramic and bronze artefacts) and modern weaponry (small cannons). So, nomads and farmers needed each other’s trade (for further discussion, see Sellato 1994a: 164 et sq.).

For the sake of my argument, I must stress here the distinction between stratified and non-stratified tribal groups and the impact of this distinction on the evolving relations of nomads with their neighbours, in terms of ethnicity.

While the economic base of all these settled Bornean societies has largely been the same – prominent swidden rice cultivation, hunting and fishing of varying importance, and trade – stratified societies are those in which inequality is ideologically expressed in formal, named classes (or ranks) that are, furthermore, functional and relevant at all levels in everyday life. Non-stratified societies do not formally express inequality and, when they do, it is not really relevant and functional in daily life. Rather than being egalitarian, however, they are highly competitive, and prestige, status, and political influence distinguish the ‘good’ (and rich) from the ‘bad’ (and poor) (see Sellato 1987, 2002b; also, Sellato forthcoming 2).

Although non-stratified societies comprise the bulk of the inland peoples of Borneo, in the regions under consideration stratified societies are the rule rather than the exception (see Rousseau 1990). They include various sub-groups of the Kayan (Kayan proper, Busang, Bahau), Kenyah, and Modang (Ga’ai, Segai, Long-Gelat), as well as certain other linguistically and culturally related groups (Merap, Aoheng, etc.).

It is really not so much the ideology of inequality that has relevance here than the ‘closed’ vs ‘open’ nature of these societies (Sellato 1987, 2002b). Social ascription in stratified groups is very rigid – a person belongs to a stem family, itself belonging to a longhouse, which itself belongs to an aristocratic family, and this holds for one’s lifetime and one’s offspring. In such a bounded society, an individual is either a full member of the community, socially as well as ritually, or a complete stranger. Conversely, in a number of non-stratified societies, group membership focuses more on a system of ego-centred networks (‘grid’) of personal relations than on social structure or even kinship. These are more informal, more fluid, and individuals and families, and even groups, are often
free to move in and out of the community as part of a dynamic process of fission and fusion (see Sellato 1997 and forthcoming 2). (This is not quite true of other non-stratified societies, such as the Iban.)

Another distinguishing feature is the fundamental dedication of stratified societies to rice farming based on their cosmogony and ideology. People of the commoner and slave categories are often fully employed by their aristocratic masters at farming and, therefore, devote relatively little time to collecting forest products. In contrast to this, individuals in non-stratified societies are relatively free to select their economic pursuits and may choose to invest their time in collecting rather than farming. This is particularly true in pioneer regions, where forest-product collecting is an important activity involving many households, and where long-distance expeditions, well beyond the community’s territory, are organised. This accounts for the fact that stratified societies or, rather, their chiefs, have more need for Punan nomads, as collectors of forest products, than do the non-stratified societies.

Indeed, in stratified societies, trade is mediated, pooled, and even appropriated by the ruling families, who ‘own’ a territory and its resources, as well as a group of people within the territory and these people’s labour. In the same way, they own ‘their’ Punan and they alone deal with them. Conversely, in non-stratified societies, any individual may establish bonds with a given Punan band and conduct trade with it for his own benefit.

The societal features above must be kept in mind when discussing ethnicity in Borneo. Through trade, cultural intercourse, intermarriage, and finally the adoption of agriculture, nomadic groups associated with non-stratified farming groups, in the course of time, simply assimilated into the patron group. In cultural terms, as in terms of ethnic identity, they became the same as their patrons. In this way, for example, the Lugat and a large part of the Beketan of Sarawak became Iban, a group known for its especially strong capacity for cultural assimilation of minor neighbouring groups; part of the Punan Murung became Murung (Sellato 1986); and the downriver Kereho became Ot Danum on the Busang River (see Sellato 1994a: 174).

In contrast, and this was the case in most of Kalimantan, particularly East Kalimantan, social and cultural boundaries remained strong between nomadic groups and stratified farmers, little intermarriage occurred, and communities of former nomads remained separate. The Punan, then, generally retained their name and their identity as Punan, although there are a few known cases of Punan bands assimilating into stratified farming groups after very long periods of close interaction. (The case of the Kenyah, nowadays a very heterogeneous cluster of ethnolinguistic groups, is ambiguous: While some were ultimately derived from
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nomadic bands, one is led to consider a bi-phased process with adoption of social stratification occurring much later than the bands’ conversion to farming practices; see Sellato 1995b).

Punan have been encouraged by the chiefs of stratified farmers to remain Punan, i.e., nomadic, and to carry on with their commercial collecting activities. The role of trade in forest products is crucial in this process of non-assimilation. Stratified groups need outsiders to collect for them in order to guarantee the flow of trade. If they do not have their own Punan band, they may try to lure one away from another farming group. Otherwise, they may ask outsiders from afar to come and exploit their territories for them. For instance, the Kayan of the upper Mahakam called in a team of Bekumpai, a Muslim Ngaju group from the lower Barito for this purpose (Sellato 1986).

Ethnicity, thus, and particularly its persistence through interaction with neighbouring farming groups, has very much depended on the stratified vs non-stratified makeup of these neighbouring societies. Whereas stratified societies contributed to the continuation of the Punan way of life and identity, the cultural boundaries between nomads and non-stratified farmers involved in intensive forest-product collecting became somewhat irrelevant and assimilation ensued, leading to the waning of those Punan groups’ identity (for further discussion of Punan identity, see Sellato 1993b).

In the case of the Punan Tubu, this contrast is quite striking. A proportion of them were associated with the stratified Merap and persisted with their traditional way of life till the end of the twentieth century on the upper Malinau. The other part, long associated with the non-stratified Tebilun on the lower Tubu River, have now virtually become Tebilun, except with regard to language (Kaskija 1998 and 2002, Sellato 2001).

The contrast, just described above, between two Punan subgroups separated by geography has been found to occur also along a time scale. A reconstruction of the history of the Aoheng showed nomadic groups easily assimilating into the early Aoheng who were non-stratified horticulturalists. Later on, the Aoheng, once they had become Kayanised and stratified rice farmers, simply stopped assimilating neighbouring nomadic bands, who then remained around as separate entities (see Sellato 1986, 1992, and 2002b).

TERRITORIALITY, TRADITIONAL AND MODERN

The three clusters of Punan communities under scrutiny in this study have been and, to some degree, remain associated with stratified groups of shifting rice
farmers. This section focuses, firstly, on the way Punan territorial patterns in the ‘pre-colonial’ situation were set in relation to the regionally prevailing traditional territorial patterns pertaining to stratified societies; and, secondly, on the way in which, first, the colonial, and then, the Indonesian administrations dealt with the question of Punan territories, again in the context of a prevalence of stratified farming societies.

Prior to the time when collecting forest products for trade became their main pursuit, nomadic groups were ranging the forest primarily in search of food, with particular interest in sago palm groves. The distribution and size of sago groves governed the size of the bands and the range and frequency of their migrations. Although there might have been local conflicts between neighbouring Punan bands over subsistence resources, most of the data available indicate that concepts of territoriality were quite weak among the nomads (Sellato 1994a: 133–136). Indeed, neighbouring bands, most often, were related by blood, and cooperation rather than feud must have prevailed.

The domain of a Punan group, that is, the area within which a number of related bands circulate, was typically an upland area of headwaters, straddling the water divide of several river basins. It was, by definition, and at any point in time, located upriver from areas occupied by the most inland farmers’ settlements on any of the river basins concerned. Those limits were unstable through time, as farmers could move further upriver in a quest for fresh farm lands or, on the contrary, withdraw downstream, closer to market towns. These dynamic boundaries had an effect on the Punan economy, constraining or expanding their circular migration patterns.

It appears that a number of Punan groups refer to a place of origin, located more or less at the centre of their area, and from which they dispersed and spread (Sellato 1994a: 134). Whether based on historical reality or not, this somewhat mythical ‘centre’ may have later come to form the foundation for modern territorial claims. This mostly holds for those bands that believe that they never migrated out of that area. Such is the case of the Bukat of West Kalimantan. In contrast, relative newcomers to an area tend to overlook their alien origins and focus territorial claims on their current area of residence. For example, the Lisum now in the Tabang area never laid claim to former territories in Sarawak, although they acknowledge that they once came from there (Sellato 1986), and instead struggle to maintain their rights in Tabang. As for the Punan Tubu, in order to sustain modern territorial rights, they now claim that they have ‘always lived in the upper Tubu River’, although their historical tradition clearly tells of other, extraneous origins (Sellato 2001).
These Punan domains, however, never have been formally recognised by neighbouring farmers as ‘Punan territory’ – taken here in a legal sense. Territorial boundaries were established between neighbouring farming groups through formal treaties based on customary law. Territories could be conquered, sold, borrowed, or given away for free, but were always the locus of a formal, ritually-sanctioned agreement between the parties involved (Sellato 2001) – which did not include nomadic bands. Such agreements were still used in formal land transfers, even when brokered by the government, well into the 1990s (Jacobus 2003). Whereas their limits along main rivers were quite precisely set, territories included whole tributary basins up to their water divides, where boundaries were rather hazy. Therefore, the territories of farming groups were adjacent to one another at the water divides, nomadic bands being in no way taken into consideration in the delineation of boundaries, and there was therefore no territory formally allocated to a nomadic group in a given area. According to adat, nomads were residing and subsisting on farmers’ lands – they had the usufruct, wild food resources, of these lands – and were often referred to by farmers as ‘guests’ or ‘visitors’ (e.g., Sellato 1994a: v) – and held no traditional territorial rights recognised by farming groups. The farmers’ chieftains, as mentioned above, owned the territory – land and waters – and whatever grew on, flew above, swam in, or walked upon it, and this included its Punan residents.

In the long process of progressive Punan sedentism (see Sellato 1994a: 163–214), a trade hamlet was established, at the farmers’ initiative, right at the boundary of their farming area, for the Punan first to come and trade, then to start some basic forms of agriculture, and finally to settle for part of the year. In time, this hamlet came to mark the downstream limit of the Punan subsistence and collecting area. Much later, it would become a formal territorial marker which the Punan would take advantage of.

Nomadic bands, then, whether they were still nomadic or half settled, whether they still relied mainly on wild sago or had started relying on agriculture (Sellato 1994a: 173–180), spent much time collecting trade products for their farming patrons or partners. Those trade products, which by then had become crucial to both the farmer and the Punan economies, had to be protected and their sustained flow guaranteed. The Punan at the same time exploited the farmers’ territory and acted as its watchdogs at the water divides, defending it against intruders. The farming chiefs made sure that no outsiders were allowed to collect in their territories, in effect instructing the Punan to kill them.

Conflicts over trade resources, it appears, were much more common and much bloodier than those over food resources had been (see Sellato 1994a: 136–139,
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2005a). In this way, for example, the Bukat band of the upper Mahakam patrolled the uppermost section of the river, which was the territory of the Aoheng of Long Apari, and often skirmished with intruding teams of Iban collectors making incursions from Sarawak. This led in 1885 to the region’s last full-scale war (Sellato 1986). Other Bukat bands, on the upper Mendalam, attempted to ward off, on behalf of their Kayan patrons, teams of marauding Iban and Beketan from Sarawak.

Punan, thus, got into the habit of defending what they viewed as ‘their’ territories, which sustained their economy, which had come to be based more on commercial collecting than on subsistence hunting and gathering, but which remained *de jure*, following the regional customary legal system, the farmers’ territories.

When farming communities decided to migrate to other areas, in order to either procure fresh farming land or gain closer proximity to markets, associated Punan bands, or some of them, occasionally chose to follow their partners. Reasons were that the Punan needed the warlike farmers’ protection against other warlike groups, such as the Iban, or simply that they were satisfied with their current partnership. When reaching their new territory, the farming chief would ‘install’ his Punan in a particular area, either because it was rich in forest products or because it needed to be protected from enemy neighbours.

Sometimes, the farming chief would distribute his Punan to several areas to suit his various purposes. In such a way, the Merap chiefs split their Punan between the upper Tubu, rich in forest products, and the upper Malinau, where the Merap held bird’s nest caves in need of protection. Likewise, the Kenyah Badeng, moving from eastern Sarawak into the Bahau drainage basin, positioned their Punan, the Punan Benalui (or Punan Badeng, a sub-group of the Penan Geng of Sarawak), in both the upper Lurah area and the Aran River. In addition, the diverse ‘Kayan’ groups that moved from the middle Bahau River down to the lower Kayan River positioned their Punan as a buffer between themselves and the Merap – and launched raids from there on the Merap’s caves.

At the onset of Dutch colonial rule over Kalimantan (for further details of the Dutch colonial period in eastern Borneo, see Black 1985, Lindblad 1988, Magenda 1991), scores of Punan groups had thus been positioned by their patrons to occupy *de facto* – albeit not to own *de jure* – vast upriver tracts of territories formally belonging to farming groups.

One important point, perhaps never previously stressed, is that, from the first expeditions to the hinterland in the mid-nineteenth century, the Dutch recognised Punan groups for what they were, i.e., separate ethnocultural entities, ethnic groups in their own right, whereas the farming groups certainly had
tended, down the centuries (as did some anthropologists after them, e.g., Hoffman 1986), to view Punan societies as a mere part, or extension, of their own world.

After 1900, and more in earnest after about 1920, the colonial administration attempted to settle the Punan, out of a feeling of pity for those poor, forever-wandering wretches whom they viewed as being taken advantage of and cheated in trade by farmers, as well as out of a sense of mission to civilise the savages. The administration cajoled the Punan headmen into moving their bands downstream from their inaccessible forest haunts, urged farming chieftains to grant farm land to the Punan, ... and took over the trade in forest products from the farmers (Sellato 1994a: 39–44).

It appears that the farmers’ understanding of this was that these lands were simply lent to the nomads to help them convert to farming and become civilised – an endeavour that they certainly did find worthy (see Bouman 1924) – and that their formal ownership, based on their adat, of the land, as well as of the nomads themselves, would not be later questioned. Indeed, the regional adat of the hinterland tribal groups proved extremely resilient, to the extent that it is still resorted to in today’s land conflicts in interior Borneo (see Jacobus 2003).

Through time, the Dutch mapped Kalimantan anew in administrative terms down to the district, under a controleur (controller), and they apparently satisfied themselves with condoning the prevailing adat territories of the farming groups’ villages. They did not intervene, except in cases of conflicts, to redraw local ethnic boundaries and did not attempt to establish new, administrative territorial boundaries at village level. The farming chiefs, who remained in charge throughout the colonial period, felt that their authority over their lands and their people was not really challenged, except for the abolition of slavery, which, at least officially but not quite so in practice, deprived them of an important source of revenue (Sellato 2001).

By the end of the colonial period, however, Punan groups were most often positioned in the uppermost settlements of their river basins, not far upstream from the last farming villages. They thus commanded vast, uninhabited areas of the uppermost inland waterways, where farmers would hardly ever venture. In fact, those areas were even vaster than before the advent of Dutch rule, for they also included farm lands, on which the farming chiefs had settled Punan bands.

Later on, the centralised Indonesian administration created the kecamatan, or district, which more often than not followed the existing ethnic boundaries, and
the *desa*, or village, the smallest administrative division. The *desa* was allocated a formal territory, or *wilayah desa* (see above). Each tiny hamlet of settled or half-settled Punan, thus, found itself with a formal, bounded territory, which really had been amputated from a farming group’s traditional territory, and over which it now had full jurisdiction. This territory, usually an upper river basin, was generally quite vast, densely forested, and rich in valuable commercial forest products.

In this way, scores of small groups of former nomads have come to control huge tracts of the hinterland, much to the resentment of these territories’ former masters, who sometimes, still today, attempt to assert their traditional rights over these lands, as in the case which the Merap of the upper Malinau are building against the Punan Malinau.

In certain cases, however, luckier or more insightful farming chiefs had arranged for their Punan partners to settle, or resettle, downstream from their own villages, and thus remained formally in control of upriver areas. Such was the situation for the Aoheng of Long Apari, whose previously nomadic Bukat were resettled at Noha Tivap, downstream from Long Apari, leaving the Aoheng in control of the headwaters area; or of the Kenyah Badeng, who maintained three households at their old village of Long Bena, upstream from the resettled Punan Benalui hamlets, only to retain control of the Lurah headwaters. This, of course, does not preclude the Bukat or the Punan Benalui carrying on ranging their former patrons’ inland territories in search of commercial forest products.

In the course of time, those Punan bands that, due to the stratified societies’ structural incapacity to assimilate them, had retained their Punan identity, by the time of early Dutch interference, were recognised as ethnic entities in their own right, and not just appendages to farming societies. Among the bands so recognised as separate ethnic entities, those that, during Dutch times, settled down upstream from their farming partners saw the areas they controlled expand to include farm lands. Those groups that had remained as separate communities were formally endowed with their own, exclusive territories, by the time the Indonesian administration established the *desa* system. Finally, among the Punan communities that were granted *desa* status, those that, because of their staunch bent toward the hunting and gathering way of life, or by sheer chance, had remained positioned as the uppermost settlement along their river, found themselves formally in command of extremely vast territories and, as noted above, among the biggest landlords in Kalimantan (see Map 3.1). Then came the timber boom of the late 1960s and, later, the non-timber-forest-product boom of the 1980s and 1990s.
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YEAR 2000: TRADE, LAND CONTROL, AND NGOs

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to go into detail regarding types of non-timber forest products collected and traded by the Punan (see Peluso 1983, De Beer and McDermott 1989, Brosius 1995a, Van Valkenburg 1997, Sellato 1994a, 2001, 2002a). Whereas the non-timber forest product trade goes back one millennium and, for some specific products, much farther, timber, until and including the Dutch colonial period, was only exploited in coastal areas and along the lower course of rivers, and principally for consumption within Kalimantan (see Potter 1988).

The trade in forest products has long displayed cycles of boom and bust, following market whims, at least during the last four centuries, where written sources exist (see Boomgaard 1998, Boomgaard et al. 1997, Potter 1997, Knapen 2001). With the advent of Soeharto’s New Order, however, the forests of Kalimantan were opened to wide-scale timber exploitation. Under the Banjir Kap system, in the late 1960s, timber was felled just anywhere and left to be washed downstream with the next river flood. Timber, a new commodity, became a new focus in Punan economic activities. By 1970, the industry was centralised and regulated by the state and timber companies were established on the lower and middle courses of major rivers. Banjir Kap activity went on upstream for a few years, until the government put a halt to it and, later, timber companies opened in the upstream regions.

The last 30 years have also seen an unprecedented boom in certain forest products, particularly rattan and eaglewood (or aloe-wood; see Sellato 2001). Systematic exploitation of eaglewood progressed from coastal to upland regions, up to the most remote areas of the island (Sellato 2005a). In these areas, Punan groups played an important role in this exploitation, as they had played a role in timber felling.

Isolated as they might have been, the Punan were quick to respond to coastal market demands, relayed to them by the networks of river traders. The flexibility and versatility of their economic system and their overall opportunistic attitude allowed them to switch overnight from one economic activity to another, or from one forest product to another, based on a careful appraisal of costs and benefits (Sellato 1994a), always with a penchant for immediate returns. In most cases, collecting costly forest products remained a better choice than, for instance, cultivating rice, which is one reason why the government’s efforts towards the actual sedentarisation of the Punan have not, to date, registered much success (id.).

In the collecting venture, the Punan had an edge, due to their very presence in the areas richest in forest products – these areas had hardly been touched, or
even visited before, other than by themselves – and their intimate knowledge of the terrain and of the finest habitats of the resources that they were seeking. It is here worth distinguishing between localised and clustered products, such as rattan, which are predictable; and scattered and unpredictable resources, such as the eaglewood tree, which may grow randomly and, moreover, does not always contain the precious exudate (Sellato 2005a). For the collector, this distinction is important: In the former case, the collecting involves going to known, albeit remote, spots in the forest and bringing back the produce, e.g., heavy loops of rattan; in the latter case, e.g., eaglewood, it involves organising long, broad-sweeping expeditions through vast, uninhabited areas, and sometimes returning empty-handed.

The Punan, thus, are well armed to exploit their official wilayah desa, and much beyond, since they are used to ranging into neighbouring areas as well. There are, however, two difficulties. Firstly, the Punan depend on the trader with whom they are associated (see below). For long expeditions, they need fuel for the outboard engines of their canoes, chainsaws, and even food supplies, since they no longer produce their own food, whether wild sago or cultivated rice. Secondly, they are unable actually, physically, to prevent teams of outside collectors from entering their wilayah and collecting there. In the old days, such intruders would simply have been killed, something the Punan may no longer do today. In any event, fierce competition for scarce resources often ensues, which has led in many areas to the complete depletion of eaglewood trees.

The Punan collect large quantities of valuable products which they trade in downriver markets. In exchange, they procure manufactured equipment, such as outboard engines and chainsaws, as well as prestige goods, from gold wristwatches to television sets. In the 1980s, one would see many more large radio-cum-cassette-players in a Punan hamlet of 50 souls than in a farming village of 500 people. By any first-sight standard the Punan are rich, much richer than any rice farmer would ever become. This first-sight impression, however, must be qualified, as is shown below.

Caught in competition with outside collectors, the Punan have shown the same ruthlessness as their competitors with regard to the sustainability of their modes of exploitation. As I have argued elsewhere (Sellato 2005a), the Punan, like other ‘traditional people’ (see below), tend to display sustainable practices of management of wild food resources, based on local concepts of ownership or guardianship of the land, whereas, in their management of wild forest resources with long-distance trade value but little or no local use, they often practise severe forms of extractivism. Such people, I concluded, do not maintain any ideological
or religious values regarding ‘good’, sustainable resource tenure. Rather, they display common-sense, pragmatic economic attitudes appropriate to earning the best possible reward out of their lands (\textit{ibid.}), and no moral judgment should be passed about this. Indeed, while the Punan, among others, clearly were instrumental in the extinction in their area of, for example, the Sumatran rhinoceros and the eaglewood tree, the blame could just as well be laid on the regional market situation.

Nevertheless, in the 1980s, experts and major international environmental organisations, after conceding that people living in the forest could no longer simply be ignored (hence, the advent of ‘social forestry’), developed the notion that traditional resource tenure could be utilised in nature conservation (hence, ‘community-based conservation’ — really an advocacy tool more than an operational concept; C. Eghenter, pers. comm.) and, eventually, that ‘traditional people’ were ‘born conservationists’ (on this, see McNeely and Pitt 1985, Poffenberger 1990, Redford and Padoch 1992, Kleymeyer 1994). This was based upon the assumption that these people, having a very intimate knowledge of their natural environment, do manage it wisely, i.e., in a sustainable way (see Brosius 1997 for a detailed description of such environmentalist representations; and Eghenter 2000 on indigenous forest tenure in Borneo), because they have an ideology of ‘living in harmony with Nature’, or even some kind of religious beliefs in a ‘Mother-Forest’.

It ensued from the idea of these ‘traditional peoples’ as born conservationists that they should be viewed as our mentors in dealing with the forest in order to both earn a living from it and preserve it (for a critical assessment, see Ellen and Harris 1997, Sellato 1999). And who better than the Punan, supposedly the most knowledgeable of all forest dwellers (but see Voeks in this volume), might fill that position? The neo-romantic myth of the Punan as ‘children of the forest’, symbols of life in harmony with Nature, and guardians of the forest against evil outsiders was thus begun (\textit{cf.} the Bruno Manser saga in Sarawak; see Brosius in this volume; about the ‘ecologically noble savage’, see, e.g., Redford 1991).

The notion of ‘traditional people’ was soon promoted and marketed by environmental organisations to institutional donors and the wider public, who readily condoned it, the former because the idea was new and trendy at the time and thus had market value, and the latter because the Western world seemed to need this myth — and both poured enormous amounts of funds into NGO programs focused on it.

In the early 1990s, major environmental NGOs began to hire anthropologists to participate in such conservation projects that claimed to implement a grassroots
approach involving local forest people. Unfortunately, while their presence was needed to answer for the project’s social science component, anthropologists remained, at best, minor partners and, often, their findings were largely ignored (see Sellato 1999), as those NGOs generally remained deeply indifferent to indigenous life ways and their survival. (For a discussion of the need for a long-term, localised, holistic social-science approach to conservation management, see Eghenter and Sellato 2003: 11–19).

However, the notion of ‘traditional people’ was also very willingly endorsed by the people concerned, particularly the Punan, who soon realised their advantage in doing so. As has been noted for another region of the world, indigenous movements often gain social recognition through their appropriation of their NGO allies’ ideological world (see Albert 1997). While this appropriation is, after all, part of a process of permanent renegotiation of tradition, and while it was also, somehow, what the NGOs strived to achieve, the problem encountered in the field often was of a strong contradiction between Punan formal discourse and actual deeds.

The myth of the ‘traditional people’ was picked up, soon afterwards, by international and regional NGOs active in assistance to social-economic development. Not only were those Punan the wisest ‘keepers of the forest,’ and thus politically very correct, but they were also poor people in need of assistance, and were even viewed, because of their remote locations, as the most disadvantaged of all, deprived as they were of all the benefits of civilisation (see Kaskija 2002 and in this volume; and Sellato 2001). So, Punan communities became the prime targets of certain NGOs, and beneficiaries of assistance programs, in the form of cash, material goods, education, and training towards their ‘development’.

About the year 1995, the same NGOs that had struggled to get the government to concede that the ‘wise traditional people’ were indeed good managers of their forests, began lobbying openly for the recognition by government agencies of the right of those people to manage their wilayah desa and retain full and exclusive rights over their wilayah’s resources. So far, they have recorded some success (e.g., in Bulungan). In other cases, NGOs have assisted communities in going to court and wresting a ruling allowing them to retain control of their resources (e.g., the Aoheng and their bird’s nest caves; see Sellato forthcoming 1). Often, though, the situation is not as clear in practice as it may look on paper. But there is a fair-to-good chance that it will improve in the coming years, and spread to other regions, especially in the current context of decentralisation, where adat is given a certain degree of autonomy within national law.¹
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In an attempt to ‘empower’ traditional peoples, locally-based NGOs have been brought on and entrusted to take over from larger NGOs the job of promoting local interests. Such grassroots NGOs now include several Punan organisations that, unfortunately, have not proved very efficient so far, due to individualistic behaviour and diverging pursuits, which is typical of traditional Punan society.

Since the turn of the third millennium, Punan communities have been benefiting from a conjunction of favourable factors. One the one hand, they are receiving assistance from all quarters toward their social and economic development; on the other hand, their exclusive right to the control and management of their lands and resources is increasingly being recognised. Finally, and perhaps more importantly for the future (to secure further assistance), they still project a positive image to the outside world.

The eaglewood has been exhausted, although in some regions it has grown back, and the price of rattan has recently risen again. The traditional economic versatility of the Punan remains, as it has long been, a trump card. It will remain a trump card as long as new opportunities come their way.

SITTING ON A TROVE: WHAT ACTUAL BENEFIT?

From the above, it may be concluded that, in many cases, and contrasting with Penan groups in Sarawak (see Brosius’ and Sercombe’s chapters in this volume), the Punan of Kalimantan, ‘innocent children of the forest’, have fared rather well in less than one century, rising from ethnocultural non-entities and negligible ‘guests’ on others’ territories to the sole formal masters of immense tracts of forest.

All things considered, two points should be taken stock of here. Firstly, these Punan are not innocent victims, left behind by development. The well-worn metaphor of the pure, gentle, innocent nomad has been already extensively critiqued by anthropologists. Clearly, the Punan should be viewed, rather, as fully fledged agents, using and manipulating other actors in their social and economic landscape toward strictly Punan goals. In this sense, they exploit their social environment in exactly the same way – a typical ‘hunting-gathering’ way – that they do their natural environment.

Secondly, they should not, just because they live in relatively isolated locations, be regarded as particularly ‘poor’. Although this may appear as a rather unconventional view, it should be held that their general economic predicaments are mostly, in fact, rather good, especially when compared to Indonesia’s urban and peri-urban poor. Many Punan in Kalimantan are, now more firmly than ever, occupying large patches of tropical rain forest, which is considered for
various reasons a very valuable asset by a broad range of diverse parties, and which will bring them an improved standard of life provided that they handle it intelligently.

This is where latent advantages prove deceitful. Despite their present boon – and its promising outlook – with regard to control of land and access to resources, many Punan groups do remain intrinsically poorly equipped – psychologically, socially, and politically – to fully benefit from their situation.

First, historical factors hinder Punan progress. They lag behind in terms of formal education and legal awareness, and this has made them vulnerable, but church organisations and NGOs have helped much in this respect in recent decades. Also, since the forest-product trade usually was controlled by farming chieftains, the Punan have little experience in dealing directly with urban traders and coastal merchants. But they are learning fast. Finally, since they traditionally abided by farming groups’ customary law (adat), they do not have their own, long-established institutions, which they need in order to make government and other agencies recognise their ‘traditional tenure’ and, therefore, their rights on their territories’ resources. Such institutions, a specific Punan adat, they are now building ex nihilo through their own grassroots NGOs. By inventing their tradition, the Punan are becoming wiser by the day.

But other, more internal factors have kept them back, upon which NGOs can hardly act. The very resilient nomadic ideology – involving an egalitarian society, nuclear-family autonomy, etc. – has prevented the Punan from organising themselves efficiently as social groupings, with the political clout to defend their resources against outsiders, either in the legal field or on the spot. Extant Punan organisations have registered immense progress, but they are often plagued by factionalism. Punan egalitarianism, individualism and a proclivity to look for individual solutions to problems have remained a strong obstacle (on how the egalitarian ethos hinders the emergence of effective leadership, see Endicott 1988). Simply because they have proved unable to properly organise, Punan communities often remain somewhat subject to outside parties – their former farming patrons, traders, government officials – and even to some of their own people who take advantage of them.

In the economic field, the Punan’s traditional versatility has prevented them from focusing on steady goals in the long term, in the same way that their tenacious ‘immediate-return’ turn of mind has prevented them from investing, in the broader sense of the word, in delayed-return activities. As soon as they bring a load of forest products to the trader, the Punan tend to acquire expensive prestige goods of little practical long-term utility.
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The role of the trader, here, is of critical importance. The Punan may still trade with their former patrons (e.g., the Punan Bahau), or allow one of their own to act as a trader (e.g., the Punan Malinau), or bypass everyone upstream to conduct business directly with a Chinese trader in town (e.g., the Punan Tubu; on the role of the Chinese, see Bertling 1925, Sellato 2001), they remain dependent on the trader (or tokay), who keeps them in his debt by sponsoring their expeditions, coaxing them into taking goods on credit, and paying them in kind rather than cash. The Punan thus tend to remain forever caught in this butang (or utang, or ijon) system, to the effect that, in the long run, the wealth of forest resources amounts to little actual benefit in terms of improvement in their health, education, or general welfare circumstances.

Finally, two features have been noted recently among Punan communities (Sellato 2001). One is the emergence, more acute than ever before, of an ‘assisted-ness’ attitude, whereby no action is taken to improve a situation or solve a problem unless there is some initiative, accompanied by (financial) ‘assistance’ (bantuan), taken by outside parties. This, as I see it, derives from several factors: the Punan’s general inability to organise and the expectation that someone else will take care of a given problem; the fact that, having become used to being made the recipients of assistance, they tend to play – and quite well – the part of helpless wretches (see Kaskija in this volume); and the administrative tradition of the proyek in Indonesia, whereby nothing is done but through government-sponsored ‘projects’. While the state explicitly tries to promote keswadayaan (self-reliance) among rural communities, the Punan seem to be heading toward more ketergantungan (dependency).

The second feature is, for the Punan – and, with them, all ‘traditional people’ – an increasing risk of discredit and, therefore, of disfavour in the eyes of both the NGOs that help them and, later, the wider world, due to the failure of some communities to rise up to NGO expectations. Cases have been reported of Punan communities selling off to outsiders the rights that NGOs had struggled to secure them – selling gold mining rights on the upper Kapuas, or selling rights to exploit timber in Malinau District. (Similar cases have been documented elsewhere in the world, especially in Latin America.) To date, the Punan still project a positive image. This image, however, may be seriously damaged by such whimsical occurrences as mentioned above, should they become more frequent.

The Punan are ‘virtually’ rich, but many remain poor. All external conditions are met to create great economic opportunities for them. But only by adjusting their ‘internal’ – psychological and ideological – conditions to modern social and economic circumstances, i.e., by altering to some degree their ‘hunting-gathering’
outlook and thus losing some of the basic tenets of their Punan-ness, will they be able to fare as well in this century as they did in the last, or even better.

**Acknowledgements**

My thanks go to Cristina Eghenter, Lars Kaskija, and Peter Sercombe for many relevant and useful comments, and to KJJ for proofreading. I am also grateful to several anonymous reviewers for their useful critiques.

**NOTE**

1. A cursory review of the revival of interest, witnessed in the course of the last two decades, in traditional legal systems may be useful here. The Dutch colonial administration, as well as Dutch scholars, certainly had acknowledged the existence of the indigenous legal systems that they had found throughout their East Indies, and taken an interest in them (e.g., Van Vollenhoven 1931–33 and, for Kalimantan, Mallinckrodt 1928; I am not considering here either the cases of Islamic law, or variants thereof, or of Hindu communities), and this was not only in order to tighten their hold on the archipelago. During the Soekarno period, however, establishing and maintaining a unitary state being top priority, little case was made of those legal systems, for the fact that they were hampering general acceptance of the national law (see Soekanto 1954).

The New Order, and particularly the 1970s, saw some development. Room was made within the constitutional framework to accommodate a couple of major indigenous religions. And, concomitant with the translation from the Dutch into Indonesian of Ter Haar’s important 1937 work, Indonesian scholars began working on and publishing about *adat* law (*hukum adat*) – both its local expressions and its general relevance (see, e.g., Koesnoe 1969, Iman 1969, Adiwinata 1970, Soerjono 1971, Surojo 1971; also, see Soerjono’s 1976 bibliography). This subject was of concern to the state and, in 1975, the BPHN (Biro Pembinaan Hukum Nasional, Bureau for the Promotion of the National Law) held a seminar on ‘Adat Law and the Promotion of the National Law’. Later on, the understanding of *adat* under national law, particularly under the Basic Agrarian Law (UUPA) of 1960, was examined (e.g., Abdurrahman 1984), as well as, in some instances, its possible development within it.

From the late 1980s on, following in the path of Kalimantan Muslim scholars, like Abdurrahman, a few (Christian) Dayak scholars (e.g., Jacobus 1988, 2003, Angguk *et al.* 2003, Devung and Rudy 1998) had begun, either of their own initiative or within programs induced from the outside (e.g., WWF’s ‘Culture and Conservation’ research program; see Eghenter and Sellato 1999 and Eghenter, Sellato, and Devung 2003), to investigate individual Dayak legal systems in a rather ethnographic way. The (more or less) guarded political agenda was to help local communities sustain claims of sovereignty, or at least right of tenure, over their traditional territories. By the mid-1990s, in the new context of decentralisation and regional autonomy, foreign scholars (e.g., Evers 1995, Fitzpatrick 1997) picked up the trend and examined local indigenous legal systems in contrast with the national law – how they were
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conflicting, how selected elements from the former could be integrated into the latter and, mostly, whether and how increasingly loud local demands for land rights should be met. In the late 1990s, after the fall of Soeharto, grassroots and province-based NGOs, supported by international NGOs, along with Dayak scholars, turned to outright political advocacy.
Chapter 4

THE EMERGENCE OF THE ETHNIC CATEGORY BHUKET: DIVERSITY AND THE COLLECTIVE HUNTER-GATHERER IDENTITY IN BORNEO

By Shanthi Thambiah

Abstract: This chapter focuses on the Bhuket, a group of hunter-gatherers of about 1,000 people scattered across central Borneo. It begins by exploring the past in order to reconstruct the ethnogenesis of Bhuket as an ethnic category, and moves on to examine the cultural category ‘Punan’ in the present context. It argues that this ascription denies the inherent diversity and varied identities of hunter-gatherers in different parts of Borneo.

INTRODUCTION

This essay begins by discussing the emergence of the Bhuket ethnic category. By drawing on historical accounts based on events that took place from the 1840s onwards, I will show that the political-economic upheavals in the Balleh, Kapuas, Mahakam, and Mendalam areas placed the Bhuket bands or sub-groups on a stage that led to the emergence of the ethnic category Bhuket.

After exploring the past to reconstruct the ethnogenesis of the Bhuket as an ethnic category, the essay will deal with the present. Although there have been changes in the mode of subsistence of most hunter-gatherer communities in
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Borneo, they continue to be regarded as hunter-gatherers through the cultural category ‘Punan’ which is used as a term for the identification of hunter-gatherers. The cultural identity of the Bhuket is that of hunter-gatherers, and they continue to perceive themselves and be labelled as such even with the diversification of their subsistence activities. Being hunter-gatherers in Borneo today is not only a reference to their past hunting and gathering practices, but is also linked to their life ways and attitudes at the present time. The commonality observed in the social life of hunter-gatherers is used to accord them with a collective identity as Punan. This paper will problematise this endeavour for it denies diversity in the social identities of the hunter-gatherers of Borneo. It also denies the hunter-gatherer communities a history of their own. In the investigation of present day hunter-gatherer communities, one cannot avoid explaining social change and emerging identities.

Finally, this essay calls for recognition of the diversity of the hunter-gatherer population of Borneo, and what the collective term Punan now means to them. Although the Punan and Penan are the better known forest nomads, there are lesser known forest nomads who do not identify themselves as Punan or Penan. It is important to give attention to the ways in which the people concerned see themselves and their world, rather than impose on them the dominant society’s own set of constructions and stereotypes.

THE BHUKET

The Bhuket, as an ethnic group, comprise five communities living far apart from one another in West Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, and the headwaters of the upper Balui in Sarawak (see Map 4.1). Although they live physically dispersed in the interior of central Borneo, the vastness of space between these communities has not isolated them one from another. They are interrelated, and interaction between them has always been maintained. In a census taken by the author in 1993–1994, there were 578 Bhuket in West and East Kalimantan, and 267 Bhuket in Sarawak. The Bhuket settlements are located at Long Ayak (Upper Balui) in Sarawak, Nanga Balang, Metelunai, and Nanga Hovat (or Nanga Obat) in West Kalimantan; and Naha Tivab (or Naha Tiwap, or Noha Tivap) in East Kalimantan. Population figures were as follows: Long Ayak 276; Nanga Balang 63; Metelunai 220; Nanga Hovat 148; and Naha Tivab 133. Therefore, the total Bhuket population in 1993 comprised 845 persons, and it probably stands at around 1,000 today.

The Bhuket are hunters and gatherers but today are also involved in various other economic activities, such as swidden rice agriculture, the collection of
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Bhuket depend on jungle produce for trade, the cultivation of cash crops, and wage labour, while at the same time hunting and gathering continue. Although they form an egalitarian society, the concept of rank is used by the Bhuket according to situation. The ideology of rank can be abandoned or activated depending on the circumstances. Bhuket claim that they possess a ranking system similar to that of their closest neighbours, the Kayan, which is deployed in interaction with stratified societies (for more on this, see Thambiah 1995: 133–148). Within the context of their own community, however, they are egalitarian in their practices.

The terms Bukat and Ukit were exonyms that have contributed to the creation of the endonym Bhuket. There are a variety of terms used by agriculturalists to refer to nomads. Baring-Gould and Bampfylde state that the word Ukit is from the Malay word *bukit*, which means hill; hence *orang ukit* means ‘hill people’ (1909: 33). According to King (1985: 52), Maloh categorise forest nomads of the upper Kapuas as *tau ‘ukit* (‘hill people’) or *tau toan* (‘forest people’). The phonetic convergence between Bhuket and *bukit / ukit* may be the reason for the variation in exonyms.

To establish the original homeland of hunting and gathering people who are highly mobile is a most taxing problem. However, according to Bouman (1924), the Bhuket originate from the sources of the Balleh, a tributary of the Rejang River in Sarawak. He referred to them as Menyimbung. They then moved to the Mendalam River in West Kalimantan, and then to the Mahakam, where some still live (cited in King, 1974a, 1974b). Bhuket have been mentioned together with other
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nomadic groups of Borneo. Hose and McDougall refer not only to the Punan, but also to the Ukit (Bhuket) and the Bukitan (Baketan) as belonging to nomadic groups (Hose and McDougall 1912, i: 35n, ii: 178). Haddon states that: ‘All the tribes, except the Punans and the Ukits, are agriculturists’ (Haddon 1901: 323). Furthermore, the Bhuket are said to be related to the culturally extinct Seru (Sr).2 According to F. de Rozario:3

The Sru Dyaks appear to have originally belonged to some branch of the Ukit tribe. In former days perhaps some three or four hundred years ago, the Ukit lived in the Balleh (then known as the Jengian) at the mouth of the Lugat. For many years they appear to have lived there in peace, but were at last surprised and attacked by the Kayans, at that time a most powerful tribe. The result of this attack was that many of the Sru people were killed or captured, and the remainder fled that part of the country and dispersed (1901: 341).4

De Rozario also stated that the Seru language differs very little from that of the Bhuket and that ‘[t]he Sru Dyak words which were printed in the Sarawak Gazette were read out to some Ukits who understood every word as belonging to their language’ (1901: 342).5 De Rozario also remarked that the Bhuket, Baketan, Seru, Bliun,6 Segalang,7 Lisum,8 and Lugat9 were culturally related (Sarawak Gazette Sept 1901: 175).10

The Bhuket, like the Seru, lived in the Balleh before invading Iban drove them out of the area. Iban migration was mingled with headhunting raids directed against the Bhuket and other forest nomads11 who were the previous inhabitants of the Rejang region. The Bhuket resisted Iban migration into the Balleh, but by the mid-1880s they were driven into the Kapuas, while some Bhuket retreated to the extreme upper Rejang-Balui area (Low, ‘January Diary,’ Sarawak Gazette, 2 June 1884: 221; ‘March Diary,’ Sarawak Gazette, 1 July 1884: 222). This group of Bhuket lived with Lisum in Long San, in the upper Balui, but left to join the Bhuket in the Kapuas after the Iban from Sut attacked and massacred the Lisum12 in the early 1900s. The Kayan of Uma Belor and the Kenyah of Uma Kelap also suffered a severe attack from the Iban during the massacre of the Lisum. Iban wanted revenge for an earlier murder of three Iban working rattan in the Naha Nyabong area. The present Bhuket settlement in the upper Balui was formed from a completely new migration, which began from Kapit in the early 1900s.

The Bhuket, unlike other nomadic groups, contested the Iban advance into the Balleh area. In his examination of Iban history, Freeman made a contrast between Ukit-Iban and Bukitan-Iban13 relationships in the Balleh. He states:
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A very significant feature of the Iban migration into the Rejang basin, was the special relationship – symbiotic in character, which existed between the Iban and the Bukitans. The nomadic Bukitans, whose ancestral territory the Rejang was, acted as guides and allies to the more numerous and accomplished Iban, and under Iban influence they gradually came to follow the Iban methods of cultivating rice, and ultimately, to live in longhouses of their own making. The nomadic Ukits, on the other hand, were inveterate opponents of the Iban, and contested their advance at many points, especially in the Balleh area (Freeman 1955a: 14–15).

Their resistance to Iban migration into the Balleh had earned them a reputation for being wild and dangerous people, and they were much feared by those working forest produce. The Sarawak Gazette (1 March 1882) reported that:

They [Bhuket] are often tall, well-made, stout fellows, with rather pleasant countenances and manners, and although often barbarous in their acts with that never failing poisoned arrow, the dread of the Dyaks who can never see or hear the blower – who are knocked over when in search of gutta percha or other jungle produces, and have no hope of making any retaliation (1882: 11).

Further early information on the Bhuket, though limited and fragmentary, can be gleaned from scattered references (Haddon 1901: 320–323; Roth [1896]: 17–19; Urquhart 1955a: 193–204; 1959: 75; Runciman 1960: 226). The basic features of their lifestyle and character are described by Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, who state that:

The Ukits, Bukitans and Punans, with the exception of the Punan Bah of the Balui, are the wildest of all the races in the island. The Ukits are light in complexion, tall and well knit, and better looking than other inland tribes. Formerly they did not reside in houses, or cultivate the soil, but roamed about in the jungle, and subsisted on wild fruit and the animals they killed. But some of these have begun to erect poor dwellings, and do a little elementary farming. They are expert with the blow-pipe, and in the manufacture of the upas-poison, with which the points of their needle-like arrows are tinged (1909: 13–14).

Another early observer, Beccari, confirmed their nomadic characteristics:

They are savages in the true name of the word, but they are neither degraded nor inferior races in the series of mankind. Their primitive condition depends more than anything else on their nomadic or wandering life, and on the ease with which they live on the produce of the forest and on that of the chase, which the sumpitan (blow-pipe) procures for them. This has no doubt contributed to keep
them from associating with their fellow-beings, and from settling in villages or erecting permanent houses (1904: 363).

More recent literature pertaining to the Bhuket has given further information on their nomadic life, history, interaction with their agriculturist neighbours and on cultural and economic change (see King 1974a, 1974b, 1979, Sellato 1989, 1994a: 18–74, Rousseau 1990). In any event, it should be stressed that the Bhuket of Sarawak, formerly at Sungai Ayak, although they are involved in diverse subsistence activities, still spend much time foraging and hunting in the forest.

HISTORY AND MIGRATION

Prior to the second half of the nineteenth century, some Bhuket bands originated from the sources of the Balleh River, a major tributary of the Rejang in Sarawak. Bhuket today refer to the Balleh as Jengayan (cf. Jengian, above), and in their conversation with other Bhuket, they use the word Jengayan synonymously with Balleh. Their traditional territories stretched from the upper Balleh to the upper Kapuas in West Kalimantan. They lived there in peace, but were attacked by the Kayan in the late eighteenth century. This attack dispersed them. Iban migrations into the Balleh commenced in the early nineteenth century and resulted in the Bhuket moving further down the Kapuas and into the upper Mahakam. But the Bhuket used to return to the Balleh whenever they wished to do so.

The Bhuket and the Iban, or Dayak (Dyak) as they were called, were engaged in hostilities against each other from the 1850s onwards. According to F. de Rozario, the officer incharge of Fort Balleh, in 1879 there was a scarcity of food and Ukits trespassed into Iban gardens. He reported that two Ukit heads were brought back by Ramian (possibly an Iban war leader) (Kapit Letters Book, Fort Balleh, 31 January 1879). The following month, Rejang, an Iban living in the Mujong River, returned from mengayau (headhunting) bringing back one Ukit head and a five-year-old captive girl. His party killed some Ukit living in the Ulu Balang, a branch of the upper Kapuas, but the Ukit also wounded and killed some of Rejang’s men (Kapit Letters Book, Fort Balleh, 6 February 1879).

By May 1879, the Brooke administration was seriously considering bringing order to the borders of the Raj. Karun (Kaharun, according to my informant, was an Aoheng chief from the Mahakam) was recommended to collect the Ukit living in the Mekam (the Iban term for Mahakam), who were enemies of the Dyak (Iban) and bring them to the Balleh to make peace with the Baketan (Bukitan, Baketan, Mengketan) and Dyak. The Sarawak Gazette of 23 May 1879 reported that:
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[...] Karun was recommended to collect the Ukits living in Mekam waters and who are at present enemies to the Dyaks and bring them to Balleh to make peace with the Bakatans and Dyaks. Should the Ukits refuse to avail themselves of this offer and persist in reprisal, then the Government would no longer feel itself called upon to restrain the Dyaks from carrying on the feud, the Government having to secure the frontiers from invasion and prevent further annoyance.

On 29 May 1881, in a letter to H.B. Low, the Resident of the Rejang, De Rozario stated that many Dyaks were going up the Balleh to work rattan, but that he was suspicious that they were fortifying the Ukit. In an earlier letter dated 10 April 1881, he reported the killing of Ukit for taking Dyak paddy and that only a few of the Ukit were left (Kapit Letters Book, 10 April and 29 May 1881).

The Sarawak Gazette of 1 March 1882 reported the massacre of three Dyak in the Sut River by a band of Ukit on 6 February 1882, and on 21 February 1882, Janen, the friendly Ukit, returned from the Mahakam and requested permission to settle in the Serani River. According to Bhuket oral histories that I collected, by this time a small group of Bhuket moved from the Mahakam and began erecting dwellings in Long Layi, upper Balleh, under Janen's leadership. Iban-Bhuket relations worsened from then on, because a Bhuket woman named Heyat was murdered by Saran, her Iban husband, at Long Layi.

By May 1883, there were government efforts to resettle the Bhuket, and a Tanjong man named Ukat was sent to Ukit country to bring Janen for negotiations. He returned unaccompanied by Janen, for Janen was not ready to move. Ukat reported that:

 [...] some five Ukit families only intended to come down, the rest, some forty families, not following Janen but being under Kesiun, Amai, Ubong and Tujai [Tehujai], their own headmen, and living in the watershed of the Kapuas and the Mahakam, about 3 days walk from the head of the Jalunge, refuse to move (Sarawak Gazette, 1 June 1883: 60).

After the incident at Long Layi, Bhuket attacks on the Iban increased. For example, in October 1883, three Iban collecting gutta percha in the Baduli, a branch of the Mengiong, were murdered by Ukit (Kapit Letters Book, 26 October 1883). The Sarawak Gazette of 1 April 1884 reported that 'Janin the Ukit is of the opinion that the three Dyaks killed in the Mengiong were killed by Lohi Ukit.'

Mr Low reported that '[t]he war between the Dyaks and Ukits is one of extermination, unless the latter evacuate their country, and retire to the left bank of the Kapuas' (Sarawak Gazette, 1 April 1884, Mr Low's November 1883 Diary).
On Friday, 9 November 1883, a band of Ukit, ten or so in number, assailed but was unable to take a Dyak langko (farm hut) in Sut. The Dyak followed the trail of the war-party, but were recalled for fear of ambush (Sarawak Gazette, 1 April 1884, Mr. Low’s November Diary). A week later, on Friday, 16 November 1883, permission was granted for the Ukit to remove to Mujong to live with Sihan and Punan. According to Mr. Low, ‘[i]t is clear they cannot exist here on the main river unless they are fed. And I have done more for them in this way than I have ever done for any other tribe. They are a perpetual drain upon the Treasury and do not promise to become a producing tribe’ (Sarawak Gazette, 1 April, 1884, Mr Low’s November Diary).

By January 1884, many Iban war parties were going into Ukit country. The Sarawak Gazette, 2 June 1884 (Mr Low’s January Diary 1884), reported that ‘Penghulu Ujung and Penghulu Igo have gone on the war-path into Ukit country. So many having gone on this errand, it will be a wonder if they do not fall foul of each other or of some other tribe.’

On 1 March 1884, eight Dyak men who went up to Bukit Batu returned with eight Ukit heads. They reported to the officer-in-charge of Fort Kapit that there were no more Dyak living up there except Ukit (Kapit Letters Book, 1 March 1884, Fort Kapit). The Ukit retaliated on 9 March 1884; Kling, son of Unggal, informed the officer-in-charge that three of Ramian’s anak biak (followers) were killed by the Ukit at the head of the Sut (Kapit Letters Book, 9 March 1884, Fort Kapit).

The Ukit continued their attack on the Iban; the Sarawak Gazette of 1 August 1884, reported that in March 1884 ‘[… the wild Ukits have again succeeded in killing three Kapit Dyak, a man and two boys. Igoh, a Government Penghulu, returned from an authorised expedition against the Ukit. He had some of his party wounded and killed.’

By April 1884, ‘[m]ore parties who were sent in search of the Ukits returned. Mancha’s party from Kaniau [Kanowit], Antas from upper Kapuas and Unjung from Mendalam. They found no Ukits’ (Sarawak Gazette, 1 August 1884, Mr Low’s official diaries). Mr Low’s January and March Diaries of 1884 mentioned that ‘[t]he Ukits resisted Iban migration into the Balleh but by the mid-1880s were driven into the Kapuas, while some Ukit retreated to the extreme Upper-Rejang-Balui’ (Sarawak Gazette, 2 June and 1 July 1884).

By July 1884, Janen, with nineteen men and two women, arrived in Kapit. He informed the officer-in-charge of Fort Kapit that he had collected all the Ukit in all 43 doors; they were left at Nanga Bakakap, and ten more doors were on the march, to make up 53 doors. They were awaiting permission to stay there (Kapit Letters Book, 14 July 1884).
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In January 1886, two more Dyak were killed in the Bagalo, a branch of the Bloh in the Katibas, by Ukit (Kapit Letters Book, 9 January 1886, Fort Kapit). In December 1887, several Dyak boats had gone up the Katibas River to go over to the Kapuas headwaters, and the officer-in-charge of Fort Kapit was not certain of their intention (Kapit Letters Book, 5 December 1887, Fort Kapit). My informants in Nanga Hovat, the grandson of Sirai, chief of the Bhuket in the Mendalam in the 1880s, said that this expedition of the Iban of Kanowit received a severe counter-attack from the Bhuket. The Iban war leaders Galau and Tedong led the war-party. Tedong, who had had a bad dream, left with his men, but Galau was killed by the Bhuket, which brought to a halt Iban expansion into the Kapuas. The Iban were attacked by Bhuket upriver, and by the Kayan from downriver, who by then had cannons provided by the Dutch; the Iban caught in between were not able to retreat. After this war, there were many attempts to make peace with the Bhuket. My informant told me that Temenggung Koh’s (the paramount leader of the Iban in the Balleh) father, Kanyan, who was considered to be of Bhuket descent (a Lugat), was sent by the Brooke administration to encourage Sirai to come down to Kapit for a peace settlement.

The Sarawak Gazette of June 1888 reported that Sirai, chief of the Lohe Ukit of the upper Mendalam, came down to Kapit as a preliminary to making peace. The Resident remarked that ‘[s]ome difficulties will arise as the Lohe tribe have always shown themselves inveterate enemies of the Dyaks who are still smarting under murders recently committed.’ The peace talks were not successful, for Sirai committed fresh murders on his way back to the Mendalam, and Bhuket say that, before leaving, Sirai performed a stunt of jumping and leaving his handprint on the wall of Fort Kapit. Two years later, in June 1890, it was reported that three Ukit leaders, Mieng, Apai Lasan, and Nyabong, were determined not to make peace (Sarawak Gazette, 1 August 1890).

These records show that, although the Bhuket were massively outnumbered by the Iban, they were not a defeated people. Instead, the Bhuket were feared. From 1892 to 1901, there was a long period of peace with the Iban and, in June 1901, the Sarawak Gazette reported that the Ukit visited Kapit and the Resident observed that ‘[t]hese people since they have enjoyed a long spell of friendship with the Dyaks are constantly coming down to trade at Kapit’ (Sarawak Gazette, June 1901).

Five months later, in November 1901, the Bhuket were again in Kapit, this time to learn the way to plant paddy: ‘A large party of Ukits were in the Bazaar. They came from Leh in the Balleh, and their main object in coming down river was to learn the way to plant paddy, which these jungle people had hitherto cultivated’ (Sarawak Gazette, 1 November 1901).
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Some time after this, the Iban-Bhuket relationship deteriorated again, due to Iban expansion and Bhuket insistence on remaining in the upper Balleh. Iban from the Ulu Ai began to range into the headwaters of the Kapuas and Balleh. The Bhuket forged an alliance with the Aoheng and continued to take Iban heads. Bhuket concentrated their activities across the border in the upper Mahakam. In 1908, Rajah Charles Brooke wanted trusted Iban chiefs to keep order in the Balleh, the principal danger being ‘collision with wild tribes of Ukits and others living near the borders’ (Sarawak Gazette, 1908: 514). By 1908, Ukit wanted to return to their country in the upper Balleh, and Janen came down to Kapit to request such a return with 30 or 40 doors. Janen had been gathering these people together since July 1884. They were living in Long Layi, Bukit Batu, and Nanga Bakakap. The Brooke administration said that, if they wanted to return to Sarawak territory, they would have to live in the vicinity of Kapit Fort (Sarawak Gazette, 1908; 515).

In about 1911, the Bhuket did indeed move down to Kapit, but did not settle well, for the Third Division Resident remarked: ‘A tribe called the Ukits who moved into Balleh some two years ago from the Makam [Mahakam] have continually been giving trouble to Government. They have now been told that they can either settle down in the Rejang or return to their country, the Makam’ (Sarawak Gazette, 16 August 1913: 634). These records show that Bhuket were determined not to give up their territory in the Balleh; but with the intervention of the Brooke government, this group of Bhuket was finally removed from the Balleh and resettled along the Balui. The Bhuket lived across from Kapit at Batu Seputin for four years (1911–1915), and here they were attacked by Iban from the Kapit area, and not from the Balleh. In 1915, pushed by the Brooke administration, the Bhuket moved to Giam Mikai, above the Pelagus rapids on the Rejang, where almost immediately they were attacked by Ga’at Iban rebels under the leadership of Kasau, Kalat, and Tabor. Ga’at rebels attacked a small party of Bhuket at Sungai Ari. A Bhuket by the name of Boang was killed and the leader of the Iban also lost his life. The Sarawak Gazette reported three Bhuket killed, and that the Bhuket had ‘put up a very good fight and the enemy had considerable losses’ (Sarawak Gazette, 1 December 1915: 278). During this period, the Bhuket were in the good books of the Brooke government and the Iban were now considered the enemy.

After this battle, and with the whole of the upper Rejang and Balleh greatly disturbed by raiding parties of Iban, the Bhuket moved further upriver to Belaga, where they remained for about two years. According to Bhuket oral tradition, they were led by Janen (of Melanau and Baketan descent), who married into their group.
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and became its leader on the death of his father-in-law, Surek. In the following section, we will see how this history of migration and warfare had contributed towards the formation of the ethnic category Bhuket.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE ETHNIC CATEGORY BHUKET

From the above history of warfare and migration of the Bhuket bands that were regrouped under the leadership of Janen, we can see that the political-economic upheavals in the Balleh, Kapuas, Mahakam, and Mendalam brought the Bhuket onto a stage where the Iban, the Kayan, and the Brooke administration took significant notice of them. In addition to the changes in the political-economic context in which Bhuket lived, there were also internal forces that operated within Bhuket bands, which were important as adaptive strategies in the face of changing circumstances. Out of this interplay of external and internal forces emerged the Bhuket ethnic category. Importantly, it was not contact alone that made the Bhuket significant to the Iban, the Kayan, and the Brooke Raj; rather, it was the recognition by them of Bhuket as a distinctive ethnic element; this, in turn, was due to the unique adaptation that the Bhuket made to the domination of the Iban, the Kayan, and the Brooke Raj. It is the historical development of Bhuket adaptation to changing circumstances that created the ethnic category Bhuket.

These processes ultimately served to bring into realisation a collectivity of people newly cognisant of their status as an ethnic category. The bands, which were a chain of cultural instances, became a loose category in the context of interaction with other dominant groups. However, I believe that the individual Bhuket did not undergo much change in terms of behaviour to accommodate themselves to this category.

Each of the puhuk (band) was linked to others, but had a separate existence. According to Sellato:

It must, however, be stressed that the Bukat groups have always remained in contact with each other across the mountain ranges. Traditionally, though, the Bukat were divided into many bands, which sometimes entered into conflict with each other. Each band, a descent group, was an autonomous political and economic entity. The Bukat seem always to have identified with the band, that is, with the family in the broadest sense, rather than with the ethnic group. Indeed, there has apparently never been a Bukat coalition against an enemy, never any policy or action involving more than one band, never any concerted migratory movements, and therefore never any form of political organisation above the
level of the band, up to recent times. Each leader of a band managed his people as he liked (or rather as they liked) (1994a: 55).

The lack of collectivity above the level of the band is apparent in the above quotation. For the Bhuket, formerly, the collectivity of all the sub-groups was an abstraction that did not have an objective or concrete reality in their experience. However, being referred to as a collectivity and treated as such gradually led them to a realisation of a wider identity. Although the *puhuk* were interrelated and in contact with one another, they did not see the significance of this wider, abstract Bhuket category in concrete terms until the great upheavals of the mid-nineteenth century, when the existence of the *puhuk* came under threat. As attacks became serious enough to wipe out entire *puhuk*, brief periods of bounded Bhuket inclusiveness were experienced as a response to political events; scattered Bhuket came together for protection and safety after a raid on a particular *puhuk*. It is likely that, at this time, episodes of strong apparent consciousness of some kind emerged, but these were short-lived instances.

These events also coincided with the intervention of representatives of the Brooke administration, who defined ethnic and group boundaries in terms of specific cultural markers; they assumed the existence of exclusive boundaries and homogeneous groups. The permeable nature of group boundaries was not recognised, for it was untidy for administrative purposes. In this regard, Babcock (1979) argues that identity came to be based less on geographical factors, and more on ethnicity, due to the administrative practices of the Brookes. He states that:

> We have seen how the Europeans in Sarawak history have tried to impose their own ideas of bounded, permanent and stable ethnic identity on the very different Sarawak scene. The Brookes did their best to keep various peoples separate, to make neat and tidy categories that were more in keeping with their orderly British minds (Babcock 1979: 197).

It is highly likely that Janen, of Melanau and Baketan descent, was sent by the Brooke Raj to collect the decimated *puhuk* groups and form a bounded unit where no such entity existed before. European attempts at the stabilisation of identities became increasingly successful with an associated rise in the level of ethnic consciousness. However, at the individual level, this bounded existence is an abstraction in the mind and, even today, it does not have much of a concrete, objective reality. But in the context of social interaction today, individuals do express their identity, which can be
The Emergence of the Ethnic Category Bhuket

said to be the result of their historical experiences. In the following sections, we will look at how this emerging sense of ethnic identity comes into conflict with the collective identification of hunter-gatherers as Punan.

HUNTER-GATHERERS TODAY

The hunter-gatherers of Borneo are today involved in various activities, such as swidden rice agriculture, cash crop cultivation, and wage labour. However, hunting and gathering are also maintained. Their current circumstances have changed, but this has not in any way stopped them from being hunter-gatherers. They farm like their agriculturist neighbours, although they are not as committed or expert; furthermore, this has not led to a change in the perceptions of their agriculturist neighbours, who do not see them as other than hunter-gatherers. And they also perceive themselves as still directly connected with their hunting and gathering tradition, and for them that tradition continues to provide social and cultural meanings, which provide a contrast to their agriculturist neighbours in terms of identity.

Although, today, most hunter-gatherers of Borneo farm and might even live like their settled agriculturist neighbours, this has not resulted in them being other than hunter-gatherers. Subsistence activities have undergone diversification, but elements of hunting and gathering life ways and attitudes seem to persist and they adapt to change in a flexible way. These features are often commented on by neighbouring sedentary agricultural communities in their concept macam Punan (Malay; meaning ‘like hunter-gatherers’). This is a reference not only to the past hunting and gathering practices of forest nomads, but also to the flexibility that is observed in their life ways at the present time, which contributes to the reproduction of a hunting and gathering social organisation. Besides that, these life ways and attitudes are highlighted by their agriculturist neighbours, who engage in the creation of certain stereotypes of hunter-gatherer communities, which fulfil their own need for maintaining their cultural identity.

Being hunter-gatherers in Borneo today is not only related to engagement in a particular mode of subsistence, but also has something to do with the flexibility of hunting and gathering culture. Hunter-gatherers live in a modern and changing context, as farmers, wage labourers, lorry drivers, chainsaw operators, teachers, clerks, and so on, but paradoxically they remain hunter-gatherers through the persistence of their flexible attitude to life. For the anthropologist, projection backwards in time is not the only way to understand the dynamics of hunting and gathering life ways; one must also try to understand hunting-gathering culture by
examining the consequences of transformations, which are, in turn, elements in the flexible cultural matrix of hunter-gatherers.

**DIVERSITY AND THE PROBLEM OF THE COLLECTIVE HUNTER-GATHERER IDENTITY OF PUNAN**

The earliest appearance in print of the term Punan, referring to nomadic peoples living in central Borneo, was in the work of J. Leyden (1968 [1814]). He described these peoples as living ‘in the very rudest stage of savage life’ (1968: 93). Another early traveller, J. Dalton, also claimed to have met the nomadic people of Borneo (Dalton 1831). The term Punan also appears in the list prepared by Robert Burns of smaller tribes in northwest Borneo. His list recorded Kanowit, Bukitan, Lugat, Tanjong, Tatau, Balingan, Punan, Sekapan, Kajaman, Bintulu, and Tilian (1849: 141). It is interesting to note that Burns separated the Bukitan and Lugat, who are also hunter-gatherers, from the Punan.

The *Sarawak Gazette* of 1 March 1882 gave information on the diversity that existed within the category Punan: ‘[…] The names Ukit and Bakatan are what they call themselves but [they] are ignorant of the origin of the term’ (1882: 11).

Charles Hose’s travel in the Baram district in northwest Borneo and his encounter with the Punan there led him to state, ‘I have no doubt in my mind that this wandering race of people are the aboriginals of the country’ (1893: 157). In his classification published in 1912, Hose included Punan, Ukit, Siduan, and Sigalang in his ‘Punan group.’ The Baketan (Bukitan, Bakatan, Mengketan) he classified as a central group that included Seping, Tanjong, Kanowit, Baketan, and Lugat (Hose 1912, ii: 320). Subsequently, Raymond Kennedy classified Punan as comprising Aput, Basap, Boh, Bukat, Bukitan, Busang, Kelai, Lism, Lugat, Ot, and Penyabong (Kennedy 1943[1935]).

Based on prolonged anthropological field research, Rodney Needham’s findings on the distinction between the Penan and Punan hunting-gathering peoples led to an awareness of the problematic use of the term Punan to denote all hunter-gatherers in Borneo. Needham argued that it was misleading to use the term Punan in the overarching manner in which it had been popularly applied (1954b, and 1955). He also remarked that there were distinctions even within the category Penan (in this volume).

Needham was leading us on the right path and onto something important, for, quite simply, he was giving the views held by hunter-gatherers themselves. Needham’s further observation that there was also a distinction between the Eastern and Western Penan, that they were different from the Punan, and that
The Emergence of the Ethnic Category Bhuket

the settled Punan Bah, in turn, were unrelated to the nomadic Punan helped clarify some of the inconsistent and muddled ways in which the category Punan had been used. Needham demonstrated the cultural heterogeneity among hunter-gatherers of Borneo (Hoffman 1983: 11). Yet, if one looks closely, this heterogeneity can also be observed in the early reports of colonial officers, who had used a myriad of terms for hunter-gatherers of the interior (see, for example, the Sarawak Gazette, March, July, August, September, October, and November 1882, and July 1898).

More recently, Peter Brosius has agreed with Needham: ‘The inconsistent or confused usage of the terms Penan and Punan continues in works by Hose and McDougall (1912), Haddon (1901), Harrisson (1950), Urquhart (1951b), Hoffman (1986), and others. Needham’s 1954 [1954b] article resolved this issue, and his conclusions were further affirmed by Nicolaisen (1976 [1976b]: 43)’ (Brosius 1992a: 55).

I wish to explore the collective concept Punan a little further by drawing on my own observations in relation to the two points raised by Hoffman (1983, 1986), which unfortunately he himself later contradicts; first, that the term ‘Punan’ is a term of reference applied to nomads by sedentary peoples, rather than an actual label of identity used by the nomads themselves, and secondly, that the term ‘Punan’ is concerned with describing certain locational and behavioural characteristics rather than assumed ethnic origins. It is also interesting to note from Brosius’ own observations that the words Penan and Punan are used by Kayan, Kenyah, Penan, and others to include non-Penan and non-Punan groups such as Bhuket, Sihan, Lisum, Baketan, and even the Philippine Negritos and the American Indians (Brosius 1988a; 1992a: 58).

Here we can see that the words ‘Penan and Punan’ are an all-embracing term for particular ways of life and certain behavioural characteristics, which was initially used by nomads’ sedentary neighbours, but eventually adopted by the hunter-gatherers themselves. I am not denying the existence of the ethnonym, Punan, for these terms have been internalised by some of the hunter-gatherer groups. Needham (in this volume) has clarified for us the groups that belong to the category ‘Penan’, but that of ‘Punan’ is considerably more problematic if used as a collective identity label for hunter-gatherers. It is obvious that the contexts in which the term ‘Punan’ is used are rather confusing. What both hunter-gatherers and sedentary farmers are expressing through the term ‘Punan’ is the commonality of life ways and attitudes shared by all hunter-gatherers. Punan’s sedentary neighbours are also making a statement about the flexibility prevalent in hunter-gatherer culture through the use of the term ‘Punan’, besides it being used as a
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stereotype for all hunter-gatherers. The term also changes in meaning depending on
the context of usage. My discussions on this matter with sedentary agriculturalists
such as the Kayan, Kenyah, and Malays led to very interesting findings. The word
‘Punan’ may have different meanings in the different contexts in which it is used:

1) as a term for hunter-gatherers whose specific identity is not known;
2) as an all-embracing label of reference for hunter-gatherers;
3) as a referent for individuals who show particular types of behavioural char-
   acteristics, such as extreme generosity, demand-sharing, sago-eating, and low
   social position; in this connection the term ‘Punan’ can be used both for
   hunter-gatherers and even sedentary people who show such traits; and
4) as a confirmatory term for hunter-gatherers who call themselves ‘Punan’, such
   as the Punan Busang.

In my discussions with hunter-gatherer communities, e.g., Bhuket, Lisum,
Sihan, Baketan, Kereho, and Hovongan (Bungan), it appears that they say that
they are not ‘Punan’ if the term refers to ethnic origin or comprises a label of
identity. They do not want to be called ‘Punan’, for they insist that they have their
own identity. Furthermore, they asserted that the term ‘Punan’ could also be used
in a derogatory manner. The Kereho and the Hovongan usually carry the label
‘Punan’, for they are on the Kalimantan side of Borneo, and government has always
insisted on the usage of the term ‘Punan’ for administrative purposes. The Kereho
and Hovongan only used the term ‘Punan’ when they had to elaborate further their
identity, which most researchers or government officers seek in their desire to
classify; in this sense, they have internalised the label of identification, and use it if
asked by an anthropologist or a government officer to identify themselves.

In my conversations with the Bhuket in West Kalimantan, they referred to
these two groups as ‘Kereho’ and ‘Bungan’ and, what is more, these two latter
groups insisted that the Bhuket were not ‘Punan’. During my fieldwork, the only
group of hunter-gatherers I encountered that called itself ‘Punan’ was the Punan
Busang, and I am aware that there are other hunter-gatherer groups who refer to
themselves as Punan. The time has come for anthropologists to take into account
the views of the hunter-gatherers themselves, for it has to do with the most basic
issue for them, that of their identity. If most of the hunting-gathering peoples
that we have included in the category ‘Punan’ do not want to be classified as
such, then we should respect their wishes and not impose it as an ethnic indicator
or as a cultural category. However, if certain groups in Kalimantan and Sarawak
have internalised the term ‘Punan’, and if they have come to accept it as an ethnic
label for themselves, then it seems permissible for these groups to be referred to
as such.
The Emergence of the Ethnic Category Bhuket

The commonality in life ways and attitudes among hunter-gatherer groups is not only expressed by their sedentary neighbours, anthropologists, and government administrators, but it is also recognised by hunter-gatherer groups themselves. But the question remains: Should this commonality in social life be given the label ‘Punan’ and used as an all-embracing cultural or ethnic category? In my view, it should not, and certainly the Bhuket, though they are hunter-gatherers, are not Punan, and do not wish to be so designated.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we have to move backward and forward between past and present, along a scale that moves from the individual, the band, and the ethnic group, to show the dynamic nature of identity formation and identification of forest nomads. The awareness of belonging to a group (suku) that we would call ‘ethnic group’ is a recent phenomenon among hunter-gatherer communities. Furthermore, hunter-gatherers have their own history and identity, which establish their relationships and their variability to one another in the Bornean ethnographic landscape. It would impede our understanding of the identity formation of forest nomads if we ignore this emerging state of diversity and flux by accepting the categorisation of Bornean forest nomads as Punan. There is much diversity within the hunter-gatherer communities in Borneo, although commonality in life ways can also be observed. This brief excursion into the past, current, and local discourses over matters of identity and identification of hunter-gatherers is to illustrate the need for caution in formulating or accepting generalisations about people’s identity without taking into consideration the voices of the very people who are being discussed. Equivalent caution is also necessary for anthropologists doing such work, because our writings do sometimes influence those who have power to categorise and administer.

All hunter-gatherer societies, past, present, and future, are profoundly affected by their integration into much larger-scale systems, which in most cases have denied them a unique history of their own. Identity and identification can be seen as interactive, and need to be placed within a historical context. Besides that, the unitary concept of Punan may not be a credible anthropological category, nor a useful category for theoretical purposes. Moreover, such categorisation does not help hunter-gatherers themselves to produce a real future, with the potential to be anything but a continuation of the past or present instance.
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AUTHOR’S NOTE

Most of the ethnographic data used in this paper were collected during my Ph.D. fieldwork in Sarawak and West Kalimantan from October 1992 to November 1993 and from April to May 1994. Because of the Bakun Dam Project, the Bhuket of Long Ayak have been resettled recently at Sungai Asap (Sungai Koyan), further down the Balui River and closer to Belaga town. The censuses for Long Ayak and the West Kalimantan settlements were taken in 1993 and 1994, respectively; data on Naha Tivab were collected in West Kalimantan from residents of that settlement.

NOTES

1. The Menyimbung River is also known as Menyivung by the Bhuket, and today it is called Mengiong by the Iban.

2. The Seru lived along the Krian River and had put up a hard fight against Iban encroachment into their territory (Pollard and Banks 1935: 406). Charles Brooke (1866, ii: 335) pronounced them all but extinct in the mid-nineteenth century, with only 30 or 40 doors left, in small communities. Deshon (Sarawak Gazette, 1 November 1882) reported the existence of one village of around 12 doors near Kabong, on the Kalaka River. Bailey (1901: 48) reported that, after the epidemic of cholera, they were reduced to one village of 18 men, 11 women, and four children. The last Seru (Sru) died in 1949, but many of the Malays of the Krian are of Seru stock (Pringle 1970: 40). However, Chin (1980: 21) has stated that the last individual claiming Seru identity died in 1954.

3. F. de Rozario served in the Brooke government from 1864 to 1911. For more than 30 years, he was in sole charge of the upper Rejang station, first located at Nanga Balleh, and later at Kapit. He was very knowledgeable about upper Rejang ethnography and wrote extremely colourful reports (Runciman 1960: 204; Pringle 1970: 40; see also his obituary in the Sarawak Gazette, 2 January 1925: 856; and for an example of his knowledge of the upriver tribes, his brief 1901 text on ‘The Sru Dyaks’ in Richards 1963). A volume of letters from officers at Kapit, covering the period 1879 to 1892, is preserved in the Sarawak Archives. It includes many letters from De Rozario and graphically illustrates the character of his administration (Pringle 1970: 257n).

4. Information collected from the last surviving Seru and now on file in the Sarawak Museum indicates that (1) the Seru did not originally call themselves Seru; the name was imposed by early Brooke officers; (2) the Seru believed that they were related to other peoples of the Melanau family in the lower Rejang, including the Beliun and Sagalang; and (3) they claimed an original homeland in the Kapuas where most Bhuket have lived since the Iban migrations drove them out of the Balleh (Pringle 1970: 40n).


6. Kaboy (1969) reported that there were no living people claiming descent from the Bliun in the late 1960s.
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7. The Seduan, Segalang, Banyok, and Bliun were related, and were living close, to the Melanau, by whom they were eventually absorbed. The Segalang were the followers and allies of Serif Massahore, the major enemy of the Sarawak regime, who was plotting to overthrow James Brooke (see Baring-Gould and Bampfylde 1909: 223–224, 265).

8. According to Low, the Lisum were related to the Sihan and Lugat (Sarawak Gazette, 1 Nov. 1882: 96). The Lisum and Sihan claim the Rejang region as their homeland (see Sandin 1985). In the Apo Kayan, the Lisum are known as Punan Lisum (Elshout 1926: 243).

9. The Lugat, like the Baketan, allied themselves with the Iban.

10. De Rozario’s categorisation is based on linguistic similarity between these groups. In certain cases, a linguistic relationship can be demonstrated (e.g., between Seru and Bhuket, and between Lisum and Bhuket); in others, given the lack of data, I would not wish to speculate about linguistic or, indeed, broad cultural relationships.

11. The Balleh was inhabited by Baketan and Bhuket (Brooke 1866, ii: 250; Sarawak Gazette, 1 November 1882: 96, and September 1901: 175). The Sihan, Lugat, and Punan also lived in the Balleh (see Sarawak Gazette, 1 November 1882: 11; and also Mr. Low’s January 1884 Diary, in the Sarawak Gazette, 2 June 1884). Freeman details the history of Iban occupation of the Balleh region (1955b: 11–20). Sandin (1967b) has documented the migrations of the Baketan.

12. The Iban attack on the Lisum, the Kayan of Uma Belor and Kenyah of Uma Kelap, and the Bhuket at Naha Nyabong was around 1900, for the Sarawak Gazette (1 December 1900: 227) reported the murder of three Dayak by Lisum. After this incident, the Lisum were attacked several times by the Iban for revenge against these murders (see Elshout 1926: 243–244, Rousseau 1990: 223).

13. Ricketts has briefly discussed Iban-Bukitan relations (Sarawak Gazette, 1 July 1898: 138–139). The Bukitan were driven out of the Balleh, and were the victims of both the Iban and the Kayan (Sarawak Gazette, 1 July 1882: 50–54; 1 August 1882: 62–65; 1 September 1882: 72–73; 1 October 1882: 81–83; and 1 November 1882: 93–96). By the efforts of the Brooke Raj, they were moved out of the Balleh to live apart from the Iban (Sarawak Gazette, 23 May 1879).
Chapter 5

THE PUNAN FROM THE TUBU’ RIVER, EAST KALIMANTAN: A NATIVE VOICE ON PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE CIRCUMSTANCES

By K.A. Klimut and Rajindra K. Puri

Abstract: R.K. Puri comments on the thoughts and experiences of K.A. Klimut, a Punan elder from the Menabur River, a tributary of the Tubu’, in what is now the Malinau Regency of north-eastern Kalimantan. Klimut likens the situation of his people to that of the Australian Aborigines and the Kurds. In a compelling statement, Klimut addresses Punan’s central dilemma, outlining the advantages and disadvantages of relocating, with special regard to the cultural practice of sharing, and wondering whether or not ‘our lives will be finished’.

INTRODUCTION

The following essay on the Punan Tubu expresses the thoughts and experiences of Klimut, a Punan elder born in 1949 in the village of Menabur Besar on the Menabur River, a tributary of the Tubu’ River, in what is now the Malinau Regency of northern East Kalimantan (see Map 5.1). He currently lives with other Punan Tubu’ in a resettlement village known as Respen Sembuak, located across the Sesayap River from the town of Malinau. Klimut was once an
The Punan from the Tubu’ River, East Kalimantan

The administrative secretary of his village, but the pay was so poor and the job so stressful that he resigned long ago and returned to the life of a part-time farmer and forest product collector. He is, however, still an unofficial community leader, participating in all aspects of running the Respen village, settling disputes and treating sick people. His fluency in Indonesian and local languages, his friendly and gregarious nature, and his perceptive and often insightful understanding of Western ways and work habits make him an excellent resource for visitors coming to the area. Thus, he often accompanies scientific expeditions in the area, and most recently has worked with WWF Indonesia, the Wildlife Conservation Society, and the Center for International Forestry Research, on surveys and forest ecology studies in the district. He has been my research assistant on two projects (Puri 1998a, 2000).

During the military confrontation with Malaysia in the early 1960s, Klimut left school and joined the Army as a teenager, received training in Balikpapan, and was stationed on the Kerayan Plateau to patrol the border with Sarawak. He managed to work as a medical assistant to army doctors, both in the field and in Balikpapan.
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He has taken that training and combined it with a traditional education in medicinal plants and healing and become well known among the Punan and other local communities as a healer/doctor. Klimut has a home garden full of medicinal and other plants, many of which he has brought home from his travels in Kalimantan and Malaysia. With boundless energy and good humour, he is an almost unstoppable conversationalist, joker, and storyteller. Often cynical, sharp tongued, and holding no punches, Klimut will publicly debate and critique all issues, from local politics and economics to international current events and the processes of globalisation. He likens the situation of his people to that of the Australian Aborigines and the Kurds.

Having known and worked with Klimut since 1997, I am well aware of the situation his people face as the new millennium dawns. When asked to contribute something to this volume, which examines the issues and condition of Punan/ Penan in the new century, I immediately knew that Klimut would have to lead this discussion, and I am grateful that he took up the challenge with such enthusiasm, twice! Unsatisfied with his first essay, written in September 1999, he sat back in November and wrote a second, more dramatic one. Both are included here. I should also note that despite Klimut’s unique status and abilities as a local ‘cultural broker’, he articulates views that are quite commonly heard and discussed among all Punan in the area, albeit he tends to be fearlessly blunt and unusually forward in expressing his views. Knowing that his message is for outsiders, he wrote in Bahasa Indonesia, which has become the lingua franca among the many ethnic groups of the Respen village and Malinau town, at the expense of local Punan languages. One of Klimut’s fears is that his children will never be fluent in Punan, since instruction in the schools is in Bahasa Indonesia.

Part I begins much as any ethnography would, setting the geographical and anthropological context. He then introduces aspects of the traditional Punan way of life, including economics, leadership, marriage, and cultural values or norms. The main subject of his writing, though, is the positive and negative effects of missionaries, local politics, and the migration of the Punan Tubu’ to the lowlands. Given the recent scholarly interest in the origins of foragers in Borneo, and the consequent focus on the ideology of nomads and nomadism (as an unchanging core significantly different from that of farming societies), it is interesting that Klimut himself is most concerned with changes in the value of sharing, which he seems to imply is a defining characteristic of being Punan. Finally in the first part, Klimut describes, and indeed worries over, the essential Punan dilemma of the day: whether to stay in the resettlement villages or return to their traditional lands. As is the case with all dilemmas, neither choice looks good for the Punan from his point of view.
The Punan from the Tubu’ River, East Kalimantan

Part II expands on the first writing in bolder, passionate, and more personal prose. It was written after the election of the new Indonesian president and vice-president and, in my opinion, reflects the new found confidence among Indonesians everywhere to address past and present problems with a fearlessness unimaginable only a few years ago. In emotional and compelling statements, Klimut again discusses the central dilemma of the Punan, outlining the pros and cons of moving, especially with regard to the cultural practice of sharing, and wondering whether or not ‘our lives will be finished’. Klimut is fond of throwing up his arms in frustration and then tapping his forehead in sad resignation, claiming he is habis pikiran, ‘out of ideas’, for solving this dilemma. Yet in these statements he outlines clearly what the tradeoffs appear to be, and thereby lays an essential foundation for a needed dialogue among his people, and between themselves and their neighbours, their local and national governments, and the international community of scientists, development policy makers, and nongovernmental organisations, who are implicated, in one way or another, in the fate of the Punan.

Having provided this brief introduction, as well as copious footnotes, to provide background information and some help in interpretation, I have chosen to refrain from intellectualising Klimut’s statement in terms of wider debates in the anthropological literature on cultural brokers or the ‘native voice’. While those certainly are interesting debates, their inclusion here would distract from the message that Klimut is trying to get across. Sometimes we just need to listen to what our informants are trying to tell us, rather than thinking of everything they say in terms of theory.

THE SITUATION OF THE PUNAN OF THE TUBU’ RIVER. PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

By K.A. Klimut

PART I: SEPTEMBER 1999

Background

The area of the province of East Kalimantan is quite large, 21,144,000 ha, which consists of 20,039,500 ha of land and 1,104,500 ha of lakes and rivers. The area of East Kalimantan forms one of the main points of entry for development in Eastern Indonesia. The area is known as the country’s timber supply, and has hundreds of rivers that provide the main means of transporting [timber out of
the region], apart from transporting them over land.\textsuperscript{5} The Mahakam River is the longest river in East Kalimantan.

The province of East Kalimantan is located on the eastern part of the island of Kalimantan and forms part of the border area with Malaysia, most specifically with [the states of] Sabah and Sarawak. The province borders Malaysia [Sabah] to the North, the Sulawesi Sea and the Makassar Straits to the East; South Kalimantan to the South; and West Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, and Malaysia [Sarawak] to the West [see Map 5.1].

East Kalimantan is not free of mountains, and mountainous terrain is found in all regencies. There are about thirteen mountains; the highest in East Kalimantan is Mount Makita, with an altitude of about 2,987 m asl, which is located in the Regency of Bulungan. There are as many as 17 lakes, which are all found in the Regency of Kutai. Two among them are very large and are called Lake Jempang and Lake Semayang, with areas of 13,000 and 15,000 ha, respectively.

The natural wealth includes mining products such as oil, gold, and coal. Other products include rattan, timber for export, eaglewood,\textsuperscript{6} malam wood,\textsuperscript{7} cinnamon, ginger, various kinds of medicinal plants, swiftlet nests,\textsuperscript{8} and apart from these there are numerous other animal and plant products.

According to a [government] registration at the end of 1996, the population in East Kalimantan was 2,187,356 people.\textsuperscript{9}

The ethnic group Dayak in East Kalimantan consists of 12 smaller tribal groups, which are Dayak Punan, Kenyah, Lundayeh, Benuaq, Tunjung, Bentian, Kayan, Merap, Abai, Tegalan, Berusu, Oheng, Bahau Saq, Bahau Busang, and Modang; whereas the Malay groups include the Tidung, Bulungan, Kutai, and Banjar.\textsuperscript{10} Immigrant groups include Javanese, Batak, Sundanese, Toraja, Buginese, Arabs from the Middle East, Butonese, Madurese, Balinese, Chinese, and Europeans.

There are eight \textit{Daerah Tingkat II} [kabupaten, or regency: second-level administrative region],\textsuperscript{11} which are Kabupaten Bulungan, Kabupaten Berau, Kabupaten Kutai, Kabupaten Pasir, Kota Administratif Bontang, Kota Administratif Samarinda, Kotamadya Balikpapan, Kotamadya Tarakan.

In Bulungan Regency, there are 17 \textit{kecamatan} [or districts; third-level administrative region], which include Malinau and Mentarang.\textsuperscript{12} There are 59 villages in Malinau District, which include 38 villages with a Punan population.\textsuperscript{13} In Mentarang District, there are ten Punan villages. The total number of Punan villages in the whole of East Kalimantan is 66.\textsuperscript{14}

In the past, present, and in times to come, the Punan people find their livelihood in swidden agriculture,\textsuperscript{15} gardening,\textsuperscript{16} and collecting forest products,\textsuperscript{17} but it is possible that this may change and they may turn to mining for coal, gold, etc.
The Punan from the Tubu’ River, East Kalimantan

There are 7,000 Punan individuals living in East Kalimantan, according to data gathered by the Yayasan Adat Punan in 1995. No data have been collected on the number of Punan in Central and South Kalimantan, or in Malaysia.

Conditions of the Punan People before the 1970s

In the old days, the Punan people of the Tubu’ River used to live in groups on each tributary of the Tubu’ River. To lead a group, a person was appointed who was considered to be able in all matters, be they matters that involve the government or those of the village or his particular group. Another prerequisite of a group leader was that he could not be a descendant of a slave. This is understandable since, at that time, a slave was often someone who had been captured in the course of a headhunting raid, then possibly traded to another group, and then married to someone of that group. The appointment of an able and courageous person could sometimes have a boomerang effect [backlash], as it was self-sacrifice [for that person to accept that function]. A sacrifice, because in settling problems with outside parties, for instance make peace and pay fines, then the group leader is sent to pay the fine on behalf of the group. But conversely, he was the one to decide on the fine to be paid [to him] if he had been slandered by a member of his group or an outside party.

At that time [before the 1970s], customs and traditions were rather strong, and many had to be followed by boys and girls. Among other things, children were prohibited from opposing or speaking out against their parents using language that might hurt their feelings; they could not eat bears, snakes, and monkeys (for young girls); they were prohibited from eating burnt rice; and they had to be quick when they were ordered by their parents to do something in a hurry.

The Present Situation of the Punan People, 1967–1999

The condition and the lifestyle of the Punan people during the years 1967–1999 was much the same as before, except concerning the unity of the group and conditions in the leadership, changes were experienced in:

1. thinking patterns;
2. beliefs and convictions;
3. customs and traditions; and
4. settlement and housing.
Beyond the Green Myth

In 1967–1968, suddenly, the whole area and the villages were visited by missionaries who came mostly from the Putuk and Lengilu people. In order to convert the people [including the Punan] to the Gospel, they visited their houses and swidden huts bringing posters showing people entering the fires of Hell, pictures of the devil entering the heart of people who believed in evil spirits, bird omens, and who used traditional medicines. Since that time, the Punan people no longer believe in bird omens and traditional medicines. This movement was called KINGMI and is called GKII nowadays. The same happened to customs and traditions. Before the Christian faith entered, a wedding had to follow the following steps:

1. Mukum oroh, asking for the hand in marriage;
2. Peturui, the wedding candidates were given formal permission by their parents to sleep together;
3. Pelulung, during this ceremony the marriage candidates were given permission by the parents of both sides to eat together in one place;
4. Niran, the ceremony whereby the girl was escorted by her parents to the home of the parents of the boy. During all these steps, the parents of the girl gave their consent, while the party of the boy contributed gifts in the form of ancient [ceramic] jars, gongs, and even persons they had captured during headhunting raids to become servants, to the parents of the girl. But a wedding nowadays is a marriage ceremony in church.

During the 1970s, coinciding with the missionary activities, the government suggested, through the village heads of the whole Tubu River area, that the Punan people move to town [i.e., Malinau], because the place they lived in was considered by the government to be too isolated. At the very least, they had to move closer to the district [capital]. In order to speed up the move, the government provided the means for transport and provided land that had been prepared to establish a village in town. They also offered assistance for the duration of one year once they had settled in the town [district capital].

According to the government, the intention of the move was:

1. to make it easier for the people to be developed and assisted;
2. to make it easier for them to obtain medical care;
3. to provide the children with proper education;
4. to teach them how to live as townspeople; and
5. to settle permanently and to abandon their nomadic way of life.

After having heard the sweet suggestions made by the government, there was a major migration from the Tubu River to the capital of the district [Malinau] and the surrounding area. The locations that had been prepared by the government were located in Sungai Sembuak, Lubuk Manis, Long Loreh, and Paking.
In Sembuak there were 13 villages, in Lubuk Manis four, in Long Loreh five, and there were four villages in Paking, in Mentarang District. After having lived in town for a few years, people began feeling that they could not adjust, because the land that had been given to them by the government was not suitable for gardening, because it was land within the [coastal] tidal zone. Also the water they were supposed to drink was very dirty and the forests and rivers for hunting and catching fish were very far away and necessitated the use of motor boats. Every necessity of life required money. This was vastly different from the villages they had moved from, where everything was nearby and did not require money. The land that they had was sufficiently vast and suitable for cultivating rice and for gardening.

After having experienced the difficulties of living in town, the [people from the] villages of Long Pada, Long Ranau, Long Nyau, Rian Tubu’, and Long Titi went back to where they had come from and they settled there again from 1973–1974 up to the present. Now they feel like a bird released from its cage; they live free and all they need in life – especially their daily needs – can be met, and their land is large enough to have swidden fields and gardens.

But they live in ignorance. Many school-aged children have never tasted education and many children and elderly persons die because of epidemics, because they do not get medical treatment from Mentarang District. Since this situation has endured for such a long time, we may assume that they are being punished by the government for returning to their land of origin and for not having followed the wishes of the government that wanted to relocate them. However, the reason why they do not get a primary school building and medical treatment is only because their village is too isolated and is in an unfavourable area. But, in fact, many people go back and forth from the district [capital] to the villages and the other way around.

The Situation of the Punan People, Now and in the Future

The situation of the Punan people nowadays may be said to be better in comparison with the past. Many Punan children are currently at school at various levels of education from primary school to teacher’s college, although not many get the opportunity to become a civil servant or a big businessman. This is understandable because there is no capital and there are no sponsors. Punan people who have adjusted themselves to life in town have many skills: agriculture, technical crafts [e.g., carpenter, smithy], and fishing and short-, middle-, and long-term planning. At the moment, the Punan people have managed to organise two festivals, in 1994 and 1998, and they also have a foundation [YAP] that will become a centre of research. They are not lagging
Beyond the Green Myth

behind [other groups] in entering politics. They also join seminars and receive training inside the country and abroad.

What we know about politics at the moment is that Malinau District will become a Regency, so we may expect the following to happen:

1. A tighter control [more constraints] over village heads for the villages in the direct vicinity of Malinau [the regency capital];
2. The regency capital is expected to expand, so villages that have no village [land] map or authentic data [land certificate], such as Respen Sembuak and Lubuk Manis, may be moved or transferred to other areas.

If that happens, it is certain that the communities of Respen Sembuak and Lubuk Manis, and the populations of other villages, will return to their original area and villages on the Tubu’ River, just like the villages of [Long] Pada, [Long] Nyau, [Long] Ranau, Rian Tubu’, and [Long] Titi.

PART II: NOVEMBER 12, 1999

The future of the Dayak Punan is worrying.

Education

In the first place, the Punan people are financially unable to pursue higher education to enter teacher’s college or university.

Obstacles:

1. There is still favouritism based on ethnicity in Indonesian society. For example: There was someone who took the test to become a civil servant. This Punan person was asked if he had six million rupiah [roughly US$ 600]. The Punan person said to one of the members of the board: ‘If I had that much money, sir, it would be better for me to use it as start-up capital, or to open a shop!’ ‘Then,’ said the board member, ‘it’s not possible,’ meaning that the Punan man did not pass.

2. When the government asks for applications for candidates to the civil service, members of the police force, members of the army, primary school teachers, or teachers for junior high school, the information is intentionally not passed on to the Punan people. Only after they have enough applicants, or when the application time has passed, do they inform the village heads of the Punan people. After a Punan person has sent in his application, he is told that they already have enough and that he was too late to apply. That is the actual situation we have experienced all along.

3. When children of our people are supposed to advance a grade in primary school, junior high school, or senior high school, there are always objections made by their school teachers. Some of them say, ‘You have not yet paid money for your BP-3, OSIS, school fee (participation).’ So children are
reluctant to go to school. That is why, to this day, many Punan children drop out of school.\footnote{32}

\textbf{Punan People}

The Punan people are just like the Aboriginal people in Australia or the Kurds who live in Iraq or in Tehran. The behaviour of society towards them is the same.\footnote{33}

This is what alarms the Punan people, and the future of our ethnic group. If we study the history of Indonesia, it is the Dayak who are the original population of East Kalimantan. The Dayak Punan are among them. But the conduct of other people towards the Punan people is as I have sketched above.

Another example. There are companies [industries such as mining, logging] in our area, but if we want to catch a ride in their vehicles, we have to pay the driver and he charges from 10,000 to 20,000 Rp per person [US$ 1–2]. When in fact the area in which these industries are working is our area, where we were born, the area of our forefathers, from generation to generation until the present day. Where lies the justice that the government propagandises to the people? Is this in accordance with Pancasila, in which, if I am not mistaken, the first principle mentions [the belief] in the one and only God?\footnote{34}

This is what worries the Punan: The future of their group.

Moreover, there is the national park;\footnote{35} wherever there is a headwater area [watershed], almost all of them have been included in the National Park, which overlaps with our traditional lands. And I have not even mentioned the logging concessions. Where else are we all supposed to go to find our food? The forests have already been occupied by business concerns.

In fact, all products are there, for instance:

1. rattan is in the forest;
2. eaglewood is in the forest;
3. timber to make boards is in the forest;
4. damar resin is in the forest;\footnote{36}
5. hunting animals is done in the forest;
6. sago is in the forest;\footnote{37}
7. the fate of the Punan people is in the forest. Everything is in the forest.

Local investigations have been conducted [showing] that in each village, 70–75 per cent of the people are still dependent on forest products.\footnote{38} They lack the skills to work in a factory, let alone to work as civil servants, and there is nothing left for them but to live a life of endless suffering.
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Even more so at present. Malinau District has officially become a regency (Kabupaten Daerah Tingkat II Malinau). Well, we know what that means, don’t we? Everything there will be reorganised and be put under new control. It will start with the rice paddies, the swidden fields, the gardens, and the house plots, all will require registration [a certificate]. All of which we do not have. All the Punan people will be in trouble as a result. I mean, those Punan people who live in Respen Sembuak are already thinking of moving back to the upper reaches of the river, back to their original lands. If there is an exodus back upriver, the situation will become even worse. If the government allows them to do so, then there will be no problem, but if they do not allow it, our fate will already be sealed; as in the expression nasi jadi bubur.\textsuperscript{39} What will become of our life?\textsuperscript{40}

For Dayak people in general, it is still the swidden fields, gardens, primary and fallow forest lands, houses, rivers, graveyards, and mountains that yield products [one’s livelihood]. We do not use papers [documents]. What we use are signs. For instance, mountains, rivers, forks or confluences, and ridges,\textsuperscript{41} those are the signs that we use to mark someone’s property. The confluence of two rivers, or a mountain, are signs that can not be changed. That is why we Dayak do not use documents. Documents may be changed by anyone wishing to do so. But mountains, or rivers, or mountain peaks; who can change a mountain? Who can change a river? That is why we Dayak use what has already been told above. So, stories handed down from one generation to the next, that’s strong proof for Dayak in general.\textsuperscript{42}

The Past and Present Culture of the Punan People

Punan culture in the past. Punan used to live in harmony and peace and their feeling of unity was very strong and could not be broken apart. One example is a village when someone had caught an animal, a pig. The pig had to be divided and shared among all members of the village. Not only the villagers, but also people happening to visit had to be fed. This too was a form of unity [oneness]. If someone in the village died, each member of the village had to help and had to give whatever they had, such as rice, sago, fish, even their own labour. They had to give cloth or a machete to the grieving people. This was proof of their unity [oneness]. If someone in their village got married, they had to help them with whatever they had for instance a jar, a gong, valuable beads, cloth, and the like. All this is called \textit{la’ lou} (or \textit{tengunyun}).\textsuperscript{43} If a person was in trouble, he had to be helped. This is why, in general, we see that Dayak people are never rich, because Dayak people share everything.
The Punan People at Present

The Punan people of today are very different from those of the past. If a Punan catches a pig or a fish, at best we will only see it, but one cannot ask for it anymore. If you ask, he will not give you anything, except if you pay for it. That means that we have to spend our own money, when, as I said before, there used to be a situation of mutual sharing. This is the difference between the Punan people of the past and the Punan today. The difference is immense. Many Punan have rubbed shoulders with town people, who do not have a culture of sharing and mutual help. This [adopting the townsfolk’s culture] is the mistake often made by Punan, whereas in fact it is they who have a culture of mutual help. I myself do not know how to address this situation and this is my concern about the Punan people.

APPENDIX : K.A. KLIMUT’S ORIGINAL TEXT

Keadaan suku Punan Sungai Tubu’, Kalimantan Timur: Dulu, Sekarang, dan di Masa Depan

K.A. Klimut

[PART I: SEPTEMBER 1999]

Latar Belakang


Daratan Kalimantan Timur tidak terlepas dari gunung dan pegunungan yang terdapat hampir di seluruh kabupaten, yaitu ada sekitar 13 gunung. Gunung yang
paling tinggi di Kalimantan Timur yaitu Gunung Makita dengan ketinggian sekitar 2.987 meter yang terletak di Kabupaten Bulungan. Sedang untuk danau yang keseluruhannya berjumlah 17 buah semuanya di Kabupaten Kutai. Dua buah di antara danau-danau itu yang luas adalah danau Jempang, Semayang dengan luas masing-masing 13.000 hektar dan 15.000 hektar.

Kekayaan alam terdiri dari bahan tambang seperti minyak bumi, emas dan batu bara. Hasil lainnya rotan, kayu expot, kayu gaharu, kayu malam, gember, obat-obatan, sarang burung walet, selain itu terdapat pula keanekaragaman hayati (flora dan fauna).


Mata pencarian masyarakat Punan dari dulu, sekarang bahkan di masa yang akan datang selain berladang, berkebun seperti mencari hasil hutan kemungkinan juga beralih ke hasil barang tambang berupa batu bara, emas dll.


Keadaan Suku Punan dulu sebelum Th. 1970-an

Suku Punan Sungai Tubu’ zaman dulu hidup mengelompok pada setiap batang sungai di Sungai Tubu’. Untuk memimpin sebuah kelompok diangkat atau ditunjuklah seorang yang dianggap mampu dalam segala hal baik itu urusan yang menyangkut pemerintah maupun yang di dalam desa atau kelompoknya

**Keadaan Suku Punan Sekarang, 1967–1999**

Keadaan/gaya hidup Suku Punan dari tahun 1967–1999 ini masih tetap terutama yang menyangkut keutuhan kelompok dan persyaratan pimpinan yang mengalami perubahan adalah:

1. pola berpikir
2. kepercayaan/keyakinan
3. adat/kebiasaan
4. tempat berdomisili


Aliran ini disebut Kingmi atau yang disebut saat ini GKII. Demikian pula mengenai adat/kebiasaan, dalam perkawinan sebelum Injil masuk, maka acara perkawinan pada Suku Punan melalui jenjang: (1) Melamar, *mukum oroh*, (2) *Peturui*, kedua calon suami-istri direstui oleh orang tua untuk tidur bersama, (3) *Pelulung*, dalam acara ini kedua belah pihak orang tua merestui kedua calon

Pada tahun 1970-an bertepatan dengan pekabaran Injil itu Pemerintah melalui kepala-kepala desa di seluruh Sungai Tubu’ menyarankan agar masyarakat Suku Punan pindah ke kota, karena daerah yang didiami masyarakat itu menurut Pemerintah dianggap terpencil. Paling tidak harus mendekati kecamatan. Untuk kelancaran proses perpindahan pemerintah menyedai sarana/prasarana transport dan lahan yang siap menampung penduduk desa itu di kota dan memberi bantuan satu tahun setelah berada di kota kecamatan.

Maksud/tujuan perpindahan itu menurut Pemerintah adalah:

1. masyarakat mudah dibina dan dibantu.
2. mudah mendapat pelayanan pengobatan.
3. anak-anak dapat sekolah dengan baik.
4. belajar hidup seperti orang kota.
5. hidup menetap tidak perpindah-pindah.


Tetapi mereka hidup di dalam kebodohan, banyak anak-anak usia sekolah tidak pernah mengecap bangku pendidikan, banyak anak-anak dan orang tua meninggal
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dunia disebabkan wabah penyakit karena tidak mendapat pelayanan kesehatan dari Kecamatan Mentarang. Dalam kurun waktu yang lama seperti ini dapat saja kita mempunyai dugaan bahwa mereka itu mendapat hukuman dari pihak Pemerintah sebab mereka kembali ke daerah asal dan tidak memenuhi keinginan Pemerintah yang ingin meng-relokasikan mereka. Tetapi alasan mengapa mereka tidak mendapat bangunan gedung SD dan memberi pelayanan medis di sana hanya semata-mata karena desa itu terpencil dan bermedan buruk. Tetapi dalam kenyataannya banyak saja masyarakat yang berlalu lalang dari kecamatan ke desa itu dan sebaliknya.

Keadaan Suku Punan sekarang dan di masa yang akan datang

Keadaan Suku Punan sekarang dapat dikatakan lebih baik dibanding dari pada sebelumnya, banyak anak-anak Punan yang sedang belajar di berbagai jenjang pendidikan dari SD s/d Perguruan Tinggi, tetapi tidak banyak mendapat peluang menjadi Pegawai Negeri dan menjadi seorang pengusaha besar. Hal itu dapat dimaklum karena tidak ada modal dan sponsor. Suku Punan yang sudah beradaptasi di kota memiliki banyak keterampilan yaitu: bidang pertanian, pertukangan dan nelayan serta perencanaan jangka pendek, menengah dan jangka panjang. Suku Punan saat ini telah mampu mengadakan festival dua kali yaitu pada tahun 1994 dan tahun 1998 dan telah pula memiliki sebuah yayasan yang nantinya menjadi pusat penelitian, juga tidak ketinggalan ikut bertarung dalam dunia politik, serta ikut seminar dan pelatihan-pelatihan di dalam dan di luar Negeri. Pengetahuan yang diperoleh dari dunia politik saat ini khususnya Kecamatan Malinau yang akan dijadikan Kabupaten, maka dapat dibayangkan akan terjadi hal-hal sebagai berikut:

1. penyiapan Kepala Desa bagi desa yang terdekat di Kabupaten Malinau.
2. dengan adanya perlancaran kabupaten, maka desa-desa yang tidak memiliki peta desa dan data-data yang otentik seperti Respen Sembuak dan Lubuk Manis ada kemungkinan digeser/dipindahkan ke lokasi yang lain.

Jika demikian halnya dapat dipastikan bahwa masyarakat desa Respen Sembuak dan Lubuk Manis serta masyarakat desa lainnya akan kembali ke daerah/desa asal di Sungai Tubu’, seperti desa Pada, Nyau, Ranau, Rian Tubu’, Titi.

PART II, NOVEMBER 1999

Masa Depan Dayak Punan Dikhawatirkan

Pertama-tama, orang Punan tidak mampu menerobos jalannya sekolah. Supaya bisa sekolah di perguruan tinggi atau bisa kuliah.


**Suku Punan**


Masa depan Dayak Punan suram kalau begini terus.

Padahal segala hasil ada di sana, contoh:

1. rotan ada di hutan.
2. kayu gaharu ada di hutan.
3. kayu buat papan ada di hutan.
4. damar ada di hutan.
5. berburu binatang ada di hutan.
6. sagu ada di hutan.
7. orang Punan menggantung nasibnya di hutan.
   Segala-galanya di hutan.

Sedang penelitian lokal dilakukan sekarang ini setiap desa rata-rata 70–75 persen orang masih bergantung pada hasil hutan. Bekerja di perusahaan tak punya keterampilan, menjadi pegawai negeri apa lagi, hanya tinggal merana saja.


Budaya orang Punan di masa dulu dan masa sekarang


**Orang Punan masa sekarang**


**AUTHORS’ NOTE**

The original texts were written by K.A. Klimut in September and November 1999, and were then transcribed and translated by Dick van der Meij, MA, at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, the Netherlands. The introduction, all insertions (in square brackets), and endnotes are by R.K. Puri. Editing of the translation and all notes were completed by R.K. Puri while visiting the IIAS in the Spring, 2000. Thanks go to Bernard Sellato for carefully checking the translation and providing comments and corrections. Peter Sercombe, Deanna Donovan, and Michael Jacobsen also commented on an initial draft. All correspondence concerning this chapter should be directed to R.K. Puri at R.K.Puri@ukc.ac.uk.

**NOTES**

1. The government program to resettle inland people was called RESPEN, an acronym for *Resetelmen Penduduk* (population resettlement).

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4. Since the essay was written in two parts, it has a confusing set of numbered and repetitive headings. With permission of the author, in the English translation I have taken the liberty to reorganise the headings so that the reader understands the organisation of passages.

5. Occasionally, I insert what I feel to be missing words or needed corrections that might otherwise impede the reader’s comprehension or that would be distracting if footnoted.

6. Aromatic resin from *Aquilaria* species (Thymelaeaceae).

7. The bast of *Aporusa frutescens* (Euphorbiaceae), which is used as a mordant for dyeing in the batik industry.

8. From *Collocalia fuciphaga* subspecies *vestita*, which is found in the Tubu’ River area.

9. This data appears to have been taken from the published statistics of the province and regency, which Klimut has access to at the Yayasan Adat Punan office and the Malinau District government office. Klimut is known as an avid reader and researcher of facts. He is often accused of being a journalist in disguise; journalists being regarded suspiciously by the Indonesian administration, Army, Police, and even some ordinary citizens.

10. I am well aware that Klimut here lists more than 12 Dayak groups. The Malay groups or Orang Melayu (including Islamised Dayak such as the Tidung and Bulungan) were organised around sultanates and controlled the lower reaches of major river systems and, therefore, the trade in and out of the interior of the province. The Tidung were in the Sesayap (and controlling the Malinau, Tubu’ and Mentarang rivers); the Bulungan were in the Kayan and Berau rivers; the Kutai were in the Mahakam basin; and the Banjarese were on the Barito River and later, together with the Kutai, on the Mahakam (see Kaskija 1995: 26; see also Appell 1983 and 1985, Sellato 2001).

11. There is some debate concerning the English translation of *kabupaten* and *kecamatan* in the literature. Some people would translate the former as ‘district’ and the latter as ‘sub-district,’ but I prefer ‘regency’ and ‘district’ (see also Kaskija 1995: 13). *Kecamatan* are too politically autonomous in perception and practice to be thought of as ‘sub-’ anything.

12. As of December 1999, these two districts are now included in a newly created Malinau Regency, with the new capital in the town of Malinau on the Sesayap River. The Bulungan Regency now covers only the lower Kayan River, but is still based in the town of Tanjung Selor.

13. Klimut argues that the Punan are a sub-category of Dayak, the indigenous people of Kalimantan. He often refers to this group as Punan Dayak or Dayak Punan. The category consists of all ethnic groups that call themselves Punan or are labelled by outsiders as Punan (in the Bahasa Indonesia sense of a nomadic forager), including
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Punan Aput of the Apo Kayan, Bukat of the upper Mahakam River, Punan and Basap of the Kelai and Segah Rivers, all Punan groups of the lower Kayan, Malinau, and Mentarang river watersheds, and the Penan Benalu of the Bahau River. That many of these groups are already settled and have a long history of agriculture, as well as having distinct languages, is of little concern for this classification. They are all Punan. Based on this and other conversations, I believe that Klimut thinks of ‘Punan’ as not just an ethnic group, but more as an ecological grouping encompassing all those people living closest to the forest, and those who depend most heavily on forest resources for subsistence and trade. Conceived as such, the class has political-economic overtones as well. These groups are simultaneously at the top of the forest economy, the collectors of numerous forest resources, and at the end of the line with regard to access to trade goods and political and economic power. These are the remotest, the poorest, and the least powerful people in the historical political economy of East Kalimantan.

14. Kaskija (1995: 26) gives the population of the Punan as 3,700; constituting 20 per cent of the total population of Malinau District and almost 50 per cent of the indigenous Dayak population. These are unusually high numbers for nomads in Borneo (see Rousseau 1988: 9), but understandable if indeed many of these Punan have been settled and farming for up to seven generations, as is claimed by Klimut and others.

15. Throughout this text, I translate ladang as ‘swidden field,’ referring to rain-fed rice fields cultivated on cleared and burned forest lands (see Chin 1985; Dove 1985; Sellato 1997).

16. Home gardens are planted with vegetables, herbs, spices, and fruit trees. Swidden gardens, planted around a rice swidden hut, tend to have most of these crops as well, as well as areas of what can be called famine food, manioc, taro, and bananas. Cash crop gardens, planted in old swiddens or around village sites, may include coffee, cocoa, bananas, and fruit trees such as durians, mangos, and rambutan (see Kaskija 1995; Sørensen and Morris 1997; Puri 2000).

17. In this area, forest products that generate cash include a few timber species (e.g., ironwood, *Eusideroxylon zwageri*, and kapur (a trade name; *Dryobalanops* spp.), gaharu (from *Aquilaria* spp.), rattans (particularly, but not exclusively, from *Calamus caesius*), forest fruits, illipe nuts (from *Shorea* spp.), honey, song birds, and bush meat (often from the Sambar deer, *Cervus unicolor*, or Bearded pig, *Sus barbatus*). (See De Beer and McDermott 1996; Kaskija 1995; Wollenberg and Uluk 1998; Wollenberg *et al.* 1999; Puri 1998a, 1999 and 2000).

18. Yayasan Adat Punan, or YAP, was created in 1994 by Punan teachers, religious and civil leaders, including Lawing, Darif, Dollop, and Klimut. These leaders are mostly from Respen Sembuak, a resettlement village established in the early 1970s for the people of roughly 10 villages of Punan from the 'Tubu' area, and located across the river from the town of Malinau. Initial funding for YAP came from the local Catholic Church and from European environmental NGOs, via WWF Indonesia. Their inaugural event was a Punan cultural fair held in 1994 in Respen Sembuak. Representatives from many Punan groups, some from as far away as the Apo Kayan, met for several days of parties, discussions, competitions, and cultural displays. Handicrafts were exchanged or sold, often to non-Punan attendees. Discussions
The Punan from the Tubu’ River, East Kalimantan

were held on mapping community lands, securing tenure, economic development, political representation, education, the role of the church, and the loss of language, art, and cultural values, such as sharing.

19. Kaskija (1995: 13) notes that Malinau District has a very high concentration of Punan, approximately 40 per cent of all Punan in Kalimantan, and 20 per cent of all Punan and Penan in Borneo.

20. Klimut uses tumbal, a Javanese term meaning ‘sacrifice’.

21. A seeming universal among parents, this gripe seems particularly aimed at the children of Respen Sembuak who, claims Klimut, grow wilder every year! It may not be an exaggeration, though, to state that the lives of children are much changed these days. They live in multilingual and multicultural villages, and are exposed to images and information about the surrounding nation and world like never before, yet they are less aware of and in some cases not even interested in their own surrounding environment and historical traditions.

22. This period coincides with Soeharto’s New Order government. More significant to this area of East Kalimantan, it is the period following the military confrontation with Malaysia. That period not only brought a war to the border area, and employed many people as soldiers and support personnel, but also increased Jakarta’s interest in and influence over the area. As military officers from Java took control of the province in Samarinda, Javanese troops, doctors, and bureaucrats were sent into all areas of Bulungan (see Magenda 1991). Klimut himself was stationed in the Kerayan.

23. Also known as Lundaye people. Lengilu’ are also descendants of Putuk ancestors who moved out of the Sesayap River basin in the lowlands up into the Kerayan Plateau. Some Lundaye have since moved back down into the lower Mentarang, and are concentrated in the towns of Malinau, Tanjung Lapang, and Pulau Sapi (Sellato 1997).

24. GKII is the acronym for Gereja Kemah Injil Indonesia, which was founded by American missionaries of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (currently based in Colorado Springs, USA). They first arrived in the area in 1932, working primarily on the Kayan River, and were successful in quickly converting the Kenyah tribes of Pujungan District (Conley 1975). It was only in the late 1960s that they managed to reach and begin to convert Bulungan’s most remote groups, such as the Punan and Penan. The Catholic Church is as powerful as GKII in the Malinau and Kerayan regions, less so in the Kayan River area.

25. Klimut does not mention that the bride payments requested of the groom by the bride’s father have been growing to exorbitant levels, sometimes requiring a young man to give up all his capital that might otherwise be used to support the new family. Lundaye marriages are well known for their high bride prices, but mixed marriages with Punan or others tend to spread the practice among ethnic groups. The solution to high bride prices is to elope, which no one prefers but young couples are often forced into.

26. Lahan pasang-surut, ‘land within the tidal zone’, is low-lying swamppy land subject to daily inundation as the tides change and to extensive flooding during the rainy season. River water in this area tends to be almost always cloudy with high silt and clay content. People from the interior are wary of such water, almost always referring to it as dirty.
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27. Klimut refers to the practice of nurses and doctors travelling to remote villages to give immunisation shots and treat residents in their villages. This is effective and necessary as often elders are too weak to travel, and the Punan are generally unable or unwilling to go to the government clinics.

28. A ‘sponsor’ generally refers to a patron who provides capital for business enterprises (such as forest product collecting) and access to the markets, usually by agreeing to buy what the clients produce. They may also arrange matters of government bureaucracy, and support their clients and their families during emergencies. In Indonesia’s hierarchical and stratified society, sponsors are like parents and are seen as being responsible for their clients, in both a legalistic and ethical or moral sense.

29. In addition to tighter controls, the number of village heads may also be reduced and those who remain, given more responsibility. As a trend across the interior of East Kalimantan, official village status is being limited to settlements with more than 500 residents. This means that small Punan villages will, in an administrative sense, have to fuse. The consequences of this are that there will be fewer salaried positions available and that the annual government allowance (to village heads) and aid money (to villages) will have to be distributed among a much larger population.

30. The expectation is that the town of Malinau will need more land for agriculture, housing, etc, and that those people who do not have official documentation of tenure, something along the lines of a land registration certificate, will be forced to leave. As Peluso (1995) has argued, maps are seen as crucial evidence of tenure and are being used to argue claims for government recognition. Not only are the Punan worried about the security of their settlements at Respen Sembuak and Lubuk Manis, they also worry that their homelands on the Tubu’ could be usurped or given away to industrial interests. There remains a tension between allegiances to the two localities, with some people advocating a move back to the Tubu’ to secure their lands.

31. *Sistim suku* or *sukuisme* usually refers to the favouring of one’s own ethnic group over another. The phrase is not uncommon among Dayak. It is often used to characterise the days of tribal headhunting, when endogamous tribes were pitted against each other in war. Under Indonesia’s Pancasila (Five Principles) state ideology (see Note 34 below), all people are citizens first, and ethnic identities are not supposed to matter. I have heard the phrase used in admonishing someone for stereotyping Punan because of their ethnicity. For example, a statement such as ‘Punan are clever, they don’t need money,’ might be met with the response, ‘Mr A is clever, not all Punan are so! We are not returning to the time of *sistim suku*, are we?’ Klimut often uses the term to characterise what he believes to be systemic or institutionalised discrimination. Although he may exaggerate the degree to which generalised corruption (e.g., managers ‘selling’ jobs) overlaps with discrimination (i.e., it may be that the Punan are unable to play the game because they lack the resources, not because they are Punan), the economic stratification of Indonesian society along ethnic and religious lines is evidence enough for Klimut and others that *sistim suku* is organised, pervasive, and very much alive. I thank Bernard Sellato for helping me to clarify this note.

32. For an educational system that is supposed to be government subsidised and essentially free for the poorest in Indonesia, the Punan and other Dayak peoples
claim to spend a lot of money on education. This includes money for questionable fees (bribes, in many cases), school uniforms, writing books and paper, pens and pencils, maintenance of the school buildings, and other incidental costs resulting from supporting teachers in the village – they often have smaller fields, or don’t grow their own rice, and depend on generous neighbours to help them with basic subsistence needs. Teachers themselves are paid very little and, often, especially in remote villages, they are paid late because they have to go and get their salary at the district capital. Reportedly, some teachers never receive special government subsidies of rice and other ‘hardship’ bonuses, due to corruption at higher levels.

33. Klimut, like many Dayak I have met over the years, is acutely aware of world events. He pays careful attention to the national news on television, reads local newspapers, and listens to international radio broadcasts, in Indonesian, from Europe and America. He is quick to point out contradictions and hypocrisy, and he is not afraid to confront local leaders or any visitor with his opinions and analysis of world events. One of my favourite images is Klimut in front of a television with the remote in his hand, scowling at the screen as he punches the buttons, saying: ‘This is just like us, under remote control from Jakarta!’

34. The use of Tuhan yang Maha Esa instead of Allah, to refer to the belief in a ‘Supreme God’ in the first principle of Pancasila, was chosen to encompass diverse religious groups, but I don’t think that is what Klimut implies by mentioning the principle here. This line occurs at the end of the page and it appears that the author has left the thought hanging, for he does not pick it up again in his references to the national ideology on the next page. More likely, though, he has confused this principle with the fifth one, on ‘Social Justice’. But his indignation is apparent enough, and Pancasila is an easy target these days. First announced by Soekarno in 1945 and meant to define the basic values for a unified and culturally neutral Indonesian political culture, the five ideals of the Pancasila are (1) belief in one supreme god, (2) humanitarianism, (3) nationalism expressed in the unity of Indonesia, (4) consultative democracy, and (5) social justice. Its ideals ring hollow for many Indonesians today, especially in the face of emerging evidence of the way the country has been run and the way its citizens have been treated over the last generation. If given the chance, I know Klimut could list countless examples of the violation of those principles from his own area.

35. The Kayan Mentarang National Park, gazetted in 1997, covers 1.3 million ha, running along the border with Sarawak from the Apo Kayan in the South to the border with Sabah in the North. Some northern tributaries of the Tubu’, such as the Kalun River, are included in the Park. The Punan, and most other residents, were never consulted about the borders of the original Nature Reserve (Cagar Alam Kayan-Mentarang), but they were consulted, however, by WWF when refining the limits of the Park, and drawing the zonation. Many residents have participated in scientific expeditions to survey the area, community mapping and resource inventory projects, and been employed by the various projects associated with it (e.g., Dollop Mamung 1998). Indeed, that is how I came to meet and work with Klimut in 1997. His antipathy and suspicions are well founded of course. Even if the people writing park management plans and trying to implement sustainable development programs are full of good intentions, it is very possible that these lands could be used by outsiders for other purposes, while the boundaries and even the legal status of the park could be changed. In times of economic crises and political upheaval, parks
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and the environment are usually of low priority and can suffer severe and irreparable damage, as has happened recently in East Kalimantan, not to mention the rest of Indonesia (Donovan 1999).

36. Oleo-resins primarily from *Shorea* species (Dipterocarpaceae), but also *Agathis borneensis* (Araucariaceae). Damar from *Agathis* was a major cash-generating forest product for the Dayak of Bulungan until the 1960s, when synthetic alternatives replaced it (Burkill 1966: 768). Damar from *Shorea* species is still used today, occasionally for fuel, but mostly for caulking wooden boats.

37. In the Tubu’, the Punan process sago flour from the pith of several wild growing tree palms including *Eugeissona utilis*, *Arenga undulatifolia*, *Caryota no*, and *Caryota mitis* (see also Puri 1997b).


39. Literally, ‘rice becomes porridge’; if you boil rice with too much water, then the rice becomes runny porridge, and there is no going back to rice. The English equivalent might be ‘the die is cast’.

40. *Apakah hidup ini sudah?* ‘What will become of our life?’ Purposefully ambiguous, Klimut implies livelihoods, ways of life, and actual lives may be lost. He mentioned that he was hesitant, even scared, to add this comment, but included it because it was the truth.

41. *Bota*, in Punan Tubu’, can mean ‘ridge’ or, more generally, the ‘uplands’, mountain areas covered in mature forest.

42. This remark is a bit of a non sequitur, but I think Klimut uses ‘stories’ in the sense of ‘oral tradition’, verbal information, or a communication event, that would indicate the boundaries of someone’s land.

43. *Tengunyun*, a Punan Tubu’ term cognate to the Kenyah *senguyun*, refers to a practice of exchanging work days, for instance during the planting, weeding, and harvesting of rice. Klimut gives *tengunyun* as an equivalent of *la’ lou*, but the former seems more likely an example of the latter, a kind of sharing encompassed by the more general term *la’ lou*.

44. There are Punan people who work at businesses or own stands and stores, and that is how they come to mix with town people.

45. *Kekeliruan* means something like ‘mistake’ or ‘confusion’, and refers to those acts of denying to share one’s fortunes with fellow Punan.

46. This is a tricky sentence to translate, but I believe that Klimut means that those who mix with town folk and adopt non-sharing values are no longer Punan, because to share is in fact a determining characteristic of Punan culture.
Chapter 6

STUCK AT THE BOTTOM: OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES AND PUNAN MALINAU IDENTITY

By Lars Kaskija

Abstract: This chapter considers the Punan Malinau, who often perceive themselves as being tetap di bawah, ‘permanently at the bottom’, or the most disadvantaged group. This perception, a part of their self-identification as Punan, is closely tied to their stance vis-à-vis neighbouring groups, external agents, and the state’s priorities, and is connected to their opportunism and perception of opportunities. Punan are constantly on the lookout for occasions to improve their economic position (trade in forest products, wage labour, or the sale of services and information to various outsiders). Both the tetap di bawah feeling and opportunism are important factors in how Punan fit into national development plans and questions of modernisation.

It’s hard to get money, and all the things we want to buy are expensive. We Punan are always at the bottom. Whenever we want to sell something, it’s cheap. When we want to buy something, it’s expensive. We are stuck at the bottom (Bare’ Tangga’ , 67, Punan Tubu’ man from Bila’ Bekayuk).

Smart people want ignorant people to remain ignorant. Punan are at the bottom of the heap and everybody wants to keep us there. In ten years or in a hundred years, we will still be at the bottom, or even lower (Rhomulis Abau, 45, Punan Tubu’ man from Bila’ Bekayuk).
INTRODUCTION

Punan Malinau–Tubu’, the largest group of Punan in Kalimantan (approximately 3,500 in 1990), often perceive themselves as being stuck at the bottom. This perception is closely tied to their stance vis-à-vis neighbouring groups, external agents and questions of development and modernisation. It is also a part of their self-identification as Punan. They see themselves as the most disadvantaged local group. Despite all their efforts, they remain poor and subordinate. Such feelings of deprivation must also be viewed in relation to their opportunism and their perception of opportunities. They are constantly on the lookout for any opportunity that might improve their economic position. Such opportunities can include trade in forest products, wage labour, or the sale of services and information to various outsiders. Both the Punan perception of themselves as ‘stuck at the bottom’ and their opportunism are important factors that affect how they fit into national development plans and other agendas and projects of modernisation.

The statements quoted at the beginning of this article contain much frustration. The Punan may well have acquired the inferior attitude evidenced in these statements over the course of centuries of being looked down upon by others (e.g., farmers, coastal people, colonial and Indonesian administration). Although such complaints may be interpreted, at least in certain contexts, as a form of strategic self-denigration, they can, just as accurately and profitably, be seen as representative of a pragmatic indigenous analysis of the socio-political situation in the Malinau region. For example, in their dealings with various outsiders, whether traders or NGO field staff, Punan see themselves as the providers of resources – whether non-timber forest products (NTFPs) or information. Outsiders profit, both in terms of money and prestige, from the expertise and services of the Punan, but the latter are always devalued. The Punan sense of being disadvantaged and permanently ‘stuck at the bottom’ has, however, also become an important bargaining chip in their negotiations with representatives of a new world of outside assistance. In this situation, the Punan have registered some success at taking advantage of their apparent subordinate position in order to press their own claims.

BACKGROUND

To many Westerners, the nomadic Penan of Sarawak have become the ‘ecological other,’ an example of a people with supreme ecological wisdom. It is only as we
approached the new millennium, however, that the area with one of the largest concentrations of Punan in Borneo, the Malinau–Tubu’ area of the present-day Indonesian province of East Kalimantan, came to outside attention. For many years, this area was of little recognised significance among scientists, explorers, and adventurers. The Dutch colonial administration did of course penetrate the area in the early decades of the twentieth century, and missionaries have been involved in local affairs for at least 40 years. Scientists, explorers, and adventurers, however, have produced few written sources about the area and its peoples, and most of the ethnographic data available today have been gathered during the last decade.²

The Malinau–Tubu’ is not the only neglected area in Borneo. There are several such areas, particularly in Kalimantan, but what is remarkable about the Malinau–Tubu’ area is the exceptionally high percentage of Punan who live there. Almost 40 per cent of the nomads or former nomads in Kalimantan are to be found in this particular area, where they constitute some 50 per cent of the indigenous, non-Muslim, Dayak population. That this large Punan population did not receive much attention before the 1990s may appear surprising, especially if we consider the present-day interest in Borneo nomads. This lack of interest is not, however, particularly unusual; none of Borneo’s nomadic groups received much notice prior to the 1980s (see Sellato 1994a: 15). In the 1950s, the first articles to deal specifically with these nomadic groups began to be published (e.g. Needham 1954b, 1954d, 1959, 1964, and 1965). Most of these articles presented first-hand information on groups living in Sarawak. The first books or monographs about Borneo nomads did not appear until the 1980s (e.g., Hildebrand 1982, Hoffman 1983, Sellato 1986). It was also at this time that more popular publications began to appear (e.g., Lau 1987).

The Malinau Area

The district of Malinau covers the Malinau and Tubu’ rivers and their tributaries, as well as the Bengalun, Sembuak, and Semendurut river basins.³ According to official statistics, the Malinau district has more than 17,000 inhabitants, of whom almost 10,000 are living in or very close to the district town of Kota Malinau. In 1990, there were approximately 3,500 Punan living in the district of Malinau, less than 1,000 of them still living far upstream.⁴ In the early 1970s, a large number of Punan Tubu’ resettled from upriver locations to large resettlement villages (Respen Sembuak, Lubuk Manis, and Paking) close to the administrative and commercial centre of the district. At the same time, a smaller number of Punan Tubu’ moved to resettlement areas in the middle course of the Malinau
River. Approximately 1,500 Punan in total, most of them Punan Malinau, have resettled to the middle course of the Malinau River (Kuala Ran, Long Loreh, Seturan; see Map 6.1). Therefore, in 1990, about one-third of the Punan lived close to the district capital, one-third lived in the most accessible middle or lower course of the Malinau River, and almost one-third were still living farther upstream. The resettlement schemes of the Indonesian government have much in common with the policies of the Dutch colonial administration. The Dutch began visiting the area in 1909, although the whole area was probably not under Dutch administration until years later. During the Dutch times, Punan Malinau were ordered to build ‘proper’ villages, which they did at several locations even in the upper Malinau River (e.g., Metut, Pelencau, and Lake). Efforts to resettle people from remote areas to more accessible locations continue and, between 1970 and 1980, some 10,000 households were resettled in the whole of East Kalimantan (King 1993: 287–288).

Aside from the pressure exerted by the authorities, there are other reasons why more than two-thirds of the Punan population have moved downriver to government-sponsored resettlement villages. There are a number of advantages to living farther downstream. Punan themselves usually note that the move downstream brings them closer to markets, and this makes it more profitable for
them to grow cash crops, such as cocoa or coffee. Transportation of both people and products is easier. Residence in resettlement villages also brings them closer to healthcare and education facilities. There are, however, also a number of disadvantages to living in the resettlement villages, which they are eager to point out. The areas to which they were supposed to resettle have been occupied by other groups for several decades, and these groups have already occupied the best agricultural land. The resettlement areas are more densely populated, which makes it more difficult to fish or to hunt wild boar; furthermore, these resettlement villages are distant from the areas where commercially important forest products, such as gaharu (B.I., incense-wood, *Aquilaria* spp.), are sought. Because of such factors, a number of Punan households that have officially resettled downriver continue in reality to reside upriver. These Punan often live for extended periods of time in farm huts on their swidden fields. These swiddens are often located along tributary streams, at varying distances from the resettlement areas. Other Punan return, usually several times a year, to their home areas far upriver. Particularly during the fruiting season or at times when it is easier to hunt wild boar, whole families travel upriver and spend weeks, or sometimes even months, there.

**Local Variation**

The subsistence economy of the Punan can best be described as a mixed economy, and as such it shows much local variation. Intra-group diversity among groups of hunter-gatherers has attracted more and more attention in recent years (see Kent 1996). This diversity applies to most aspects of their lives, and not just to the versatility characterising their economies and subsistence strategies. The boundary usually drawn between hunter-gatherers and farmers is highly problematic, and many authors would rather view this diversity in terms of a ‘continuum of economic systems displaying a variety of combinations of rice farming, horticulture, gathering, and hunting’ (Sellato 1994a: 176–177; see also Sather 1995).

In reference to the Malinau area, two sets of factors are of special importance to the discussion of local variation in subsistence activities. One is the location of settlements, downriver or upriver – location affects the availability of various resources and opportunities. Another set of factors is of a political and historical nature. Each Punan settlement or band, in the Malinau and Tubu’ areas, has its own history of alliances, fusions and fissions, and within each of them there is much variation. Even for the purpose of a brief macro-description of the area, it is impossible to fit this complex social environment into neat categorical boxes,
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with clear labels. Much of what is said here is therefore a simplification of the situation in the Malinau district as I found it in 1990–1992.

In research notes published in 1975, Tom Harrisson, who travelled through the Tubu’ area in the 1940s, says that this river was ‘mainly controlled by settled Punan, some of them very sophisticated;’ these Punan were ‘rich and business-like’ (1975a: 3). However, in his book, World Within, Harrisson also paints another picture, saying that ‘in the Toeboe [Tubu’] and related rivers, there were numbers of nomadic people, Punan […] who roam in small bands over great distances, without cultivating anything; living off wild vegetables and game’ (1986: 265–266). This difference, between the ‘rich and business-like’ Punan Tubu’ and other groups of Punan (including certain groups in the Tubu’, as well as many of those in the Malinau River area), continues to the present-day, and is a significant factor that has to be taken into consideration in any account of Punan opportunity structures and subsistence strategies.

One reason behind the variation that Harrisson observed more than 50 years ago is found to be in the relationships between local Punan groups and their closest agricultural neighbours and allies. Generally speaking, Borneo nomads often have intermarried and become assimilated into non-stratified groups of rice-farmers, whereas they have not done so with strictly stratified groups, such as the Kayan or Kenyah. Lack of stratification makes assimilation easier (Sellato 1994a: 183–184, 212; Rousseau 1990: 245). Several Punan groups in the Tubu’ area were affiliated to less stratified groups, such as the Abai, Saben, Merau, and Ngurik⁶ (as well as with Merap of mixed or ‘lower’ status), who are characterised by a more ‘open’ social organisation. The boundaries between these groups were permeable, and intermarriage between Punan and members of these agricultural groups were not uncommon, which is probably one important reason why Punan Tubu’ have become more ‘rich and business-like’ and more like their farming neighbours. This applies especially to those living along the lower half of the Tubu’ River and who have resettled to Respen Sembuak.

The Punan Malinau were affiliated to the Merap, a strictly stratified group, with whom they have very infrequently intermarried.⁷ Punan Tubu’ have also been involved to some degree in rice agriculture for a longer time than Punan Malinau, who remained nomadic and ‘up to a short time ago, practiced no agriculture’ (Sellato 1994a: 177). Although a few Punan Tubu’ individuals demonstrate extensive genealogical memories, Punan Malinau can rarely recount more than a few generations. While Punan Tubu’ demand a high, or very high, bride-price for their daughters, Punan Malinau have not, until recently, done so. The practice of secondary burials, common among most groups of agriculturalists
in the Malinau area until the 1960s, was also common among some groups of Punan Tubu’, while all other Punan groups in the Malinau–Tubu’ area bury their dead immediately and in one stage only. Furthermore, Punan Tubu’, especially those resettled downstream, are generally much more outspoken and self-assured, while Punan Malinau are often more subservient in their relations with farming groups, traders, or representatives of the government or various companies. Bare’ Tangga’, one of my main Punan Tubu’ informants, pointed out that the Punan of the upper Malinau are still ‘holding the tail’ (B.I., pegang ekor) of the Merap or Kenyah, meaning that they are not free, but remain those groups’ followers, unlike the Punan (Tubu’) in Respen Sembuak, who are ‘free and educated’, and ‘brave’ and ‘unafraid in the presence of other people’, and also increasingly ‘aware of their own rights’.

Despite the differences sketched above, there is no clear and absolute boundary between Punan Tubu’ and Punan Malinau, who have been characterised instead by permeability, and there has been a great deal of movement of people between different groups, e.g. through inter-marriage.

**Punan Malinau Subsistence**

Punan Malinau earn their livelihood from a combination of basically forest-oriented activities, such as hunting and gathering, collection of and trade in NTFPs, small-scale horticulture, rice cultivation, and by acting as porters and guides to anyone in need of their services. In addition, individuals may engage in wage labour, for short or long periods of time, or devote time to the cultivation of cash crops. Their economy is truly versatile and shows much flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances. Before further developing this theme, I would like to present a few basic facts about various Punan subsistence activities.

Most of the carbohydrates consumed by the Punan today come from cultivated crops such as rice and cassava, which they grow themselves. Traditionally their staple food was starch from several species of (wild) sago palms. Individual households still occasionally extract sago. Although most Punan now grow at least some rice, the yield from the harvest is usually not sufficient for more than a few months. The most important crop is cassava, several varieties of which are grown. Unlike rice, cassava can be harvested at any time of the year and therefore interferes little with other activities. With the exception of fruits and sago, surprisingly, little (wild) vegetable food is gathered from the forest. Mushrooms, ferns, bamboo shoots, and honey are sporadically collected. The indifference shown towards these wild food resources stands in sharp contrast to the elation exhibited by Punan
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during the fruit season, which is of exceptional importance emotionally as well as nutritionally. Likewise, very few medicinal plants are used.  

Many species of wild animals are hunted and eaten. The meat of large animals, such as deer and wild boar, is avidly sought and has exceptional symbolic value, but for many groups aquatic resources are a more important everyday source of animal protein. Especially in the sparsely-populated upriver areas, there is an abundance of fish, and for most of the year fish (and other aquatic resources, including reptiles and amphibians) are the most reliable food resources. Some settlements devote much more time to hunting than other settlements do; there is thus much variation in the sources and amounts of animal protein consumed by local Punan groups.

Wage labour is of minor importance, partly because there are few opportunities, and partly because Punan consider the wages that they are generally paid to be too low. Individual Punan who have worked in the timber industry in Sarawak have earned substantial incomes, however, and they have sometimes worked there for periods of several years. Cash crops, such as cocoa and coffee, are considered potential alternatives for earning cash, especially among Punan living closer to markets. In 1990–1992 there were, however, few incentives for the cultivation of cash crops, mainly because of the rapidly rising price of incense-wood (gaharu, Aquilaria spp.).

The collection and sale of such NTFPs as rattan, various resins (B.I., damar), and gaharu have long been of vital importance to the Punan economy (see De Beer and McDermott 1989, Katz 1997). At the end of the 1980s, the demand for gaharu increased and high-quality gaharu fetched approximately US$ 50 to US$ 100 per kilo. This price rose to about US$ 300 per kilo in 1991–1992. By 1999, the price had risen to as much as US$ 700 per kilo (Wollenberg 1999).

Gaharu has been the economically most important NTFP for Punan in recent years. It is collected by small groups of men, perhaps a father and his sons, or by larger parties, organised and financed by a local trader. In a system based on credit, called utang (B.I.) or bon (B.I.), traders offer members of these parties provisions on account. This practice both enables the collectors to spend longer periods in the forest and, at the same time, allows the trader to ‘monopolise’ their labour in relation to other traders. In this way, each Punan man is therefore the ‘client’ (B.I. anak buah) of a particular trader (boi).

IMMEDIATE RETURN AND SHARING

Food resources procured by groups of hunter-gatherers living in tropical forests soon spoil in the humid environment and thus cannot easily be stored. It is,
therefore, not surprising that forest nomads, like the Punan, consume their food resources quickly, without regard for tomorrow. When they have plenty of food, whether meat or fruit, they eat as much as they possibly can, and when they have little or nothing, they simply have to go hungry. Woodburn (1980, 1982) characterised such hunter-gather societies as ‘immediate-return systems’, and contrasted them with ‘delayed-return systems’, such as farming societies. In delayed-return systems, people store food resources for later consumption and also make other material investments in the future. Although Punan Malinau also display some delayed-return features, in this section I focus on their preference for immediate return on their investment in time and labour.

Economic pursuits in immediate-return systems frequently involve little calculation and foresight. Activities that produce a return on the spot, here and now, are generally preferred. Whether these preferences and attitudes have an effect on the outcome of any long-term commitment, such as rice cultivation, depends upon what other opportunities arise in the meantime. The Punan, like other groups that do not store food or make any material investment in their future, appear confident that the source of their livelihood, the forest, will also provide for them tomorrow. Immediate-return economies are characterised by this basic trust (see Endicott 1984, Sahlins 1968, 1974). Testart has observed that ‘hunter-gatherers consider storage superfluous in so far as they trust the generosity of nature to supply them with wild resources at any time’ (1988: 170).

In a similar vein, Bird-David notes that hunter-gatherers’ skills, knowledge, and experience ‘reinforce the common trust in the viability of hunting and gathering’ (1992b: 41).

One striking correlate of this basic trust aspect of immediate-return systems is a sort of ‘feast or famine’ mentality. In times of abundance people delight in consuming everything available, with no thought for tomorrow. The food resources that Punan appreciate most, fruit and meat (particularly wild boar), are subject to seasonal variation and fluctuations in availability. There are times of plenty and times of need. An abundance of fruit or meat is a reason for orgies of consumption; everyone joyfully consumes as much as possible until there is nothing left. If joyful consumption in times of abundance is conspicuous, periods of scarcity and ‘hunger’ are just as conspicuous. Nonetheless, very little is done to even out the ups and downs, with the exception of sharing.

Sharing and Demand Sharing

In immediate-return societies, the variability in food supply is frequently reduced by sharing (see Cashdan 1989: 37ff). Punan Malinau often share food resources
with each other, especially the meat of large game, like wild boar. Hunters freely share the meat that they bring back from the forest. This sharing includes all band members, i.e., all the households co-residing at the same location receive a share of the meat brought back from a hunt. Punan Malinau have a very strong ethic of sharing, and it is considered extremely rude to ‘eat alone’. Eating alone is a behaviour that is seen as typical of a selfish person who refuses to share. Despite this ethic, most items are not shared freely; most sharing is on demand (see Peterson 1993). A Punan will thus ask for a share of whatever he desires, and such a request is not normally refused. The only way to refuse a request without causing both parties embarrassment is to hide the coveted belonging or simply to lie and say that one does not have the requested item (ibid.: 864).

Demand sharing, a lack of advance planning, and a tendency to consume everything on the spot, all make accumulation difficult. The money Punan earn is usually quickly spent, and, despite the fact that many of them often earn more cash than members of agricultural groups, no one lives in such simple material conditions as do the Punan. Shopping is often done with very little planning or foresight; when Punan have money, they buy whatever they happen to desire, such as alcohol, tobacco, or clothes. They are usually eager to purchase new items of imported consumer goods such as radio-cassette recorders, outboard engines, generators, television and VCR sets, chainsaws, watches, necklaces, and clothes, whenever they can afford them. Normally, however, they are surprisingly careless in their handling of these expensive goods (see Bird-David 1992a: 32).

Among neighbouring, agricultural groups, such as the Kenyah or the Putuk, cash income is often invested in village infrastructure or in goods that last. Punan, on the other hand, focus primarily on present needs and on the resources available to meet them; a focus on such factors often yields very little concern with future needs. In such immediate-return systems, people ‘do not accumulate property but consume it, give it away, gamble it away or throw it away’ (Woodburn 1980: 99). With little or no forethought or concern for long-term accumulation, Punan prefer to invest their money in items for consumption and symbols of success.

In 1989, very few Punan owned a long-tailed outboard engine (B.I. ketinting). From 1989 onwards, with the economic boom in the gaharu trade, the number of outboard engines owned by Punan increased dramatically. This may be compared to the increased consumption of Western-type goods that followed the economic boom in the cocaine-trade in the Colombian Amazon (Hugh-Jones 1992: 45–46). Outboard engines were an important acquisition for most Punan. A ketinting is not only an important practical tool and a major economic
investment; possession of an outboard engine also lends an aura of modernity and personal success to its owner. Despite their practical and symbolic importance, outboard engines are not always properly taken care of. Although individual Punan were frequently reminded to change the motor oil regularly, this was usually neglected until there were serious problems with the engine. The lack of maintenance of sophisticated equipment is also linked to a kind of collective ownership. Outboard engines are constantly borrowed and used by others, usually close relatives, which means that no one, not even the formal owner, feels much responsibility for or concern with the maintenance of these engines. However, to paint a picture of the whole population as carefree and short-sighted would be simply wrong. There are several Punan, often ambitious entrepreneurs with several years experience of the timber industry in Sarawak, who do take proper care of sophisticated equipment, like chainsaws and outboard engines, with both foresight and technical know-how. Also, even though immediate consumption and the practice of demand sharing are important reasons why so little is invested in infrastructure and lasting material assets, the most recent ‘trend’ among Punan Malinau is to build large, wooden houses, with glass windows, verandas and, at least, a painted front. This has been the case since the mid-1990s, especially among Punan Malinau living far upstream, and it has been made possible by the boom in the gaharu trade and by the credit system. These houses today have much the same aura of modernity and personal success among Punan Malinau as the long-tailed outboard engines had ten years ago.

A Need for ‘Many Things’

In the Malinau-Tubu’ area, to be wealthy has been traditionally perceived in terms of the ownership of goods of Asian, mostly Chinese, manufacture, such as ceramic jars and gongs. This has been the case among all indigenous peoples of the area (e.g., Harrisson 1986[1959]). Although to a lesser extent today than formerly, these items are still highly prized valuables. As bride wealth payments among Punan, these valuables, i.e., gongs, jars, and glass beads, are still exchanged. During the last couple of decades, however, these types of valuables have been increasingly replaced by Western goods, especially imported manufactured goods like outboard engines, cassette players, and wristwatches.

The Punan language has no word for ‘rich’. Instead, phrases like fi’ ubat, fi’ amung (B.P., literally, ‘many things’), or fi’ melat (B.P., literally, ‘lot of iron’) are used to characterise someone who possesses a lot of ‘things’. The ‘things’ referred to by the words ubat, amung, or melat, however, are usually not the kind of things that any Punan can produce with materials from the surrounding environment.
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These ‘things’ are rather manufactured goods from outside, i.e., imported goods. Anyone who has a number of such foreign goods – western clothes, outboard engines, generators, valuable jars, or jewellery – has *fi’ melat*, i.e., a lot of unusual, superfluous, prestige goods. On the other hand, those who have few such possessions have *maling fi’ melat* (B.P., ‘not much iron’). These terms are, however, not relevant to whether or not someone is a successful hunter, farmer, or collector, or in relation to subsistence concerns. In terms of subsistence, it is relevant to talk about being *kocop* (B.P., ‘hungry’) or *bau* (B.P., ‘full’). Any period when Punan have no meat, fruit or rice is characterised as *luman kocop* (B.P., ‘season of hunger’), even if alternative food sources are available and consumed in such large quantities that no one suffers from actual nutritional deprivation.

This desire for imported, manufactured goods and the almost wanton consumption of goods of all kinds, and the failure to accumulate and invest in infrastructure and lasting improvements, are tied to Punan perceptions of the environment as both inexhaustible and arbitrary. How the ‘many things’ Punan desire are distributed is both unfair and arbitrary, and in relation to other groups the Punan are always on the lowest rung. Nature, as well as every visitor, is seen as a source of ‘things’ and riches; Punan do not see themselves as ‘producers’ of wealth, neither in the forest nor elsewhere. They do not ‘generate’ or engage in the production of wealth, they just extract it, as opportunities arise.

PROCUREMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

In a series of articles, Bird-David has focused on hunter-gatherers with immediate-return systems. She suggests that, in these societies characterised by sharing and demand-sharing, people relate to their environment in much the same way as they relate to their sharing partners (Bird-David 1992a). They ‘view their environment as giving, and their economic system is [...] constructed in terms of giving, as within a family’ (Bird-David 1990: 189). The environment is seen as an ‘ever-providing parent’ (*ibid.*: 190). The economic system of these hunter-gatherers, she argues, is not focused on the *production*, but rather on the *procurement* of resources (Bird-David 1992b: 39–40). Hunter-gatherers, whether they engage in hunting, gathering, agricultural activities, wage labour, or office work, *procure* resources (*ibid.*: 37–38). They do not switch among various productive activities: ‘from their perspective they simply obtain the resources afforded by their environment through whatever means happen to be suitable’ (*ibid.*: 40). Among Punan Malinau, demand sharing may perhaps be seen as a kind of procurement of resources. Bird-David defines to *procure* as ‘to prevail
upon, to induce, to persuade a person to do something’ (ibid.: 40). In light of this definition, I would suggest that the way in which Punan Malinau relate to both their social and physical environments is one and the same.

Environment and Conservation

Bird-David claims that many hunter-gatherers perceive their environment as an ‘ever-providing parent’ (Bird-David 1990: 190). This is, however, not the case among the Punan Malinau, who do not do so, at least not in the (rather romanticised) way ascribed to the Mbuti Pygmies (Turnbull 1962; see also Grinker 1994: 6). If Punan may be said to live in a ‘giving environment’ built on basic trust, this is an environment that they perceive as being a more or less inexhaustible resource, a kind of ‘supermarket’. Although the forest is inhabited by spirits of various kinds, the forest itself is not seen as a ‘parent’ nor as any kind of sacred entity. Considering the enormous size of the forest, Punan have no reason to regard the environment – as Western environmentalists clearly do – as fragile and in need of human protection and care (see Milton 1996: 124ff). The Punan relations to this environment are very pragmatic and contain few elements of what we call ‘conservation’.

If Punan utilise certain (food) resources in a more restricted way, as a precaution against over-exploitation, this is an act of economic rationality and has nothing to do with morality or the ideology of conservation. During my fieldwork in the area in the early 1990s, I never heard any Punan express worry over the effects of logging, or even comment negatively on the situation in Sarawak, where several of them had witnessed the effects of large-scale deforestation. Instead, Sarawak always played the role of ‘the land of opportunities’ in local narratives. The Punan, at that time, appeared to view their environment and the livelihood that they could extract from it in terms of immediate return. Woodburn’s statement, that ‘those who consume most of their food on the day they obtain it and who are unconcerned about storage, also appear to be relatively unconcerned about conservation and about the planned development of their resources’ (1980: 101), rings particularly true in the case of many Punan.

Given that the Punan perceive the environment as an endless source of riches, the same is basically true of their perception of the modern, industrialised world. For them, the modern world is also an endless source of riches, of ‘things’, a place where wealth is generated in abundance. Therefore, they may ask for anything and everything when they meet a temporary visitor: ‘Give me your watch, you can get a new one when you return home.’ This behaviour may perhaps be seen as a parallel to their attitude and behaviour when there is an abundance of fruit:
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‘eat as much as you can now, you can always procure more later’. This attitude also leads Punan to pursue ‘hit-and-run strategies’ in their extraction of various resources, not least the NTFPs that fetch good prices at the moment. Punan lack ideological constraints on these activities; and, as long as it does not have any practical or economic consequences for them, they show very little concern about environmental degradation. What might be termed opportunism – a readiness to grab good opportunities whenever and wherever they appear, irrespective of the possible long-term consequences – is an important feature of Punan culture in general, much more important than any kind of eco-morality or ‘feeling for nature’.

CODE-SWITCHING AND OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES

In 1989, when I first visited the area, Punan Malinau were rather puzzled by Western visitors’ interest in anything ‘primitive’. They repeatedly asked themselves, and me, why these people, the most modern people in the world, would invest so much money and effort to take photographs of anything ‘primitive’. A half-naked Punan was more interesting than anyone dressed in a shirt and trousers; a broken bamboo quiver was more interesting than an expensive outboard engine. They suspected that these pictures and old artefacts fetched a good price in the West. Punan seem to assume that anyone visiting them or their forests always has a selfish reason. Most visitors come to collect something, whether NTFPs, timber, stones (minerals), or ‘stories’ (i.e., information, data), that either has economic value per se or may lead to the acquisition of prestige. Bare’ Tangga’, a Punan Tubu’ elder, said to me, after having patiently answered my questions:

You are here to collect data. You are here to write about Punan culture in your (note-)books. We are always happy to help you. One day you can go back to your country and become a professor, an important man, and earn a lot of money. I am already a kind of professor. Nobody else knows as much about Punan culture as I do. But where is my salary?

Most visitors to the Malinau area have come with specific agendas and goals: both the Dutch colonial and the Indonesian governments came to develop and administer the area; Christian missionaries came to proselytise among its inhabitants; and various others came to exploit and make a profit on economically valuable resources, such as timber, minerals, or NTFPs of some kind. However, especially since the 1990s, the number of visitors who have come to the area in order to gather nothing but information has increased. These people are usually
classified as collectors of ‘stories’ (B.I. cerita). Christian missionaries, too, have often collected ‘stories’, but never to the extent experienced from 1990 onwards.

Westerners who travel as far as interior Borneo do so, Punan argue, in order to convert these experiences into prestige, academic titles, well-paid jobs, or other forms of social capital and financial gain. News of visitors is invariably greeted with the question: ‘What is s/he looking for?’ Punan Malinau are openly interested in estimating the power of and the resources controlled by the various outsiders who work in or visit the region. They tend to perceive these visitors and outsiders – whether government officials, missionaries, NGO-representatives, tourists, or anthropologists – in terms of the ‘opportunities’ these external agents might offer them. For example, when Punan talk about the missionaries working in the area, the topic of discussion is rarely religion; they are much more interested in discussing and comparing the material, medical, or economic support that they have received or hope to receive from these missionaries.

Punan, especially leaders and entrepreneurs, quickly make themselves familiar with the language and values of neighbouring groups, government officials, representatives of church organisations, and so on. This strategy is well-known among hunter-gatherers; it is variously called ‘codeswitching’ (Kratz 1981), ‘bicultural oscillation’ (Gardner 1985), a ‘dualistic life-style’ (Morris 1982), or ‘lip-service to the conventions of others’ (Bird-David 1988: 29). This ‘code-switching’ phenomenon has been seen as a ‘cultural digging stick’, by which a hunter-gatherer ‘extract[s] resources from his social environment’ (ibid.). In their interactions with outsiders, Punan utilise their capacity to ‘codeswitch’ and speak the idiom of any potential power holder and/or ‘donor’. It is therefore not surprising that the most talented Punan leaders have become remarkably fluent in the vocabulary of the Indonesian administration. It is likely that the Punan Malinau, in their dealings with various NGOs, increasingly communicate with these outside groups in an environmentalist – sustainability – jargon, even using concepts, expressions, and proverbs that have not, until recently, existed in their own language (see Sellato 1999). This ‘chameleon’ technique has nothing to do with ‘acculturation’ or a lack of ‘authenticity’ – it is a strategy, perfectly in line with their tradition, their hunter-gatherer life ways.

An individual Punan’s attitude towards and expectations of ‘visitors’ are often intimately tied to such ‘personal resources’ as his/her level of education and prior experience with outsiders – resources that give individuals different ‘opportunity structures’, i.e., differential access to various kinds of opportunities. Expectations and attitudes also affect the way in which individual Punan relate to and depend upon the resources of the forest. If a number of alternative sources of income are available, such as wage work for various outsiders, dependence upon the resources
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of the forest is reduced. For those who are restricted to an upriver context, both in terms of the location of their settlements and in terms of their education and their experience with and knowledge of external agents, the forest remains the major source of income. In the presence of outsiders, these Punan are usually silent, and they may even choose to withdraw if possible. There are, however other Punan, most of them Punan Tubu’, who have a cultural competence that allows them to move between different forms of social interaction, from the forest huts far upriver to offices in the district town or even the provincial capital. As their level of education and degree of experience with wage labour and with various categories of outsiders increase, individual Punan not only increase the number of economic opportunities that are available to them outside the forest, but also, at the same time, they become more and more difficult to cheat. Increased awareness of the prices of the products that they collect, coupled with increased sophistication in dealing with outsiders, encourage them to bypass middlemen and, whenever possible, to sell their products directly to major traders downriver.

The procurement of resources, as opportunities arise, and the philosophy of immediate return, may both be seen as intimate parts of the traditional Punan way of making a living as hunters and gatherers. These features, however, also encourage individual Punan to pursue new and market-oriented economic strategies, including the cultivation of cash crops, the employment as wage labourers for local timber companies or as research assistants with international NGOs. As Bird-David has pointed out, such new and market-oriented activities are usually reorganised to fit into the hunter-gatherer way of life (1992b: 37) and do not, in themselves, imply a break from tradition. Making use of market-oriented strategies is clearly consonant with traditional Punan ways of making a living; the eagerness with which Punan explore new opportunities is nothing new. These new strategies, however, do entail changes that are qualitatively different, and they are likely to generate completely new processes that have important consequences.

STUCK AT THE BOTTOM

In her research with the Nayaka, hunter-gatherers of South India, Bird-David found that they both ‘moan[ed] excessively about their poverty and needs’, and ‘praise[d] the goodness and generosity’ of giving agencies, whether human or natural (1992a: 30). The Punan Malinau, too, praise the generosity of patrons, visiting outsiders, church leaders, government officials, and others, and complain

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about their own poverty. ‘We are very happy whenever we meet you, because you have always been compassionate and given us medicines, cigarettes, and things we need’ and ‘Pity me, for I have no shirt. Give me your shirt’ are both claims that Punan may make when meeting outsiders; both claims are voiced strategically to procure resources. Punan Malinau are hunter-gatherers operating with an expectation of immediate return, and they do in reality often have very little; as a result of this, they both ask for, and expect to receive, food and things from the apparently well-to-do outsiders whom they meet. These ‘complaining’ and ‘praising’ behaviours have, at least partly, been shaped by history. The Punan have a history of being looked down upon by others (farmers, coastal people, colonial and Indonesian administrations), and they have turned that experience into a tool for manipulating their current social environment.

Although the Punan perception of themselves as being ‘stuck at the bottom’ is, in certain contexts, a strategy of deception and/or manipulation, it can also be seen as a serious critique of how the world in which they live is constituted and functions. When they see the material plenty of people in towns and cities, such as Malinau and Tarakan, they often experience sadness (see pelulup urip, below) and feelings of being disadvantaged and positioned ‘at the bottom’. They perceive the world as very unequal and unfair. They would certainly like to possess all the shiny and fascinating consumer goods that they see in towns and marketplaces. Unfortunately, there are many difficulties and dilemmas that make the acquisition of such goods difficult. Traders demand high prices for the commodities and manufactured goods that they supply to the Punan, but the products of Punan labour that they receive in return are devalued and under-priced. Utang (B.I.) is a practice in which traders extend credit against future deliveries of NTFPs, especially the much sought-after gaharu. Such credit contracts, which are most commonly entered into by those Punan who live farthest upstream, are clearly disadvantageous to them. Many Punan are deeply in debt to traders, who gladly provide them with anything from sugar, tobacco, and medicines to manufactured consumer goods like cassette players. In 1997, for example, traders had provided at least two upriver settlements with televisions, satellite dishes, and large diesel generators – on credit.¹⁵

The Punan themselves wryly observe that whatever they do has little value. Various handicraft products, even the fine woven rattan baskets and mats produced by skilled Punan women, that are in demand for export, fetch very low prices. There are few opportunities for wage work within the district and the wages are very low. Most external agents who visit the area are rich; whether they are researchers or representatives of timber companies, mining companies, or
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NGOs, they control enormous resources and all of them have substantial incomes, but they all undervalue the work and services of the Punan and pay them only meagre salaries. As they themselves claim, Punan are always ‘at the bottom’.

Another reason – and an important one – why Punan often feel that they are ‘at the bottom’ may be found in the dire health situation of many Punan. As they often say: ‘If we get seriously ill, we die alone.’ Punan, especially those living upstream, are truly disadvantaged when it comes to health care. In 1990–1992, the most common ailments were fever, respiratory diseases (bronchitis, pneumonia, pulmonary tuberculosis), diarrhoea, stomach disorders, and various kinds of injuries. Most women suffered from chronic anaemia. According to the data that I collected in a number of upriver settlements, more than 40 per cent of all children died at an early age, because of malaria, fever, and diarrhoea (see Knapen 1998). It is perhaps not surprising that Paradise (B.P. kediman dau) was depicted by one informant in the following way:

Kediman dau is a very large city for all people who died on Earth. A king, called Rajah Kediman Dau, lives there, and he has a hospital that is big enough for everyone. In Kediman Dau, everyone is well off, but not wealthy. When it comes to development, Kediman Dau is the best place there is (Tomas Tangga’, 50, Punan Tubu’ man from Rian Tubu’).

Most informants, especially old people, often pointed out that the health of the Punan had been much better in the past. Formerly malaria, which is now endemic, was an uncommon disease among nomadic Punan (see Knapen 1998). Unyat Iman, an old (65–70) Punan Malinau man from Pelencau, commented that:

Now there are doctors and many kinds of medicines, but we are sicker than ever before. In the past we always drank water directly from the river without getting sick. Now we get sick even if we boil our water.

Punan Malinau often compare their situation with that of the indigenous population of neighbouring Sarawak, East Malaysia. In Sarawak there are immunisation programs for all children and good health care for everyone; there are even flying doctors for distant Penan settlements. There are also many logging camps and the wages paid there are very good. Development has reached even the most distant villages; in Sarawak they all are modern. Punan Malinau often point out that Bruno Manser – a Swiss artist who for seven years at the end of the
1980s stayed illegally among nomadic Penan, and who drew much media attention to their plight – helped the Sarawak Penan and saw to it that they receive compensation money from local timber companies, which has enabled them to build modern villages and buy a lot of modern things. After having reflected upon the situation in Sarawak, one of them, Rhomulis Abau, wryly commented: ‘We (on the other hand) live in a poor country’ – a country ‘at the bottom.’

Identity and Group Sentiments

Many of the features that correlate hunter-gatherers with immediate-return systems are particularly characteristic of those groups who have been surrounded by larger and more powerful agricultural or pastoral societies (Woodburn 1988: 35). Egalitarianism, individualism, family autonomy, opportunism, and spatial mobility are all among the core features of such ‘encapsulated’ or, as Sellato (1994a: 119) has called Borneo nomads, ‘enclave’ hunter-gatherers. These specific features seem to occur not because these groups are isolated, but rather because the relationships between these hunter-gatherer groups and larger socio-political systems are ‘generic to their social system’ (Bird-David 1988: 20).

If Punan experience a sense of ‘Punan-ness’, this is, as Sellato has argued, based on such core features of Punan livelihood as a preference for immediate return, opportunism, individualism, and pragmatism (Sellato 1994a: 209). Sellato claims that a feeling of Punan-ness is ‘common to all the Punan, it affirms Punan identity in contrast to that of farmers’ (id.). This Punan identity is not to be found in material propensities, in a formalised cultural repertoire, or in other such overt attributes. It is, rather, something that is enacted in their daily lives – but it is not formalised, verbalised, or codified. It is only when Punan explicitly compare themselves with others, however, that feelings of ‘us’ as opposed to ‘them’ seem to find open expression. A case in point is pelulup urip (see below) and complaints about being ‘stuck at the bottom.’ What Punan see in other groups is mainly what they themselves do not have – houses, fields, riches, ‘things’. What they, as Punan, have, and the others do not, is a particular way of life. It is only in opposition to the surrounding world – and especially in relation to aspects of that world of which they feel deprived – that a sense of ‘Punan-ness’ can be observed. Traditional Punan forms of procuring a livelihood have not favoured the development of a long-standing attachment to territory. Nor have they served to shape stable, over-arching political, social, or religious institutions. Each band is autonomous, and there is no sense of shared common interests nor forms of organisation ‘at the level of the ethnic group’ (Sellato 1994a: 144).
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At the core of the Punan social universe is the loosely assembled band; but even this basic group will often segment into smaller units, as individuals and households respond to divergent interests and perceived opportunities elsewhere. While group sentiment is commonly predicated upon the distinction between one’s own group and others, it is important to observe that the expression of this group sentiment among the Punan has a particular tone.

Pelulup urip: *Brooding over Life’s Hardships*

In times of scarcity, or when Punan families face difficulties and disappointment, they often sit together at the end of the day and, in melancholic monologues, seconded by an audience of their companions, individuals take turns bemoaning their current hardships and reflect on events of the past, both good and bad. This semi-public airing of their grievances, and nostalgic memorialising of former deeds and occurrences, take a very stereotypical form, both in terms of style and content. There is even a Punan phrase for this practice, *pelulup urip*, ‘thinking about life’ (see Kaskija 1998). Among close relatives and friends, these are moments for a kind of collective contemplation of their own shortcomings and the inequities of life, the sources of their feelings of being ‘stuck at the bottom’. Such communal commiseration and pondering of life’s woes can sometimes continue from sunset until well after midnight. *Pelulup urip* was explained by a young Punan Malinau man as:

> It’s about making a living, and about not being able to do so anymore because of old age; it’s about the desires and needs that we feel in our hearts, because of ‘things’ – like money, jars, outboard engines – that we cannot get hold of. That’s *pelulup urip*, it’s about the hardships in our lives.

**RAPID CHANGE, NEW TARGETS, NEW OPPORTUNITIES**

At the beginning of the 1990s there were still no roads in the middle and upper parts of the Malinau and Tubu’ rivers. Logging was restricted to downriver areas or neighbouring areas outside the Malinau district. Since that time, major changes have occurred, the consequences of which lie beyond the scope of this paper. The following is only a brief sketch of some of the most important changes that occurred in the area during the past ten years: large areas that were still primary forest in 1990 have been logged by timber companies. Logging roads, as well as public roads, have improved communications significantly; these roads have reached the middle Malinau from several directions, and continue into the upper Malinau
and Tubu’ areas. New bridges have been built, even quite far upstream, across the Malinau River. A coal mine has been opened close to the resettlement areas in the middle Malinau. Big plantations of fast-growing tree species and oil palms have been established or are in progress in neighbouring areas (CIFOR 1999).

In 1995, 303,000 hectares in the Malinau area were designated as the Bulungan Research Forest (BRF). This research forest, which includes areas used for timber production as well as protected forests, is regulated and administered by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) in Bogor. The BRF includes a large part of the Malinau river area, from the headwaters downstream, and also the upper Tubu’ area; it is also adjacent to the Kayan Mentarang National Park, where the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has been conducting research since 1990. Part of the Tubu’ area lies within the border of this National Park. Because of this, Punan Tubu’, whether upstream or downstream at Respen Sembuak, have had contact with the WWF, CIFOR, and a number of local NGOs, such as the Institute for the Development of the Environment and Human Resources (PLASMA); Punan Malinau, on the other hand, have, until recently, had only limited contact with these new local agencies.

Many of the changes and developments that have taken place in the past few years have had, of course, ecological consequences, but they have also brought many new opportunities. For example, chances for employment have increased to some degree. Even if wages, according to Punan, are still very meagre, a few of them have nonetheless worked sporadically in road-building projects or as unskilled, low-paid labour in the logging industry. Proximity to timber camps has also given some households an opportunity to sell various products, such as fruit, meat, fish, and handicrafts. The arrival of a growing number of powerful outsiders, such as timber, mining, and plantation companies, have contributed to increased competition for land, but it has also created new opportunities. Claiming compensation for land that will be exploited or for farmland or fruit orchards that have been damaged is a new potential source of cash income. Although these claims are reasonable, they may nonetheless be used strategically by opening up a swidden or by planting perennial crops in areas that may become the next target for exploitation and, therefore, a generator of compensation money. Another important aspect in this process is that land and economic strategies are increasingly individualised, privatised.

In spite of such new possibilities to earn cash, the collection and sale of gaharu has been unchallenged as the most important source of cash income throughout the 1990s. As we have seen earlier in this paper, the price of gaharu has increased dramatically from 1989 onwards. Developments, such as greater cash incomes,
new roads and improved communications, a dramatic increase in the number of outboard engines,\textsuperscript{17} have had a series of consequences. Formerly, differential access to information about markets and prices made it easier for traders and other middlemen to manipulate the Punan living far upriver. This situation has changed, however, and continues to change; traders now face much competition. Agriculturalists who also act as middlemen, shopkeepers, and traders cannot now exploit the nomads as easily as they could before. The system of credit (B.I. \textit{utang}), however, is still very common, although Punan living downstream often try to sell their \textit{gaharu} to another trader from whom they have not received any provisions, thus bypassing the trader to whom they are in debt. With the increase in the number of boats and outboard engines owned by Punan, as well as the construction of new roads, collectors can more easily sell their products directly to the big traders downriver, thereby increasing their own profits.

\textbf{Growing Political Awareness …?}

The large resettlement villages near Kota Malinau are inhabited mostly by people from the Tubu’ river, and there is evidence of a growing political awareness, particularly visible among these Punan. Traditional leaders who still live upstream are often very gifted orators and advocates for their local groups. Although these men are highly respected and described as \textit{a’ayo} (B.P., lit. ‘big, important persons’\textsuperscript{18}) by people upstream, they have very limited influence downstream, among Punan Tubu’ who have resettled to Respen Sembuak. As a rule, these traditional leaders do not have much formal education and are considered less ‘developed,’ less ‘modern’. A new type of leader, who has both education and much experience with outsiders, is emerging among Punan living downstream.

Among these Punan living downstream, near Kota Malinau, as well as among ambitious young Punan men living further upstream, it is becoming increasingly important to find a wife who is educated, familiar with modern ways, and not shy and afraid (in modern settings). ‘If you have guests coming to your house’, a young Punan man from Respen Sembuak explained, ‘and your wife doesn’t know how to behave, how to cook, you will be embarrassed.’ Anyone who is shy in modern settings or among outsiders, who does not have any education and is unfamiliar with city customs is characterised as a person who \textit{maling yam lob} (B.P., ‘does not know anything’), i.e., who is ‘ignorant’. On one occasion, I heard a very bright, although uneducated, young man described as ‘smart but ignorant’. Educated Punan, particularly those with university degrees, are a source of much pride among most, if not all, Punan. Their existence is an indicator that Punan are intelligent and that, as a people, they are no longer ‘ignorant’.
In 1994, a local NGO, the Yayasan Adat Punan (YAP, Punan Custom Foundation), was founded by Punan Tubu’ from Respen Sembuak. The founding of this Punan NGO occurred in a context of expanding political awareness, where lobbying for recognition and funds, from governmental and non-governmental organisations, is important. In June of the same year, YAP organised a ‘Punan Cultural Festival’, which was attended by a large number of Punan, some of them from other parts of East Kalimantan. For the first time, Punan groups who never before had come together became aware of common interests. The first steps towards a more complex ‘multi-Punan’ identity and the emergence of a more encompassing category of self-identification appear to have been taken.

The presence of savvy and articulate Punan leaders and the establishment of a Punan-based NGO may eventually lead to a ‘consciousness raising’ for Punan as a whole, but at present they are only representative of an emerging educated and modernised Punan elite. These are the Punan with whom outside agents will establish relationships, and it is therefore important not to see these extraordinary individuals as representative of the whole population. The variation and diversity found among various Punan groups and individuals must not be lost sight of in the rush to incorporate the Punan into the various projects of modernity now flourishing in the Malinau.

Especially with the arrival of new organisations, such as WWF, CIFOR, and PLASMA, new arenas for action have opened up, at least for those Punan who have the necessary knowledge and experience. These organisations now constitute new and interesting alternative elements – new economic targets – in the Punan’s spectrum of hunting-gathering opportunities. In addition, there are now a number of Punan who have realised the importance of what Brosius has called ‘strategically deployed essentialisms’ (1999: 281), and who, increasingly, can express themselves in ways that appeal to a wider, global audience (see Sellato 1999). In the new millennium, the Punan, armed with a new toolkit, are confronted by a whole new range of possibilities for action.

**AUTHOR’S NOTE**

The data presented were gathered in 1990–1992, primarily among Punan Malinau, in the course of extended fieldwork for my doctoral thesis. Where not otherwise indicated, the time period and sub-group are those referred to in this article. I revisited the area in October 1997 and in February 2000. The research project was made possible by a grant from the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries (SAREC). Financial support to take time
Beyond the Green Myth

off to write this article was provided by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Bogor, Indonesia. I would also like to acknowledge valuable comments on earlier drafts generously offered by Bernhard Helander, Mikael Kurkiala, Enid Nelson, Jan Ovesen, and the editors of this volume.

NOTES

1. Punan often used the Indonesian expression tetap di bawah (here translated as ‘stuck at the bottom’), when describing their own situation as compared to that of others.

2. There are some exceptions, such as Sitsen (1932, cited in King 1989), Lundqvist (1949), Harrisson (1959, 1975a), Schneeberger (1979), Pfeffer (1959), and Pfeffer and Caldecott (1986), but none of these sources present much information on the Punan.

3. All figures given here refer to the situation in the Malinau district in 1990–1992. It should be noted, however, that the picture changed in 1997, when the Tubu’ River basin was instead incorporated into the neighbouring district of Mentarang. This means that the Punan villages in the Tubu’ area are no longer situated in the Malinau District.

4. Within the Malinau District, there are also approximately 200 Punan living in the eastern part of the district, on the Bengalun and Gong Sulok rivers. This sub-group, usually called Punan Berusu’ (because of their affiliation with the agricultural Berusu’), differs in many respects from the Punan Malinau and Punan Tubu’.

5. In the following text, I have indicated the languages of the terms and phrases given in italics: B.I. (Bahasa Indonesia) for Indonesian, and B.P. (Bahasa Punan) for Punan (Malinau–Tubu’).

6. The Ngurik left the Malinau area approximately 150 years ago. We do not really know what they were like at that time, but it seems likely that, in terms of stratification, they came close to other groups in the region, such as the Abai. Intermarriage between Punan and Ngurik was not uncommon, which is indicated by genealogical data and in such statements by Punan as: ‘There are no Ngurik left today (in the Malinau area), only their bloodline.’

7. There have, however, been cases in which a Merap headman’s son or nephew married a Punan Tubu’ chief’s daughter. Such marriages enabled the Merap to tap the labour of their new Punan affines. However, this did not entail assimilation of Punan individuals and local groups by communities of Merap (B. Sellato, pers. comm.).

8. In the 1980s, Brosius was surprised to find that the Western Penan in Sarawak showed little interest in medicinal plants. Today, however, the ‘environmental rhetoric of medicinal plants’ has itself suffused back to the Penan and been adopted by them as their own’ (Brosius 1997: 62). Various NGOs working in the Malinau region have clearly expressed an interest in the ethnobiological knowledge of local Punan, including knowledge of medicinal plants. The Punan have not only been the main providers of such information; in meeting this demand, they have also become aware that they are especially knowledgeable about the forest, and that such knowledge is valuable.

9. In areas characterised by an increased competition for land, planting cash crops may now also have become a strategy for making private claims to particular plots of
Stuck at the Bottom

land. This especially seems to be the case where land is expected to be of interest to mining, logging, or plantation companies. The reason is that privately claimed land raises the possibility for individual households to receive compensation.

10. The meaning of *anak buah* (B.I.) is complex, and depends on context; it can denote that someone is a follower, a client, a dependent, a vassal, a supporter of some kind, an employee, a sharecropper, a retainer, or a servant. It is based on the metaphor of the family, i.e., a group of people headed by a ‘father’ (a patron, a *bapak*, or *bos*), who takes care of and is supported by his ‘children’ (*anak, anak buah*).

11. There are, in the context of Borneo, some exceptions, such as honey, some nuts, and animal fat (Sellato 1994a: 130).

12. At present, although all Punan in the Malinau area are more or less settled, individual households may spend considerable amounts of time in the forest each year. It may thus be incorrect today to talk of ‘forest nomads’. I use this phrase here, however, because Punan ‘core features’ are still those that characterise nomadic hunter-gatherers. Even though they may be settled and no longer strictly nomads, Punan retain a kind of hunter-gatherer or nomad ideology and identity.

13. The lack of foresight alluded to here should not be read as referring to some psychological ineptitude or as having a negative connotation – I do not intend that it should be. A versatile economy that focuses on the present may be just as rational as, or perhaps even more rational than, an economy that invests totally in single, long-term projects. Still, the expression ‘lack of foresight’ is problematic. An alternative phrase might be a ‘lack of taste or ability for anticipation, or advance planning’, as they may well have the foresight, yet not implement it, as a consequence of an immediate-return economy.

14. While all three terms refer to expensive, foreign, imported goods, like jars, gongs, jewellery, or clothes, two of the terms, *ubat* and *amung*, have a meaning that may also include bags or mats made of rattan, or blowpipes. *Melat*, however, meaning ‘iron’, only refers to imported goods, whether made of iron, ceramics, gold, cotton, or some other material. Today, however, it has become increasingly common among Punan to use Indonesian (B.I.) words, like *kaya* (‘rich’) or *barang* (‘things’), even when speaking in their own language.

15. Two years later, one of these satellite television sets had ceased to function, while the second one was washed away by a large flood in February 1999.

16. However, see Brosius in this volume. This perception, or misconception, was very common among the Punan in the Malinau area at the beginning of the 1990s.

17. The number of outboard engines increased rapidly from 1989 until 1995–1997. Since then, it has dropped considerably. There are two main reasons for this. First, the monetary crisis in Indonesia, which has had an effect on the price of these engines. Second, the construction of new roads, which has reduced the importance of rivers as means of communication and transportation, at least on the lower half of the Malinau River.

18. Although currently all prominent persons classified as *a’ayo* are men, in the past Punan women were also prominent leaders.
Chapter 7

NESTED DISPUTES: BUILDING MEDIATION PROCEDURES FOR THE PUNAN IN WEST KALIMANTAN

By Mering Ngo

Abstract: This chapter examines the mounting conflict over the collection and control of edible swift nests, and this product’s economic importance for the Punan communities living near Betung Kerihun National Park, on the upper Kapuas River, West Kalimantan. The park, the first trans-boundary conservation area in Indonesia, has been conceived as an ‘integrated conservation and development project’ (ICDP). Three case studies illustrate the dynamics of the conflict over the exploitation of nests, each being analysed in the light of kinship and power relations involving the interests of short-term profit-seeking outsiders.

INTRODUCTION

Increasing demand for birds’ nests on the international market has significantly stimulated forest-dwelling people in Kalimantan to collect this non-timber forest product. Nests are collected far more frequently than in the past, because of higher consumption worldwide and higher prices in regional markets. Because of this demand, the Punan of the Kapuas and Bungan rivers are in a dilemma over the issue of ownership and control of this commodity. Conflict regarding management and collection appears not only within communities but also between the Punan and traders, middlemen, and government and military
Nested Disputes

officials. The relevance and magnitude of the study are not limited to nest collecting and trading conflicts, but extend also to development and management disputes relative to many other resources of Borneo’s tropical rainforest.

This paper is based on research undertaken for the development of Betung Kerihun National Park, West Kalimantan, as an ‘integrated conservation and development project’ (ICDP) and trans-boundary reserve.² It is hoped that lessons from this case study will be used in developing the overall management plan for the national park.

Study Sites and Methods

The Punan Hovongan occupy the upper reaches of the Kapuas and Bungan rivers in Putussibau District, Kapuas Hulu Regency, West Kalimantan (see Map 7.1). They speak a common language with minor dialectal variations. Full ethnographic data are provided in the course of this chapter where needed. The administrative village (desa) of Bungan Jaya actually consists of four separate hamlets (dusun), totalling 796 people. Most of the households of Bungan Jaya rely on the collection of birds’ nests for cash.

Understanding the dynamics of conflict over bird’s nest caves is important for developing a management plan for the park. In particular, community participation should be stressed, as it is crucial to the empowerment of Punan communities, not only relating to park management but also to community life in general. Describing, understanding, and mediating conflicts should give the park a better chance of a sustainable continuation into the future.

The Punan share their hunting and foraging grounds with other Dayak groups. These include the Bukat, Aoheng, and Taman Kapuas. The Bukat, or Kei Buket, as they call themselves, were formerly a hunting-gathering group originating in the upper Kapuas and Mendalam rivers. Like the Punan, most of the Bukat began to adopt a sedentary life at the beginning of the twentieth century (Ngo 1986, Sellato 1994a, Thambiah in this volume). The Aoheng and Taman Kapuas, in contrast, are shifting cultivators, characterised by greater social stratification than the Punan and Bukat (Diposiswoyo 1985).

This study was conducted in two hamlets, Tanjung Lokang and Nanga Bungan, over a period of four months, with the help of one assistant and three local residents. Several methods were resorted to. Household surveys were employed to obtain information on income structure and sources. In-depth interviews were used to gather data on resource tenure, land use, and
Map 7.1. The Bungan Area
Nested Disputes
decision-making processes concerning resource management. Village-level data were collected through group discussion, household surveys, community resource mapping, and participant observation. District officials and foresters in Putussibau were also interviewed. A field manual was used to examine leadership and power dynamics, both within the village and beyond the village boundaries. Group discussions were held to elicit diverse viewpoints regarding resource-use practices, particularly related to bird’s nest collection and trade. This information is important because it provides an understanding of the principles of resource tenure and local-level procedures for settling disputes over resource management and use. No previous research had addressed this topic in any detail.

The World Wide Fund for Nature Indonesia also conducted a series of community mapping operations, the objective of which was to gain a clearer picture of local-level resource distribution and use, including the distribution of bird’s nest caves. Community resource mapping has become a powerful tool for encouraging group discussion on resource disputes. Clarification of related information can be achieved by using the Global Positioning System (GPS) (see, e.g., Flavelle 1993, Josayma 1996, Momberg et al. 1996).

Betung Kerihun National Park
Before 1995, forest lands around Nanga Bungan and Tanjung Lokang were gazetted as a nature reserve. Indonesian forestry regulations prohibit any human activity within nature reserves. This regulation is particularly important in Betung Kerihun National Park because this mountainous region, lying at the headwaters of the Kapuas and Bungan rivers, requires protection to secure its function as a water catchment area, and to preserve its unique biological diversity. In September 1995, the status was changed from nature reserve to national park by decree of the ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and WWF Indonesia was asked to act as the coordinating organisation for project activities within this park.

WWF Indonesia’s main goals were to develop a management system that can promote conservation of biological diversity and the ecosystem, and to develop socio-economic features of the local natural resources for the local communities’ benefit. National park regulations allow human activities within what is called a ‘traditional use zone’. The definition of the kinds of activities approved for this zone is based on the results of studies on issues such as biological diversity, forest ecology, resource management, regional planning, and social and economic factors. These studies are currently under way; to date, only the ethnographic study has been completed.
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BACKGROUND

Historical Sketch and Settlement Pattern

Wariso (1971), Kartawinata (1993), and Sellato (1994a) have studied the Punan Hovongan in West Kalimantan. Likewise, in Sarawak, important recent works (e.g., by Brosius and Langub) are available on Penan groups, as they are called there.

The oral tradition of Punan Hovongan in Tanjung Lokang and Nanga Bungan shows that this group came down from the upper Bulit (or Hovorit) and Bungan (or Hovongan) rivers more than six generations ago. In those hamlets, they were divided into three sub-groups, speaking separate dialects, Hovorit, Hovongan, and Hovo’ung. Nowadays, the last sub-group mainly lives at Bo’ung (Hovo’ung), a tiny hamlet, and Nanga Lapung on the Kapuas.

In the early 1970s, an important group of Punan families (puhu) lived together at the present site of Tanjung Lokang. A few years later, some families of Punan Hovo’ung moved to Nanga Lapung, downstream from Tanjung Lokang, to collect incense-wood (gaharu, Aquilaria malaccensis), while the rest of the Hovo’ung decided to stay at Tanjung Lokang.

The Punan Hovongan are gradually adapting to sedentary life in single-house dwellings. In the early 1910s, longhouses (lovu’ daru) were built, and the Punan Hovongan practised shifting cultivation, influenced by the Seputan, Semukung, Aoheng, or Kayan groups. In the past, the Punan also lived in temporary shelters (pabut), with certain gathering centres. This maximised their mobility, so they could process their main staple food, wild sago (Eugeissona utilis Becc.), and collect non-timber forest products, which they traded through middlemen for tobacco, salt, sugar, etc. The Tanjung Lokang longhouse disappeared in the early 1980s.

Social Organisation and Power Structure in Relation to Resource Control

In the past, preferred marriage was between first cousins. However, people could also choose to marry others within the band. More recently, they tend to marry within the community and village. After marriage, the husband, even if he is an outsider, resides with his wife’s family and community. Interestingly, certain outside traders, Chinese or Malay, use this principle to establish themselves within a community and so protect their interests in bird’s nest collection and trade.

A married woman, either the eldest daughter or a person designated by the parents (ngevian tabakan), is responsible for managing and allocating heirlooms and property rights belonging to the natal family. These property rights include
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managed forest gardens (lepu’un)” and bird’s nest caves (diang saa seleppini). The woman and her husband have primary rights of use over this resource; her brother or sisters, with their wives or husbands, only have secondary or usufruct rights.

The Punan Hovongan are basically egalitarian. But they have adopted from the Aoheng some terms referring to hierarchical positions, such as dangan tahakan, meaning elder or leader. This is a semi-hereditary leadership position. Nothing is sacred about the role or status, and it entails no special privilege, except that leaders may sometimes have several wives.

A leader has little formal authority. His power is based only on personal qualities. No difference in status is marked or ascribed. However, his influence depends on his experience, wisdom, and ability to make decisions. It appears that decisions may be made only after a general discussion (betusat), in which everyone has a voice. Thus, a band leader’s prestige derives not from his status, skill as a hunter, or ability as a provider, but from his leadership qualities. These qualities include being hard-working, eloquent, experienced, and fully familiar with the group’s history and traditions. In addition, the leader can represent the band or community in its interactions with the outside world. This is particularly true when the band interacts with farming groups, traders, and government officials, even more so in the current social and economic situation.

A command of neighbouring languages and of the national and regional languages is a highly desirable leadership skill, as the Punan Hovongan are anxious to meet other groups on an equal footing. Outside connections, integral to the leader’s role as a representative, can only raise his prestige within the group or community, and this leads to a certain degree of social inequality. This is particularly true if one of his sons or relatives is closely linked to the government apparatus at the village or district level. These dynamics strongly influence the power structure at Tanjung Lokang and Nanga Bungan, and are extremely important in the decision-making process regarding the resolution of conflicts over bird’s nest caves.

Modes of Livelihood

The Punan Hovongan traditionally inhabited primary rainforest, which provided sago, game animals, fish, and other forest foods. The areas they lived in also provided commercial goods. The forest environment allowed for self-sufficiency in the matter of diet. The traditional lifestyle of the Punan Hovongan changed at the time of the band’s first trading contacts with farming groups and again, more recently, because of the influence of rent seekers backed up by powerful groups from government and the military.
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Table 7.1. Rice Sufficiency among the Punan in Tanjung Lokang and Nanga Bungan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rice sufficiency</th>
<th>Tanjung Lokang (n = 39 households)</th>
<th>Nanga Bungan (n = 16 households)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than eight months</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About eight months</td>
<td>1 (2.56%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than eight months</td>
<td>31 (79.49%)</td>
<td>14 (87.05%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No rice field</td>
<td>7 (17.95%)</td>
<td>2 (12.05%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39 (100%)</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Ngo (1996)

Punan Hovongan rice fields are often very small and poorly tended. This lack of interest and labour investment derives from the fact that farming is in direct competition with commercial collecting. Punan families for whom commercial collecting has become an economic priority have adapted their dietary economic habits to facilitate this activity. Efforts to improve productivity in their rice fields would be a serious hindrance to collecting non-timber forest products.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Punan Hovongan often abandoned their rice fields between sowing and harvesting (Nieuwenhuis 1900). A similar situation is now observed at Tanjung Lokang and Nanga Bungan. Therefore, it is no wonder that rice supplies from their swidden fields last less than half a year. At Tanjung Lokang and Nangan Bungan, for example, at least 80 per cent of the respondents in a community of 55 households were already short of rice only five months after harvest (Table 7.1). To overcome this situation, men search the forest for non-timber forest products, especially birds’ nests, for sale.9

The major current source of income for the Punan at Tanjung Lokang is birds’ nests, followed by traditional gold panning and incense-wood (gaharu) collecting. They also work as tourist guides and motorised longboat drivers. Nanga Bungan people have a different form of livelihood. In this hamlet, the major income is from gold panning and semi-mechanical gold mining, followed by bird’s nest and gaharu collecting, long boat operating, and acting as tourist guides (Table 7.2).

MAIN FINDINGS AND ISSUES

The pilfering of nests and, more often, the systematic plundering of caves are a popular topic of discussion in Nanga Bungan and Tanjung Lokang and beyond. Almost everyone is eager to discuss the topic, either openly or privately. These
Nested Disputes

Table 7.2. Sources of Income in Tanjung Lokang and Nanga Bungan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Tanjung Lokang (n = 39 households)</th>
<th>Nanga Bungan (n = 16 households)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Birds’ nests</td>
<td>31 (79.49%)</td>
<td>4 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gold panning/mining</td>
<td>3 (7.69%)</td>
<td>8 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Gaharu</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Tourist guides</td>
<td>2 (5.13%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Longboat drivers</td>
<td>2 (5.13%)</td>
<td>1 (6.25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Other</td>
<td>1 (2.56%)</td>
<td>1 (6.25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39 (100%)</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Ngo (1996)

discussions are often based on suspicions rather than facts. No one really knows who is stealing nests. It could be someone from within the hamlet, residents of the neighbouring village, or intruders from Central or East Kalimantan.

The author found three important problems relevant to the collection of nests in the Punan area. First, people have become increasingly uneasy over the frequency of nest collecting. Secondly, rather than see this resource stolen by others, the Punan prefer to use whatever means they can to collect the nests first. Thirdly, many Punan are forced to collect nests to repay their debts to Chinese traders, as they are trapped in this debt system (ijon) because they often need items available from the traders.

Before 1985, the Punan collected nests based on seasonal variation (for comparison, see Medway 1957, Cranbrook 1984, Mohamed 1999, Gausset 2002). They gathered nests during the rainy season and on into the early days of the dry season, that is, from September through April. The Punan did not collect nests between May and August because this is the season when cave bats feed on birds’ eggs, as bats are forced to change their diet when forest fruits are not in season. During this period, it is very common for the bird population to decrease.

Cave bats are very common in the forest at the time of mast-fruiting. Then, the birds have time to build their nests in the caves. This is why the Punan consider the months from August until April to be the best season for nest collecting. Based on this observation, two ornithologists and a resource management specialist with Betung Kerihun National Park are conducting an in-depth study of cave bats’ behaviour and food sources.

Since 1990, the Punan have begun to disregard their own traditional practices of observing seasonal taboos (trep) pertaining to nest collecting. Instrumental in this shift away from tradition is pressure from the short-term profit takers from
Central Kalimantan and downstream hamlets, mostly the Bakumpai and Malays. These outsiders enter the forest within the traditional home range of the Punan to steal nests from caves. Rather than let their resources be stolen by unknown people or outside groups, the Punan have begun to abandon their own traditional foraging principles. Thus, instead of a six-month collecting period, the Punan now harvest nests about once in every 45 days, which reduces the quality of the nests and lowers the price they receive for them.

The design of the traditional tool to collect nests, if used improperly, is instrumental in reducing the quantity and quality of birds’ nests. Among the Punan, this tool (penjuruk) is meant to be used methodically and carefully, otherwise the nest falls apart. Meanwhile, the type of tool used by the Bakumpai and other groups from Central Kalimantan is better designed for more rapid collecting, and does not damage the nest as extensively as the Punan penjuruk does.

The debt system (ijon) used by Chinese traders is the third factor that encourages improper harvesting of nests. Chinese nest traders maintain small shops and sell various commodities to the Punan, including sugar, salt, rice, coffee, tobacco, gasoline, kerosene, clothes, work shoes, even cheap spirits and beer. In addition, the Chinese are willing to provide personal services, such as money lending.

The Punan often ask these shop owners to buy radios for them, audiovisual sets, or longboat engines, in Putussibau or even in Pontianak, the provincial capital. The agreement between the shopkeepers and the Punan requires the return of the loan plus interest. Many such borrowers are unable to repay these loans very quickly, and it often takes many payments before they are freed from their debt. The Chinese, therefore, require nests instead of money. This forces the Punan to over-harvest birds’ nests to repay their debts. These transactions are described in Table 7.3.10 This situation leads to a variety of conflicts, involving not only the Punan, but also traders, middlemen, and government and military officials. Three cases below illustrate these conflicts.

The first case shows a conflict within the community, between the administrative head of a hamlet (kepala dusun) and a villager and his family. One cave, known as a good source of birds’ nests, was estimated by the hamlet head and the villager to provide in every two-month harvesting season some 40 to 50 kg of nests, worth US$ 10,000 – US$ 12,750.11 Both parties had discovered the cave about five years before and agreed to share the yield. The arrangement was that they would collect the nests on a rotational basis, which meant once in every four months. But the villager found that the hamlet head, breaking the agreement, had asked other people to collect for him every two months.
Nested Disputes

Table 7.3. Comparison of Bird’s Nest Yields

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991/1992</td>
<td>1,263 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992/1993</td>
<td>3,870 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993/1994</td>
<td>11,556 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994/1995</td>
<td>8,015 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995/1996</td>
<td>3,024 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>27,728 kg</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Forestry Office at Putussibau (1996)

The villager raised the issue and called for a community meeting. When he found that the meeting was not an effective means for achieving his goals, he asked the chief of customary law (*tumenggung*) and the elders (*dangan tahakan*) to hold a traditional dispute-settlement meeting (*betusat*). This meeting was controlled by the *tumenggung* because he was the hamlet head’s uncle and also had an interest in the disputed cave. The result of the meeting was obviously unfair because, with regard to power and authority, the villagers were at a disadvantage.

The second case is of a conflict between the hamlet head and a family of the Aoheng group, another Dayak group outside the Bungan region. Two years before, that family had found a cave in the upper Bungan River, which seemed to have a very high production of birds’ nests. After the family had been working in the area for a year, the hamlet head asked them over to his house at Nanga Bungan and insisted that they were harvesting nests from his private property (i.e., the cave).

This led both parties to hold a dispute-settlement meeting. Several meetings later, however, the case remained unresolved, despite the *tumenggung*’s and some elders’ attendance. A few months later, the hamlet head asked two police officers of Putussibau to Tanjung Lokang to help him settle the conflict. He funded all daily subsistence allowances and fees of the police officers, even paying their transportation costs from the town to Tanjung Lokang. After several meetings, the Aoheng family was clearly losing its rights over the use of the cave. Finally, after a decision was reached by the police officers, the Aoheng family accepted a small amount of compensation from the hamlet head and gave up harvest rights.

The third case concerns a conflict between the Punan, some Iban (also a Dayak group), and a Chinese trader backed by military officials. In 1992, a few Iban families from Sadap, a hamlet on the upper Embaloh River, found several
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bird’s nest caves on the upper Keriau River. After they conducted formal gatherings with the local residents, the Punan Kereho (or Keriau), the Iban were permitted to collect nests from the caves, with one condition: They had to share the yield equally with the Punan. Then, for some reason, the Iban went back to their home village for about two years. Meanwhile, a Chinese trader, believing that there were no rightful holders to the caves, wanted to manage them and reap the profits himself. Some Punan confirmed that no one was claiming the caves.

The Iban were surprised when they found that the caves no longer belonged to them. After several meetings, in which vigorous discussions sometimes almost led to open clashes, they and the Chinese trader still could not agree. The Chinese trader then asked some military officials from Putussibau to support and secure his interests. These officials apparently had personal interests, namely, they would receive some of the profits. They were also part of the Army’s cooperative body, or Puskopad (Pusat Koperasi Angkatan Darat). When the Iban and their Punan friends realised that they were powerless to protect their rights, they asked a lawyer based in Putussibau to help them. The litigation lasted almost two years at the court in Putussibau. In the process, the Chinese trader gave a lot of money to the military officials and to his lawyers. In short, the Iban and their Punan friends lost. Thus, the key elements in this litigation were the imbalances of money and power.

DISCUSSION

The traditional hunting and gathering way of life of the Punan has almost vanished. Nevertheless, the basic tenets of family autonomy, individualism, opportunism, and pragmatism, which emphasise physical mobility and economic versatility, are still vital in the realm of bird’s nest collecting.

Punan ideology, with its focus on band or family autonomy, has produced both intended and unintended consequences. In the conflicts described above, this genuine autonomy has resulted in a new dilemma. This is particularly evident when family interests are closely tied to economic and power realities. These disputes are nested in the larger disputes of people, parks, NGOs, and government agencies.

The shift from the exclusive use, by the band or family, of resources within its territory to an open-access situation, in which property rights and control over resources do not exist, is now the key element of the conflict concerning birds’ nest caves. Before 1980, for example, all caves within the home range of the Punan Hovongan were used for, and shared by, the band or families. All others
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were denied access and use, and excluded from the decision-making process. Individuals had rights and duties in these common-property regimes. As stated by Bromley (1992), the capacity to exclude others stands as the *sine qua non* condition of common property. Traditional bird’s nest management focused on the regulation of outsiders’ access to the caves within Punan territory, with the band’s ethic of access guiding its use and distribution among families.14

In the early 1980s, the traditional power structure of the Punan Hovongan deteriorated. They were regrouped, under the new village administration regulation (Law No. 5 of 1979), which states that each village (*desa*) must consist of, at least, 2,500 people. Traditional mechanisms for determining leadership were abolished, including the position of the chief of customary law (*tumenggung*). The unintended impact was that little incentive was kept alive for maintaining traditional ethics of access to birds’ nests and that no indigenous management techniques were retained. In addition, traditional sanctions and incentives have become inoperative or dysfunctional, because of government pressures and market forces beyond the control of the Punan Hovongan.15

One current symptom of the conflicts is that no one knows who is stealing from whose bird’s nest cave. The short-term profit takers from Central and East Kalimantan, including middlemen and Chinese traders, and the short-term profit seekers from local military and government agencies are imposing their own priorities. Each party is trying whatever means it has to instigate disputes for achieving its position. There are no clear regulations, nor is there any law enforcement, regarding offences.

The analysis of the findings also suggests that obstacles to dispute settlement are related to power imbalance and misuse of authority. The hamlet head, for example, being a member of a group’s elite, was using his formal relationship with the government to further his interests. As stated in Law No. 5 of 1979, the hamlet head is at the lowest level of Indonesian administration, being at village level. However, he also has direct access to formal authority and can make use of this kind of relationship to impose his personal position upon other disputants, namely, his own constituency and other people from outside the hamlet.

Possible structural interventions include defining clearly and changing the role of each disputant. During the development of park management, for example, each disputant should be invited regularly to establish a working group for sustainable use of bird’s nest caves within and around the park. In line with the current spirit of regional autonomy, this working group should be based at Putussibau. One primary agenda of the working group will be to address management problems and issues relative to the use of the bird’s nest caves for
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the maximum benefit of all disputants. This working group should be written into the park management structure.

A second intervention needed is the sanctioning of destructive behaviour in the use of bird’s nest caves. Offences should be processed using fair regulations and mutually acceptable decision-making processes. This should be done under the guidance and monitoring of the working group. The ethics of access and the rotational principle for collecting nests could be formally accepted by the state and private sectors to protect both the bird’s nest resources and local claims for joint bird’s nest management arrangements. In addition, the possibilities of reallocating ownership or control of bird’s nest resources need to be gradually brought to discussion.

A third intervention recommended is the replacement of the negotiating process from positional to interest-based bargaining. The NGOs and other elements of the civil society should promote the best possible authentic and equitable dialogue under the existing inequitable conditions. Furthermore, the working group should discuss the modification of the means of influence used by outside parties; in other words, coercion must be eliminated. Coalitions with other institutions working in similar situations are useful to strengthen the concern and increase the influence of the ‘less powerful’ (i.e., the Punan groups). The process of intervention, by itself, imposes constraints on the exercise of excessive power by some groups or outsiders (Crowfoot and Wondolleck 1990). The actual problem might be confronted in promoting this intervention. It can bring to light the real economic and political biases of the central authority in accepting environmental mediation (Amy 1983).

NGOs should initiate the mediation process while developing park management. Considering time and physical constraints, those possible interventions should ideally be elaborated and immediately tested in field sites. The initial experience must be discussed and recorded by the working group at village level and at Putussibau and Pontianak levels, respectively. Regional planning board meetings (Rapat Koordinasi Pembangunan or Rakorbang) and the regional parliament are useful in attracting a broader spectrum of stake-holders.

The lessons learned from this test-case mediation process should be modified dynamically so that they can be used in other relevant cases of natural-resource disputes. They will also be especially relevant in developing the first and the five-year plans of the Master Management Plan of the park. A dynamic planning process is required because conditions at local level and beyond are changing quickly. Each management plan for a given area needs to incorporate the capacity to adapt to changing conditions, namely, climate, population, economic and
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political conditions, and regional development in surrounding areas (McNeely 1995).

The proposed working group must be kept up to date with current information regarding dispute areas. The non-governmental organisations doing mapping have already been allowed to conduct participatory mapping on the distribution of bird’s nest caves in and around the park. They are in the process of identifying conflict areas. Visualisation of current nest collecting has to be used to encourage an open discussion on dispute resolution. Learning more assertive negotiating skills will be important for the Punan because, historically, they have tended to avoid open conflict (Sellato 1994a). This conflict avoidance puts them at a disadvantage when dealing with powerful outsiders, such as military and government personnel.

Resource management and ornithology specialists are needed to explore the possibilities of developing a community-based bird’s nest management program. Cross-visits to promising bird’s nest areas would be useful. Some possible sites are the Bukit Kelam in Sintang District (West Kalimantan), Karang Bolong in Central Java, or Niah Caves in Sarawak. This is important because a trend of declining bird’s nest availability is revealed in the official data at the Forestry office in Putussibau. If birds’ nests cannot be developed, the resulting situation will be extremely detrimental to the Punan’s cash income and, therefore, their welfare. The unintended consequence of this would be ‘encroachment’ into the park area.

CONCLUSIONS

As noted by Dove (1996), the more resources are developed, the more likely external political and economic forces will become involved, and the less likely the indigenous inhabitants of the forest will retain control. Thus, the management of birds’ nests may not be simply a technological and economic challenge. It may be first a political challenge, involving the mediation of power relations between the Punan, various outsiders, and the state. Therefore, a strategy for the resolution of conflict over the management of birds’ nests has to be adopted in the broader park planning process and management structure. It is recommended that a working group on bird’s nest management, along with a strategy for participatory mapping of the distribution of bird’s nest caves, be initiated by NGOs and other appropriate groups in the civil society.

The role of NGOs and other elements of the civil society will be important for empowering the Punan and developing their mode of livelihood. With respect to the use and control of nest collecting, NGOs or other institutions working in
environmental dispute settlement must take a greater role in strengthening the negotiating skills of the Punan. Training in resource-dispute settlement should also be conducted for park personnel. Networking among NGOs and institutions working in similar situations will be useful for achieving these goals.

The initiatives that I have suggested should result in a more effective approach to bird’s nest management. Indigenous resource management practices and rotational collecting principles (trep) can continue to provide a foundation for community-based management, if recognised by the state and private sectors. Continued leadership development and new institutional arrangements should be tested at field sites for their relevance to joint management of park resources.

These strategies can improve the distribution of benefits from bird’s nest collecting, the welfare of the Punan people, and the sustainability of the park as a whole. This proposed scenario may also prove valid for other non-timber forest products collected by the Punan. If these strategies are not taken into account, benefits for the Punan may not be achieved under the current resource management authority and, hence, the park may be subject to continued uncontrollable encroachment.

The analysis of the findings on bird’s nest management also suggests that the dialectical contest among the Punan, and between the Punan and outside entities, for the control of bird’s nest resources, is evidence of political and economic factors that may overpower biological and local-level social and cultural factors in conservation and regional development.

NOTES

1. Birds’ nests refer to the nests made by species of swiftlets (Collocalia spp.; see Koon and Cranbrook 2002). These nests are eaten in soups in Chinese restaurants. The trade in edible birds’ nests goes back to the fourteenth century (for a history of this trade with China, see Blussé 1991).

2. In Indonesia, Betung Kerihun National Park is the first conservation area designated as a trans-boundary reserve (see Ngo 1996a). The park is managed in collaboration with Lanjak-Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary and Batang Ai’ National Park in Sarawak, Malaysia. A cooperation program between the Government of Indonesia and the Government of Malaysia was initiated in 1993. Japan and Switzerland granted funds through the International Timber Trade Organization (ITTO) towards establishing the park. The Indonesian ministry of Agriculture and Forestry asked WWF Indonesia to produce a management plan for the park.

3. This community resource mapping, a preliminary activity, was carried out prior to a series of more detailed mapping projects related to the participatory park zonation in village land use planning. In addition, Global Information System (GIS) facilities
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are being installed at the Provincial Planning Board (Bappeda Tingkat I Kalimantan Barat).

4. Wariso, a sociologist, reported to the ministry of Social Affairs on the cultural background and socio-economic conditions of the Punan at that time. Later, Kartawinata wrote an ethnography of the Punan, based on research in the village of Cempaka Baru. This publication, however, has some weaknesses, as the study site is really not a Punan settlement, but rather a mixed Aoheng, Semukung, Bukat, and Kantu’ settlement and, moreover, the author confused some important kinship and economic terms used by the Punan with those of the Kantu’. Of greater relevance is the publication by Sellato (1994a: 18–74), in which he describes the transition of the Punan and Bukat to a more sedentary existence, in terms of economics and politics.

5. Brosius (1995a) analyses patterns of collecting and trading forest products by Penan hunter-gatherers in Sarawak and describes how these patterns vary through time and space. Contrary to the Punan Hovongan case, he notes that the contemporary trade dynamics of Penan in Malaysia are based largely on the contribution of women. Langub (1996a) focuses on the variation of Penan responses to change and development, particularly the dynamics of permanent residence imposed by the Government of Malaysia.

6. Puhu’ was a common term adopted from the Kayan via the Aoheng, Seputan, and Semukung. The term generally refers to an extended family or a group of extended families having a common ancestor and acknowledging a genealogical link (Ngo 1996b, Sellato 1994a).

7. Lepu’un has several meanings. It refers to a former longhouse or settlement site, a managed fruit-tree garden, or a former swidden field, with perennial crops such as illipe nut or tengkawang (Shorea spp.). It has the same meaning as the terms tembawang and tempalai among other Dayak groups in West Kalimantan (Ngo 1992, Padoch 1995).

8. Betusat is a general term for any decision-making process that is undertaken within the village or band. Among other topics discussed, betusat may concern the scheduling of farming or collecting activities. It has been observed, however, that this traditional group meeting is gradually changing because of the segmentation of Punan communities in response to internal and external forces.

9. It must be noted that the basic attitudes of the Punan and other Dayak groups relative to shifting cultivation are not necessarily the same. The Punan are principally collectors of forest products, which allows them to buy rice, whereas the goal of many other Dayak groups is self-sufficiency in rice (B. Sellato, pers. comm.). This is particularly true in the case of the Punan Hovongan, who largely depend on birds’ nests and other non-timber forest products to buy rice from other Dayak groups. Thus, structural intervention regarding the conflict over nest resources and possible resolutions regarding nested disputes are important for the future livelihood of the Punan Hovongan. Therefore, community-based bird’s nest management is critical to the park’s development.

10. The quantitative data on birds’ nests in Putussibau District must be viewed sceptically and considered as tentative information. Many traders or middlemen are reluctant
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to report to government agencies to avoid tax, unofficial revenue, and bribery. In addition, there is much illegal trade in birds’ nests, which goes unreported.

11. In 1999, 1 kg of birds’ nests sold at the village fetched Rp. 400,000 (US$ 174). The trader or middleman sold it at the Putussibau market for about Rp. 600,000 (US$ 261), a price accounted for by the fact that he must cover the cost of transport – at least two days by longboat for one round trip. For the sake of comparison, see Slamet et al. (1986) and Sellato (2002b: 60–62) for production and prices in East Kalimantan in the early years of the bird’s nest boom.

12. There is a rumour that Pusat Koperasi Angkatan Darat (Puskopad, the Army’s Cooperative Centre) is actually under the control of a private company led by Ari Sigit Soeharto, a grandson of former President Soeharto.

13. On the breaking down of traditional social regulations and management practices at the Niah Caves, Sarawak, due to high prices and the emergence of new, competitive actors, see Gausset (2002); to be compared, for an earlier period, with Cranbrook 1984. For the Idahan of Sabah, however, Mohamed (1999) presents contrasting evidence that, despite high demand, solidarity and social control have allowed the villagers to maintain their exclusive access to the caves in their territory and the sustainable exploitation of nests. On traditional groups’ conflict-ridden relations with outsiders and the state over birds’ nests, see Sellaro (2002b: 55–66); on the emergence of extractivist practices among them due to competition with outsiders, see Sellato (2005a); and on social and political changes historically triggered among them by the bird’s nest trade, see Sellato (2005b).

14. The term for ‘ethics of access’ among the Penan in Sarawak, molong, can be roughly glossed as the sustainable use of natural resources in view of further harvest at a later time (Langub 1996a). It can also mean the fostering of resources for the future. Punan molong all sorts of fruit trees, sago, rattan, and birds’ nests, which can be used communally or individually. On the ‘ethics of access’ and the problem of ironwood (Eusideroxylon zwageri) management, one can read Peluso’s study (1992) set in West Kalimantan, where she noted that the government’s management strategies have by-passed local people’s claims to ironwood because customary forest-management institutions have not been formally recognised and supported. Private control has taken precedence over common (village) control and the ethics of access have been transformed.

15. It must be noted that this law was abolished in June 1999, after the fall of President Soeharto. This was a fundamental correction to the Soeharto regime after a stay in power of three decades. Therefore, in June 1999, the new ministry of Home Affairs and Regional Autonomy issued Law No. 22 on Regional Government (Pemerintahan Daerah), which gave wider room to the region to use specific local terms, including indigenous and local institutions and governance arrangements. However, the effects of the previous centralised government, e.g., the process of decay of indigenous power structures, can still be felt in this transitional era throughout Kalimantan, and even throughout Indonesia.
Chapter 8

GAME, PETS, AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AMONG PENAN AND PUNAN GROUPS

By Stefan Seitz

Abstract: This chapter explores underlying motives of nomads’ attitudes towards animals, as either game or pets, and their reluctance to eat the meat of animals they have reared. It argues that, at the present time, no animal husbandry strategies can be developed among nomads unless their attitudes and bonds with animals living alongside humans undergo a fundamental shift.

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this article is relationships between men and animals, in particular the behaviour of Penan and Punan groups both in keeping and killing animals. It sets out to explain certain consequences of human attitudes towards animals among hunters in their adaptation to a sedentary, farming existence. The explanation offered here is based on ethnographic knowledge about former foraging Penan and Punan, who have been gradually making the transition from mobile hunters to settled farmers. The study tries to demonstrate how patterns of Penan and Punan behaviour reflect their rather modest success in raising animals on a domestic basis.

In the interaction of non-settled Penan and Punan foragers with animals, certain specific behavioural patterns are recognisable, which are typical of
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foraging approaches among non-specialised hunting and gathering societies. These include the tendency to kill animals immediately after catching or receiving them and to consume the meat of their game immediately following the kill. This approach towards the utilisation of resources is based on an economic strategy of ‘immediate return’ for the labour (Woodburn 1980: 99) or ‘the immediate use of food resources’ (Testart 1982: 523), whereby the major portion of the food supply is consumed the day on which it is acquired. Normally, Penan and Punan do not store food; in general, storing would hamper the mobility of a group. As Puri (1997a: 406 fn. 8) has noted, however, Penan can store raw meat in flowing waters for up to three days, keep smoke-dried meat for as long as one week, and mix meat with sago flour that can last up to six months. Occasionally, for short periods, they also keep wild boar fat, which makes up a high percentage of their calorie input (Brosius 1991a: 145), and smoked fish, besides non-animal products such as nuts and honey (B. Sellato, pers. comm.; P. Sercombe, pers. comm.).

Associated with this immediacy of consumption is the principle of the virtually obligatory reciprocal sharing of food equally among members of a local group. Meat is generally distributed among community members immediately it is brought into a camp. For Penan and Punan alike, distribution among a group also applies in the case of plant foods, in particular with regard to sago (Arnold 1958: 64; Harrisson 1949a: 137; Puri 1997a: 333). This has been characterised as sharing ‘with scrupulous equality’ (Needham in this volume) and as a ‘semi-communistic’ attitude towards property (Nicolaisen 1976a), even though sharing is never entirely equitable among these groups, because the hunter nearly always gets the best parts (R. Puri, pers. comm.), which is his privilege. However, this modus operandi is confined to perishable items (basically foodstuffs) and does not include permanent personal or household possessions.

In contrast to the above behaviour, the economics of farming life demand long-term planning and the necessity of waiting for the harvest or produce. Thus, in agrarian cultures, relations with animals are oriented more towards maintenance and reproduction, and slaughter of the stock when necessary. In agricultural societies a reciprocal division of food is no longer essential in order to secure sustenance. In pastoral societies, above and beyond the economic behaviour of farming, the economically oriented thoughts and actions of a community tend to be focused on increasing the size of herds.

However, a typical behavioural pattern of hunters towards animals includes the reservation not to kill wild or domestic animals if they have been kept or bred for a sustained period in a hunting and gathering group as pets, a consequence...
of which is that the meat of these animals does not become available as a consumable resource. In the same way, farmers often also do not kill wild animals and consume their meat if they have been retained as pets. However, an important point is that hunters tend to transfer this behaviour to the practice of animal husbandry.

Animals that have not been killed when caught but retained as pets can be seen, in the view of both foragers and farmers, to correspond with human beings in their behaviour and may be included in the human social environment. Thus, animals may come to be viewed anthropomorphically and be attributed human qualities. Consequently, the differences between humans and animals are repressed. Killing and eating such creatures may well become socially and psychologically unacceptable (see Serpell 1996: xiii, xiv, xix). Through the emotional attachment that develops between humans and animals over a period of time, the typical need and desire of hunters to kill animals living in the community for meat consumption is likely to be extinguished.

A hunter's view of the animal world may be more than just an economic one. Thus, in contrast to traditional farming societies, certain hunter-gatherers' behavioural patterns may be based on special relationships that can arise between men and animals. These relationships may determine the idea of a sense of equality between man and animal. However, it can be observed that little consideration has been given to the issue of pet-keeping in tribal societies (Serpell 1996: 66). Ethnographic observations of interaction between humans and animals, especially in hunting societies, have seldom been recorded and this behaviour has rarely been analysed. In regard to this theme complex, most notably Serpell (1996) has taken this up in his work, *In the Company of Animals*, but he did not focus on hunting and gathering societies.

As is the case with regard to many hunting and gathering societies, the literature on Penan and Punan relationships with animals has been given scant attention. Consideration has remained limited essentially to the idea of animals as game, and thereby their utility as a food resource. The bonding that may occur with animals, that Penan and Punan traditionally used for their food supply, especially those kept in communities as pets, has only been mentioned peripherally. An article, for example, by Hose and McDougall (1901) on the topic of ‘The relations between men and animals in Sarawak,’ concentrated essentially on the religious implications of animals and was, in addition, primarily focused on the behaviour of Kenyah people as settled farmers.

The keeping of pets per se seems to arise largely from the pleasure, entertainment, and comfort that can be gained from the company of animals,
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besides which small wild animals are also occasionally given to children as living toys and, in interacting with them, gain experience of fauna (e.g., Laughlin 1968: 309; and Serpell 1996: 68). The close bond with animals and their acceptance within a human community also show a readiness to provide food for animals, since pets need to be fed.

For Penan and Punan, adaptation to a predominantly agricultural economy and thus a sedentary way of life, such a behavioural pattern as the tendency towards the immediate killing of game (at the time of capture), as well as the inhibition against killing animals that have been adopted and kept in the community of humans, can have a counter-innovative effect. An outcome is the difficulty of achieving a successful adoption of and adaptation to animal husbandry practices. Nonetheless, the implementation and maintenance of these practices are a necessary prerequisite for securing an adequate supply of protein by shifting to a sedentary lifestyle.

The reorientation from the utilisation of animals as game, with a strong inclination to kill them immediately and consume their meat soon after, to the keeping of animals and their acceptance as livestock for slaughter at a later date, necessitates giving up certain traditional behavioural patterns and practices: the killing principle at the climax of the hunt (if this is viable in the context of a chase), on the one hand, and the inhibition against killing, which tends to result from the emotional bonding with animals after sustained contact, on the other. Moreover, reorientation also demands giving up the game hunter’s view of an animal as a resource for immediate consumption. For Penan and Punan, then, the transition from a hunter’s to a farmer’s means of subsistence requires a fundamental reorientation in their relationships with animals. Serpell (1996: 5) associates this process of the domestication of animals with the need for the hunter to relinquish the idea of equality in status between man and animal. However, the abandonment of this perception in settling almost inevitably takes longer than the time required to make the transition to technological-economic adaptation. For many Penan and Punan, persistence of traditional thought, in this regard, tends to continue for a recognisably significant period.

RESPONSIBILITY AND SENSITIVITY IN THE TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

Close bonds with and respect for animals are expressed in the way Penan and Punan proceed with a hunt. As a general rule, they kill only as many animals as are required to satisfy their short-term food needs. Any danger to game stocks
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comes much less, or not at all, from Penan and Punan, but rather from outsiders. Utilising traditional low-impact hunting techniques, Penan and Punan hunting activities have negligible effects on the ecological balance of fauna in areas where they reside. Langub (1989: 176–177) emphasises that, with traditional hunting methods, the number of game animals in environments inhabited by Penan in Sarawak remain relatively stable.

The apparent decline in the ease of capturing game, such as wild boar (*Sus barbatus*) and Sambar deer (*Cervus unicolor*), the two species principally preferred by Penan and Punan along with other Dayak, is due largely to the activities of other people, particularly loggers residing in upriver areas, and groups from downriver (often) coastal areas. These ‘outsiders’ hunt upstream for commercial reasons, using refrigerated containers to preserve meat, which is largely transported and sold to Chinese restaurants in urban areas. In fact, this practice is now prohibited by law in Sarawak, but legal restraints have been imposed retrospectively, largely as a reaction to the consequences of excessive hunting. There remains the issue of habitat destruction of indigenous fauna caused by widespread logging. As a rule, Penan and Punan have not overexploited these animal populations, even if they also seek animals that do not primarily provide them with meat, but rather with materials, such as horns, feathers, and gallstones (particularly bezoar stones), and these are acquired in order to sell, although in some cases certain animals may be sold as pets.

Certainly, there are examples that demonstrate the involvement of Penan and Punan in the decline of local game populations. The extinction of certain animal species, such as the rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*), which was still hunted in the Baram River area until the time of the Japanese invasion, or wild cattle (*banteng*, *Bos javanicus*), which were still to be found on the Upper Limbang in the nineteenth century (Hanbury-Tenison and Jermy 1979: 187; see also Harrison 1975b) and are still occasionally found today in parts of Kalimantan, may be partially attributable to the hunting activities of Penan and Punan in Sarawak. In the upper Rejang River area, these two species of animals were hunted to extinction primarily by the Kayan and Iban, for example, according to reports of the Penan Gang and Penan Lusong (Urquhart 1951a: 531). Kayan, Kenyah and Iban may have traded the horns and participated in hunting expeditions, often led by Penan and Punan guides as mentioned in Penan and Kenyah oral history accounts (R. Puri, pers. comm.). It is also likely that Punan in Kalimantan bear some responsibility for the near extinction of the rhinoceros, which they hunted in order to acquire and sell certain parts to Chinese for medicinal purposes (B. Sellato, pers. comm.). Another example
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attributes responsibility to the Punan Tubu for the increasing rarity of the Straw-headed bulbul (*Pycnonotus zeylanicus*), which has long been in demand as a song bird, and which reflects the wealth and social status of the owner (Puri 1999). This species is disappearing rapidly from the Tubu Region of Kalimantan, as well as from other areas of Borneo.

The introduction of modern hunting weapons has so far only brought major changes to a minority of Penan in the Rejang area, and the adoption of firearms has clearly allowed for the acquisition of more game and thus more meat (Nicolaisen 1976b: 50–51). In the Baram area, Anderson (1979: 212) noted explicitly, however, that the use of firearms by Berawan, Kenyah, Kelabit, Murut, and Iban represented a much greater danger for the game population than that posed by Penan, largely because the former groups are greater in number, have more money to spend on ammunition, and own a much larger number of guns per head of population than any Penan group in Borneo. In addition, Penan in remote districts often have considerable difficulty in obtaining ammunition for their firearms (Langub 1989: 176), notwithstanding the actual cost of bullets. Many Penan in the Mount Mulu National Park area of Sarawak were still using blowguns predominantly, at the end of the 1970s (Kedit 1982: 232), and continue to do so. Puri (1997a: 324–341) gives a very detailed description of two kinds of hunting techniques using the blowpipe, involving either stalking or ambush, still widely practised today, by the Penan Benalui in East Kalimantan.

There is also evidence that, in some cases, Penan and Punan themselves have been trying indirectly to preserve game populations. Langub (1989: 177) reported the case of an old Penan from the Magoh River area of north-eastern Sarawak, who explained that his community consciously spared trees yielding fruit that were food for wild boar.

Penan and Punan traditionally do not and never have killed any game or livestock for sacrificial purposes, in contrast to the practices of Dayak (Hose and McDougall 1912, II: 84–85). In rare cases where sacrificial acts are observed by Penan or Punan, they have almost certainly been adopted and, in these events, only domestic rather than wild animals are sacrificed. A number of semi-settled Punan groups have borrowed rituals, particularly those of the rice cycle, and do sacrifice chickens (often during the rice harvest festival), in the same way as do Dayak groups. The meat of sacrificial animals is consumed by members of the group, whether they be Penan, Punan, or Iban (P. Sercombe and B. Sellato, pers. comm.). Among the Kereho-Busang, in Central Kalimantan, pigs may be ritually cleansed and sacrificed as part of a marriage ceremony between first cousins (Sellato 1989: 128), a practice most likely to have been adopted from Seputan...
groups. It should be added that sacrifices are also performed, not only with chickens and pigs, but also with cows, which have occasionally been raised by sedentary Penan or Punan, but these are extremely rare occurrences.

A direct ban against killing and eating omen animals did exist among Penan and Punan (see Hose and McDougall 1901: 195; Needham in this volume). Before the adoption of Christianity, the Punan Tubu regarded the Slow loris (Nycticebus coucang), tarsier (Tarsius bancanus), Yellow barking deer (Muntiacus atherodes), Common palm civet (Paradoxurus hermaphroditus), and Tufted ground squirrel (Rheithrosciurus macrotis) as omen animals or message bearers from spirits or ghosts. The presence of these animals was perceived as a potential sign of impending danger or catastrophe. While the Yellow barking deer, civet, and squirrel are hunted today, the rules of conduct with respect to the loris and tarsier have been maintained, and these animals are not intentionally killed in the Tubu Region or in other parts of the interior of East Kalimantan. Many Punan still believe that, when someone is bitten by a loris (not a common occurrence), this can cause death, in addition to believing that the tarsier is a ghost (Puri 1998a). Penan and Punan omen creatures can also include birds, such as the Bat hawk (Macheramphus alcinus), the Maroon woodpecker (Blythipicus rubiginosus), and the Banded kingfisher (Laceda pulchella), which, depending on a number of factors such as direction of flight, may augur either good or bad events (Chen 1990: 17).

In general, among Penan and Punan groups, as in most hunter and gatherer cultures, kept animals are usually treated sympathetically, and Urquhart (1959: 82) noted that Penan and Punan treated their pets with consideration. However, Arnold (1958: 63) mentioned the case of a young animal used by children among the Penan on the Plieran in the upper Rejang basin to practise hunting. He observed how a wild piglet was bound with a piece of rattan on the sinews of the hind leg, in order to permit the boys to use it as a live target for spear-throwing practice, and a similar observation has been made by R. Puri (pers. comm.).

Hunting dogs fulfil very different practical functions among human communities and are not comparable with pets acquired from the wild. It is worth briefly considering the attitudes of Penan and Punan toward dogs, as in the literature some notions of Penan and Punan relationships with these creatures can be found. Many Penan and Punan groups keep dogs, as do Dayak farmers, and they are kept in the main for hunting purposes. Hunting dogs play an important role in tracking and holding game at bay when hunting, either with spears or firearms (Hildebrand 1982: 284–288; Brosius 1991a: 145, 1993a:
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521–522; and Puri 1997a: 342–356). However, when using a blowgun, which is still in wide use today (e.g., in the upper Baram area of Sarawak), dogs can actually be a hindrance, as the blowgun cannot viably be used on running game; the hunter must approach and sneak up very close to an animal, and the noise of one or more dogs may well alert the game to a threatening presence. Some Penan (e.g., the Penan in Brunei) have shifted their hunting methods to employ traps for catching game, as a result of which they rarely use dogs for hunting any more (P. Sercombe, pers. comm.).

In fact, the use of hunting dogs is likely to be a relatively recent feature of Penan and Punan culture, and one which was adopted from Dayak, a point echoed by a number of authors (Hose and McDougall 1912, I: 145; Nicolaisen 1976b: 46; Hildebrand 1982: 287; and Brosius 1993a: 521–522). For at least the last 100–150 years, however, the importance of the hunting dog among Penan and Punan groups has been documented, although the times at which these animals became functioning assets vary for different groups (Sellato 1989: 82, 185).

Penan and Punan hunting dogs are often highly esteemed by settled Dayak in Central Borneo and in East Kalimantan. Certain Penan groups have a reputation for being very successful in breeding hunting dogs, and Kayan, Kenyah and Iban have been known to seek hunting dogs from Penan communities (Nieuwenhuis 1907: 316; Harrisson 1965a: 68, 83). It has also been reported that Penan barter their dogs to Malaysian dealers (Harrisson 1949a: 144). Furthermore, Nicolaisen (1976a; see also Puri 1999) noted that Penan knowledge and experience with hunting with dogs are praised by other ethnic groups, although in general terms they are not known to be as consistent breeders as are settled Dayak.

Dogs are widely regarded by Penan and Punan (as well as other groups) as valuable property. The high adaptability and potential faithfulness of dogs tend to enhance their relationships with their owners, and this is characterised by the manner in which they are treated not just as a functional resource but also as pets (Harrisson 1965a, Rubenstein 1990: 161; Serpell 1996: 69). Urquhart (1951a: 531–532; and 1959: 81–82) believed that, among the Penan Gang and Penan Lusong, dogs were much better treated than by Iban, and that the Punan Busang loved their dogs like their children and let them sleep under mosquito nets in the home. Nevertheless, the treatment of dogs can vary widely among Penan and Punan groups, often depending on their personal economic circumstances. Some groups are reluctant to cull dog litters, with the result being hordes of underfed dogs, which may be ignored or maltreated (Arnold 1958: 63; Chen 1990: 24–25)
and left to die, especially if they are old or diseased, with only some being actually used for hunting. Other groups do cull litters and only keep a few healthy dogs, and these are generally both fed well and treated favourably. As far as is known, Eastern Penan do not cull litters of dogs or domestic cats at all (P. Sercombe, pers. comm.), although keeping cats has only been rarely reported (see Kedit 1982: 232; and Sellato 1989: 122). Overall, similar attitudes towards dogs can also be found among the Kenyah of Central Borneo, among whom Hose and McDougall (1901: 187) reported that dogs can be perceived as children and that they eat and sleep with longhouse dwellers under the same roof.

A high esteem for dogs is also found among other tropical rain forest hunters. Among, for example, the Southeast Asian Negritos, in particular the Agta in Northeast Luzon, in the Philippines, dogs may be the exclusive property of the head of a family (Peterson 1978: 22; and Griffin 1984: 107–108). Similarly, among the Rhwa in the eastern Congo, possession of a hunting dog brings considerable social prestige (Seitz 1977: 75). It has also been reported that the Andaman islanders have an especially high regard for hunting dogs introduced by Europeans (Cipriani 1966: 80–83). Despite some contrary representations (e.g., Serpell 1996: 70), it can also be noted for Central African Pygmies that their dogs are ‘treated affectionately by their owners’ (Heymer 1995: 196–198). In all, it seems that dogs are valued not only as an additional resource in the search for and acquisition of animal proteins by hunter-gatherers but that they are particularly appreciated for the ways in which they appear to develop lasting relationships with their keepers.

**KEEPING OF PETS AND THE INHIBITION AGAINST KILLING AND EATING PET ANIMALS**

It has been documented that various monkey species hunted by a number of nomadic Penan and Punan groups are apparently only rarely taken as game, and are more often kept as pets. For Penan in the Mount Mulu area of Sarawak, Kedit (1982: 232) noted that families from the villages of Tepoh Basong and Long Iman adopt monkeys. Urquhart (1959: 81–82) had previously commented that Penan in the Baram River area of Sarawak also often kept monkeys as pets. Chen (1990: 41) mentioned that it was not unusual to see Penan women breastfeeding a baby monkey or a suckling wild boar. Rubenstein (1990: 169, 173, 175) described how she was given a little monkey as a present by Penan of Long Apu (in the Baram area), which had been found abandoned in the forest. She, in turn, gave the animal to the local village school, where it was kept on a rattan leash and fed
milk by the school children. When the animal died, it was mourned. Gibbons (*Hylobates muelleri*) are also kept as pets (see Harrisson 1949a: 141, and 1965a: 71; Hildebrand 1982: 294) and are known for their gentle, unaggressive nature.

There is no report among Penan or Punan, however, that primates are seen to resemble humans physically, to the extent that it would be considered cannibalistic to eat them, as is the view of some Pygmy groups of Central Africa (Seitz 1977: 67). Penan and Punan do, in fact, often eat the meat of hunted monkeys, even though they are not generally preferred game (Kedit 1982: 240).

One of the most likely ways in which a wild animal becomes a pet is when its parents have been killed for food, and this might include creatures as diverse as the sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*) and wild pig (see, for example, Arnold 1958: 63, regarding the Penan Plieran). When Penan or Punan hunters keep wild animals as pets, these come to be regarded as members of the community, and taboos thus arise against killing those species which would otherwise normally be hunted for food, even when communities are suffering from food shortages (Urquhart 1951a: 513; Manser 1992: 29). As can be imagined, these captured animals can become impractical to keep as they become fully mature, although many do not actually survive long in captivity.

Birds are also widely sought after as pets. Urquhart (1959: 82) observed in the Baram River area how Penan had marked a tame Rhinoceros hornbill (*Buceros rhinoceros*) bird with a red ribbon, so as not to kill it by mistake as it flew through the jungle. And when Harrisson visited a community of Punan Busang, they kept three such birds as ‘free-flying pets’ (Harrisson 1965a: 71). Nevertheless, birds are also considered wild game, although they contribute little to the food supply, due to the generally small amount of meat they provide. Exceptions are forest fowls and a few large hornbill birds, which are often hunted at times when forest products are being gathered. Among certain Penan groups (e.g., those in Brunei), adult hornbill birds are eaten, but these are not preferred food; rather, they are consumed when nothing else is available (P. Sercombe, pers. comm.).

Many captured animals, particularly birds, are kept as pets by settled groups. Hose and McDougall (1901: 180) recorded that Kenyah in the Baram area of north-eastern Sarawak occasionally kept hornbill birds as pets in their longhouses. Penan and Punan exploit this preference by procuring birds to sell to their settled neighbours, and certain species are captured solely for the purpose of selling, e.g., bulbuls, especially the Straw-headed bulbul, as they are believed to be great songbirds. Puri (1999) and Kedit (1982: 232) have both dealt with the issue of animal trading between nomadic groups and settled peoples in parts of Kalimantan and Sarawak, respectively.
A number of reasons have been invoked to try and explain inhibitions against killing and eating captured animals, including economic-rational hypotheses, symbolic interpretations, and ideas rooted in religious beliefs. But these usually pertain only to individual animal species and to specific hunting and gathering groups. Among Penan and Punan, with the exception of prohibitions against killing and eating omen species which they share with Dayak farmers, religious constraints are not discernible. While little is known of Penan and Punan traditional beliefs, it is understood that the spiritually-oriented convictions that they hold are often adopted from groups with whom they live in proximity. However, their inhibitions against consuming animals that they keep beyond the point of capture have largely to do with their world view.

Harris (1985: 176–178) postulated that, whether sedentary farmers or nomads, a close relationship between man and animals does not need to be a factor in the inhibition against killing and eating the same creatures. This holds for his examples of pigs in Melanesian cultures, as well as cattle in certain Northeast African cultures, in which these animals are highly esteemed but nonetheless eaten. However, hunter-gatherer cultures, as well as those in transition or having made the transition to a sedentary existence, are characterised by markedly different attitudes towards animals. Furthermore, in Harris’ comparisons (1985: 179–186) between Polynesians and North American Indians explaining the inhibition against eating dogs as being a result of the continued availability of these animals for work, the cultural differences between Polynesians, as farmers, and Indians, living largely as hunters and gatherers, are not considered. This inhibition is viewed not as based on the fact that animals are kept as pets, but rather as due to the availability of adequate meat supplies. Harris (1985) has pointed out, in comparing Polynesians who eat dogs, with Indians of North America who usually do not eat dog meat, that North Americans had greater access to wild game. It made little sense for Indians, who needed and used dogs for hunting, to eat them while, for those Indians who did eat dog, this animal was not important for the hunt. Harris (1985: 176) sees the issue conversely, i.e., not whether a pet may be eaten, but rather: ‘[…] whether an animal that is part of a people’s regular cuisine can still be a pet.’

THE RELUCTANCE OF SETTLED NOMADS TO EAT MEAT FROM LIVESTOCK

Not only the meat of pets but also that of domestic animals is generally not consumed by Penan and Punan. It is claimed here that if livestock is kept for a
sustained period, then for the Penan and Punan this will have a psychological-emotional impact, preventing their owners from slaughtering them. This issue remains for the most part neglected in the discussion of the adjustment of hunter-gatherers to a sedentary existence.

Meat from domestic animals is not eaten by non-sedentary Punan and Penan hunters. Harrisson (1949a: 143) reported that Penan of the Magoh River area (in north-eastern Sarawak) ate neither the meat of cattle nor that of domestic pigs, goats, or chickens, while other Penan, e.g., those of the nearby Apoh River area, apparently did not follow these constraints. For some Penan families in the Mount Mulu National Park area, fowl and pork were not eaten, although this inhibition did not pertain to all families (Kedit 1982: 241) and may have been to do with their acceptance of norms held by adjacent settled peoples.

Hose and McDougall (1901: 195) claimed that the refusal of Penan to eat meat from a domestic pig was based on their being too unaccustomed to this meat, since ‘[t]hey know nothing of it, it is strange to them.’ Connected with this is the issue of the meat’s taste (Huehne 1959–1960: 202; Sellato 1989: 224), such that people unfamiliar with the flavour of domestic animals’ flesh take time to adjust to its flavour and accept it as part of their diet, but this may not be the principal factor. The same attitude is also demonstrated by some Penan groups towards meat from certain wild animals, whose taste they may generally find unpalatable. Thus, some Penan families have reported that they do not like the meat of mousedeer (*Tragulus javanicus* and *T. napu*), since ‘it is too smelly to be edible,’ and Penan in Long Iman (near Mount Mulu) have cited the same reason for not eating wild cats, the moonrat (*Echinosorex gymnurus*) (Kedit 1982: 241), or wild cattle (*banteng*), whose meat tastes too strong for some Penan (P. Sercombe and B. Sellato, pers. comm.).

Meat from livestock is also not eaten by settled Penan and Punan. Normally, former hunters and gatherers, who have become sedentary, only rarely keep any kind of animals for any length of time. For the most part, these are slaughtered when caught, a practice deriving from traditional hunting practices, which require, for economic reasons (such as not having to feed these creatures with food needed for other members of the community), as well as practical reasons (such as the sheer effort of restraining large wild animals), that animals are killed immediately following capture.

Many Penan and Punan traditionally refused to eat the meat of pigs and chickens that they had received as presents or had kept themselves. In the same fashion, similar behaviour towards domestic animals can also be observed for many now sedentary Penan and Punan. Urquhart (1959: 82) reported that
settled Penan in the Baram River basin treated their small numbers of domestic animals affectionately and refused to eat chickens or domesticated pigs, arguing that ‘[o]ur pigs and chickens are as friendly to us as dogs. If you eat your pigs, why do you not eat your dogs when they are of no further use for hunting?’.

Nowadays, a great number of sedentary Penan and Punan have come to adopt the habit of keeping chickens and pigs. Sellato (1989: 122, 224) has mentioned that, in shifting from processing sago to cultivating rice, a shift to the rearing and keeping of domestic animals has simultaneously occurred among, for example, Punan on the Mahakam and Kapuas Rivers of Kalimantan, and that pig and chicken were introduced to the Kereho-Busang in the upper Mahakam River area along with the adoption of agriculture as a consequence of intermarriage with Seputan people (Sellato 1989: 125). For Penan in the Baram River area of Sarawak, when settling in the 1960s (Langub 1972b: 84, 1974b: 94), and for some settled Penan in the Belaga District (Kedit 1982: 232), chicken and also duck rearing was observed.

It is worth noting that when settled Penan and Punan have been seen to keep domestic animals, but not as pets, these were more often intended for sale rather than for domestic consumption. Given what is known of Penan and Punan reluctance to slaughter animals not obtained through hunting, it becomes understandable that sedentary Penan and Punan might keep chickens and occasionally pigs to resell them at a later date. Kedit (1982: 232) observed this among Penan families in the Mount Mulu area of Sarawak, and Anderson (1979: 212) also noticed that Penan of the Pelutan River (a tributary of the Baram) kept chickens to sell to Kayan, who purchased them at below the usual market price. Penan in the Belaga area of Sarawak have also been observed only rarely to slaughter their chickens for food, while barter-trading them with merchants (Langub 1974b: 94). Sellato (1989: 224) has also reported, for certain groups of settled Punan in Kalimantan, that some raise chickens, while a few (e.g., the Bukat) keep cattle, with neither being intended for domestic consumption, but rather for sale. Consequently, an advantage of small-scale animal husbandry can be seen as the convertibility of animals into commercial goods, rather than in their utilisation as a meat source.

Of course, the keeping of animals could be of major economic benefit to Penan and Punan, especially during a process of transition from hunting to farming, and particularly, given the reduction in available wild species in the rainforest due to widespread logging and excessive hunting by ‘outsiders’. One might possibly find an economic profit in pets if they became economically utilitarian animals and thereby serve as a live food resource, even when this was
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not originally intended (see, e.g., Volkhausen 1994: 321–322). In the case of Penan and Punan, this presently seems rather unlikely.

The economic rationale for slaughtering animals for immediate-return benefits, along with the sociopsychological-emotional attitudes of Penan and Punan in keeping animals have so far made it difficult for them to establish animal husbandry practices for the purpose of providing meat, even though this is obviously one significant strategy for securing dietary protein requirements. Thus, it is typical that Punan from Long Pada in Kalimantan go hunting daily, even though they keep chickens. Also, Punan who are settled in villages on the middle Tubu of Kalimantan still satisfy their protein requirements from wild game (Puri 1998a). However, Puri (ibid.) had the impression that Punan who lived closer to Malinau town, because of the great expenditure of time needed to journey to the good hunting grounds near the Tubu River were, in contrast, forced to resort to keeping chickens. Chicken and fish are cheaper and more accessible protein sources and thus more economically important for them than game meat. Fish, traditionally not a primary protein source for many Penan and Punan groups, has become an essential source of protein with the onset of settlement, and with the decline in the availability of wild boar and other larger sources of protein.

Associated with becoming sedentary, domestic animal keeping has become an important factor regarding the hygienic conditions of a settlement. Punan and Penan who tend to keep neither pigs nor chickens have no scavengers to consume rubbish in their settlements, thus their refuse remains around the camp (Arnold 1958: 57; Morrison 1976: 307–308), while for Dayak pigs and chickens not only provide meat but help to eliminate waste matter, even though a settlement located in the rainforest can be kept clean by wild scavengers, such as civet cats and ants (R. Puri, pers. comm.).

Naturally, the keeping of small animals limits the mobility of Penan and Punan (Sellato 1989: 224), or any group for that matter. As a result, some Penan and Punan have used this as an argument against animal keeping, maintaining that in an emergency situation in which farming the land had to be abandoned in favour of a return to hunting and gathering, domestic animal keeping would be a hindrance to them. Sellato (1989: 214) has suggested that, depending on the situation, many Penan and Punan remain ready to abandon rice cultivation and return to the rainforest. This is evidenced not only by statements from Penan but also by the arrangement of many homes, in which belongings may be permanently stacked in a corner of a family apartment, adjacent to bags, in readiness for a quick departure (see Sercombe in this volume).
CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the reasons for the apparent lack of interest of Penan and Punan in keeping domestic animals, which has been widely noted (e.g., Harrisson 1949a: 143; Urquhart 1951a: 513; Huehne 1959–1960: 202; Sellato 1989: 224), becomes comprehensible to the observer. It is indicative that Nicolaisen (1976b), who studied the economic transition to farming for individual groups in the Seventh Division of Sarawak along the Rejang River, mentions nothing of animal keeping. He specifies fishing as a replacement for hunting, with the decline in available game.

An additional factor is that for farming neighbours (e.g., Kenyah, Kayan, and other Dayak), who might be seen to act as a model for domestic animal keeping, this practice generally only plays a subordinate role in their economies. For many Dayak groups, chickens and eggs may be primarily sacrificial animals and offerings. Similarly, pigs are sacrificial animals for special religious and social occasions, such as weddings or harvest festivals. Hose and McDougall (1901: 182–183; 1912, II: 64–65) suggested that Kenyah, for example, kill neither domestic pigs nor chickens simply to obtain meat, but that the slaughtering of these animals always represented a religious or symbolic act of some kind. Likewise, the Benuaq of East Kalimantan kill and eat pigs, chickens, and buffalos only in ritual contexts (C. Gönner, pers. comm.).

Thus it becomes understandable why, in shifting to a sedentary lifestyle, Penan and Punan have been hampered in the keeping of animals by a range of factors. It seems that only under severe economic stress are they willing to alter this aspect of their behaviour. For most sedentary Penan and Punan, protein needs can still be satisfied by hunting, fishing and, in certain cases, the purchase of protein foods. Only when these options are not available or are exhausted might Penan give up their reluctance to slaughter domestic animals. As with other hunting and gathering groups, it can be seen that the transition by Penan and Punan to sedentary farming, part of which includes the practice of animal keeping, is not necessarily to their economic benefit.
Chapter 9

HISTORY AND THE PUNAN VUHANG: RESPONSE TO ECONOMIC AND RESOURCE TENURE CHANGE

By Henry Chan

Abstract: This chapter examines the recent history of the Punan Vuhang community of Sarawak, focusing, in particular, on changes in their economic and resource tenure systems. Based primarily on oral testimony, it reconstructs the major events that have affected the livelihood of the community over the last 100 years. At the turn of the twentieth century, in order to retain their freedom as a hunting and gathering people, the forefathers of the present Punan Vuhang left their ancestral territory to avoid being subjugated by expansionistic agricultural peoples, notably Kayan and Iban. Towards the end of the 1960s, the elders and parents of the present generation opted to become sedentary and abandon their traditional belief system in order to adopt an agricultural economy. This shift in economic orientation led to the creation of a new form of resource tenure adapted for cultivation. Today, the Punan Vuhang brace themselves for the impending effects of the logging industry, and face a severe crisis of non-recognition of their resource tenure by the Sarawak state’s legal system.

A SKETCH OF PUNAN VUHANG HISTORY

In 1995, the Punan Vuhang community numbered 70 persons. Its members lived in two longhouse blocks in Long Lidem, located on the Kajang, a tributary of the Balui, over a mile upriver from Belaga town, in the Kapit Division of
History and the Punan Vuhang


Early History

Prior to the nineteenth century, before the expansion of the Kayan into Punan country, the ancestors of the present day Punan Vuhang consisted of three groups: the Punan Vuhang, the Punan Tekalet, and the Punan Nuo. While the Punan Nuo were on good terms with the others, the Punan Vuhang and Punan Tekalet are said to have used spirits to attack each other. In the 1800s, when the Kayan expanded into the lands of the Punan Tekalet in the lower part of the Balui, conflicts flared as the Punan Tekalet attacked the newcomers. The Punan Tekalet even attacked Kayan who visited them for peaceful trading. The Kayan retaliated and, by virtue of their political cohesion and greater numbers, sought, through systematic warfare, to eliminate the Punan Tekalet.

The Punan Tekalet found refuge with the Punan Vuhang, who enjoyed a close relationship with the Kayan owing to a legendary adoption of the brother of an early Kayan chief by the Punan Vuhang.1 While under Punan Vuhang protection, the Punan Tekalet hoped that the Kayan would not attack them. Since they themselves were on troubled terms with the Punan Vuhang, they drew in the Punan Nuo, who suffered no animosity against the Punan Vuhang, to join them in seeking refuge. In this way, the Punan Tekalet were assured that the Punan Vuhang would not be aggressive towards them. Believing that they would become targets of Kayan revenge following the escape of the Punan Tekalet, the two groups fled together to the territory of the Punan Vuhang. The Punan Tekalet offered their women to their hosts in marriage, so binding the Punan Vuhang to protect them.

After many years of peace, intertribal warfare resumed. Decades after the Kayan left the Apau Kayan Plateau of Kalimantan in the 1800s, the area became devoid of human inhabitants. When the land had returned to mature forest, Kenyah moved in to fill the vacuum. Some Kenyah groups, in particular the Badeng and Bakong, preyed upon other groups for heads and were archenemies of the Punan Nuo and Punan Tekalet. Thus, the convergence of many Kenyah into the Apau Kayan, which shared the same watershed system with the Balui,
Map 9.1. Punan Vuhang Exploitation Grounds During Nomadic Times
History and the Punan Vuhang

brought the Punan of this area into contact with their traditional enemies. Headhunting was frequent, and life became increasingly difficult for the Punan. Frequently, hunters and food collectors failed to return to camp, having been killed by headhunters.

Hostilities caused the Punan to look for a new location to live. They moved into uninhabited areas and divided themselves into three groups (see Map 9.1). One group moved to the Kihan, a tributary of the Kayan River in Kalimantan. A second group went to the lower reaches of the Kajang and the middle part of the Linau, tributaries of the Balui in Sarawak. A third group, comprising primarily Punan Vuhang, whose forefathers had had no quarrel with the Kayan or the Kenyah, decided to return to the Balui headwaters. Being at peace with the dominant groups, they lived at the headwaters, sandwiched between the Kayan in the lower part of the Balui and the Kenyah living across the mountain range in the Apau Kayan Plateau.

Before the Punan Vuhang returned to the Balui headwaters, several important events occurred. During the Great Kayan Expedition of 1863, Brooke forces overcame the resisting Kayan who had gathered in the upper reaches of the Balui. In the area of the Balleh River, Kayan who had originated from the Mahakam River area in Kalimantan no longer felt safe from Iban headhunting forays in the Balleh. They returned to the Mahakam and the Iban then filled the vacuum. From the Balleh, the Iban launched headhunting expeditions into the upper Balui, forcing the Kayan and other sedentary peoples to congregate in the mid-Balui for easier defence (Chan 1991: 18–20; on Iban warlike history, see Sandin 1967).

When the Punan Vuhang returned to the Balui headwaters, the Iban massacred 14 of them as follows: the Iban had seemed to be the genuine forest exploiters and tapped gutta percha for a long period. They appeared harmless, friendly, and peaceful and the Punan Vuhang eventually let down their guard and befriended them. The Iban even held a *servilak* (*sevila'*) swearing ceremony, whereby they became bound to the Punan Vuhang as blood brothers. These Punan had no idea that the Iban were actually scheming to kill them when they were most vulnerable.\(^2\) On the eve of the attack, the Iban asked their hosts to hold a singing ritual in praise of the spirits. After feasting and dancing throughout the night, they fell into a deep sleep. It was then that the Iban slaughtered their victims.

The survivors and their kinsmen from the other Punan groups in the Linau River area sought revenge against the Iban. At first, they sought help from the Kayan. However, the Kayan reported the massacre to the Brooke government,
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which launched a punitive expedition against the Gaat Iban. These Iban were in a rebellious mood, and it was suspected that they had killed the Punan Vuhang. The Punan Vuhang joined a Brooke force of 200 soldiers against the Iban, an event reported in the *Sarawak Gazette* (*SG* 1916: 78). The expedition was a success, but the Punan Vuhang felt the victory belonged to the Brooke forces, not to them, and so decided they would carry out further revenge.

They went to Iban territory in the Balleh River basin and killed four Iban. By noting the pattern of attack and retreat, the Iban identified the killers as Punan and set out to seek their revenge. The Iban war party came across unsuspecting Penan Bunut – another hunter-gatherer people of a different ethnicity – and used a friendship-betrayal scheme to kill their hosts (see Chan 1995: 24–25 for a version of these events told by the survivors’ descendants). The Iban, however, remained unsatisfied and pursued the Punan Vuhang, who went into hiding.

The Punan Vuhang then decided to seek refuge among the Kenyah in Kalimantan, who were enemies of the Iban and had frequently clashed with them (see Pringle 1970: 261). They remained in Kalimantan for five years, but once hostilities in the Balui had subsided, they returned to Sarawak (on a similar situation regarding the Bhuket, see Thambiah in this volume).

A few years later, in 1924, the Kapit Peace-Making Ceremony forged peace between the Iban, Kayan, and Kenyah and brought about a cessation of warfare in the area. For the first time in decades, peace prevailed. In the years subsequent to the peace-making ceremony, there appeared to be no significant events that affected the well-being of the Punan Vuhang.

*Sedentism and Conversion to Adet Bungan and Christianity*

The period of the Indonesian–Malaysian Confrontation (1963–1966), during which Indonesian forces made incursions into Sarawak, brought a period of calamity to the whole area. Raids took place across border passes between Kalimantan and Sarawak, including assaults at the Balui headwaters, which were the major access routes between the two states. The confrontation had an impact on the Punan Vuhang, who were living along one of these border passes. Commonwealth forces under the command of the British army guarded the border passes and one group stayed with the Punan Vuhang for a period. Although the situation was tense, for the Punan Vuhang it was a relatively easy period as they were given ample food by the army. 3

The arrival of a Kayan trader requesting that the Punan Vuhang deliver a peace letter to his brother who lived in Kalimantan marked the end of Confrontation for the Punan Vuhang. The letter was to invite Indonesian tribal
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chiefs to come over to Sarawak to conduct a peace-making ceremony. The trader requested that the Punan Vuhang settle down, so as to make it easier for traders to visit them. Their frequent movement in the distant headwaters had made it difficult for traders to meet them.

Initially, the Punan Vuhang refused the idea. They argued that a settlement further down the Linau River, where traders could meet them more easily, was not favourable for trade, as little rattan was available in the area. The trader then suggested that they settle in the Kajang basin, where rattan was abundant. The Kajang valley also happened to be very fertile, thus providing an environment suitable for cultivation. Besides, travelling to the Kajang from the Linau, a main waterway, required only a few hours’ walk across an intervening mountain range. Once in the Kajang basin, travelling along the river was less problematic, as there were no difficult rapids to traverse. The Punan Vuhang subsequently agreed to move into the Kajang valley and adopt cultivation (see Map 9.2).

In persuading them to settle, the trader also suggested that the Punan Vuhang adopt a new belief system, Adet Bungan (recently emerged from among the Kenyah of interior Kalimantan, comprising elements of traditional belief and Christianity; on the Bungan religion and on conversion, see Rousseau 1998), as he foresaw that by merely adopting cultivation the Punan would face great difficulties. He believed that the Punan Vuhang’s practice of fleeing an area following the occurrence of a death would, sooner or later, force the community to abandon their cultivated fields. This was incompatible with cultivation, which required consistent crop maintenance and a sedentary life. He assured them that Adet Bungan only suppressed the negative effects of death-related taboos, and that they could continue to practise their old festivals and healing rituals. In fact, these healing rituals were compatible with Adet Bungan. Eventually, the Punan Vuhang accepted the new religion and moved into the Kajang valley to begin cultivation, in 1968.

The beginnings of sedentarism and cultivation coincided with a series of deaths among the group, which the Punan Vuhang attributed to having abandoned their traditional livelihood. These deaths also coincided with the return of Indonesians to Kalimantan after having worked in Sarawak. These migrant workers came from the border area between Kalimantan and Sarawak. At the end of the Confrontation, they returned using the Kajang route for their journey. Having accumulated money to buy goods, they were loaded with supplies on their passage home. Viewing them with their new supplies, the Punan Vuhang thought that they could also obtain many goods if they went to the
Map 9.2. Sedentary Punan Vuhang Regular Exploitation Grounds
Belaga bazaar, without realising that the travellers had worked for many years in order to purchase these items (see Map 9.1 on p. 194).

The Punan Vuhang went to Belaga seeking goods. They returned without any goods but, unknowingly, with contagious malaria. The fever spread and seven people died. Although conversion to Adet Bungan should have averted their fleeing the death site, the unusually high number of deaths provoked great fear and caused them to abandon their new settlement. The community was in a dilemma, as most wanted to revert to their traditional way of life, but their leader decided otherwise and convinced them to resume cultivation. Nonetheless, many more died from malaria. Their traditional healing rituals could not provide any cure and they did not have sacrificial animals, such as pigs or chickens, with which to perform Adet Bungan rituals. Instead of improving, the situation continued to worsen.

Eventually, those who survived started to recover from the disease. At the same time, a Christian pastor, on his return home, requested that the Punan Vuhang guide him back to Kalimantan. He made the request during the occurrence of bad omens. No one wanted to take him, for fear of the consequences. He convinced them that conversion to Christianity could avert the effects of omens. When two young men converted to Christianity and took him to Kalimantan, then returned with no bad consequences, the entire Punan Vuhang community followed suit and adopted the new religion. The subsequent recovery from the disease, simultaneous with their conversion, enabled the group to continue cultivation without further major difficulties.

After cultivating different sites for three years, they decided to stay at Long Lidem. After they settled, the government provided aid to construct a longhouse, where they have remained ever since. A legislative council member (of Kayan origin) from the area requested that they adopt longhouse-style apartments. At first, the Punan Vuhang refused, worried that their hunting dogs might fight if their owners lived together in such close proximity. The council member rationalised that the dogs would eventually get used to such a situation. Besides, he reasoned, when it rained they could visit other households as the common corridor linking all the apartments would shelter them. The Punan Vuhang were convinced and accepted the idea of a longhouse.

For over 25 years, no significant event occurred. Due to the remoteness of their settlement, they had few visitors. On occasion, especially after the harvest season, traders would make a trip to do business with them for rattan products. Only occasionally, during outbreaks of malaria, did a medical and malaria prevention team visit them to provide treatment and spray insecticide in their immediate vicinity.
Recent Period (1980–2000)

In the late 1980s, due to Penan resistance to logging in the Baram River area (see Brosius in this volume), the Sarawak state government initiated a development programme meant to bring these remote hunting and gathering communities into the mainstream of development. The programme introduced agriculture, health care, and schooling. Headmen appointed by the government were given a yearly allowance of 1,000 Malaysian ringgit (MYR) and were obliged to attend meetings called by the nearest District Office. Selected young Penan were recruited into a Volunteer Corps to bring basic agricultural skills, health care, and schooling to the communities.

The Punan Vuhang, due to their remoteness, received few of these provisions. They did not want to send their children to the boarding school at the Lusong Laku Service Centre, which took two days to reach, travelling by boat and walking. Only occasionally did they send their wives to give birth at the Lusong Laku clinic. Moreover, as the state government does not differentiate Punan from Penan (see Introduction, in this volume), one unmarried Punan Vuhang man was selected to become a Penan Volunteer in 1999.

In the early 1990s, the Flying Doctor Service started visiting the Punan Vuhang by helicopter on a monthly basis. The service provided basic health care, and a doctor advised expectant mothers to deliver at the Lusong Laku clinic, where newly born children could be registered. In 1993, the community was given construction material to build a new longhouse.

In late 1993, the government revived the controversial Bakun Hydroelectric Project that, when completed, will submerge a huge part of the interior of the Kapit division of Sarawak. The Punan Vuhang are unlikely to be directly affected, as the area to be submerged lies downriver from them. Indirect effects, nonetheless, came about from government compensation for homes that will be submerged by the resulting reservoir. Many people living downriver, inhabiting small dwellings that will command little compensation, sought capital to construct larger houses for which they would receive greater government reimbursement. To obtain this capital, these people were motivated to trade with the Punan Vuhang. Once the rice season was over, trading groups came to trade with the Punan Vuhang every two or three months, or even more often. By late 1995, all the homes to be affected by the Bakun Hydroelectric Project had been registered for compensation, and since then fewer trading parties have visited the Punan Vuhang.

During the last decade of the twentieth century, logging had not yet reached the Punan Vuhang. Nonetheless, they have begun to feel the ripple effects of
logging as they listened to people who have suffered its consequences. On their travels to the Belaga Bazaar or to Kapit, walking on logging roads and hitching rides on logging trucks, they directly observe logging’s drastic impact on the environment. Felled trees have knocked down surrounding trees. Logging roads and tractor skid-trails have buried sago palms, rattans, and other forest resources. Mountain slopes are now covered with loose soil that washes down during rains to pollute, flood, or block nearby rivers.

Rather than waiting for logging activities to reach their present area, the Punan Vuhang have been actively preparing for that eventuality. They travel to forests that they have not used since settling down, to re-establish rights of ownership. In particular, they have returned to the headwaters of the Linau and painted their community’s name, ‘Punan Busang’, over areas where they previously camped and in caves in which they hid during the headhunting era. They have done this to prevent the Penan, living along the middle part of the Linau Basin, from staking a claim to these lands. In addition, they have sent petitions to the company now logging the area (where the Iban killed 14 Punan Vuhang), at the headwaters of the Balui, demanding compensation for the desecration of a death site. They have also written to the state government asking for a communal forest that would be kept free from logging.

ECONOMIC CHANGE AND THE PUNAN VUHANG RESPONSE

During the era of headhunting and warfare, the Punan Vuhang were able to resist subjugation by expansionist groups and remain relatively free, as their mobile economy enabled them to subsist entirely on rainforest resources. A brief description of the ecology of their circumstances provides an understanding of the relationship between the rainforest environment and their mobile economy as it existed in the past.

The equatorial climate of Borneo, with rainfall ranging from 200 to 400 cm per year, makes possible a perennially damp rainforest that is ‘fabulously rich in both plant and animal species’ (Whitmore 1990: 58; 1995: 11). The rainforest contains hundreds of animal species, many of which were hunted by the Punan Vuhang (see Payne 1995: 54; see also Payne et al. 1985). The natural vegetation in tall lowland and hill forests up to 1,000 m altitude is dominated by Dipterocarps (287 species), and no other tropical rainforest anywhere in the world has such a high prevalence of one tree family (Whitmore 1995: 11). During major fruiting seasons (‘mast-fruiting’; see Dove 1993b), occurring two or three times per decade, Dipterocarps provide a super abundance of fruit for wildlife to eat. Across
a large area, almost all Dipterocarp species flower within a few weeks of one another (ibid.). Besides, at least 120 species of trees in the Bornean rainforests produce edible fruits, often fruiting in the same season (Soepadmo 1995: 28).

Although it appears that periodic flowering is probably the rule for most tree species, there are some that flower continuously (Whitmore 1984: 70). Leighton and Leighton (1983) also list some seasonal plants that provide animals with major food resources during low fruiting periods. These plants, described as ‘keystone mutualists’, permit the maintenance of animal populations that have fixed home ranges and cannot simply escape unfavourable periods by migration. These plants include the Melastomaceae and Rubiaceae families. Others include the Ficus species, the Annonaceae, Meliaceae, and Myristicaceae. The trees and climbing plants of the Legume family (Fabaceae) provide fruit, leaves, shoots, flowers, and bark, consumed for survival by primates, squirrels, and other mammals. These ‘keystone’ plant resources play a prominent role in sustaining plant-eating animals through periods of food scarcity (Payne 1995: 59).

Corresponding to the seasonal fruiting of the Dipterocarp species, the Punan Vuhang observed a calendar synchronically linked to the major fruit season, during which their methods of food acquisition were adapted to temporary resource abundance. In contrast, long lean periods outside the major fruit season made necessary more strategic and diversified methods of food acquisition.

From Figure 9.1, it can be seen that the Punan Vuhang had adopted a mobile economy that took advantage of the seasonal availability and varying types of food resources. As they depended on the natural occurrence of resources, the Punan Vuhang, as hunter-gatherers, practised a nomadic economy rooted in mobility. In each resource area, they exploited the food resources until depletion, and then they moved on to another area to commence a further cycle of exploitation. During periods of food scarcity, the community divided itself into two groups in order to exploit different areas. This fission, with fewer members, put less pressure on the limited available resources. During lean times, when sago was the only main food resource, they often harvested sago in spots that required temporary stays away from the main camp.

Using a diversity of food acquisition methods – hunting with dogs and with blowpipes, trapping ground-dwelling animals, fishing, and collecting various foods – the Punan Vuhang were able to cope with the seasonal lack of food abundance. Some individuals claimed a form of property rights over individual sago clumps to conserve them for future use. In times of need, they could return to these clumps to harvest the regenerated palms. The practice of sharing and
reciprocity also ensured that those who failed to get anything would receive something from successful hunters.

From this outline, showing the material ecological relationship of the Punan Vuhang with their environment, their food seasons and synchronised calendar, we can identify three cycles that determined Punan Vuhang survival.

The first relates to the cycle of seasonal abundance and scarcity. Seasonal drought caused vegetation to flower and then bear fruit, providing a momentary abundance of game during the fruiting season (‘mast-fruiting’). When the fruit season ended, there was a corresponding lack of animals, as the migratory species moved away to areas where food was available. For the animals remaining behind, keystone plant species provided food that maintained their survival, ensuring the
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Punan Vuhang a continued supply of meat. When the drought season returned, another period of abundance occurred, followed by scarcity, thus completing this cycle.

This seasonally varying feature led to the second cycle, revolving around ease and then difficulty in hunting. The period of fruit abundance resulted in an animal population explosion from new births and the appearance of migratory animals that came to forage on the fruit, especially wild boar. During this period, it was easy to hunt animals, as they focused on foraging for fruit. During the lean period, however, only game that remained behind to feed on keystone resources could be obtained. Even then, the scarcity of food caused animals to forage over wider areas, making it more difficult for hunters to locate them. Related to this was the ease of hunting game that had yet to encounter human hunters as predators. However, it is said that certain species of animals developed avoidance habits to elude hunters, and this was related to the next cyclical feature.

The third cycle involved food abundance and scarcity in relation to mobility. When a band camped in a new river system far from the area that it had previously exploited, it was relatively straightforward to hunt animals that were not aware of the Punan Vuhang presence. A new area also provided many sago palms for processing into starch. After depleting the resources in an area of abundance, they would search for sago groves and solitary palms in adjacent forest zones. As these resources became depleted, Punan Vuhang again experienced scarcity. They then moved on to a new area. These three cycles were the foundation of their mobile economy, which in the past enabled them to survive long periods of food scarcity.

The Sedentary Economy

The adoption of cultivation in 1968 drastically shifted the economic orientation of the Punan Vuhang from a mobile to a sedentary system (see Langub 1974a). Cultivation requires sedentarism in order to maintain crops, and food sufficiency enables them to stay in one location. Nonetheless, the Punan Vuhang do not rear domesticated animals for food (for a discussion of this, see Seitz in this volume), and so they continue to hunt for protein food. Consequently, they remain a people able to obtain protein only through hunting, although hunting strategies have changed as a result of their adaptation to a sedentary existence.

While the Punan Vuhang practise a system of shifting cultivation that is similar in most respects to that of other Borneo communities (see, e.g., Chan 1991, Chin 1977 and 1985, Dove 1985, Freeman 1955b, Rousseau 1977), their work processes differ. At this point, it is important to note that the Punan
Vuhang subsist on a variety of staple foods that includes rice, tapioca, bananas, sweet potatoes, and yams. They do not cultivate rice as intensively as other communities, such as the Kayan and Iban do. Most of their farm sites are located along the banks of the meandering Kajang River, on fertile alluvial soil. Because the land is comparatively fertile, they do not need to farm large tracts of land.

The Punan Vuhang generally cultivate farms together in a common community tract. Nonetheless, some households select individual sites if they feel that their location is better than the common tract. The presence of individual farms isolated from one another differentiates Punan Vuhang cultivation from that of the Kayan, who farm only adjacent swiddens. Among the Kayan, even if farms are cultivated at different locations, groups of households make their farms side by side.

The Punan Vuhang prefer flat land with a meandering stream that can irrigate the soil. To determine the suitability of land for cultivation, they look for ferns as an indicator of soil fertility. When the time for clearing is short, an individual chooses young secondary forest overrun with thorny vines. Despite the difficulty in clearing such land, the soil is fertile and the vines require little time to dry, compared to big felled trees. Under ideal conditions, the best type of land is secondary forest that has been fallow for over ten years. The trees dominating such land are sufficiently mature, with diameters larger than a man’s waist, to provide an abundant biomass for conversion into burnt nutrients. The dense canopy prevents sunlight from penetrating to the forest floor and so inhibits weed growth. There are few weed seeds in the soil, thus minimising the laborious work of weeding. The abundant humus from decayed unburned trunks from previous cultivation further contributes to soil fertility.

Once clear of vegetation, the very old secondary forest and primary rainforest land is suitable for planting rice. The surface soil contains a thick layer of humus. The only disadvantage in cultivating such land is the presence of huge trees, including hardwood species that are difficult to fell. The tree-felling stage, therefore, has to begin much earlier in order to be completed at least a month before the beginning of the sowing season. Early clearing lets the branches of larger trees dry sufficiently to allow for burning. Therefore, only households with sufficient manpower attempt to clear such land for rice cultivation.

The work process of clearing undergrowth, felling trees, burning, sowing, weeding, and harvesting are the same as for the Kayan. However, the social aspect of the work process is completely different. Among the Kayan, all work stages are carried out on a workgroup basis that involves a systematic exchange.
of an equal amount of labour between participating households. The number of days that an individual works on another person's farm is reciprocated with the same number of days' work on his farm. In addition, each workgroup labours an equal amount of time for all the members on a daily rotation of work on each member's farm. During the early years of cultivation, in contrast, Punan Vuhang were unable to follow an even distribution of work, and so eventually abandoned the labour exchange. Not knowing how to measure the work contributed by each member, the farmers completed all the work on one household's farm before they moved on to another. The duration of work was uncertain, depending on the size of the farm and the vegetation to be cleared, without calculating the number of days that each family worked on another's swidden. Only the completion of work on all the farms signified the end of the reciprocal exchange of labour, regardless of whether a person provided more labour than he or she had received. Besides this unfair work distribution, households that received the workgroup's assistance late were at a great disadvantage. Towards the end, people were less diligent and absenteeism was high. To worsen the situation, households whose lands were the last to be cleared were left with only a short time for the vegetation to dry and thus obtained less ash from burning.

During the later stages of labour exchange, the disadvantaged households grumbled that absent members were ungrateful for the benefits they had already gained. Another factor leading to a breakdown of the workgroup system was firewood collection. At the end of the day, members collected wood from the felled trees. This annoyed some swidden owners who complained that workgroup members were only interested in collecting firewood. Due to these factors, members began to disassociate themselves from workgroups to work on their own.

Each man now works for himself for the duration of the cultivation season. Other members of the household only provide assistance during the strenuous period of sowing, weeding, and harvesting. At the onset of the cultivation season, it seems impossible for a single man to clear a plot of forest land. The task is perceived as being extremely monotonous, and most men work alone all day. I believe that since Punan Vuhang hunt in isolation, farming in a solitary state seems more familiar. This differs from the Kayan, who say that they work in groups because of the need to overcome the 'weaknesses' of working alone, which include lack of discipline, loneliness, and the monotony of labour (Chan 1991: 141, Rousseau 1977: 138).

Nonetheless, the comparison of individual toil versus workgroup labour also needs to be seen from a different perspective, that of the consumption of food crops. The Kayan consider rice to be their staple food and eat other foods such
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as tapioca or sago only in times of rice shortage. As such, they need large tracts of land, requiring much manpower to clear. By comparison, the Punan Vuhang subsist on a variety of staple crops in addition to rice, such as tapioca, bananas, yams, and sweet potatoes. Potatoes and yams are grown on plots within the longhouse compound. Tapioca tubers are often obtained from previous swidden fields, and bananas from clumps growing near the settlement. In the event of crop failure, there is still plentiful wild sago to fall back on. The smaller amount of rice consumed can therefore be cultivated on a smaller swidden than a man can clear by himself.

Interestingly, a new type of cooperation has emerged with the advent of the chainsaw. Since it is a skilled task to operate a chainsaw for felling trees, a man may offer his unskilled labour to a person who is skilled in tree cutting, by clearing the undergrowth for the latter. In return, the skilled person helps to cut down the trees by reciprocating the number of days’ work that he received. This exchange is more advantageous to the unskilled person because if he were to fell the trees by himself, it would take much longer. Consequently, he gains ‘extra’ working days by offering just a few days of work clearing undergrowth.

As mentioned, the Punan Vuhang cultivate a variety of plants to supplement their diet: tapioca (cassava, Manihot esculenta Crantz), sweet potatoes (Ipomoea batatas), taro (Colocasia esculenta), and bananas (Musa spp.) as other staples, and a number of vegetables for side dishes. At the edges of their swidden, they also plant fruit trees.

The Punan Vuhang plant tapioca after sowing rice and usually harvest the crop the following year to obtain tubers the size of a man’s forearm. The delay in harvest allows the tubers to accumulate more starch. When they feel a nostalgic desire to eat sago paste, they grate the mature tubers and process them into starch. Otherwise, they just boil the tubers before eating them. A group of women or an old man alone usually harvests the tapioca. The work is straightforward, and a person needs to obtain only a basketful of tubers for three or four days’ consumption. The proximity of swidden fields to the settlement lends women a sense of security that allows them to go there without being accompanied by a man.

The Punan Vuhang also cultivate bananas by planting young shoots that they have dug up from banana clumps. Banana shoots require a relatively long period to grow. When they reach maturity, they produce offshoots, and as plants continue to produce offshoots, they mature and ripen at different times. Consequently, this fruit can be harvested over a long period. Besides being eaten
raw as a snack, the fruit is cooked in lard to produce a banana paste. Occasionally, it is boiled and mashed into a pulp.

The Punan Vuhang only plant maize when seeds are obtainable. They do not greatly enjoy eating this food, as the breed most available seems tough and tasteless. If they wish to grow it, then maize is planted in a swidden field together with rice. Depending on seed availability, vegetable crops such as gourds and cucumbers are also grown and consumed as side dishes.

Once vegetable crops are exhausted, the Punan Vuhang rely on a variety of wild plants for food. They consume ferns (*Stenochlaena palustris*) and seasonal bamboo and sago shoots. Except for sago shoots (*Eugeissona utilis* Becc.), these foods are usually found near their settlement. The Punan Vuhang frequently gather tapioca shoots found in abundance in swidden fields, including abandoned swiddens near the longhouse. They do not favour ferns, except for an occasional meal to break the monotony of eating tapioca leaves.

Tobacco is an important crop, although only those who smoke tobacco cultivate it. They plant tobacco seeds in fertile spots within their fields where the burnt biomass is most concentrated. When the plants mature, the leaves are plucked, thinly shredded, and dried in the sun. The Punan Vuhang use a type of broad jungle leaf to roll the tobacco for smoking.

The Punan Vuhang cultivate fruit trees along the riverbanks, especially at the confluence of the small streams that act as boundaries between farms. During the burning stage, they take great care to avoid burning these fruit groves. They also convert the land close to the settlement into small fruit gardens, so that during the fruit season, they do not have to go far to harvest these fruits. Among the varieties of common fruit that the Punan Vuhang favour are durian (*Durio zibethinus* Murr.), mango (*Mangifera pajang* Kost.), jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*), rambutan (*Nephelium lappaceum*), a bristly hairy rambutan-like fruit (*Nephelium mutabile* Bl.; *N. uncinatum*), and a longan-like fruit (*Pometia pinnata* Forst; *Xerospermum* sp.; *Dimocarpus longan* Lour.). They also plant less favoured, sour-sweet fruits, such as oranges (*Citrus reticulata* Blanco; *Citrus sinensis*), limes (*Citrus aurantifolia*), pomeloes (*Citrus grandis*), and pineapples (*Ananas comosus*). Coconut (*Cocos nucifera* L.) is not much favoured because the palms are considered difficult to climb.

The Punan Vuhang use two methods to cultivate fruit trees. The first is to clear weeds around a tree seedling that has self-propagated. During fruit season, people simply spit out seeds, which sometimes germinate into seedlings. Near the settlement, many fruit trees are cultivated this way, although seedlings growing close to the longhouse (nearer than 20 feet) are removed, for if they...
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mature into trees, branches may snap and damage the longhouse. The second method involves replanting in a swidden field seedlings from trees that are known to produce good yields.

The Punan Vuhang continue to rely on wildlife for protein. Nonetheless, hunting has become less intense due to the greater availability of cultivated food. During nomadic times, hunting was always undertaken in the hinterland, up on the mountain ranges. With the availability of boats and outboard motors, hunters can now easily go far upriver to search for game foraging along nearby river valleys. In about 1972, a new strategy of meat transportation was introduced. When a hunter obtained a wild boar, he brought the carcass to the nearest part of the riverbank, where he left it, walking on to his boat to then return and collect the animal. This idea caught on and hunting shifted from trips to the hinterland, to hunting along nearby river valleys. Over the years, it has become increasingly difficult to hunt wild boar near rivers, as Punan believe animals have become wary of the danger of being close to waterways. Nowadays, hunters have to travel farther inland from riverbanks to hunt, and the yield is often not commensurate with the effort required.

Wild boar remains the major focus of hunting trips. It is relatively arduous and less rewarding to obtain arboreal game with blowpipes and trap ground-dwelling animals with noose traps. Generally, a hunter will only search for such game when a member of the household is ill and desires to eat a certain tree-dwelling animal. In the mid-1980s, the government issued two shotguns for the community’s self-protection. These weapons are now important hunting tools, although their use is limited due to the lack of available ammunition. Consequently, the use of hunting dogs remains most important for hunting.

Fishing is now an important activity because of the availability of boats and fishing nets, in combination with the difficulty and hardship involved in hunting game. Cast nets and gill nets are used only during dry periods, when the rivers are low. After a heavy downpour, it can take up to a week for a river’s level to subside to a favourable level. When the water is low, fish avoid the shallower parts of a river and seek shelter in bays, and when fish are concentrated in this way, it is easier to trap them.

Commoditisation

Trade is now an important economic activity, and here I will assess the extent to which commoditisation has penetrated the Punan Vuhang economy and discuss the changes that have resulted. To the extent that the Punan Vuhang
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continue to carry out activities that they practised in the past, it is also pertinent to examine the resilience of their traditional economy. Despite having adopted cultivation and permanent settlement, they continue to carry out subsistence activities as their main mode of production. The range of subsistence activities, however, differs from those of their traditional economy. Traditional activities included hunting and fishing and fruit and rattan collecting. The non-traditional ones, carried out only after settling down, include the cultivation of a variety of food crops: first, annual crops, such as rice and tapioca (the main staple food crops), and various supplementary vegetables; and also perennial crops, such as bananas, an alternative staple, and various fruits as seasonal foods. Tobacco is cultivated to satisfy an addiction that was previously satisfied by barter trade for tobacco.

The availability of new tools and sedentarism have changed the way in which hunting and fishing are carried out. The use of shotguns is an alternative to hunting wild boar with dogs. Boats and fishing nets are used to catch fish, a much more efficient method than the traditional use of fish harpoons, line and hook, and fish traps. Sedentarism also limits the forest areas that can be feasibly hunted, with less wildlife available nearby. Consequently, hunting with blowpipes and trapping game are now rarely practised. However, the lack of ground- and tree-dwelling animals is offset by the use of boats and outboard motors allowing travel over greater distances in search of game.

In terms of food, the Punan Vuhang continue to subsist without relying on food obtained through commodity trade. Food items acquired through barter trade, such as instant noodles, sweets, sugar, coffee, and biscuits, are mostly consumed very quickly. When they run out of these, only small children continue to crave them. Although one might deduce that subsistence activities have been resilient in the face of modern market forces, it is more likely that difficulties of transportation have prevented a more widespread trade in food items.

Although permanent settlement midway along the Kajang River has made it easier for trading expeditions to reach Punan Vuhang territory, it still requires a period of one week to reach their village from the nearest town (in contrast to a three-month journey during the nomadic past). Such a trip, requiring expensive land transportation, a boat journey and travel on foot, only allows for transporting small, light trade items that can fetch a relatively high price, as opposed to the bulky, heavy food items that command a low price.

A question that arises is, what motivates traders to make the difficult journey to the Punan Vuhang settlement? Compared to the past, when among the Kayan only aristocrats could raise the required capital to carry out trading, over the last
few decades of the twentieth century, commoners have begun to enter commerce. For various reasons too complex to be discussed here, social change among the nearest longhouse communities has allowed some upward social mobility. Enhancement of one’s social standing can be achieved by acquiring status goods, which is made possible by trading. As a result, trading relations between longhouse dwellers of non-aristocratic descent and the Punan Vuhang have become more significant.

As noted earlier, the commencement of the Bakun Hydroelectric Dam project in late 1993 resulted in a further intensification of trade. The official plan to compensate for houses that will be submerged by the dam reservoir motivated many individuals to trade. However, after the government finished compensating for these houses, trading decreased.

For the Punan Vuhang, one might ask what factors drew them into trading relations. Producing material for barter trading, particularly rattan mats, involves highly monotonous and repetitive work. Once Punan Vuhang have obtained a sufficient supply of basic materials, such as cooking pots, knives, torches, and clothes, they have little interest in obtaining more of these goods. Their need for tobacco has been relieved by growing their own. To entice them into trading relations, traders introduced new goods to attract the Punan Vuhang, such as quickly consumable items (sugar, coffee, and instant noodles). More importantly, they introduced an apparently more addictive ‘Bangau’ brand of tobacco (lokok lokong), which is said to produce a strong effect on the person who smokes it. Craving for this kind of tobacco has resulted in the Punan Vuhang producing goods desired by traders. Traders also brought along items to sell on credit terms, such as radios and cassette players.

In addition, the availability of the addictive drug ‘Three Legs’ has greatly enhanced trading. The effect of the drug is said to be immediate in suppressing headaches, fever, and other discomforts, and also in relieving lethargy, thereby giving the user a sense of well-being. It needs to be pointed out here that the drug was not introduced by traders but by two young Punan Vuhang individuals who attended school in Belaga in the 1970s. After completing school, one worked as a hospital attendant and the other served in a rural health clinic. Over time, they found it hard to endure the ‘regimented’ lifestyle, that required adherence to rules and regulations with which they were previously unfamiliar, and turned to this drug for relief. They returned home and introduced the ‘Three-Legs’ brand drug (known as Kaki Tiga), a drug commonly taken as a painkiller. The Punan Vuhang were unaware that the drug is addictive, and after taking it several times, many began to crave its soothing effect. In fact, the habit of many
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has become more intense by the consumption of *Kaki Tiga* to alleviate boredom while making rattan products to trade for yet more *Kaki Tiga*.

Traders were subsequently asked to bring the drug on their trading expeditions. Initially, they brought only a little but consumption increased. As more and more was brought, many Punan Vuhang increasingly craved the drug. When they felt tired or hungry, it appeared to relieve them of their discomfort. It also provided relief for lethargy during periods of rattan weaving, hunting, and cultivation activities. Before long, many were obsessed with the drug, to the point that some individuals found it extremely difficult to do anything without it. Well-meaning traders have warned the community of the dangers of consuming the drug, and medical staff, who fly in once a month by helicopter, also became aware of the problem. However, it has been of little avail and the number of habitual users has increased and, although life carries on, the impact of this drug and the craving for it have become a serious community problem.

In recent years, traders have introduced new commodities, selling chainsaws and outboard motors on credit. In 1994, a chainsaw cost about MYR 1,000, and a three-horsepower outboard motor cost MYR 850. Households that obtained these machines had to work hard to produce mats and baskets to pay for them. Because of the large amount of debt involved, it can take a family a year or so to pay off the debt.

With the purchase of these motorised tools, demand for a new consumption product, petrol, has arisen. While traders bring petrol and sell it at MYR 30 per gallon, most Punan Vuhang make the three-day journey to the nearest logging camp to purchase it at MYR 11 per gallon. As cash is needed to purchase petrol, most Punan Vuhang prefer to sell their products for cash. However, very few traders are willing to buy rattan products for cash, as they will not profit from this because the Punan Vuhang will only sell their mats for the price asked in the Belaga market. Only a few young traders, who travel extensively and conduct their transactions in the main state towns of Kuching and Miri, are willing to pay for woven rattan mats in cash. In these towns, rattan products are sold at one and a half times more than the price in Belaga.

The production of commodities has now become an important part of the barter exchange process, and every able-bodied household member is expected to produce some of these commodities. When there is a need to produce mats that require a large amount of rattan, men (and boys) will undertake a rattan-collecting expedition, travelling to distant areas where there is an abundance of rattan.
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Women, likewise, regularly work long hours to make mats and other products for trade. A mat takes about two to three weeks to make, depending on other tasks that a woman has to deal with. In the early 1990s, a big mat measuring 5 × 5.5 feet sold for MYR 100. A design-work basket (ajat kalong) takes a day or so to weave and is worth MYR 10. Women weave in the morning and afternoon, when they are free from other tasks, and at night they come together to weave as a group, sharing a diesel lamp for light. To produce more income, some men weave meshed baskets (ajat kawang) that sell for MYR 4 each, while others weave shoulder straps (oii), with a pair costing MYR 0.50, and basket bottoms (lutuk ajat) for MYR 1.

At night, when people are gathered around weaving, they entertain themselves by telling stories, playing a sapé (lute), or a tape recorder, and dancing. These forms of entertainment, it is claimed, help them work late into the night. The general craving for Kaki Tiga is an important aspect of motivation. A person jokes about it: Pinak kai mek we, kai nyokomu Kaki ivak ('When we weave rattan, we think only of Kaki').

In the context of commoditisation, various trade items have increasingly been incorporated into the production cycle. Knives and axes procured through trade are now basic tools in swidden cultivation. Chainsaws are increasingly used to fell trees for clearing forest, as are outboard motors, when petrol is available, for transportation to farms and for hunting, fishing, and rattan collecting. However, households generally have an insufficient amount of petrol for their requirements.

The Punan Vuhang have also become keen consumers of various types of purchased foods, which soon run out following the departure of the traders. They wear clothes, use blankets, mosquito nets, and toiletries, all items obtained through trade. During meals, they use plates, bowls, and a tray to hold the food, instead of using only the cooking pot, as in the past. Battery-powered torches provide light at night, along with diesel lamps, for which the fuel is obtained free of charge from the logging camps. Cassette players are also bought on credit from traders for entertainment.

The extent of the commoditisation of the Punan Vuhang economy shows that commodity production has gradually become an economic requirement for them. Cash is becoming increasingly important. It is required not only to buy petrol but also to buy consumer items whenever the Punan Vuhang go to a logging camp. The logging road that leads downriver is three days’ journey away, and some people have begun to bring rattan products directly to Belaga or Kapit to sell. However, this is relatively rare, as a substantial amount of goods has to be taken to a town to make the journey economically viable.
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At the time of my fieldwork, between 1993 and 1995, the buying and selling of commodities for cash had yet to play a major part in commodity relations. During this period, the tuck shop at the nearest logging company camp did not accept rattan products in exchange for other goods. Consequently, only someone with cash was able to purchase petrol and other goods at the shop. However, individuals who were able to make rattan products in considerable quantity could bring them to Belaga to sell for cash. With cash, they could then buy other commodities that they would otherwise have been unable to obtain.

In summary, during the early phase of their history, particularly that of headhunting and warfare, the Punan Vuhang responded to the expansion of sedentary peoples by moving to more remote areas, in order to remain free from danger and political control, although by doing so, they were isolated. Their mobile economy enabled them to subsist independently of external food products. The adoption of cultivation and a sedentary life in the late 1960s brought about considerable changes. From being a mobile hunter-gatherer community exploiting a large territory, the Punan Vuhang have now settled permanently in a two-block longhouse, and they cultivate the surrounding land. Here, they are able to produce a consistently sufficient food supply to sustain them through each year. The advent of logging in the last decade of the twentieth century brought with it the introduction of cash, now an essential item, mainly for buying petrol to operate chainsaws and outboard motors. In the near future, logging, with its extensive dirt-road networks that inevitably penetrate the remotest areas (to obtain precious timber), will reach Punan Vuhang country. This will facilitate movement and transportation between the interior and the downriver markets which, in turn, will further expose the Punan Vuhang to commoditisation. It is likely that when a road finally reaches their settlement, they will become involved in cash crop cultivation as another means of obtaining cash.

CHANGE IN RESOURCE TENURE

Because their forefathers chose to live in remote areas where few others ventured, the Punan Vuhang have long been the sole inhabitants of a large territory. Being the only resource users in such a vast area, they have scant recognition of property rights over land or resources, although they recognise ownership of certain resources that gives the rights holder exclusive access.

The adoption of cultivation and permanent settlement have converted resources into items of high value, particularly land and durable construction materials. On the other hand, sago, formerly the most valuable resource, has become much
less important. Over time, a property rights system will develop further, as a result of the increasing scarcity of resources due to their overexploitation. The advent of logging and road building will inevitably result in the rapid development of a property rights system related to the increasing penetration of a cash market economy.

**Resource Tenure in the Former Mobile Economy**

The Punan Vuhang have traditionally accorded private property rights for some fruit trees, trees that provide sap used for blowpipe poison (*Antiaris toxicaria*) or wood for making blowpipes, and trees that produce the best firewood. They considered *Eugeissona* sago palms as both a form of private property and an open-access resource. If they were used occasionally and could be obtained easily due to their abundance, palms were considered open-access resources. To survey the impact of change on resource tenure, it is necessary to look first at the nature of the property regime that existed in the mobile economy.

The only food source available throughout the year, sago was the most important food resource to the Punan Vuhang. Of the two sago species, *Eugeissona utilis* and *Arenga undulatifolia*, private rights were established only for the former. The claim by some of *Eugeissona* as private property, while others maintained it as an open-access resource, requires deeper analysis. As *Eugeissona* is abundant and found throughout the forest, the Punan Vuhang had no qualms exploiting edible young palms and consuming the shoots. After all, when these young palms mature a few years later, the energy required to produce fruits would have drained the starch. Consequently, the young palms would no longer contain starch when the people returned to the area, years later. In any case, the palm seedlings left growing would then be mature for exploitation. For that reason, the Punan Vuhang did not find it necessary to conserve young palms or establish rights over them.

However, some Punan Vuhang considered sago private property, to which they established rights excluding others from exploiting it, but they only conserved young palms and established rights over sago clumps that contained quality starch, and that were also near running water, for starch processing. To these individuals, the motivating factor in establishing such rights was the need to cope with food scarcity. Despite the abundance of sago, during lean times the conserved plants provided an assured food supply when the band had to return to the area earlier than expected. This notion of conserving young sago for future needs corresponds with the resource tenure of the Penan, another hunter-gatherer people in Sarawak (for further details see, for example, Langub 1996b).
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The Punan Vuhang considered fruit an important resource to supplement sago as a staple. During the fruit-ripening season, they consumed nutritious fruits as a staple, while eating sour and less palatable fruits as snacks. Due to their importance, the Punan Vuhang established private property rights over favoured fruit trees. They only lopped off the secondary branches of rambutan trees (*Nephelium lappaceum* L., *Xerospermum* sp., *Pometia pinnata* Forst., *Nephelium mutabile* Bl., and *N. uncinatum* Radlk.).

Fruits that drop upon ripening were gathered from the ground. These included durian (*Durio zibethinus* Murr., *D. kutejensis*) and mango (*Mangifera pajang* Kost.). Such fruit usually ripens in stages, with only a few fruits dropping in a day. Consequently, the amount of fruit that drops during a single day was only enough for the rights holder’s household. In the past, during minor fruit seasons, when only a few trees bear fruit, there have been cases of individuals, too impatient to wait for valuable durian fruit to ripen, who have chopped down the trees to harvest all the fruit, including unripe ones. With permanent settlement, this is no longer condoned.

The rare blowpipe poison tree (*Antiaris toxicaria*) was one of the most important resources to hunters, without which it was almost impossible to obtain game using a blowpipe. As such, the Punan Vuhang treated *Antiaris* trees as private property. Bark that has been tapped for latex does not produce more, making the *Antiaris* tree a non-renewable resource. The raw *Antiaris* latex was one of the few resources that was not shared, although the processed poison might be shared with a sibling (if requested) through a complex distribution system.

For firewood, the Punan Vuhang used only a few species of hardwood trees that had two characteristics: they were able to produce a hot, strong flame and a long-lasting burn; and they were easy to split apart into kindling of 2 inches thick. Of the various trees used as firewood, *lingoh* was the most suitable: It grows to 1.5 feet in diameter, comprising hardwood, but is extremely easy to split; it burns very well, producing a hot fire, which lasts much longer than any other type of wood, requiring only three or four pieces of kindling to cook a meal. *Lingoh* was treated as private property.

**Resource Tenure and Sedentism**

With the adoption of a sedentary lifestyle, the Punan Vuhang have changed their perception of resources that were once without much value, now seeing them as valuable items. Every individual places importance on land that has been cleared for cultivation. Several individuals in the community have established rights to trees reserved for constructing boats and homes. On the other hand, no rights
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to wild food resources, such as sago, that have lost their importance in their diet have been established. Hence, private property rights over wild *Eugeissona* sago are no longer important, and only a few men continue to establish such rights as a precaution against famine.

Adoption of cultivation has included a new range of property rights concerning planted crops. The Punan Vuhang accord private property rights to all crops, but consider a food crop that self-propagates after harvesting as an open-access resource. The establishment of exclusive rights to cultivated crops is based on a recognition of the effort required to cultivate them, as a result of which it is only reasonable for the Punan to recognize the exclusive rights of a cultivator over his crops. In addition, cultivated food does not fall within a system of sharing. Only under special circumstances does a person feel obliged to share his yield.\(^5\)

Although in the past Punan Vuhang only established private property rights to mature fruit trees, they now establish rights to fruit trees via two methods: cultivating a plant from its seed and establishing rights over a self-propagated seedling. The first involves the intentional planting of a tree at a farm, usually at the edges of a swidden field to mark its boundaries with other swiddens. Near the settlement, people cultivate fruit groves, so that the owners need not go far to harvest their fruit. Punan Vuhang consider a banana clump to be private property, as the shoots that emerge perpetuate the plant.

A cultivator holds exclusive rights over the annual crops that he plants in his swidden, including rice, tapioca, tobacco, and vegetables. Due to the short-term nature of these crops, these rights are impermanent and lapse after harvesting. Such non-permanent rights concern tapioca that self-propagates after harvesting, as the tapioca plant does not decay but grows roots and re-establishes itself. When these roots mature, people consider them an open-access resource. Rights to tobacco follow the same rule. The big leaves that produce quality tobacco become the private property of the cultivator, but the small leaves left on the stalk after harvesting can be taken freely by anyone.

Punan Vuhang regard sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum* L.) as different from other resources and therefore maintain a special form of rights over it. They cultivate sugarcane for its juice, obtained by chewing the cane. Sugarcane is planted by sticking a cutting of a stem in the ground. When mature, it produces offshoots that perpetuate its growth. The second growth stage of the cane produces the most succulent juice, and these canes are the most valued. Following this stage, weeds will overgrow most canes, and anyone can collect the remnants.
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With regard to firewood, after decades of permanent settlement in a single locality, lingoh trees and other good trees close to the settlement have been depleted. Individuals now have to travel some distance to obtain quality firewood. In the near future, various species suitable for firewood within accessible areas, which in the past were ignored, will probably have rights established over them. This development of property rights will probably occur first with trees in secondary forest along riverbanks. Presently, anyone can fell trees in the secondary forest, and a landowner does not have an automatic claim to standing trees.

In 1975, the government used helicopters to fly in corrugated zinc roofing and tools to assist the Punan Vuhang to build durable houses. Many large trees from the nearby forest were felled and sawn into construction materials. From this experience, the Punan Vuhang realised the need to establish rights to suitable trees for future construction. Nonetheless, only a few men have established rights to trees, especially those near the riverbank, to avoid carrying wood on land over a long distance for further transport by boat.

Over time, young households have added apartments to the longhouse. Several were constructed over an area of damp ground, and subsequently, the house posts decayed. In 1986, when a man from the community visited the state capital (Kuching), he made a request for further assistance. He was told that his request for a housing project would most likely be approved, in view of the government’s priority for providing housing to the Penan and Punan. When he returned, he informed the community of the housing project and they discussed a possible new longhouse location. They realised that a new longhouse of 15 apartments would require many trees for sawing into posts, columns, and planks. They would need very hard wood for making posts, and Shorea spp. for making columns and planks. To obtain these materials, the longhouse site should be near an abundant source of suitable trees. They decided that the new site should be located downriver, where suitable trees could be found.

During the meeting, they also decided that each household member should establish rights to trees suitable for house construction. Since trees were abundant, most delayed doing so and thought of establishing rights after the delivery of the housing materials. The delivery by helicopter only came in 1992. Due to the long lapse after the first notice, few people believed that the government would actually deliver on its ‘promise’. Consequently, only three men established rights to trees. When the material was delivered, the community cultivated the 1993–1994 rice season at the agreed upon longhouse site and, in the process, cleared land for a new settlement. However, several members changed their minds and wanted to build their homes at the old site, where many fruit trees were located.
Before adopting cultivation, the Punan Vuhang never considered the land to be a resource in its own right. Nonetheless, even though the land did not have economic value, negative cultural factors could affect the use of an area. When a death occurred, people had to leave the river valley where the death had occurred. Until the members of the dead person’s household first returned to the valley, which could only happen years later, it was forbidden for any other individual to exploit the resources there: hence, the negative effect of death on the economic value of an area.

The adoption of cultivation has resulted in the creation of a new system of land tenure. For the first time, in 1968, the Punan Vuhang established rights to the land following its cultivation. The system of land tenure that they followed was similar to that of the Kayan. The individual who first clears an area of primary forest establishes rights to the future re-use of the land. The establishment of these rights is recognition of the work required to fell trees for clearing the land. Decaying tree trunks also contribute to the importance of previously cultivated land, as they decompose into humus, becoming an important source of nutrients for the soil. Land has now become a resource that acquires value by being cultivated.

According to Punan Vuhang land tenure rules, the individual holds exclusive rights to the land, and not the household, as in the case of the Kayan. A Kayan man who marries into his wife’s household becomes a member of a land-owning unit. If divorce takes place, the household members may give the divorced male a portion of land as token compensation for his original assistance in clearing the land. In contrast, divorce does not nullify a Punan Vuhang man’s rights to any land that he may have cleared during his marriage. Instead, a divorced wife has no rights to the land that her ex-husband cleared.

As rights to land are established by felling areas of forest, they are likely to be affected by the introduction of chainsaws. The Punan Vuhang now use chainsaws
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instead of axes to fell trees. It is interesting, therefore, to see how land rights have developed on land cleared with chainsaws. The members of one household bought a chainsaw by selling rattan products woven by the household head’s wife, her mother, and grandmother. However, the man did all the rattan collecting. The acquisition of the chainsaw was therefore made possible by a combined effort. Since the chainsaw was jointly acquired and became a major element in clearing land for cultivation, it is possible that a new type of land rights may develop if divorce were to happen. It is likely that the land would be shared or divided between the spouses or ex-spouses.

Resource Tenure in Crisis

In the future, the Punan Vuhang are likely to face a major crisis, as their system of resource tenure is not recognised by the 1958 Sarawak Land Code and the Sarawak Forests Ordinance. The Land Code grants jurisdiction to the Land and Survey Department to regulate all matters pertaining to land. The Forests Ordinance provides the Forest Department jurisdiction over forests that have been delineated into various categories of forest. Of relevance to the Punan Vuhang is the category of Permanent Forest Estate, in which the land covered in forest is reserved for perpetual commercial timber harvesting. Forest classified as Permanent Forest Estate is classed as Protected Forest under the Forests Ordinance. Land and forest outside the Protected Forest are under the jurisdiction of the Land and Survey Department and are therefore regulated by the Land Code. Consequently, the Punan Vuhang live on land and in forested areas that are regulated by two different sets of laws: the Land Code and the Forests Ordinance.

In 1958, the Sarawak Colonial Government enacted the 1958 Land Code to consolidate the various existing land legislation and repeal all land ordinances created prior to it (Chan and Lim 1992: 9, Johen 1997: 2). Under the Land Code, Native Customary Land is the land for which native customary rights have lawfully been created before 1st January 1958. This legislation has severe implications for the Punan Vuhang. Section 5 of the Land Code makes it clear that rights to land established without authorisation for the creation of customary native rights even before that date are not recognised. As the Punan Vuhang first began to cultivate land only after 1968, any claim to land rights is effectively ruled out by this law. The customary rights that they have established since are inadmissible and deemed illegal.

Nonetheless, with special provisions, customary rights can be created after 1st January 1958. Section 5.–(1) of the Land Code begins with:
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As from the 1st day of January, 1958, native customary rights may be created in accordance with the native customary law of the community or communities concerned by any of the methods specified in subsection (2), if a permit is obtained under section 10, upon Interior Area Land.

Following subsection (2):
The methods by which native customary rights may be acquired are –

(a) the felling of virgin jungle and the occupation of the land thereby cleared;
(b) the planting of land with fruit trees;
(c) the occupation or cultivation of land;
(d) the use of land for a burial ground or shrine;
(e) the use of land of any class for rights of way; or
(f) any other lawful method [in the Land Code Amendment 2000, this subsection has been omitted]:

Provided that …

(ii) the question whether any such right has been acquired […] be determined by the law in force immediately prior to the 1st day of January, 1958.

However, subsection (ii) providing for the acquisition of land rights to ‘be determined by the law in force immediately prior to 1st January 1958’ contradicts subsection (1), which enables land rights to be created after 1st January 1958. With this convoluted legal puzzle, it seems futile for the Punan Vuhang to make an application for land titles.

While Section 5 would seem to rule out the Punan Vuhang gaining documentation of their land rights, they can appeal to the minister in charge of land matters for the declaration of a communal reserve. The Land Code empowers the minister to ‘by order signified in the Sarawak Gazette declare any area of state land to be a Native Communal Reserve for the use of any community having a native system of personal law […] declare that the customary law of such communities […] shall apply’ (Section 6). With the proper procedures, it is possible for the Punan Vuhang to apply to the relevant minister to effect the recognition of land rights. Unfortunately, looking into the trend, even if this were to be done, it is unlikely that the Sarawak state government will ever issue any such title (World Rainforest Movement and Sahabat Alam Malaysia 1989: 241–254).
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For the Punan Vuhang, as a former hunting and gathering community that continues to rely on forest resources, the Forests Ordinance has serious implications. In Section 36, it states that

No person shall in a protected forest –

(a) erect any building, or clear or break up any land for cultivation or for any other purpose;
(b) fell, cut, ring, mark, lop or tap any tree, or injure by fire or otherwise any tree, or remove timber, firewood or charcoal;
(c) take or remove any other forest produce;
(d) pasture cattle or permit cattle to trespass;
(e) cause any damage by negligence in felling any tree or cutting any timber;
(f) quarry stone, burn lime or charcoal or search for minerals;
(g) kindle, keep or carry any fire or leave any fire burning; or,
(h) commit any other acts of trespassing.

Subject to Sections 28 and 30, only those whose ‘right or privilege has been admitted but was not extinguished’ can exercise subsistence rights or privileges ‘having regard to the natural capacity of the native to enjoy such rights or privileges’ (Section 35.(1)).

The Punan Vuhang’s rights have not been acknowledged, as they made no claims during the establishment of the Linau Protected Forest that covers the upriver Linau area. Consequently, even if the Punan Vuhang had a legitimate claim, their rights or privileges could be deemed null and void by virtue of non-claim of rights within the stipulated 60 days upon proclamation of a proposed protected forest (Section 26.(1) (c)). In effect, the law now makes it illegal for the Punan Vuhang to collect any forest produce. However, Section 65 of the Forests Ordinance allows any inhabitant of Sarawak the collection of produce in ‘State land which is not a forest reserve […] exclusively for his own domestic use and not for sale, barter or profit’.

Depending on how the law is interpreted, Section 36, which prohibits various forest activities, is in contradiction to Section 65, which provides for subsistence activities in Protected Forest. However, looking from another perspective, even if Section 65 is applicable and allows the Punan Vuhang to collect forest products, in essence the provision is potentially threatening, since anyone from Sarawak can collect forest resources for domestic use, and logging roads could provide easy access to outsiders to plunder valuable resources, such as rattan.

One portion of the Forests Ordinance, Section 40, might give hope to the Punan Vuhang to apply for a communal forest area, in that
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The Minister may, at the request of a community, constitute any State land, *not being a forest reserve, protected forest or other Government reserve*, a communal forest (my italics for emphasis).

Unfortunately, as the law specifies, forest reserves and protected forests cannot be declared as communal forest or customary rights land. As the area that the Punan Vuhang live in is within the Linau Protected Forest, the restriction makes remote the Punan Vuhang’s chance of being granted an area of communal forest.

The implication of the Forests Ordinance on the Punan Vuhang is that they are severely restricted in what they can legally do in the protected forest. However, although the legal implications of Section 36 are severe, in reality, the law has not been enforced, as the state government has so far allowed native people in Sarawak to live off the forest and its resources as they have done from time immemorial. It would be a possible violation of human rights to prevent them from continuing their livelihood. Further, it is against Article 5 of the Malaysian Federal Constitution, the supreme law of the land, to deprive anyone of his livelihood. Even if the government were to be strict, it would be difficult to enforce the law, given that the Punan Vuhang are a great distance from administrative centres. Besides, due to the small number of people in the community (70 persons in 1995), their impact on the forest is minimal.

Regarding the future, the Punan Vuhang are already wary of the impending arrival of logging companies that will bring with them acute environmental destruction. In 1994, when hunters went to a distant mountain in the direction of the Balui headwaters, they heard a faint roaring sound. They went on to investigate, and it took them a week to walk to the area and find that logging tractors were the source of this noise.

When pondering the impending impact of logging, the Punan Vuhang are greatly concerned about forest degradation. They have seen that although only trees with commercial value will be harvested, the impact on surrounding trees will be critical, including fruit trees that provide food for wildlife. The use of tractors in pulling and dragging out logs will expose the soil, which will then be washed away into streams and rivers. Consequently, rivers will become polluted, causing the fish population to dwindle. The construction of roads requires levelling of land at the tops of hill ridges and mountain ranges, and this will cause soil to be pushed down the slopes. Exposed soil covering an entire slope will destroy all its resources and become a further cause of erosion and pollution.

The criss-crossing of logging roads, tractor tracks and the formation of new streams due to the changed physical landscape will affect wildlife habitats.
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The drone of chainsaws and tractors will cause animals to flee, and hunters will then have to travel much further to areas unaffected by logging activities to obtain meat.

While the Punan Vuhang’s fears may be exaggerated, the work of Bruenig (1996: 88–89, 113), a forester with much experience of logging in Sarawak, suggests that these concerns may be justified. Bruenig reports that the extensive removal of the tree canopy and tractor drivers bulldozing their way without pre-planning completely alters the structure and function of the physical ecosystem and its quality as a potentially renewable resource.

In essence, the Punan Vuhang know that they face a grim future, as their hunting skills will no longer allow them to bring back meat from a drastically changed environment. Making the situation worse will be hunters from downriver coming into their territory in four-wheel-drive vehicles to hunt animals for trade purposes. They have seen how communities that have experienced logging face serious social problems. The lure of fast cash from logging compensation has caused many to turn to alcohol to drown their frustrations.

They know that the payment of ‘goodwill’ money before a logging company enters their territory is to initiate a friendly relationship to prevent reactions against logging. Every household will receive some monetary payment to cover river pollution, and the community will receive financial gifts during festive seasons. Affected households will be paid a token compensation if their swidden and secondary forest lands under fallow are damaged by logging activities. The logging company will pay some allowance to the headman and his assistant, and the committee members for logging affairs, to keep them on friendly terms. In most cases, this gesture of financial compensation serves to engender hostile intra-community relationships, as the majority of the community’s rights will not be recognised, and many of their requests ignored.

Depending on the informal policy of each logging company, some form of commission payment, based on the volume of timber, will be paid to the community if they can establish a claim over a forest without being challenged by another community. The Punan Vuhang have begun to put up marks on trees and caves in areas that they exploited in the past. This is especially the case in the upper reaches of the Linau and Danum Rivers, where no other community has been known to live previously. They believe that they can prove their territorial right to these locations by the presence of three long stones inserted into the ground, which previously served as stands to hold a pot while cooking. Over the years, moss has covered these stones, proving that they were not deliberately put there to claim compensation.
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How the Punan Vuhang will actually respond to the forces of logging can perhaps be seen by the reaction of the neighbouring Penan communities living in the Belaga area. It is likely that their complaints to government authorities will not bring any positive results, since they have not done so for others, to date. Without support from NGO activists and a cohesive purposeful community force in the Belaga area to resist logging, it is unlikely that the Punan Vuhang will put up blockades against logging, as the Penan of the upper Baram River have done (for further discussion of this issue, see Brosius in this volume).

CONCLUSION

Whereas in the past the Punan Vuhang were able to remain free of the influence of external forces by moving to places uninhabited by others, events of the last decade of the twentieth century, in the form of logging, have begun to pose a serious threat to them. As we have seen, the Sarawak Land Code and Forests Ordinance do not favour them but instead serve as the legal basis by which the logging industry is able to expand into previously unexploited areas. As the impact is related to industrial development initiated by the modern nation-state, the position of the Punan Vuhang needs to be seen in the context of the laws that have relevance to them. As of the year 2000, logging operations are a day’s walk from their settlement at Long Lidem, and it remains to be seen how the Punan Vuhang will actually deal with the eventual arrival and incursion of these outside forces.

AUTHOR’S NOTE

The data for this chapter were collected during fieldwork from 1993 to 1995, as well as during subsequent visits. My gratitude is extended to Clifford Sather, Peter Sercombe, and Bernard Sellato for their comments on this paper and to Louise Sather for her editing.

NOTES

1. Lake’ Dian Lulo Kasut, the paramount chief of the Kayan who unified all Kayan, had a brother born with the umbilical cord wound round him. As this was a bad omen, the baby was abandoned. The Punan Vuhang found him, adopted him, and named him Sigoh Garing. Years later, when Lake’ Dian became aware of his
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relationship with Sigoh Garing, the two brothers made an oath that the Kayan and the Punan Vuhang would always be blood brothers.

2. According to an informant, it was through this deceptive scheming that the Iban also decimated the Lisum and the Penan Bunut – see a Sarawak Gazette report: ‘This act [of killing Lisum] was committed by a party of mischievous young Dyaks [Iban] who were supposed to have been on a gutta hunting expedition’ (SG 1907: 135).

3. Due to the difficulty of transportation along the Kihan–Kajang route, the Indonesian army abandoned the idea of invasion through this pass. Nonetheless, there were concentrations of soldiers across the border, and the British army had to guard the border. Camping and moving about together with the Punan Vuhang was of mutual benefit to both parties. If the Indonesian soldiers were to enter Sarawak, the Punan Vuhang, being forest ‘wanderers’, would spot the intruders first. The British soldiers, therefore, did not have to patrol so intensely. For the Punan Vuhang, the soldiers’ presence provided security. This arrangement suited the British strategy that had ‘put great stress on mobility, constantly patrolling the remote jungle paths and harrying intruders whenever they found them’ (Mackie 1974: 211).

4. During the early years of adopting cultivation, the community consisted of many young men who motivated and challenged each other to fell big trees and clear large tracts of land. Nowadays, the availability of the chainsaw enables them to again cut big trees in old forest land.

5. While this may seem obvious, the opposite is the case for the Penan, another hunter-gatherer people living downriver of the Punan Vuhang. The Penan practise a form of demand sharing over all forms of resources, naturally occurring or cultivated. It is probably for this reason that they have not been very successful cultivators, as some groups do not enforce members’ exclusive rights over their crops. Only recently have the Penan adopted the notion of private property over their crops (Kedit et al. 2001: 32).

6. However, Section 10 maintains that the exercise of rights or privileges in Native Area Land can only be carried out under a valid and subsisting document of entitlement. Without a prior permit in writing from a Superintendent of the Land and Survey Department, it is an offence to fell or attempt to fell virgin jungle or attempt to create customary rights in Interior Area Land. For a better understanding, the following related categories of land are defined: Native Area Land is the land held by a native under a document of title; Native Customary Land is the land in which native customary rights, whether communal or otherwise, have lawfully been created prior to the 1st day of January 1958, and still exist as such; Interior Area Land is the land that does not fall within any of the definitions of Reserved Land, Customary Land, Native Area Land, or Mixed Zone Land, in which Reserved Land is the land reserved for special purposes, including National Parks, Forest Reserve, Protected Forestry, or Communal Forest constituted under the Forests Ordinance; and Mixed Zone Land consists of land held under title by all legal inhabitants of Sarawak.

Chapter 10

CONTINUITY AND ADAPTATION AMONG THE PENAN OF BRUNEI

By Peter G. Sercombe

Abstract: This chapter provides etic as well as emic sketches of the Penan's situation in Brunei, in the form of an ethnographic description, and contrasts this with patterns of existence prior to their transition to sedentism in 1962. This juxtaposition is used to elicit and account for the forms and modes of transition that the Penan in Brunei have undergone (or themselves initiated) during the period since they first settled in Brunei.

INTRODUCTION

The Penan of Brunei Darussalam comprise an ethnic isolate of 56 persons who inhabit Sukang Village, in the interior of Brunei’s Belait District (see Map 10.1). Until Antaran’s (1986) description, little information had emerged regarding Penan in Brunei, compared to more detailed descriptions of the Eastern Penan in Sarawak (e.g., Needham 1953; for further details of the Eastern Penan, see the introduction; and Needham in this volume). Antaran’s article on the Penan in Sukang (1986) largely comprises a general description of Eastern Penan characteristics and provides little in the way of specific information about the Penan community. Where details are given, these have now dated considerably (for example, barter trade, which no longer occurs), and updated information is given later in this chapter.
Physical location, gradually emerging affiliations within Brunei, certain aspects of their socio-economic circumstances, along with other socio-cultural features, demonstrate that the Penan Sukang differ from Eastern Penan communities in Sarawak, in a number of significant ways (Sercombe 1996b), largely due to the national, areal, and local social and geographical environments that they now inhabit. At the same time, the Penan Sukang can be considered integral to the Eastern Penan ethnic congeries (which otherwise only occupy certain parts of north-eastern Sarawak), due to their close historical links – including consanguine and affinal relationships – with Penan in Sarawak, particularly with inhabitants of the village of Long Buang, a village on the Apoh, a tributary of the Tutoh River, in neighbouring Sarawak (ibid.).

This chapter, which is largely an outline ethnographic description, provides a thumbnail delineation of the Penan Sukang’s history, social organisation, culture, economics, and patterns of language use. This report results from a number of separate periods I spent with the Penan between 1992 and 2000 during which the aim was to elicit features of social and cultural continuity, alongside
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adjustments that they have made since they settled permanently in Brunei. The account draws together observations in the form of an overall impression of their contemporary circumstances.

HISTORY

The earliest published reference to Penan in Brunei, of which I am aware, is by Andreini (1928: 144), who reports meeting Punans \textit{(sic)} from Belait who were moving back into Sarawak territory. The next earliest reference was in a \textit{Brunei Annual Report} (Davis 1948), regarding ‘nomadic Punans’ \textit{(sic)}. Subsequently, Harrisson (1949a: 130) mentioned that ‘[i]n the 1947 census of Sarawak and Brunei […] Punans \textit{(sic)} were located […] 29 were in Brunei’, and a later \textit{Brunei Government Report} (1955: 12) stated that ‘[i]n one area (Ulu Belait), there is to be found, but only after careful pre-arrangement, a small group of Punans \textit{(sic)} – the real jungle people – or as sometimes referred to, the wild Men \textit{(sic)} of Borneo’. Urquhart (1958) also suggested that the ‘Pennan’ \textit{(sic)} are ‘perhaps in the \textit{ulu} Belait’.\textsuperscript{1} Harrisson (1975c: 42) further proposed that a small number of Penan had ‘for decades […] come over sporadically from the Tutoh behind Marudi across into the Ulu Belait in Brunei’.

What is known is that before moving towards the Belait District, the Eastern Penan, who now live permanently in Brunei, had foraged in the Linei River basin (a tributary of the Tutoh, in Sarawak), the group elder being Tiung Uan, the current elder’s uncle (Martin and Sercombe 1992) and were closely allied with Penan who reside in Long Buang (on the Apoh River, in Sarawak), having ‘migrated together from Pelutan via Malinau to Linei where they split, one group to Belait and one to Long Buang’ (Needham 1953: 399–401). Needham maintained that those from Long Buang had themselves previously been foragers in the Penipir River area, in the southern part of the Belait District of Brunei.

It is known that, in the period immediately prior to 1962, the Penan Sukang had been full-time hunter-gatherers in the interior of the Belait District, in the southern part of Brunei’s western enclave. The present group elder, Luyah Kaling, has declared that the band foraged in an area stretching from the Kerawan and Penipir Rivers (tributaries of the Belait River) and further north along the Belait River as far as Sukang Village, as well as east to the headwaters of the Tutong River, in Brunei. At this time, the group also occasionally ventured south across the watershed that forms Brunei’s southern border with the Malaysian state of Sarawak, to the Tutoh and Malinau river areas north of Mount Mulu, to interact with other Eastern Penan in Sarawak. Nowadays, the Brunei–Malaysia border is
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more closely patrolled, discouraging free movement between the states, where there exist no official crossing points, in order to discourage illicit extraction of Brunei’s natural resources from the rainforest and also to prevent unofficial entry into the country.

Some Penan in the ulu (upriver) areas of Brunei returned to the Penan settlement of Long Buang on the Apoh River in Sarawak (which had been established in 1928) during the early 1940s, to avoid the Japanese occupation in Brunei (Antaran 1986). Prior to settlement, the Penan band in Brunei occasionally bartered with the Dusun in Sukang, to obtain tobacco, salt, and clothes, for which they exchanged blowpipes and rubber latex. It is claimed that, at that time, Penan already knew some Malay, which they would have acquired through trade with Chinese and sporadic interaction with local officials, and that the Dusun also acquired some knowledge of their language through trade meetings (Jamal Gantar, a Dusun from Sukang, pers. comm.). It was during these barter trade meetings that the Penan were eventually persuaded to settle by the local Dusun, who in turn had been encouraged to lobby the Penan by the local Belait District officer at the time. According to both Dusun and Penan, this district officer, a (British) colonial administrator, was a prime mover in initiating the Penan transition to settlement.

Finally, in 1962, Legai Madang, the then elder of the Penan band, made an agreement with the Belait District office to move into a longhouse in Sukang Village. Single family shelters in the forest (the standard type of nomadic Eastern Penan accommodation), normally located on ridge tops, were given up for a longhouse constructed from wood donated by a local Chinese sawmill. Twenty-one Penan settled next to the Dusun longhouse, on the right (or eastern) bank of the river in Sukang. These were later joined by 15 more Penan (Leake 1990: 105).

Legai reported that his band of Penan had originally come from the Pelutan River area of Sarawak (as mentioned above by Needham), an eastern tributary of the Baram River, south of the small administrative and commercial centre of Long Lama (located on the banks of the Baram). He also included, as part of Penan Pelutan, those who lived and still inhabit the villages of Batu Bungan, Long Iman, and Long Buang, each of which is located in the Tutoh and Apoh river areas of north-eastern Sarawak (around 50 km south of Sukang). Some Penan in Sukang also claim that they originate from the Selungo River, a tributary of the Baram farther south than the Pelutan, from which they had migrated north during an earlier period. However, the Penan in Brunei now refer to themselves as Penan Belait or Penan Sukang.
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Luyah Kaling, the current Penan Sukang elder, does not know exactly nor is he greatly concerned about when Penan moved north to hunt and gather in Brunei. Following the death of Legai in 1973, Luyah became and continues to be the Penan community elder (as well as the oldest surviving Penan in Brunei), having been chosen by Penan longhouse members, with official sanction from the Sukang Sub-district penghulu, Simpok, a Dusun.

Typically, the Eastern Penan in the interior of the Baram Division of Sarawak maintain fairly regular social contact with other Penan villages (through personal visits to close and extended family relatives), but the Penan Sukang have been without continuous close physical contact with other Eastern Penan groups in Sarawak since they settled in 1962 (see Sather 1995: 258), although sporadic contact has been maintained in other ways, which are described in subsequent sections of this chapter.

DEMOGRAPHY

Penan Sukang have moved from being a hill-top residing nomadic group to a sedentary riverine community, an almost universal phenomenon among Eastern Penan who have given up full-time nomadism for sedentism (see Rousseau 1990: 218). Rivers became, for many settled Penan, the new conduits of communication once they settled, replacing forest paths. This has again been changing in the last decade or so, with the increasing number of logging roads penetrating the interior of Sarawak, providing a cheaper and faster means of communication than rivers (albeit at considerable social and environmental cost, a fuller consideration of which is beyond the scope of this study, but see Chan in this volume).

For the Penan Sukang, the Belait River became and remains the main means of physical communication. Although the Penan commenced their settled existence on the right (or eastern) bank of the Belait River in Sukang, they subsequently moved to the left bank (becoming physically removed from neighbouring groups), where they have remained until now. The third, most recently constructed Penan longhouse was completed in 1982. Its basic layout is not unlike that of an orang ulu (‘upriver people’) longhouse, in the style and position of the roofed veranda (since it is without an open Iban veranda for drying padi or hill rice) and the internal arrangement of separate family compartments. Presently, the longhouse is in great need of repair or replacement.

The number of Penan in Brunei was first officially recorded as 29 (Harrisson 1949a), although it is likely that the number of nomadic Penan in the Belait
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District was considerably higher before the Japanese occupation in World War II (Antaran 1986). Around the time of their settlement, some Penan adult males moved back to and married into Long Buang in Sarawak (ibid.). When McLoughlin (1976) conducted a physical morphological study among the Penan Sukang, the group size totalled 34. Seitz (1981: 279–280) recorded the number as being 39 in 1979, and it was apparently between 40 and 42 in 1980 (Groome and Waggitt 1990).

There has been some exogamy since the group settled in 1962 (discussed further below); there were also three infant deaths in 1980 (which may have contributed towards the move across river), but there have been no other upheavals, such as group fission or a fatal epidemic. The current total living in the Penan longhouse (in 2000) is 56 people. Group size has increased a little less than 100 per cent since their population was first recorded in 1948; this seems to have been slightly less than the general increase in numbers among other Eastern Penan groups in Sarawak who have taken up a settled existence (for further discussion, see Sercombe 1996b).

Apart from ethnic Penan, there is an Iban and a Bisaya’ (both adult females), as well as a son of the Bisaya’ woman, in the Penan longhouse – these women originating from Limbang in Sarawak but then married into the Penan community. Outside Sukang Village, there is a Penan male who lives between Sukang Village and the Iban longhouse of Biadong Ulu, having married an Iban from there. There are also eight Penan living in the Brunei coastal town of Kuala Belait and two more in Tutong town, but relatively few, compared to the number of Dusun and Iban who have migrated from Sukang Sub-district to coastal areas of Brunei. Younger Penan adults who have left school but not yet married are all (except two) living at home (see Groome and Waggitt 1990).

More recently, the Penan have been granted land by the government, and some have also been provided with timber (also by the government) to construct separate homes on the right (or eastern) bank of the river. None has so far built a new dwelling across the river, apart from the headman, and even he continues to reside mostly in the Penan longhouse (on the river’s left bank).

SOCIAL FEATURES

This chapter takes a configurationist view that the Penan maintain a cluster of distinct characteristics that clearly distinguish them from other groups throughout Brunei. One of the major features of the Penan is that they traditionally represent
what has been described as a cold (vs hot) society without institutionalised social hierarchies (see Lévi-Strauss, cited in Wiseman and Groves 1997; see also Sellato in this volume). Social stability is maintained largely through a balance of egalitarianism and in-group symbiosis. This remains largely the situation among the Penan Sukang, such that, relatively speaking, ‘there is harmony between societal and individual needs’ (Duranti 1997: 57).

Compared to the large number of social roles in more modern industrial societies, Penan Sukang relationships provide clear examples of mainly kin-based networks that carry clear rights and obligations with regard to all members of the group. For the Penan Sukang, their kin and social lives generally comprise and concern every member of the community (see Needham 1971: 204, and in this volume; also, Siskind 1973: 52), constituting a series of dense social networks such that individuals are bound together in multiplex consanguine and affinal relationships. All Penan adults in Sukang categorise themselves as part of the group, although a number of them nowadays have begun to develop close affiliations and cultural affinities with neighbouring Iban.

**Community Rules and Leadership**

As Ellen (1994: 202–203) has written, ‘[m]any food-collecting populations neither require, nor have the opportunity to create, much by the way of social institutions’. This still applies to the Penan in Sukang, even though food collecting is now but one means of production, as discussed in more detail under ‘Economics’, below.

A Penan elder’s role traditionally carries no institutional authority. As Needham (in this volume) has stated, a ‘group is usually headed by a recognised elder but he has no real power. Relative age is the most general and the most important social differential, but there are no age sets or recognised age grades’. The group elder, Luyah Kaling, however, now earns a monthly salary, for his official position as ‘headman’, which also requires that he has contact with government officials on a regular basis. In part, he has become a state emissary. He still has no socially prescribed authority within the group, but his official position and the salary that he receives reflect authority ascribed from outside. While Penan relations among the group remain important, in terms of material reciprocity and family obligations, Luyah’s material wealth reflects a new status, both among the Penan and within the village community, as an officially sanctioned government representative.
Family Organisation

The concept of the Penan Sukang household is one of a nuclear family unit. One reason that extended family units remain small in Sukang is that there are no Penan grandparents residing among the group. Beyond nuclear family units, there is just one divorcee, an unmarried uncle, and a widow, who stay with their closest family relatives (on Penan family sizes, see Needham in this volume). The lack of Penan elders reflects an age-group vacuum and has probably acted to diminish certain aspects of Penan life in Sukang. This vacuum is keenly felt by the community, as has been vigorously articulated by a number of Penan adults.

Commensality remains a fundamental act of social solidarity, and the Penan eat together as nuclear families but not in larger groups, unless visitors are present and non-family community members feel that they can partake as their right to welcome and spend time with outsiders as part of a larger social occasion. This is also the case if guests or other community members have brought food, drink, or news to share with their hosts, and are making more than the most perfunctory visit.

While among other Eastern Penan groups living parents may still be referred to directly as Tama (father), or Tinen (mother), followed by the name of their eldest child, this no longer occurs in Sukang, where all individuals of school age and above are now mostly referred to by their given names.

There are not and have never been rituals associated with birth (Luyah Kaling, pers. comm.). There are no special taboos or proscribed foods for pre- or post-natal mothers, and nowadays women give birth in Sukang Village clinic, rather than among the Penan themselves; this is encouraged by the health authorities, in case of medical complications.

Children have never undergone special initiations or training between birth and adulthood (ibid.). When old enough, daughters help to look after younger siblings or relatives’ children, especially since there is presently an absence of grandparents in Sukang. School-age children, who are able to, help with rice planting and harvesting nowadays, but there has been a decline in knowledge of the fauna and flora of the rainforest among younger Penan, particularly among those now under 20 years of age.

No longer are deceased Penan left in locations important to them (in primary rainforest), but they are now buried locally in a community graveyard and, as with other potentially significant social events, no specific ceremonies take place. It is told that, following a death among the Penan Sukang, an atui (a percussion instrument consisting of a log rested horizontally across the V sections
of vertically placed crossed pieces of smaller logs) is played by striking the top with sticks (Arin Paren, pers. comm.), but no deaths among the Penan have occurred since I first came to know the members of this group, in 1992.8

Sharing

Penan in Sukang continue the convention of reciprocally sharing wild game, when it is obtained, with other longhouse members, as well as surplus rice if a family is in need (see Hong 1987: 23), a form of prestation. Sharing among Penan in Sukang (and elsewhere), nonetheless, only extends to perishable items; they are under no obligation to share money or other durable goods (see Needham 1953: 133–134). Not sharing food, however, would be tantamount to denying community relationships (see Siskind 1973: 9; Marshall 1976: 370). In fact, stinginess with regard to food remains taboo among Penan in Sukang and elsewhere among many Eastern Penan in remote areas where there is still a reasonable supply of game, although the sharing of wild meat no longer occurs among some communities of Eastern Penan in the middle Baram areas of north-eastern Sarawak. This is mainly a result of the greater economic pressures that they have suffered (Sercombe 1996b). A consequence is that Penan from Sukang do not sell or trade meat and, thus, a potential source of income is lost. In comparison, Iban from Sukang Sub-district occasionally sell wild boar downriver, at Pengkalan Mau, early on Sunday mornings, from which they derive cash income.

Marriage and Formal Relationships with Neighbouring Groups

Penan marriage customs are relatively simple and flexible and, similar to other rites of social passage, marriages are not celebrated in any special way. Eastern Penan (including those in Sukang) can and continue to marry first cousins, and endogamous marriage in Sukang has remained more common than marriage outside the Penan group (ibid.). There remains, in theory, the idea of a bride price (of a blowpipe), but this is no longer generally honoured (Luyah Kaling, pers. comm.), and there are no rules regarding post-marital residence. Some Penan mothers and one father have said that they would like their daughters to marry a man who is not a subsistence farmer, and many parents perceive there being more chance of a daughter marrying exogamously than a son. Penan adults’ aspirations are understandable, given the less physically arduous life endured by those in Sukang Sub-district, such as teachers, the village policeman, and health assistants, and what they are seen to earn for their work.
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From 1962 to 1983, there were only two exogamous marriages, both of which ended in divorce. In more recent times, during which there has been an increase in marriage outside the group, this has mostly involved Penan women marrying non-Penan, resulting in couples moving elsewhere. Those Penan not married to others in the Penan group have been betrothed to Iban, Chinese, Malay, or Dusun but mostly to the former. There is also one unmarried, middle-aged (aged 48) Penan man (an unusual occurrence among Penan) in 2000.

Non-Formal Relationships with Other Groups

Nearly 50 years ago, Needham (1953: 162) stated that ‘Eastern Penan are slow, patient, open, friendly, ingenuous’. I have found no reason to disagree with this in relationships established and maintained with Eastern Penan, in either Sarawak or Brunei.

For Penan in Sukang, social contacts are predominantly primary with few secondary relations, i.e., the people they know are also those with whom they mostly come into regular daily contact. For Luyah Kaling, the group elder, like for most other adult Penan in Sukang, consanguine and affinal relations with Penan in Sarawak remain important, as they have stated (and as may be inferred from the historical connections described above, even though Penan from Sukang are rarely able to travel to Sarawak). This has been demonstrated by Luyah’s two visits, in recent years, to Long Buang (in Sarawak) when, on one occasion, he bought a diesel-powered generator so that the people of Long Buang could thresh rice by machine and have electric light in their village. Penan in Sukang are always eager for news of Long Buang and are curious about my visits there and when I intend to go again. Until recently, significant events in Long Buang were communicated by telephone to a Penan woman married and living in an army camp in the Tutong District of Brunei. Nowadays, communication can occur directly with the Penan longhouse in Sukang, where incoming telephone calls can now be received.

Since 1962, there have been no Penan visitors to Sukang from Long Buang or from any other Penan communities in Sarawak (see Sellato 1990a). Reasons for this include the expense involved in making the journey (stemming from the difficulty in earning cash for those living in the interior of Sarawak), the expense, time, and logistical difficulties of obtaining a Malaysian passport, as well as the problem of access since there is no public transport along the Belait River.

While the Penan in Sukang have been settled for nearly 40 years, they remain sympathetic towards the idea of full-time nomadism and Penan hunter-gatherers (see Voeks and Sercombe 2000), although they are no longer familiar with any
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nomadic bands. Many fully settled Penan in Sarawak, however, tend to be disparaging of nomadic Penan,11 and it has been observed that ‘[a]griculturalists see nomads as inferior and the latter behave as if they accept this evaluation’ (Rousseau 1990: 245). This observation is not novel; many observers (e.g., Douglas 1906: 68, among others) have described exploitation and even persecution of Penan by settled peoples. Needham (1953: 89) maintained that Eastern Penan ‘accept in their mild fashion the indifference, the rudeness, and the maltreatment that accompanies the lowly political status that is accorded them by settled tribes’. Whatever the treatment of Eastern Penan in general (whether nomadic or settled), the attitude of others towards them has tended to remain one of condescension. Penan Sukang are aware of their lower status in relation to other local groups and of the ways in which they are perceived as socially inferior by their neighbours. As Rousseau (1990: 71) also mentioned of previously nomadic Borneans, ‘[f]ormer nomads still bear the stigma of their origin’.

Penan Sukang do not, however, live in vassalage to their neighbours (like some Eastern Penan in Sarawak do, albeit considerably less than before), although the local Dusun would like to employ Penan during periods of rice planting and (particularly) harvesting when they are otherwise overstretched. Penan will sometimes undertake harvesting work for Dusun, but have not infrequently complained that they are not paid enough (at B$ 20 a day, the normal rate for unskilled labour) or sometimes not paid at all, that they have to work too hard, or that they have other commitments.

When a piped-water system was installed in Sukang Village, the local Chinese contractor (also the village shopkeeper since 1962, locally known as Panjang) hired foreign labour (workers from Thailand) rather than villagers, particularly the Penan. He does not hold a positive view of the Penan and will not extend credit to them – this being a common way of doing business between shopkeepers and villagers in isolated rural settings throughout interior parts of Brunei and Sarawak; neither do the Penan attempt to fraternise with Panjang.

Sather (1995: 229) has perceived the Penan, in general (like other Austronesian hunter-gatherers), as ‘parties to a process of symbiosis with agriculturalists which has continued for several millennia’. This seems no longer to be the case, in general terms, and is certainly not the situation in Sukang, partly for the reason that Dusun and Iban no longer need or desire jungle products or craft items (such as damar, a resin that is burned to provide illumination; gabaru, or eaglewood, for the production of incense; bezoar stones for spiritual purposes; wild latex for rubber; or blowpipes for hunting), the kinds of items that Penan would have traded in the past.
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While informal relations with village neighbours do not appear dynamic in terms of social interaction (in the same way that they are between Dusun and Iban, with considerable successful cross-group cooperation and intermarriage), the Penan Sukang have formed out-group alliances with Iban. This may well be because Penan social institutions are structurally more compatible with those of the Iban than with the social organisation of other groups. For example, both groups are considered immigrant to Brunei, and they are both traditionally less socially hierarchical than other Bornean groups in Brunei. These common characteristics would appear, on the surface at least, to allow for easier integration between Iban and Penan. In day-to-day dealings, Iban are generally accommodating towards the Penan, in addition to which Penan regularly attend Iban festive occasions. Some older Penan children maintain that Iban customs (e.g., miring, a ceremony involving offerings of thanks) are the same as those of the Penan, and that these are sometimes performed in the home of Luyah Kaling, the Penan elder. In fact, Penan have no history of miring; if this is seen by some Penan (in Sukang) as a Penan practice, it suggests the extent to which some Penan may wish to identify with Iban (for further discussion of this, see Sercombe 1996b; and see Nagata 1979). In addition, there is also a lack of eligible Penan marriage partners in Brunei, due to the small size of the group. Certainly, marriage with other Penan and residence in Sarawak is nowadays seen as less attractive, since Penan in Sukang are keenly aware of the widespread material hardships suffered by many Penan across the border, many of whom have lost portions of their land to logging, in the interior of Malaysian Sarawak.

Beyond Penan earshot, however, there are a number of impressions of the Penan held by Dusun and Iban in Sukang District. Both the primary school headmaster and a Dusun teacher from Sukang still believe that the Penan bride price is one blowpipe, and feel this to be highly amusing, although there is no longer such a practice (reflecting a lack of familiarity with Penan customs). Another preconception is that the Penan are highly knowledgeable in and about the rainforest. This notion is sometimes disproportionate to reality, as evidence suggests that Penan knowledge of rainforest flora (if not fauna) is deep but not necessarily as broad as that of some settled peoples (Voeks and Sercombe 2000; Voeks, this volume). Another impression is that Penan are seen as lazy, and that, despite being very competent hunters, they hunt game infrequently and rely more on traps and fishing than on their blowpipes. Iban and Dusun also cannot comprehend why the Penan do not appear to live in a more systematic way, i.e., in the same way as themselves. The village primary school headmaster (an Iban who converted to Islam) has said that the Penan make tuak (rice wine)
from the *tampoi* fruit (known botanically as *Baccaurea*), and frowns upon this habit. One Dusun teacher (from outside Sukang Sub-district), who had been at the school seven years, had a very negative view of the Penan because, he said, they drink and allow their children to drink, and because they are considered dirty and do not heed the advice that they are given.

It seems that the community status of Penan adults in Sukang (and their children) is evaluated, roughly, according to a number of criteria overshadowed by one factor: When ‘[a] nomad […] becomes sedentary […] he enters the lowest part of the sedentary scale’ (Glatzer 1982: 72), an assertion that also reflects traditionally settled neighbours’ current perceptions of the Penan in Sukang. Other considerations include the following: whether a Penan is married and, if so, from which ethnic group the Penan’s spouse originates; the extent of a Penan family’s farm; the amount and condition of non-perishable materials owned by a Penan (e.g., outboard engine, boat, etc.); the physical appearance of a Penan family and its members, and whether or not female Muslim converts wear headscarves; whether or not alcohol is drunk by a Penan (especially if s/he is a Muslim convert), apart from during festival occasions; if shoes or other footwear are worn; the degree of academic success of a Penan family’s children; the degree to which a family and its members are seen as industrious; and the range of languages and speech styles at their command. In most cases, the Penan Sukang are assessed as low in all these categories. In addition, Penan women have weak, almost non-existent, ties with women from neighbouring groups, and the latter state that they look down on many Penan women for their apparently liberal drinking habits, for looking scruffy, and for the relatively dishevelled state of Penan children.

The village primary school is an environment in which Penan children come into regular contact with neighbours and with teachers from outside the district. While Penan children (in the lower primary levels of the school) appear to have Dusun and Iban friends, I have never seen a non-Penan child enter the Penan longhouse. Furthermore, the headmaster, local and non-local teachers, and school cooks all hold negative impressions of Penan children, which seem to affect the ways in which they interact with these children in the school.

For the Penan, contact with Bruneians who are from outside Sukang is mostly with school teachers, nearly all of whom have never entered the Penan longhouse, contrasting with their frequent visits to the Dusun longhouse in Sukang.

There is also the Penan relationship with the central government. This is mostly through the district office and via the Penan elder and, in this, Luyah Kaling is a kind of cultural broker among the Penan (see Dahlan and Wan
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Hashim 1979: 41). There are, however, issues that the Penan feel further reflect their social position. The land that they occupy (on the western or left side of the Belait River) is government owned, and the Penan have no rights of cultivation, needing official permission just to cut down a tree. Penan adults living but not born in Sukang are not full Brunei citizens, although their children, registered as being born locally, are granted full citizenship (see Azmi 1990: 9); all Penan are still categorised as ‘Other Indigenous’, rather than ‘Full Indigenous’ citizens of Brunei. The officially posted sign on the riverbank declares Rumah Panjang Punan (‘Punan Longhouse’), but punan means ‘fight’ in Penan, which is ironic since the Penan are well known for their pacifism and abhorrence of violence.

Contact with staff from the Pusat Dakwah (‘Centre for the Propagation of Islam’, a section of the ministry of Religious Affairs), in the capital of Brunei, has been ongoing and of a transactional nature since 1992. Employees of the centre have been encouraging Penan (as well as others in Sukang, and elsewhere) to become Muslim, since 1992 when the centre was given the role of coordinating ‘Visit ASEAN Year’ with respect to villages in the interior of the Belait District (see also the section on ‘Beliefs’, below).16

Finally, with respect to Brunei at large, in a recent informal survey of some first-, second- and third-year students at the Universiti Brunei Darussalam, not one (out of 80) knew of the existence of Penan in Brunei (some not even having heard of this ethnic category), which reflects the degree of unfamiliarity and lack of contact between Penan and urban coastal dwellers in Brunei.

CULTURAL FEATURES

The concern here is with the various codes that shape social organisation, and ‘a system of participation’ (Duranti 1997: 46), as well as those elements ‘which can be learned or transmitted’ (Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman 1981: 10).

Regarding Eastern Penan culture, Needham (in this volume) has remarked that it is ‘characterised by a relatively meagre […] inventory’, and this is certainly the case for the Penan Sukang, perhaps even more so now, in a non-material sense, than during the period (the 1950s) when Needham carried out fieldwork among Eastern Penan in Sarawak.

Material Culture

In terms of appearance, Penan males in Sukang have long since given up wearing the loin cloth that distinguished them (and other Dayak) from coastal Malays
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and Chinese. Luyah Kaling, the elder, wore a loin cloth until 1997, but was laughed at by Penan children, to the extent that he took to wearing trousers. He alone, among the Penan in Sukang, continues to sport a traditional Dayak haircut, cut straight around the head with a long pony tail, as well as extended earlobes (see McLoughlin 1976: 103). Nearly all the Penan Sukang have poor teeth, largely as a consequence of consuming sweets, sweetened drinks, and processed foods, while many do not brush their teeth, despite entreaties from government dentists when they visit the village (Udhi Kutok, pers. comm.). However, there are no overweight Penan living in the longhouse (although there are quite a few adipose Iban and Dusun in Sukang Sub-district).

Personal adornment consists of watches (for adults who can afford one) and modern style tattoos, earrings, and rings, for both boys and girls. No Penan Sukang now uses jong (on the arms) or selungan (on the legs), both being traditional Penan bracelets made from rattan, and Penan children laugh at the very idea of wearing these.

Every household has a radio, but there is only one television in the Penan longhouse; I have never seen this in working order. No Penan living in Sukang has a car (unlike many of the Dusun and Iban who leave their cars parked downriver, either at Bukit Sawat or, more likely, at Pengkalan Mau). In fact, the Penan in Sukang tend to have few permanent possessions, clothes being the most obvious of these, although not many are in fine condition. Those possessions most valued are either functional and traditional (i.e., blowpipes and machetes) or modern (radios, outboard engines, boats, watches, and shop-bought jewellery). Their limited possessions, many of which are easily portable, are seen piled in one place, in most family compartments. While the Penan no longer participate in any form of migration, they have the appearance of being ready for movement at any time.

Boats

The Penan in Sukang have become competent boatmen and boat makers since settling. Each Penan family owns a longboat and an outboard engine. This is an essential form of transport for access to shops and offices downriver, as well as for fishing and quick and easy movement to areas along the Belait River and its tributaries, which are known for fruit trees liked by game animals (so long as the outboard engines on their boats are functioning), and for transporting timber for blowpipe and boat construction or for longhouse maintenance. All these are home-made boats, and the wood, used in their construction, is obtained with their own chainsaws. However, most of the Penan boats and engines are in tatty
condition and poorly maintained, compared to those owned by the Dusun and Iban.

**Crafts: Blowpipes, Baskets, and Mats**

Traditionally, Penan have been known as outstanding craftsmen, producing exquisite rattan mats and baskets, and blowpipes. Penan women in Sukang still demonstrate these skills in the production of mats and bags, as do males for blowpipes, but these artefacts are only for personal use, since there is no longer a ready commercial market for the sale of these products. There could be outlets for crafts through shops in Brunei’s coastal towns, but shopkeepers can and do acquire similar goods from neighbouring Sarawak at much cheaper prices, due to the present currency exchange rates.

**Longhouse**

The Penan longhouse is spartan in its appearance and poorly maintained in comparison to the neighbouring Dusun and Iban longhouses – the insides of which are varnished or painted, decorated with photographs, traditional hats, and Dayak-style oil-painted designs, and are kept spotlessly clean. The Penan longhouse has some pictures of Malaysian pop stars taken from newspapers and pinned to walls, but it is otherwise bare wooden boards, as an Eastern Penan home would normally be. There is no longhouse generator, but three families have their own small generators, which they turn on just for electric light, some evenings of the week.

Unhealthy and mangy dogs roam along the longhouse veranda, the floor boards of which are worn and holed in places. The front stairs leading to the ground from the centre of the longhouse’s front veranda have collapsed, and rubbish is widely strewn on the ground below. A number of small wild animals and birds (such as young squirrels and hornbill birds) can be seen occasionally in the longhouse, in home-made cages of wire or thin bamboo, caught and kept (a common Penan practice) when their parents were killed for food (on pets, see Seitz in this volume).

Apart from the longhouse, each family has a farm hut, and Luyah (the Penan elder) has a house across river on the right bank, and some Penan move to their farm huts during periods of planting and harvesting.

**Health and Rituals**

Some consideration of this topic among Penan in Sukang was undertaken by Voeks and Sercombe (2000), who ‘examined the cosmology and ethnomedical
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beliefs of the Penan’ (ibid.: 679). Their research concluded that the Penan in Sukang ‘maintain a medical system that is limited in scope and detail compared to neighbouring swidden rice cultivators’ (ibid.).

For sickness, the Penan have, to a large extent, abandoned traditional methods in favour of a service offered by the government-provided village clinic, where modern medicines can be obtained (see Voeks and Sercombe 2000), although most adult Penan in Sukang continue to perceive that sources of illness have a basis in what Metcalf (1991: 292) describes as ‘soul loss and the infraction of primordial taboo’ (also see Voeks and Sercombe 2000). Even so, most members of the group enjoy reasonable, consistently good health at the present time, as they did when McLoughlin (1976) undertook his morphological study in the late 1970s.

Recreation

Penan engage in a number of mostly cooperative pastimes. After school or during holidays, children of school age and of both sexes frequently play in the Belait River and fish by rod from the riverbank. When the weather is wet and cool, children gaze across the river, play tag, or engage in other group games on the Penan longhouse veranda. Teenage girls help their mothers by washing clothes in the river, while also swimming. Older boys (but not girls) play sepak takraw (a ball game using a rattan ball) in front of the longhouse, in the afternoons. Almost never do members of other groups such as Dusun, who live nearby, join in these activities with the Penan in the river. Occasionally, however, Penan play football with Dusun and school teachers in Sukang on the small playing field beside the primary school, during late afternoons. The Dusun are reasonably fit and skilled, and normally team up with outside teachers, who wish to play. Teams are often divided along ethnic grounds, with the Penan comprising one team. None of the aforementioned are really a match for the Penan, who are leaner, fitter, and much more skilled, although they are invariably both bareback and barefoot, or an individual may be wearing just one football boot. The Penan are teased mercilessly by outside teachers, who wear both boots and football strip, but they always lose games to the Penan and seem to resent it.

Pudarno Binchin (1991) described five games played by the Penan of Sukang for entertainment, as practice for developing strength and hunting and gathering skills, but I never observed them, and Penan said they no longer engage in these.18

I have never witnessed singing, dancing, or the use of traditional Penan instruments, such as the pagang, keloré or oréng (used by Penan elsewhere), which are not owned or used at all by Penan in Sukang, although none of these has ever
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had any ritual value for Penan (R. Needham, pers. comm.). While many of the adult Penan know traditional stories, none of these seems to be told nowadays. Penan seem indifferent to these aspects of their traditions, although by no means opposed to them. For those adult Penan who have a functioning radio, programmes in Iban, broadcast from Limbang, are listened to regularly. Programmes in Malay, especially popular music programmes, are also heard, often at high volume, such that broadcasts carry well beyond the longhouse.

It has become increasingly common for the few older adolescent Penan boys who have left school to hang around their longhouse smoking (if they have cigarettes), play *sepak takraw*, or sit around on the veranda of the longhouse. It is also common for them not to accompany their families to their rice farms. They are not reprimanded for not going to rice farms to help their parents, although their help is often needed.

**Alcohol Consumption**

For Iban, drinking rice wine (*tuak*) remains part of *gawai* (festival) tradition, and they have official, if unwritten, permission to produce *tuak* for important cultural events, such as the annual harvest festival, as it is otherwise illegal to produce alcohol in Brunei, for consumption or sale.

Traditionally, Needham (in this volume) maintained, Penan did not drink alcohol at all, for fear of becoming *mavuk* (‘dizzy’) and losing control, since being composed and in control of oneself is generally very important for a Penan. Certainly Eastern Penan have never been known to drink for any ritual purposes, because they have very few rituals and these are not obligatorily observed anyway. Even so, two Penan maintain that their parents and grandparents made wine from wild fruit as hunter-gatherers when they lived in ulu Belait, and a number of adult Penan (women included) unashamedly enjoy alcohol, which lowers their status in the eyes of their neighbours (especially when they become all noisy if they drink during the daytime and can be heard from the village school, across river). Nowadays, Penan do not make rice or fruit wine but occasionally buy it from Iban (at B$ 5 a bottle), as well as illicit rice spirit (*arak*) from shops downriver. There is one Penan who has a reputation as a regular consumer of alcohol (*kaki-botol*) and who has never married (a marked occurrence among Penan), one reason being, it is said, because of his drinking habits.

**Names and Naming**

One clear example of cultural realignment among the Penan, over the last 25 years or so, has been the increasing use of Iban and Malay personal names.
Traditionally, there are three types of Eastern Penan names: *ngaran usah*, an ‘autonym’, a given personal name; a teknonym, a kinship name, particularly for parents (*tamen*, ‘father’, or *tinen*, ‘mother’, followed by the name of the eldest child); and *ngaran lumo*, a necronym or death name, designating one’s relationship to the immediate kin member most recently deceased. Among the Eastern Penan necronyms listed by Needham (1965), comprising an extensive list, only *uyau* (‘deceased father’) and *ilun* (‘deceased uncle/aunt’) are still known among Penan Sukang, and then only by those above 30 years of age. There is also the less well-known form *ngaran ai*, ‘friendship name’, first recorded among the Penan in Long Buang in Sarawak by Needham (1971: 206), and given to another by a close friend in memory of a shared experience. Penan Sukang report never having used *ngaran ai*, although they are aware of its use by other Penan, such as those in Long Buang, in Sarawak (where their nearest relatives reside).

Nowadays, Penan in Sukang use only given names (both in reference and address to those of similar age), and these have shifted, to a small extent, from Penan-type names used previously. Only Penan-type names for the group’s total of 36 were recorded by McLoughlin (1976), while the percentage can be seen now to include 25 per cent indubitably Malay-like names (e.g., Sufian, Ahmad, Maslina, and Siti Marinah), and this does not take into account names that Penan are required to adopt once they become Muslim. While new Muslim names are adopted as a mark of conversion, Penan continue to use their (previous) given names as address forms and in reference to others, in day-to-day interaction. Needham (1954d and 1965) argued that the erosion of the Penan system of death names, otherwise an important aspect of group solidarity, was tantamount to the loss of Penan identity, and suggested a correlation between decline of necronym usage and assimilation to coastal society with the loss of their autochthonous values system (an issue that is discussed below).

**Beliefs**

Chatwin (1989: 220) made the observation that ‘[n]omads are notoriously irreligious. They show little interest in ceremonial or protestations of faith. For the migration is itself a ritual performance a religious catharsis’. A further significant explanation of nomads’ tendencies not to be formally religious is that ‘[r]eligious beliefs support stratification […] a binary distinction between high and low’ (Rousseau 1990: 184), and hence these are generally incompatible with the egalitarian nature of nomads and open social groups (see Saville-Troike 1989: 41). As Rousseau (1990: 221) also observed with regard to swiddeners
in Borneo, belief in omens can prevent movement, depending on the sign observed. This, however, would never have been practical for hunter-gatherers, as submission or even subscription to the power of omens has really been and remains a matter of personal preference, rather than obligation.

Certainly, until Western missionaries first arrived in Borneo, Penan (and Punan), like their settled neighbours in the interior of Borneo, were animists (if not fervent in their adherence to beliefs), and elements occurring in the surrounding natural environment were considered imbued with spirits, although Penan have generally been more relaxed in their beliefs. A further relevant factor is that Penan have never been headhunters, and so their beliefs and lifestyles are without any of the trappings of other Bornean peoples for whom headhunting was important with respect to their beliefs (see Needham 1953: 46), and this remains the case.

Hose and McDougall (1912, II: 186) were uncertain as to whether Punans (sic) had adopted ‘their religious and superstitious notions from the settled tribes of the same region’, or ‘whether […] the Punans represent in this and other respects the perpetuation (perhaps with some degeneration or impoverishment) of a more primitive culture once common to the ancestors of all, or the greater part of the tribes of Borneo’.

Needham (in this volume) argued similarly that ‘[t]he major characteristics of the indigenous religion of the Penan are in general, and in a somewhat impoverished form, those of the Kenyah religion as described by Elshout (1923 and 1926)’. Brosius (1988a: 91), in fact, suggested that the salient features of Penan and Punan religion included ‘omenology, thunder, animal mockery, food-mixing, rich and poetic figurative vocabulary, supernatural world, concealment of human activities from malevolent spirits’.

The issue of religious and other kinds of beliefs is a potentially complex one, and a full treatment is beyond the scope of this chapter. What is certain, however, is that the few practices that can be associated with traditional beliefs held by Penan Sukang have become mostly moribund since they have settled. Animistic convictions are still held but in a typically flexible Penan way (for further details, see Voeks and Sercombe 2000).

Interestingly, Eastern Penan have no word for religion, and considerations of formal religion, for them, mostly concern certain non-obligatory rituals (Voeks and Sercombe 2000; also see Metcalf 1991), reflecting their rather minimalistic attitudes towards beliefs. Only Luyah, the community elder, makes use of traditional invocations, although, he freely admits, he is not rigorous in his use of these.19
Among Penan Sukang, institutionalised religious beliefs are held only by those who have become Muslim. Four Penan couples in Sukang have embraced Islam, along with their children who are 12 years of age or above, but none has shown punctiliousness in carrying out the ritual requirements of their newly adopted faith (see Rousseau 1990: 74).

ECONOMICS

The economics of the Penan community in Sukang are perceived here as the various ways in which members of the group interact with their environment to create and sustain production for individual families and the community. Prior to settling, the Penan were full-time hunters and gatherers who hunted wild boar (among other wild fauna) and processed sago as the basis of their subsistence. The Penan also conducted barter trade for certain items that the rainforest could not provide, and they came to Sukang village prior to 1962, when they had moved into the area around the headwaters of the Belait River, to trade rubber for salt and tobacco with the Dusun.

Nowadays, the Penan Sukang are not wealthy in material possessions, relative to their immediate neighbours or coastal urban dwellers in Brunei. However, they are certainly considerably better off than most of the Eastern Penan in the interior of Sarawak (Sercombe 1996b).

The Penan household is the unit of production and consumption in Sukang (see Rousseau 1990). As in many rural (mostly subsistence) communities, men farm, fish with nets that they set, and trap game, while women cook (with wood they collect), clean, and gather wild fruits and vegetables. Both men and women work during periods of planting and harvesting, when families stay for several days at their farm huts, although Penan women do less planting work than males and less than either Dusun or Iban women.

The Penan diet consists mainly of rice, noodles (which are shop-bought), fish (which are caught by net), meat (or game, mostly caught in traps), wild fruits, a fairly minimal vegetable intake, and some tinned food (such as sardines or pork pieces, bought from shops in the small settlement of Bukit Sawat, downriver). Vegetables comprise mainly ferns and cassava leaves gathered near the longhouse; these are not so much planted as grown incipiently, although some vegetables are intercropped with hill rice. Crisps and sweets are also bought from the village shop as snack foods, mainly by children.

In general terms, the Penan in Sukang have the following basic means of production.
Farming

Perhaps the most noteworthy contemporary feature of Penan Sukang economics is their basic means of production. This has shifted from sago processing to planting and harvesting rice, since they settled. Nowadays, if Penan wish to consume sago, they buy it as flour or pellets from the Sukang village shop or downriver.

Every family has a plot of land across the river from the longhouse, where they cultivate hill rice, the planting and harvesting of which is carried out on a cooperative basis among members of the Penan community. Sufficient rice is normally grown to support each family’s basic needs for one year, although there have been cases where rice has been insufficient. No wet rice is planted, as is also the case among the Dusun and Iban throughout Sukang Sub-district, and all cultivation takes place to the right side of the Belait River, by government order.24

The Penan did, at one time, keep chickens, but they all died. The Penan in Sukang have no other domesticated animals that they rear for consumption, although they do keep dogs (for occasional hunting forays) and other wild animals (for a further discussion of this issue, see Seitz in this volume). 25

Local Sources of Cash Income

Six Penan men (and one Iban, the school groundsman, but no Dusun) are labourers in Sukang Village for the Belait District office, which pays a standard local rate for unskilled labour (in Brunei) of B$ 20 a day. The work of the Penan involves keeping the village and sub-district paths clear of overgrowth, between Sukang and Biadong Ulu (an Iban village about an hour east of Sukang on foot), and between Sukang and Dungun (an Iban village about ten minutes south, or upriver, from Sukang). One Penan male also works as an assistant in the local medical clinic, the only Penan from Sukang to have progressed beyond primary school education. Another kind of work, which is occasional, involves manual labour for the Dusun (mostly clearing old-growth forest for rice planting), although Penan do not have symbiotic transactional relationships with the local Dusun, as they did in the past.

Families who have converted to Islam and have no other cash income receive financial credit from the religious propagation centre. No Penan women in Sukang have wage work of any kind. Two Penan men have also worked as consultants for the Biology and Geography departments of Brunei’s national university and the Brunei forestry department, identifying types and functions of certain flora. I have also paid Penan for translation work, but this has been
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irregular. An important point that emerges from knowing the Penan in Sukang, over a period spanning nearly a decade, is that cash seems to be spent quickly, and there appears little conservation of the perishable or disposable resources that they acquire, apart from rice and the rainforest around them.\textsuperscript{26}

**Non-local Sources of Income**

No Penan who is an ongoing Sukang longhouse resident works outside Sukang Sub-district. One family man did, in the past, work away from home, in the oil industry on the coast, but only for six months. The one single and middle-aged male occasionally works away from the village but is never away for periods of more than two weeks. Unlike many of the younger generation Iban and Dusun, younger Penan do not seem oriented towards the world beyond the village, for employment or other reasons (see Kershaw 1994: 183).

**Fishing**

The Belait River, next to which the Penan live, remains relatively free of pollution and provides a good source of fish, even though fish were not traditionally an important or preferred source of protein nutrition for Penan. They use casting nets, as well as fixing nets (which they buy) at suitable spots along the river during low water periods, sharing river space with the Iban and Dusun. Fish almost certainly provide the most consistent and easily sought source of protein for the Penan in Sukang, since fishing requires relatively little investment of time or money, although, as with other Penan tools, their fishing nets are often in poor repair.

**Hunting**

Nowadays, hunting takes place only during daylight hours at weekends, because adults have to be at home to collect children from school each day, they say, and men also state that they do not want to be away overnight, or to travel far on foot, as they become \textit{muhau}, ‘exhausted’. This is in dramatic contrast to presettlement days, when hunting constituted a regular economic activity for men, involving a day, or days and nights, away from a camp to hunt wild game. At the present time, animal traps are laid but not on a regular or systematic basis, although there is an increase of both trap laying and weekend hunting during fruit seasons, mainly to catch wild boar, the preferred meat (as for many other upriver non-Muslims).\textsuperscript{27}

One evolving consequence of the reduction in hunting is that Penan boys no longer seem to automatically acquire hunting skills in the same ways as their
fathers did. Penan boys who attend school have less experience of the rainforest, as an exploitable resource for food, than their parents (see Janowski 1996: 57), and associate less with the forest. This can be seen from both their reduced knowledge of and interest in the rainforest around them. Few now hunt or seek game as a spare time or recreational activity. Instead, they play sports in the village.28

**Gathering**

Sago processing diminished over a period extending from the time when Penan farms became fully productive, in the mid-1960s, to the time when adult males acquired wage work in Sukang, in the 1980s. Two preferred species of wild sago palm (*uvud* and *balau*), however, are available in Sukang Sub-district.

The Penan are not overly partial to the consumption of vegetables (although they do consume them) but sweet fruits are enjoyed as snack food. These are collected but not cultivated in orchards, although stands of bananas occur around Penan farm huts, a form of incipient agriculture. As mentioned above, different ferns are gathered, as are bamboo shoots and tapioca roots and leaves. The latter, as foodstuffs, are looked down upon by other residents of Sukang.29 Penan also gather good-quality wood for blowpipes from the Sungai Ingai area (about 40 minutes upriver by boat from Sukang), but this is on a very small scale, since their need for new blowpipes is limited.

While Penan Sukang still believe in the idea of *molong*, a conservation strategy that prevents overexploitation of essential rainforest resources (see Langub 1989 for a more detailed description and discussion), it is no longer a relevant concept for the Penan Sukang, who have come to rely on wage income, cultivation, and the use of boats to satisfy their economic requirements. However, while the Penan may have undergone a number of subsistence-style changes, they maintain that the rainforest is still important to them (see Langub 1996a: 119), as a home with which they associate closely, and as an exploitable resource.

**Trade**

Trade has been claimed as a defining feature of nomad–swiddener relations (see Hoffmann 1986), although this remains only a hypothesis. If it ever was the case, it is no longer of any significance to the Penan in Sukang. Originally, Penan trade in forest produce in Brunei was really only with the Dusun (a stratified group) and not with the Iban (an institutionally unstratified group).30 Nowadays, Penan Sukang do not trade with either Iban or Dusun, because the Penan have nothing that the latter want, except their labour, which the Penan sell or trade sparingly.
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For example, few Dusun or Iban, except elders, want bezoar stones (taken from a monkey’s gall bladder).

Penan continue to make blowpipes for their own use, but only rarely are they able to sell or trade them with others, such as Iban. Spearheads, to attach to the ends of blowpipes, are obtained from Iban, who forge and subsequently sell them to the Penan for B$ 70 each, which is expensive, given they can be bought for about B$ 6 a piece in neighbouring Sarawak. Besides blowpipes, demand is negligible for mats and bags, which are finely crafted by Penan women but produced in sufficient quantities by Dusun and Iban to satisfy their own needs and wants. In addition, access to larger centres of trade in towns is currently relatively limited for the Penan. Moreover, the Brunei dollar currently has a comparatively high regional value, against, say, the Malaysian ringgit, and similar crafts, made by Penan in Sarawak, can be bought at much lower prices in the neighbouring towns of Limbang or Miri, in Sarawak.

A final remark here is that it seems that presently the only realistically viable way for the Penan to raise their standard of living is for their offspring to succeed educationally, allowing them a choice of work options among which would be skilled employment, either locally or, more viably, elsewhere in Brunei. To do this, they would need to be downriver to gain access to education beyond primary school, whether at secondary level, vocational school or, possibly even, in higher education (see Nagata 1979 for an incisive discussion of social mobility via education in Malaysia).

PATTERNS OF LANGUAGE USE

The issue of language use spans social, cultural, and economic dimensions of Penan lives, and it is considered highly significant as an index of both facets of continuity and adaptation and has been a subject of some discussion elsewhere (e.g., Sercombe 1996a and 1998).

The most significant factor in bringing about the present state of multilingualism among the Penan in Sukang has been the act of adopting a sedentary existence, which has brought with it ongoing contact with Dusun and Iban neighbours as well as with the local outposts of Brunei national institutions, which have resulted, virtually by default, in an expansion of Penan linguistic repertoires. Obvious potential sources of influence on Penan include Dusun, Iban, Malay, and English, the languages that occur in Sukang Sub-district (the latter two languages being taught as subjects as well as being the media of instruction in Sukang Village school). The linguistic influences on Penan were noted as being
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overwhelmingly from Malay and Iban, and this is despite relatively little contact with first-language speakers of Malay, since living in Brunei at least.

In addition, the contexts of use for Penan have been reduced. Penan remains a means of identifying the community in Sukang, but formal education, in Malay and English, appears to have partially usurped some of the informal educational roles of Penan. Certain domains of use for Penan were reduced as soon as the Penan settled in Sukang, particularly for children who began school and were exposed to formal education in Malay and English media. Interethnic contact among adults continued to be conducted in a superordinate code (Malay), just as it had been when the Penan were hunter-gatherers, but this contact would have increased considerably once Penan had settled, and would have given rise to group-wide acquisition of Iban, which had also become the sub-district’s *lingua franca* by the 1960s.

The Penan in Sukang are overtly positive about both their own language and Iban (as the local *lingua franca* and the first language of the majority of the inhabitants of the sub-district). At the same time, they certainly do not appear negative towards other codes and ethnic groups with whom they come into contact, either regularly or sporadically.

It has not been possible to either observe or record (and thus analyse) the language knowledge and use of every member of the Penan group in Sukang, so the statements made below are not necessarily generalisable to every member of the Penan community. As mentioned, Penan are very positive towards Iban, the language that they view as the source of most of the code switchings and borrowings, of which they are aware, in daily language use. The degree to which the occurrence of non-Penan features can be seen as marked can be judged by the extent to which Penan themselves have perceived certain language features that they use as Penan or not, and whether or not it was possible for them to provide Penan equivalents for language items not perceived as traditionally Penan (for details, see Sercombe 2001).

I conducted certain tests with Penan children, to whom I was able to gain access in the primary school, which revealed some surprising results. Firstly, a number of Penan primary level children were found to be able to read and write in Penan with relative ease, despite having never before been exposed to printed matter in their own language. However, their general levels of Penan cultural and linguistic knowledge appear somewhat attenuated in contrast to adults’ levels of knowledge and not just because of age differences. At the same time, all Penan primary level children with whom I came into contact were print-literate, which is not the case for Penan adults, among whom I found only three who
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were able to read printed text. Up until the present time, few Penan have been able to exploit their text literacy in ways that might benefit them as individuals or the group. If and when an opportunity to do so arises, this is most likely to be outside Sukang Sub-district, and the already limited domains of use for Penan language may be further reduced.

A number of factors suggest that Penan is an endangered language in Brunei – notwithstanding Krauss’ (1992) suggestion that any language with fewer than 10,000 speakers is likely to be at risk. These include the small number of Penan speakers, the limited number of domains in which Penan is used, the low status of Penan, and the limited amount of institutional support that Penan receives, although, in the long run, it is unlikely that language maintenance will be achieved through institutional support alone (see Edwards 1984).

The persistence of the Penan language in Brunei can be accounted for largely by factors related to both the physical and social environments inhabited by Penan speakers:

1. the relative rural isolation of Sukang, with only the Belait River as a practical means of access to other areas, limits the potential effects of state institutions.
2. the minimal and peripatetic presence of ‘outsiders’ minimises the effects of exposure to many of the norms and values of coastal dwellers.
3. physical and social separation between the Penan and others, within the village context, are significant factors in the continued use of Penan within the Penan longhouse community.
4. penan, by dint of their rural circumstances, have far more chance of maintaining their language, where the current opportunities and needs for group cohesion are increased, than if they lived in urban circumstances (where the possibilities for wider social contacts would be far greater).
5. economically, the Penan continue to be independent, even if materially poor.
6. penan is still the primary language of socialisation among the group.
7. most Penan males in Sukang continue to use their language because their social networks remain very much rooted in the Penan community. It continues to be more advantageous to cooperate with or assist a group member than someone outside the group. Penan essentially maintain the same socio-political system as when they were hunter-gatherers. This is reflected in the ongoing primordiality and predominant Penan ethnicity of the group. As Gumperz (1968: 386) has suggested, ‘separate languages maintain themselves most readily in closed tribal systems, in which kinship dominates all activities’.
8. a lack of success among Penan at school, due to a number of reasons – including a lack of fit between Penan culture and the values and beliefs practised
in the village primary school – is perceived and occasionally referred to by teachers in the school and has an isolating effect, ensuring greater levels of Penan intra-group dependency.

9. Telephone contact with relatives in Sarawak allows access to societal supports for Penan, one of which is continued use of Penan, although features of both Iban and Malay have begun to occur in inter-Penan-community discourse.

Among the factors that appear to be highly salient in language change is penetration of a language group by speakers of other languages. Another is colonisation, from which stems the creation of a hierarchy of languages of differential status by which previously non-existent concepts such as ‘minority language’ emerge (see Mühlhäuser 1989). As Williams (1991: 4) has suggested, ‘[l]anguages in contact are often languages in competition, and the ecology of language has much to do with questions of power, of control over resources, people and land, and the granting or abrogating of social rights throughout history’. It is felt that the social forces referred to by Williams are present to only a limited degree in Sukang Sub-district.

For the Penan language to either die out and/or for Penan to make a total shift to either Iban or Malay (the only other languages to which they presently have any significant degree of exposure), a number of conditions would have to arise, which are not presently in place. The social factors listed below would not necessarily be evenly distributed in terms of the influence they exerted upon the Penan community (see Weinreich et al. 1968):

1. Easier access to urban coastal districts of Brunei (via roads), where the homogenising effects of large-scale institutional forces would be felt more greatly.
2. Greater Penan participation in national social institutions to which they presently have only limited access.
3. Greater exposure to both the national and international media.
4. Greater participation in work that permits regular social interaction with speakers of Iban and/or Malay, as well as of other languages.
5. The Penan have so far placed little stress on individual achievement, with a consequential lack of socio-economic mobility among the group. Greater academic attainment among Penan children would ultimately allow for further economic opportunities.
6. Penan would need to move to other locations for purposes of marriage (particularly exogamy or hypergamy, a particularly powerful factor in language shift, this remaining relatively unlikely at the present), work, or further education. Educational achievement would quite likely also have an effect on their chances of marrying out of the group. (The only Penan to have progressed beyond the primary level education has married a Bisaya’ from
the Limbang District in neighbouring Sarawak, and presently has the most prestigious job among the Penan living in Sukang, as an assistant in the village medical clinic.)

7. if the Penan community is not replenished by more Penan in the form of immigrants or more children, then assimilation may take place if the group diminishes to a point where it may no longer be viable as a discrete community.

8. the lack of Penan in written form reduces the chances of its continuity.

9. in the continued absence of other Penan, those in Sukang are more likely to look towards their Iban neighbours for greater social contact and closer affiliation, as described earlier.

10. further conversion to Islam among members of the Penan community might encourage greater use of Malay (in the same way that it has among Dusun, but not among Iban in the neighbouring upriver sub-district or mukim of Melilas).

11. ultimately, language shift and death are caused by a shift in values (personal and group), and this shift has yet to happen in a way that has caused erosion of Penan to the point of its demise.

It currently appears that the Penan community continues to comprise, to a large degree, a distinct linguistic entity maintaining a distinct code, albeit influenced by surrounding languages.

CONCLUSIONS: SOURCES AND PROCESSES OF SOCIAL CHANGE AMONG THE PENAN IN SUKANG

This chapter has tried to outline a number of significant aspects of the current circumstances of the Penan in Sukang and, in so doing, elicit elements of continuity, as well as examples of transformation that they have undergone in the period since they settled in Brunei. This, of course, omits to take account of the possible social and cultural shifts that took place while the Penan were still hunter-gatherers in southern Brunei and northern Sarawak.

Social change is an ongoing universal phenomenon although it varies, quantitatively and qualitatively, according to context. Rates of social change typically increase as technology within a society advances, and material change is generally more rapid than non-material change. Generally speaking, sources of social change can be accounted for largely through the following: cultural processes, such as inventions and discoveries; diffusion via the spread of cultural elements and contact between societies through trade, immigration and mass communication. There remain very few contemporary hunting and gathering societies that are characterised by patterns of life little changed over the centuries.
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The Penan in Sukang are an example of a community that has undergone a fundamental shift regarding patterns of subsistence (like the majority of Eastern Penan in Sarawak, from the nineteenth century right up to the present day).

Social change is also driven by economic change often with an implicit assumption of improved economic status. Unfortunately, there appears, in the main, little evidence of overall economic progress for most Eastern Penan, since settling. They now farm rice, but no longer process sago, and all are still tied to the land (see Jawan 1994, regarding the same kinds of economic constraints on Iban in Sarawak), not that they would necessarily choose other occupations, given the choice. At the present time, however, Penan remain a true minority group in terms of their numbers, status, and socio-economics (see Mougeon and Beniak 1991: 1)

A number of processes have led to both shifts in procedural knowledge and reductions in the cultural inventory of the Penan Sukang (see Brosius 1992a: 75, on the effects of settlement on Penan). These include new methods of transport (along rivers by boat, rather than by foot along paths); new kinds of labour (wage work); changes in spatial orientation (from expanses of primary rainforest towards a more discrete permanently located community); the acquisition of new skills (e.g., farming and boat making), and a decline in traditional skills; this is concomitant with an overall reduced, but not inevitable, exploitation of the rainforest as a resource and as a marker of social identity, from an etic perspective at least. While Penan have given up elements of their culture (e.g., the practice of certain beliefs, their complex of naming systems), they do not appear to have adopted rituals and practices from settled groups, such as the Dusun harvest festival (temarok) or the Iban gawai festival, although some have become Muslims but not primarily from religious motives.

Apart from settlement (in 1962), significant transformations among the Penan include the following: locational proximity to a community of Dusun; proximity to and influence by Iban; cultural influence at areal level (by Iban) and at national level by a Malay-dominated society (including conversion to Islam); exposure to formal bilingual education; limited access to wage jobs; long-term separation from other Penan; the transition to a new basic means of subsistence; a decrease in hunting; the emergence of fishing as a significant economic activity; an increased use of alcohol; official Bruneian status; and institutionalisation of the Penan elder's role and social status within the larger community of the sub-district. At the same time, it can be observed, particularly from the section on social features above, that the Eastern Penan in Sukang have not yet undergone an ideological shift away from the egalitarianism of Eastern Penan hunter-gatherers,
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nor have they acquired economic wealth and social status through ‘any’ means (see Gurenther 1968: 131–132). Conversion to Islam has brought with it material benefits, but it has only slightly offset the relative material poverty among some Penan families, who had almost no other regular sources of cash income.

Physical isolation decreases chances of dramatic change. The rural and relatively inaccessible context of Sukang is conducive to the conservation and maintenance of village life, with its limited scope for social and physical change, unless imposed or heavily influenced from outside.33

Future changes for the Penan can only be guessed at (see Sercombe 1996a and 1996b), and it would be imprudent to speculate how the Penan in Brunei will continue to evolve as a discrete community, if indeed they remain that. Turnbull (1983: 7) has suggested that,

[w]hen a culture persists with little apparent change, as that of the Mbuti seems to have done over a period of many thousands of years, it is not because of a preoccupation with the past, with the maintenance of ‘tradition,’ nor even because of a conscious readiness and ability to adapt to the present. Rather, it may be because the people, and the culture, are oriented toward what we would call the future rather than the past, or because both the future and the past are considered by them as relatively insignificant extensions of the ever-changing present.34

It is the conclusion here that it is no longer the case that ‘nomadism is the essence of being a Penan’ (Needham 1953: 156). It is not necessarily the case that Penan, depending on ‘length of settlement […] exhibit progressive changes in social organisation and culture compared with traditional groups’ (Needham 1965: 60). The place of settlement is also relevant. Needham’s observations were among Penan on the coast of Sarawak, and residence in coastal areas of Borneo has frequently been shown to be a significant factor in social and cultural realignment. Neither is it the case that the loss of the death-name system is a direct reflection of assimilation to coastal culture (see Needham 1965: 69). While this may suggest social mutation, it does not demonstrate it, and the loss of death names (necronyms) may be interpreted as a symptom that does not, in fact, reveal the real extent of social change, in the same way that it need not reflect the extent of social continuity among this group.

AUTHOR’S NOTE

The author wishes to thank Kelly Donovan for drawing the map that accompanies this chapter.
NOTES

1. Urquhart (1958: 206) had earlier suggested that the term ‘Pennan’ (*sic*) derives from ‘[M]ennan […] a word from a number of Kenyah dialects meaning “to stay in the jungle” […] for two or three years and during that time not to plant crops’.

2. This seems (but may not be) ironic, since one reason given for the arrival of Iban in upriver parts of Brunei is that they were fleeing the Japanese occupation of Sarawak.

3. Leake (1990: 104) also suggests that ‘some Bisaya’ leaders […] in turn “owned” groups of nomadic Penans for trading purposes. As the Penans wandered the deep rugged interior clad in bark loincloths, they would collect jungle produce such as hornbill feathers and bezoar stones to trade for iron knife blades and tobacco.

4. According to R. Needham, the Penan Pelutan migrated between 1765 and 1790 further north, to the middle Baram (pers. comm).

5. Needham (1954d: 429) stated that ‘Penan in general have short memories for genealogies and concern themselves hardly at all with the past […] Penan are concerned to remember and locate as fully as possible the living members of their tribe and people but they do not occupy themselves with the past’, a statement with which I would agree.

6. Needham (1953: 218) stated that ‘Penan trace kinship ambilaterally’.

7. See Sercombe (1999), regarding Iban and the changing status of longhouse chiefs since they have begun receiving salaries for their positions; see also Needham (1965), regarding the emergence of contractual relationships resulting from settlement and contact with official hierarchical institutions, and the contrast to pre-sedentary Penan social life; also, see Steward (1972).

8. An *atu* has been set up in the Brunei National Museum of Technology as an example of Penan culture. See Langub (1989: 179) for further details of *atu* use among Penan. Barnes (1958: 639–645) also provides descriptions of Penan cemeteries on the Niah River.

9. Rousseau (1990: 227) cites Langub’s observation that about ten per cent of Penan marriages are with non-Penan, and this is about the same for the Penan Sukang. Nagata (1979: 246) suggests, in relation to interethnic marriage in Malaysia, that ‘[t]he low rate of ethnic intermarriage is in no small part the result of cultural and structural incompatibility’, which would apply to the Penan in relation to other ethnic groups, to some extent, particularly those with strong institutions of stratification.

10. R. Needham (pers. comm.) said that he had only ever seen one Penan not married, and this man was both ugly and weak, which is not the case with Udhi, although he is a heavy drinker, if given the opportunity.

11. The only exception that I have encountered in Sarawak was in the Eastern Penan village of Pa’ Tik, to the south of the Kuba’an River, where some Penan remain semi-nomadic.

12. There is a telephone located in the Dusun longhouse, and people pay to phone out of the district – B$ 1 for three minutes, when it works. Penan always feel very
uncomfortable approaching the Dusun to make use of this facility, even though it is provided by the government. Now there is also a telephone in the Penan longhouse, but calls can only be received, not made.

13. One way to tease an unmatched Dusun or Iban adult male is to suggest that he obtains a Penan bride. In Biadong Ulu, there is a consensus among Iban that the Penan are lazy and chaotic in their daily lives. However, a Penan male is married to an Iban woman from Biadong and they live with her brother next to the path between Sukang and Biadong.

14. See Janowski’s (1996) view that the Kelabit, in Sarawak, perceive Eastern Penan as children, although this has been challenged by Bala (2002).

15. This coincided with some Penan saying that they had made tuak from fruit when they had been hunter-gatherers.

16. In conjunction, however, a number of Iban – about 50 per cent – in the adjacent mukim of Melilas (which has only one longhouse with a population of just over 100) have converted to Islam, as have some Dusun in Sukang.

17. Penan in Sarawak have increasingly abandoned loincloths and traditional haircuts.

18. In the Penan village of Pa’ Tik, on the Magoh River (between one and two days’ walk from Bario) in northeastern Sarawak, I witnessed performances satirising loggers and government officials through mime and role-play. I have also witnessed, in Long Buang, sayatu (Penan ‘dance’), loosely based on the elegant dances of other groups but, in the case of Penan, it is mostly performed as a vigorous bottom-wiggle, the more vigorous the better, in a deliberate parody of refined longhouse-style dances.

19. Nowadays, following both missionary influence and that of settled peoples with whom the Penan come into regular contact, the majority of Penan in Sarawak have become evangelical Christians; and some openly disdain traditional Penan beliefs (see Sercombe 1996b).

20. Brunei’s Borneo Bulletin (2000: 22) occasionally makes reference to the number of Muslim converts. In the 23 April 2000 issue (Borneo Bulletin 2000: 22), an article on this subject was accompanied by a picture of the Sultan, presumably to add prestige to this phenomenon: ‘From 1971 to 1999 there were altogether 9,570 converts in the country’, under the title ‘More Embrace Islam’. The newspaper did not mention the economic and other social advantages to be gained from conversion to Islam, which may be significant attractions for those intending to convert, or the fact of compulsory conversion to Islam by marriage to a Muslim. At the same time, Brunei should not be seen as particularly different from many other nationalistic governments in their attempts at homogenisation towards a single religion, language, ethnicity, or political idea.

21. For more comprehensive descriptions of Eastern Penan foraging economies, see, among others, Langub (1989) and Needham (in this volume).

22. Rousseau (1990: 46) argued that Barth’s (1969) view of ‘ethnicity’ as ‘the most general identity’ is inapplicable to Borneo because it is not the major marker of socio-economic differences. I would suggest that, in the case of Eastern Penan, ethnicity is a clear and useful marker since, wherever one travels among Eastern Penan, they are inevitably the poorest people in a given area. I am aware of no exceptions to this.
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23. The Penan cannot travel any further than Bukit Sawat, a small settlement downriver that adjoins both the road south from the coast and the Belait River, as no Penan in Sukang has a car. Penan are occasionally able to secure lifts in cars from teachers returning home, but not from the neighbouring Dusun, who are reluctant to take them, since their cars are more likely to be full with family members and/or supplies.

24. Leake (1990: 105) claimed that the Penan Sukang were planting wet or swamp rice and cultivating *rumbia* (sago palms), but the former has never taken place among any of the groups in Sukang Sub-district and the latter practice began to decline in the 1960s and stopped altogether in the mid-1980s.

25. Nearly every Penan village that I have ever visited has a similarly poor record of rearing chickens for domestic consumption.

26. Dusun and Iban buy foodstuffs in bulk downriver, which they can then store in their freezers at home in the upriver sub-district.

27. Penan store wild pig fat on the occasions that they obtain it.

28. Ellen and Bernstein (1994: 16) felt that Bruneians ‘who traditionally made a living from forest products (Dusun, Iban, Murut and Kedayan) have been lured to wage employment. This has resulted in a flow of people to towns and the emptying of rural villages’. This is certainly true for Dusun, less so for Iban and Penan.

29. See Nicolaisen (1976b: 208; although his focus was actually Western Penan), who wrote that ‘[a]ll Penan still collect wild sago in the forest’, as if this is a defining characteristic of being Penan, yet the Penan Sukang have abandoned this practice, but remain Penan. Brosius (1991a) suggested that Penan may abandon their traditional management of forest resources with increased availability of cultivated foods, and those which can be bought if they have access to these and the money to buy them. This is the case in Sukang. Sather (1995: 255) also suggested that ‘[w]hile foragers may be in the process of becoming sedentary, the end result is by no means a complete conversion to cultivation, much less to full-time rice agriculture. Instead, partially settled foragers usually continue to forage, often, in fact, intensifying their collection of forest products as they take up part-time cultivation for subsistence’. This is not the case in Sukang (see Ellen 1994: 205), where the Penan now rely mainly on cash, rice-farming, and fishing. In Sukang Sub-district, the Iban collect far more intensively and widely than the Penan, besides which the Iban do not mind being out at night in the search for resources, while the Penan do.

30. Sellato (1994a) has written that egalitarian groups like the Iban do their own commercial foraging and so do not need the services of the Penan.

31. Ironically, the Penan in Brunei make less use of the plentiful resources available to them than the Penan who inhabit the middle Baram areas of Sarawak, who have a far more limited range of natural resources to exploit.

32. In some respects, the Penan Sukang contrast considerably with Eastern Penan in Sarawak: among Penan in Sarawak, there is a highly developed sense of political consciousness (Sercombe 1996b). A number of Penan in Sarawak have received higher education, moved downriver, and taken up government administrative
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Posts or returned to teach in upriver (Penan) schools. Among these Penan, there have been clashes with loggers, vociferous objections to oil palm projects, as well as close interaction with journalists and tourists. Penan in Sarawak are also aware of commercial markets and of the value of their culture as a commodity that has been put on exhibit, for example, at the Sarawak Cultural Village in Kuching. The Penan in Sarawak have had to adapt to deforestation, which has not affected the interior of Brunei to any great extent. And most of the Penan in Sarawak have been converted to Christianity (ibid.).

33. According to Jamal Gantar (pers. comm.), the Dusun and Penan did not affect each other, in any distinct social or cultural way, before, during, or after Penan settlement. It was only with the arrival of Iban that both Dusun and, subsequently, Penan were affected socio-culturally. Significant evidence for this has been the adoption of Iban as the lingua franca for Sukang Sub-district.

34. See Glazer and Moynihan (1975: 4), on the ways in which ethnic groups tend to be seen as historical relics, yet many engender change and regenerate themselves while clearly remaining identifiable as a particular ethnic group.
Chapter 11

PENAN ETHNOBOTANY: SUBSISTENCE STRATEGY AND BREADTH OF KNOWLEDGE

By Robert A. Voeks

Abstract: It has been hypothesised, that the plant pharmacopoeias employed by hunting and gathering societies should be significantly smaller than those maintained by small-scale cultivators. The author uses knowledgeable Penan and Dusun informants to examine this hypothesis by means of a one-hectare-plot-based census of perceived medicinal species in old growth, mixed Dipterocarp forest in Brunei Darussalam. He suggests that the subsistence continuum from foraging to farming is necessarily accompanied by an amplified understanding of the medicinal properties of plants.

INTRODUCTION

The subsistence strategies of Borneo’s interior societies are (or were) divided roughly between nomadic hunter-gatherers, especially the Penan (or Punan), and settled swidden agriculturalists, such as the Kenyah, the Kayan, and the Dusun. The Penan concentrate their efforts on blowpipe and spear hunting of the Bearded pig (Sus barbatus) and other forest game, as well as the preparation of sago from nangah (Eugeissona utilis), a wild, clump-forming palm. They also collect a variety of non-timber forest products for food, fibre, medicine, and other purposes. Most swidden farming groups, on the other hand, focus on hill rice
cultivation, supplemented by snare hunting, fishing, and wild plant extraction (see Brosius 1992a, King 1993, Padoch and Peluso 1996, Rousseau 1990, Sellato 1994a). Both subsistence systems are characterised by an intimate understanding of the plant kingdom. Nevertheless, because ethnobotanical knowledge among traditional societies is largely utilitarian (Hunn 1982), it follows that the Penan, whose livelihoods depend completely on their knowledge of the forest, should maintain a greater breadth of ethnobotanical understanding than their cultivating counterparts. Thus, whereas Borneo’s swidden societies focus their plant skills on domesticated rice varieties, the foraging Penan by choice direct their botanical efforts at naming and exploiting the island’s wild primary forest providence.

However intuitively persuasive, the notion that hunter-gatherers such as the Penan maintain greater levels of ethnobotanical knowledge than small-scale cultivators has not been supported by research. Using lexical breadth as an index of ethnobotanical knowledge, Brown (1985) reported that small-scale cultivators maintained a magnitude of named plant categories some five times greater on average than that of foragers. Cultivators averaged 890 named plant classes, whereas hunter-gathers exhibited a mean of only 179. With two exceptions, all of the farming societies in his census had more than 337 labelled plant taxa, whereas all the foraging groups maintained less than 337 plant labels. Berlin (1992: 98), who used the number of named folk genera rather than simply named taxa, likewise discerned a significant variation in the number of folk generics between groups employing different subsistence strategies. In his literature survey, small-scale farming groups averaged 520 folk generic names, whereas hunter-gathering societies averaged only 197. The question, then, is whether there are some inherent features associated with a predominantly foraging life style that lend themselves to the development of a relatively small ethnobotanical lexicon and, hence, a limited quantitative knowledge of the surrounding flora.

Brown (1985) advanced several hypotheses to account for this disparity. He noted, for example, that ethnobotanical lexicons are amplified significantly by the acquisition of domesticated crop species and their varieties, a flora with which foragers should have relatively limited familiarity. Moreover, even without the numerical addition of cultigens, the process of crop cultivation, as opposed to simple plant extraction, has the effect of converting relatively homogenous old growth vegetation into a patchwork of successional and often highly productive seral stages for plant recognition and exploitation (see Chazdon and Coe 1999; Toledo et al. 1992; Voeks 1996a). In addition, the myriad weedy plant invaders
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associated with cultivation, species with little or no salience to wild food gatherers, are likely to receive the attention necessary among cultivators to warrant plant labels (Ellen 1999).

Brown (1985) further suggested that the principal benefits associated with this reliance on domesticated crops – increased food supplies and its resultant enhanced carrying capacity – would likely carry the liability of heightened risks of famine (see also Hunn and French 1984: 89). Unlike hunter-gatherers, who depend on wild food species that are reasonably well adapted to occasional environmental fluctuations, cultivators by choice bank on food resources that are at the mercy of periodic crop failure from droughts, floods, insect outbreaks, and other natural and social calamities. Thus, periodic hunger is seen as a driving force behind the acquisition of an amplified understanding of temporary famine foods, and thus an expanded ethnobotanical inventory. Groups pursuing a purely foraging form of subsistence, on the other hand, because of their low population densities and reliance on a relatively reliable subsistence base, are seldom if ever required to exploit such marginal food resources.

Brown (1985) further posited that the contrasting demographic patterns associated with hunting and gathering and with cultivating might also play a role in plant name acquisition and retention. In this view, farming societies would naturally suffer from a greater range of illnesses, especially viral ‘crowd diseases’, than their foraging counterparts, because of their greater population densities. This enhanced risk of disease would, in turn, force small-scale cultivators to become better acquainted with the medicinal properties of the native flora and, as a result, expand their labelled plant pharmacopoeia.

Brown’s conclusions can be criticised on methodological and theoretical grounds. For example, establishing a clear demarcation between what constitutes a hunter-gatherer as opposed to a shifting cultivator existence is problematic. Foraging groups often engage in incipient horticultural enterprise, and cultivators are often skilled hunters and gatherers (Brosius 1991a, Layton et al. 1991). Moreover, Ellen (1998) has questioned the use of lexically encoded plant knowledge as an index of ethnobotanical knowledge. Foragers, he suggests, may compensate for a limited breadth of plant knowledge by maintaining a greater substantive knowledge of the plant taxa that they exploit. More specifically, Berlin (1992: 283–290) questioned Brown’s emphasis on neo-functionalist explanations for ethnobotanical knowledge. However, although Berlin argued against the necessity of domestication as the principal agent behind the acquisition of folk specific taxa, he did not fully address the underlying issue of whether or not utility is the principal driving force behind expanded folk genera.
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The most serious challenge to Brown’s results comes from the data sets used in his calculations. Many of the small-scale cultivators in his inventory inhabit species-rich, moist tropical regions, where the opportunities to exploit different plant taxa are legion. Most of the hunter-gatherer records he used, however, were for groups occupying less speciose, temperate zone habitats (Bulmer 1985, Berlin 1992: 99). Clearly, the validity of comparing groups from such widely different biomes as tundra and tropical forest is open to question. Indeed, Headland (1985) subsequently compiled an ethnobotanical lexicon of 603 plant terms for Negrito hunter-gatherers in the Philippines, well within the range of that reported for cultivating groups. Later, Ichikawa (1992) identified over 500 species being used by the Mbuti in the Republic of the Congo, a figure very near the mean reported for small-scale farmers. Clearly, the most unbiased means of assessing this issue would be through an ethnobotanical census of hunter-gatherers and cultivators who occupy the same tropical habitat (Berlin 1992: 99).

The objectives of the present study were two fold (1) to test Brown’s hypothesis regarding the magnitude of folk plant names maintained by hunter-gatherers and small-scale cultivators in Borneo, and (2) to determine the degree to which ethnobotanical salience among these groups is a function of cultural utility. In order to reduce the influence of differing biodiversity levels encountered by geographically separated groups, I worked with sympatric foraging and cultivating groups – the Penan and Dusun of Brunei Darussalam – people with the opportunity to know and utilise essentially the same range of plants and habitats. I also avoided the question of whether or not complete ethnobotanical lists were produced for either group by employing a plot-based sampling method.

CULTURE AND SETTING

The Penan consist of two disjunct populations – the Eastern and Western Penan. They are distributed in Sarawak in East Malaysia, Kalimantan in Indonesia, and Brunei Darussalam (King 1993: 166–170; Needham in this volume). These two sub-groups exhibit distinct differences in language, group size, foraging range, nomadic characteristics, and degree of social organisation (Brosius 1992a: 66). The group in this study, the Penan at Sukang, were nomadic hunter-gatherers in Sarawak and southern Brunei prior to settling in 1962 (Sercombe 1996a; see Map 10.1). They constitute one of the ethnic isolates of the Eastern Penan phylum that inhabit areas to the east of the Baram River in Sarawak, as far as the Limbang watershed, south to the Kalimantan border and north into Brunei.
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There are presently 56 people who occupy a longhouse on the west bank of the Belait River in the interior of Brunei.

The Penan at Sukang are undergoing many of the socio-cultural changes that are affecting other indigenous groups in Borneo (Ellen and Bernstein 1994). These include accepting wage-earning employment, miscegenating with non-Penan cultivating groups, absorption of lexical elements from nearby groups (especially Iban), and religious conversion. Four families, by the time of this study, had converted to Islam. Moreover, all the families at Sukang have substituted hill rice cultivation for wild sago. Indeed, several of the distinctive cultural elements listed by Needham (1963) as indicators of their ‘Penan-ness’ have been abandoned by the Penan at Sukang. These include, among others, living in huts, men wearing loincloths, men with distended earlobes, use of penis pins, and plucked eyelashes and brows.

In spite of these changes, the Penan at Sukang represent a good compromise source of information regarding a traditional Bornean hunter-gatherer society. Sercombe (1996a) found, for example, that the Penan language predominates at Sukang, although Iban and Malay words are rapidly being incorporated. Several of the fundamental elements that distinguish the Penan as a distinct group survive at Sukang as well, including preparation of blowpipes, hunting, and sharing of game meat. Hunting and gathering are still significant activities, in part because Brunei has strictly limited its timber extraction activities, leaving it with extensive areas of primary Dipterocarp forest. Moreover, because possession of firearms is punishable by a mandatory death penalty in Brunei, game is relatively plentiful and is still pursued with traditional spears and blowpipes. These features contrast sharply with those of the neighbouring Sarawak, where shotgun proliferation has eliminated much of the wild game, and where most of the old-growth forests have been severely logged over. Finally, although some of the Penan at Sukang have converted to Islam, most continue to subscribe to their original animist belief system (Voeks and Sercombe 2000). In Sarawak, where many of the Penan groups have converted to Christianity, the original spiritual ties that bound these groups to the land have disappeared.

The Dusun of Brunei represent one of the oldest settled agricultural groups in the region. Although officially recognised as Malay by the Brunei government, the Dusun appear to be linguistically related to the Bisaya, an ethnic group currently inhabiting the Limbang region of Sarawak (Bernstein et al. 1997). They traditionally lived in village longhouses, but this practice was largely abandoned in favour of single-family dwellings after World War II. Their subsistence economy, at least until recently, depended on community-based, swidden rice cultivation. This was supplemented by fishing and hunting of forest game, and collection of extractive products (Antaran
Dusun subsistence was also notable in that it frequently included the creation and maintenance of orchards of wild and semi-domesticated fruit trees.

Dusun society has undergone significant changes as well since the 1950s. Most young people are abandoning traditional agricultural activities in favour of wage-earning jobs in the coastal cities. Many have entered the Brunei armed forces, and a few have received advanced degrees from foreign universities. The younger generations, having passed through the Brunei school system, are now fluent in Malay (Ellen and Bernstein 1994). However, although increasing numbers are intermarrying with Malays and converting to Islam, the Dusun spiritual belief system is surprisingly intact, even among urban Dusun. Nevertheless, knowledge of the forest is disappearing quickly among this group and is, increasingly, the exclusive domain of a dwindling number of older Dusun.

The floristic landscape of this region comprised a mix of tropical forest ecosystem types. These include lowland peat forests, riparian forests, heath forests, and mixed Dipterocarp forests. The last type, however, represents each group’s primary habitat for exploitation. Mixed Dipterocarp forest, which is characterised by tall, broadleaf evergreen trees sometimes exceeding 60 m in height, is numerically dominated by the speciose Dipterocarpaceae family. Other particularly rich families include the Ebenaceae, Euphorbiaceae, Myrtaceae, and Annonaceae. The understory is rich in palms, including a host of rattan climbers (e.g., *Calamus* spp. and *Daemonorops* spp.) and shrubby licuala (*Licuala* spp.). The old-growth forest floor is carpeted with herbaceous ginger (*Zingiberaceae*), ferns, and forest tree seedlings (see Edwards and Cranbrook 1994; Poulson and Pendry 1995).

The soils of this area are mostly ultisols developed on soft shale substrate. Mean annual precipitation ranges from 2,000 to 3,000 mm, distributed more or less evenly throughout the year (Sirinanda 1990).

**METHODS**

I sampled the known and/or culturally significant species of the Penan and Dusun in a 1.0-hectare forest plot. In addition to representing a relatively unbiased sampling method for ethnobotanical work, plot-based sampling has the advantage of being repeatable in other habitats and among other human groups (see Phillips et al. 1994, Prance et al. 1987, Voeks 1996b). The plot, located in old-growth mixed Dipterocarp forest, represents a permanent ecological study plot maintained by the Universiti Brunei Darussalam. It is floristically dominated in order of importance by Dipterocarpaceae, Euphorbiaceae, Ebenaceae, and Anacardiaceae. All trees greater than 5 cm dbh (diameter at breast height)
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had previously been labelled, vouched, and identified to genus or species. A total of 303 tree species or morpho-species were enumerated among the 1,086 individual trees in the plot. Lianas, epiphytes, and other life forms were not included in the original census.

I worked with a 44-year-old Penan informant (Udhi anak Kutok) and a 64-year-old Dusun informant (Kilat bin Kilah) to census the plot. Although the original plan had been to employ two informants from each group, Udhi was the only unmarried adult male Penan at Sukang, and thus the only member who was able to leave the village for days at a time. However, I was confident that Udhi’s knowledge of the forest was reasonably representative of the group as a whole. He was still actively engaged in hunting and gathering and, compared to the married male members of the group, spent relatively little time working the swiddens. Kilat had been a swidden rice farmer in Bukit Sawat for 50 plus years, and had recently retired. I had worked with him in an earlier ethnomedical study, and found him to be quite knowledgeable about the local flora. However, given that there were only two main informants, it is acknowledged that this study is both suggestive and preliminary, and that further data should be gathered to investigate the validity of the claims made here.

The plot was censused individually by Udhi and Kilat between 8 October 1993 and 21 October 1994. Both men were asked to identify all known individual plants, regardless of whether they were or were not considered useful. The concept of ‘useful’ in this context was explained to refer to ‘cultural significance,’ that is, material, magical, avoidance, or otherwise. The plot was divided into 10 m × 10 m sub-plots, which facilitated the census. We moved from one sub-plot to the next, examining each numbered tree, as well as all accessible lianas, rattans, shrubs, epiphytes, and herbs. The questions posed at each plant were ‘Do you have a name for this plant?’ and ‘Does this plant have meaning or value to the Penan (or Dusun) people?’ If the answer to either question was yes, then Udhi or Kilat was asked to explain further. In these cases, the numbered tree was recorded or, if it was not a numbered tree, the plant was collected using standard vouchering procedures. Collections were stored at the Brunei Forestry Department Herbarium, and determinations were made by the local herbarium staff.

As noted earlier, there is little question that ethnobotanical lexicons are enhanced significantly by the addition of domesticated crop plants. The more problematic question, however, is whether quantitative knowledge of wild plants also increases along the transition from foraging to farming. In this particular case, old-growth tropical rain forest represents the preferred foraging habitat for the Penan. By their own accounts, they did not, for fear of offending forest spirits, cut trees larger in
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diameter than that of their forearms (Voeks and Sercombe 2000). Nor, again by
their own accounts, did they hunt or collect forest products in the secondary forests
created by their swidden neighbours. Although I could not test the veracity of these
claims, I have no reason to doubt that old-growth forests are at the least their
preferred habitat (Brosius 1991a; Needham in this volume). This preference
contrasts markedly with the Dusun and other Bornean cultivators, who utilise the
full range of seral communities, from highly disturbed to nearly pristine. In terms
of the quantitative objectives of this study, this narrow habitat preference in effect
gives the hunter-gatherer group the advantage. Thus, if the magnitude of the
Penan's ethnobotanical knowledge is within the range of their Dusun farming
neighbours, then surely it should be elicited in a census of their principal foraging
habitat.

GENERAL CENSUS RESULTS

Udhi, the Penan informant, furnished a total of 45 basic labels for plants in the
plot (Table 11.1). These were distributed among 18 different plant families, 39
genera, and 58 species. The most speciose culturally significant families were
Dipterocarpaceae, with 15 species; Palmae, with eight species, Euphorbiaceae,
with seven species; and Myristicaceae, with four species. The most species-rich
genera included Shorea, with nine species; Daemonorops, with three species;
Dipterocarpus, with three species; and Vatica, with two species.

Kilat, the Dusun informant, identified 84 different basic plant names (Table
11.2). These were distributed among 42 different families, 87 genera, and 185
species. The most quantitatively important families were Ebenaceae, with 17
species; Myrtaceae, with 16 species; and Dipterocarpaceae, with 15 species. The
most numerous genera were Diospyros, with 17 species; Syzygium, with 16 species;
Shorea, with seven species; and Gluta, with five species. Unlike Udhi, who supplied
names for all the culturally significant species he identified, Kilat failed to provide
names for a significant number of medicinal taxa, which he stated he knew but
could not remember. Although we were later able to resolve several of these names,
13 useful taxa remained without Dusun folk labels. Thus, in terms of quantitative
plant salience and significance, Kilat knew this patch of forest much better than
Udhi. Kilat provided 87 per cent more plant names than Udhi. He also identified
2.3 times more culturally significant plant families, 2.2 times more genera, and
3.2 times more species.

Among the species named and/or given cultural significance by Udhi and Kilat,
only 21 were recognised by both (Table 11.3). For Udhi, these 21 species represented
### Table 11.1. Plant Species Named and Identified as Useful by Penan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Penan Name</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Life Form</th>
<th>Voucher Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abang</td>
<td>Cooking oil from fruit</td>
<td><em>Shorea acuta</em> Ashton</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>RV422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Shorea amplexicaulis</em> Ashton</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aoh</td>
<td>No use</td>
<td><em>Xanthophyllum scortechinii</em> King</td>
<td>Polygalaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>batang kevok</td>
<td>No use</td>
<td><em>Koilodepas longifolium</em> HK.F.</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bekayu</td>
<td>Fashion chop sticks to eat sago</td>
<td><em>Isona cf. glomeridiflora</em> Bremek.</td>
<td>Rubiaceae</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>RV420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bekelah</td>
<td>Leaves used as sand-paper for blowpipes</td>
<td><em>Tetracera macrophylla</em> Hook.F. &amp; Thoms.</td>
<td>Dilleniaceae</td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>RV424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belulang</td>
<td>Edible fruit</td>
<td><em>Ptychophyxis</em> sp.</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>RV418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>benua</td>
<td>Leaves fashioned into packets for carrying food</td>
<td><em>Macaranga trachyphylla</em> Airy Shaw</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boheng</td>
<td>Fuelwood; wood mortar for removing rice husk</td>
<td><em>Elasteiospermum tapos</em> Bl.</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>itot (daun)</td>
<td>Edible pith from lower stem; leaves made into hats</td>
<td><em>Licuala</em> sp.</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>RV427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>janan (bua)</td>
<td>Edible fruit; rattan for mats and baskets</td>
<td><em>Calamus cf. ornatus</em> Blume</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>CL</td>
<td>RV432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jemelah</td>
<td>Poles for forest huts</td>
<td><em>Brownlowia</em> sp.</td>
<td>Tiliaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karot</td>
<td>Edible fruit</td>
<td><em>Garcinia mangostana</em> L.</td>
<td>Guttiferae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kelingin aham</td>
<td>Fuelwood</td>
<td><em>Aporusa subandata</em> Merr.</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keramo</td>
<td>Edible fruit</td>
<td><em>Dacryodes laxa</em> Benn. H. J. Lam</td>
<td>Burseraceae</td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>RV423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keruong</td>
<td>Edible fruit</td>
<td><em>Dacryodes expansa</em> (Ridl.) H. J. Lam</td>
<td>Burseraceae</td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>RV415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kevahah</td>
<td>Fuelwood</td>
<td><em>Vatica umbonata</em> (Hook. F.) Burck.</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kovong aput</td>
<td>Timber for longhouse construction</td>
<td><em>Dipterocarpus genticulatus</em> Vesque</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lemesong</td>
<td>Fuelwood</td>
<td><em>Shorea dasyphylla</em> Foxw.</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lesuan</td>
<td>Timber for longhouse construction</td>
<td><em>Gironniera parviflora</em> Planch.</td>
<td>Ulmaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manan mitus</td>
<td>Edible fruit</td>
<td><em>Dryobalanops aromatica</em> Dyer.</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medong</td>
<td>Edible fruit</td>
<td><em>Shorea pareiflora</em> Dyer.</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mejingring</td>
<td>No use</td>
<td><em>Artocarpus odoratsissimus</em> Blanco</td>
<td>Moraceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mesilat</td>
<td>Edible fruit</td>
<td><em>Nephelium cuspidatum</em> Bl.</td>
<td>Sapindaceae</td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>RV419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Use</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Tree</td>
<td>Shrub</td>
<td>Vine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngah</td>
<td>No use</td>
<td>Anacardiaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyagang</td>
<td>Trunk used to fashion blowpipes</td>
<td>Moraceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyereyu</td>
<td>Fuelwood</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyivung</td>
<td>Edible palm heart</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paa</td>
<td>No use</td>
<td>Leguminosae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>penawon</td>
<td>Leaves used for medicinal rubbing</td>
<td>Annonaceae</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>RV421</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peripun</td>
<td>Edible fruit</td>
<td>Moraceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perutang</td>
<td>Edible fruit</td>
<td>Sapindaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>RV416</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pidau (bu)</td>
<td>Edible fruit</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>RV414</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raha</td>
<td>Fuelwood</td>
<td>Myristaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rangah</td>
<td>Timber for longhouse construction</td>
<td>Myristaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selapong (wai)</td>
<td>Rattan woven into bags and mats</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>semui (wai)</td>
<td>Rattan woven into bags and mats</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sin savit belengon</td>
<td>Edible palm heart</td>
<td>Daenonorops korthalii Blume</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sin savit medok</td>
<td>Edible fruit; cooked heart is edible</td>
<td>Daenonorops periantha Miq.</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tepungen pawa</td>
<td>Fuelwood</td>
<td>Xerocarpus noronbianum Bl.</td>
<td>Sapindaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tilikut</td>
<td>Burn bark for insect repellant</td>
<td>Lauraceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upak (daun)</td>
<td>Edible pith from lower stem</td>
<td>Annonaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>RV412</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utong</td>
<td>Fuelwood</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sulat</td>
<td>Fuelwood</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uvat</td>
<td>Type of edible starch</td>
<td>Ulmaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11.2. Plant Species Named and Identified as Useful by Dusun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dusun Name</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Life Form</th>
<th>Voucher Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abang</td>
<td>Timber for upper house; vegetable</td>
<td>Shorea amplificaulis Ashton</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>oil pressed from fruits</td>
<td>Shorea meciotoperyx Ridl.</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adal</td>
<td>Snack food</td>
<td>Canarium littoral Bl.</td>
<td>Burseraceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Canarium piloum Benn.</td>
<td>Burseraceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ambat sagubang kayuh</td>
<td>Root as poison antidote</td>
<td>Trigonostemon polyanthus Merr. var. lychnus R.I. Milne</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>RV519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anggih</td>
<td>Timber for upper house construction</td>
<td>Dryobalanops aromatica Gaertn. f.</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arak-arak</td>
<td>Wood for machete sheath</td>
<td>Shorea biawak Ashton</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atung</td>
<td>Wood for musical instrument</td>
<td>Blumeodendron kurzi (Hook f.) J.J. Sm.</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blumeodendron sp. 1</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>badui</td>
<td>Nasal medicine</td>
<td>Costus paradoxus K. Schum.</td>
<td>Costaceae</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>RV469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>banawar bukid</td>
<td>Fuelwood</td>
<td>Pternandra coriacea (Cogn.) Nayar</td>
<td>Melastomataceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pternandra crassicalyx Maxw.</td>
<td>Melastomataceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>banculuk</td>
<td>Male root tonic</td>
<td>Lepisanthus fruticosus (Roxb.) Leenh.</td>
<td>Sapindaceae</td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>RV523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bantantu (uwai)</td>
<td>Rattan for making baskets</td>
<td>Daemonarops oxycearpa Becc.</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>RV527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>barang</td>
<td>Stem for hut flooring</td>
<td>Pinanga moreae J. Dransf.</td>
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<td>Drypetes macrostigma J. J. Sm.</td>
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<td>durian mantui</td>
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<td>Durio grandiflorus (Mast.) Kost. &amp; Soeg.</td>
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(continued)
Table 11.2. Plant Species Named and Identified as Useful by Dusun (continued)

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<th>Species</th>
<th>Family</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Diospyros hermaphroditica</em> (Zoll.) Bakh.</td>
<td>Ebenaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Diospyros macrophylla</em> Bl.</td>
<td>Ebenaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Diospyros cf. mindanaensis</em> Merr.</td>
<td>Ebenaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Diospyros muricata</em> Bakh.</td>
<td>Ebenaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Diospyros nidus-avis</em> Kosterm.</td>
<td>Ebenaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Diospyros pendula</em> Hasselt ex Hassk.</td>
<td>Ebenaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Diospyros cf. pseudomalabarica</em> Bakh.</td>
<td>Ebenaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td></td>
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<td><em>Diospyros swingleri</em> Kosterm.</td>
<td>Ebenaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Diospyros sp.</em> 2</td>
<td>Ebenaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td><em>Diospyros sp.</em> 3</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td><em>Diospyros sp.</em> 4</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Diospyros sp.</em> 5</td>
<td>Ebenaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patidong</td>
<td>Used in tamarok ceremonies to eliminate bad spirits; other magical ends</td>
<td><em>Dracaena</em> sp. 2</td>
<td>Dracaenaceae</td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>RV515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pawas</td>
<td>Timber for upper house</td>
<td><em>Litsea caulocarpa</em> Merr.</td>
<td>Lauraceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Litsea sp.</em> 1</td>
<td>Lauraceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piasau-piasau</td>
<td>No use</td>
<td><em>Pentace</em> sp. 1</td>
<td>Tiliaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pilis</td>
<td>Upper house timber; fashion mortar for removing rice husk</td>
<td><em>Aporusa nitida</em> Merr.</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Aporusa subcaudata</em> Merr.</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Aporusa sp.</em> 1</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Aporusa sp.</em> 2</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pinang sisil</td>
<td>No use--jinx plant</td>
<td><em>Areca minuta</em> Scheff.</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>RV513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>podos (uwai)</td>
<td>Rope material; stem for spanking children</td>
<td><em>Calamus javenis</em> Bl.</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>CL</td>
<td>RV522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pogoh</td>
<td>Edible fruit</td>
<td><em>Elateriospermum tapo</em> Bl.</td>
<td>Euphorbiaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant Name</td>
<td>Common Name</td>
<td>Scientific Name</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Use/Effect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rangas</td>
<td>No use--minor dermatitis</td>
<td><em>Beilschmiedia cf. kunstleri</em></td>
<td>Lauraceae</td>
<td>T x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Ganua beccarii</em> Dub.</td>
<td>Sapotaceae</td>
<td>T x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Ganua kingiana</em> (Brace) V. D. Assem.</td>
<td>Sapotaceae</td>
<td>T x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rangas baduk</td>
<td>No use - - serious dermatitis</td>
<td><em>Gluta sp.</em></td>
<td>Anacardiaceae</td>
<td>T x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Gluta laxiflora</em> Ridl.</td>
<td>Anacardiaceae</td>
<td>T x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Gluta cf. macrocarpa</em> (Engl.) Ding Hou</td>
<td>Anacardiaceae</td>
<td>T x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Gluta cf. pubescens</em> (Ridl.) Ding Hou</td>
<td>Anacardiaceae</td>
<td>T x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Gluta wallischi</em> (Hook. f.) Ding Hou</td>
<td>Anacardiaceae</td>
<td>T x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rangas mpalang</td>
<td>Bark burned as insecticide; piscicide in small lakes</td>
<td><em>Barringtonia lanceolata</em> (Ridl.) Payens</td>
<td>Lecythidaceae</td>
<td>T x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Barringtonia reticulata</em> (Bl.) Miq.</td>
<td>Lecythidaceae</td>
<td>T x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Barringtonia sarcocephalus</em> (Merr.) Paynes</td>
<td>Lecythidaceae</td>
<td>T x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rangup</td>
<td>Eat raw root to strengthen bones; burn leaves for protection against prosecution</td>
<td><em>Ardisia sp.</em></td>
<td>Myrsinaceae</td>
<td>TL RV508</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>sagang</td>
<td>Edible fruit</td>
<td><em>Alpinia cf. glabra</em> Ridl.</td>
<td>Zingiberaceae</td>
<td>H RV509</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>sanggara</td>
<td>Leaves edible; roots for male tonic</td>
<td><em>Galearia fukia</em> (Tiul.) Miq.</td>
<td>Pandanaceae</td>
<td>TL RV505</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sangkarai</td>
<td>Excellent fuelwood</td>
<td><em>Polyalthia hypoleuca</em> Hk. f. &amp; Th.</td>
<td>Annonaceae</td>
<td>T x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>silad</td>
<td>Leaves to wrap food; covering for snares; roof thatch; stems for baskets; male root tonic</td>
<td><em>Licuala sp.</em> 2</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>SH RV501</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Licuala cf. borneensis</em> Becc.</td>
<td>Palmae</td>
<td>SH RV521</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>silil</td>
<td>No use—jinx</td>
<td><em>Urophyllum hirsutum</em> (Wight) Hook. f.</td>
<td>Rubiaceae</td>
<td>TL RV510</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sisil purak</td>
<td>No use—jinx</td>
<td><em>Litsea ferruginea</em> (Blume) Blume</td>
<td>Lauraceae</td>
<td>TL RV512</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>tagalap</td>
<td>Root infusion for blood in vomit</td>
<td><em>Hosea lobiana</em> (C.B. Clarke) Ridl.</td>
<td>Verbenaceae</td>
<td>TL RV533</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tawir</td>
<td>Bark burned as insecticide in tobacco field</td>
<td><em>Fordia filipes</em> Dunn</td>
<td>Leguminosae</td>
<td>T x</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Fordia splendidissima</em> (Miq.)</td>
<td>Leguminosae</td>
<td>T x</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Buisen ssp. splendidissima</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>tiga-tiga</td>
<td>Leaves burned as tobacco insecticide; latex applied topically for pancreas pain</td>
<td><em>Luvunga molleyi</em> Oliver</td>
<td>Rutaceae</td>
<td>TL RV524</td>
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(continued)
Table 11.2. Plant Species Named and Identified as Useful by Dusun (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dusun Name</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Life Form</th>
<th>Voucher Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tiis</td>
<td>Resin for lamp fuel</td>
<td>Shorea balanocarpoides Sym.</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>tinggilan</td>
<td>Wood for axe handles and spinning tops</td>
<td>Alangium javanicum (K. &amp; V.) Wang</td>
<td>Alangiaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alangium sp. 1</td>
<td>Alangiaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ubor</td>
<td>Timber for upper house construction</td>
<td>Syzygium sp. 8</td>
<td>Myrtaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Syzygium sp. 9</td>
<td>Myrtaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Syzygium sp. 10</td>
<td>Myrtaceae</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Syzygium sp. 11</td>
<td>Myrtaceae</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Syzygium sp. 12</td>
<td>Myrtaceae</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Syzygium sp. 13</td>
<td>Myrtaceae</td>
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<td>Syzygium sp. 14</td>
<td>Myrtaceae</td>
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<td>Syzygium sp. 15</td>
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<td>Syzygium sp. 16</td>
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<td>Syzygium sp. 17</td>
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<td>Syzygium sp. 18</td>
<td>Myrtaceae</td>
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<td>Syzygium sp. 19</td>
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<td>Syzygium sp. 20</td>
<td>Myrtaceae</td>
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<td>Syzygium sp. 21</td>
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<td>Syzygium sp. 22</td>
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<td>Syzygium sp. 23</td>
<td>Myrtaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
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<tr>
<td>unun parai</td>
<td>Burn leaves as paddy insecticide</td>
<td>Amomum sp.</td>
<td>Zingiberaceae</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>RV511</td>
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<tr>
<td>upun</td>
<td>Hard timber for longhouse beams</td>
<td>Dipterocarpus acutangulus Vesq.</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dipterocarpus palembanicus Sloot.</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shorea virensi Parijs</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shorea sp. 3</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shorea sp. 4</td>
<td>Dipterocarpaceae</td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no name</td>
<td>Root decoction for rheumatism relief</td>
<td>Dillenia sumatrana Miq.</td>
<td>Dilleniaceae</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>RV456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no name</td>
<td>Root medicine for blood in vomit</td>
<td>Cinnamomumum sp.</td>
<td>Lauraceae</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>RV459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no name</td>
<td>Root decoction to treat vertigo</td>
<td>Bauhinia sp.</td>
<td>Leguminosae</td>
<td>CL</td>
<td>RV462</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common Name</td>
<td>Scientific Name</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Code Type</td>
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<tr>
<td>no name</td>
<td><em>Memecylon scolopacium</em> Ridl.</td>
<td>Melastomataceae</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>RV463</td>
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<tr>
<td>no name</td>
<td><em>Ziziphus borneensis</em> Merr.</td>
<td>Rhamnaceae</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>RV466</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>no name</td>
<td><em>Aristolochia</em> sp.</td>
<td>Aristolochiaceae</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>RV467</td>
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<tr>
<td>no name</td>
<td><em>Amischotolype sphagnorhiza</em> Cowley</td>
<td>Commelinaceae</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>RV468</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no name</td>
<td><em>Pternandra cf. rostrata</em> M. P. Nayar</td>
<td>Melastomataceae</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>RV470</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>no name</td>
<td><em>Sp indet</em></td>
<td>Menispermaceae</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>RV472</td>
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<tr>
<td>no name</td>
<td><em>Rubus</em> sp.</td>
<td>Rosaceae</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>RV474</td>
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<tr>
<td>no name</td>
<td><em>Dichapetum gelonioides</em> (Roxb.) Engl. ssp. <em>pilosum</em> Leenh.</td>
<td>Dichapetalaceae</td>
<td>CL</td>
<td>RV529</td>
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<td>no name</td>
<td><em>Globba</em> sp.</td>
<td>Zingiberaceae</td>
<td>H</td>
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<tr>
<td>no name</td>
<td><em>Ardisia</em> sp.</td>
<td>Myrsinaceae</td>
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<td>RV455</td>
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<tr>
<td>no name</td>
<td><em>Ardisia</em> sp.</td>
<td>Myrsinaceae</td>
<td>H</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beyond the Green Myth

Table 11.3. Plant Species with Cultural Significance for both Dusun and Penan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species in Common</th>
<th>Penan Name/ Significance</th>
<th>Dusun Name/ Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aporusa subcaudata</td>
<td>kelingin aham/ fuelwood</td>
<td>pilis/ timber; craft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artocarpus odoratissimus</td>
<td>medong/ fruit</td>
<td>madang lutung/ fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daemonorops pericantha</td>
<td>sin savit medok/ fruit, heart</td>
<td>lambar (uwai)/ heart, craft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dipterocarpus acutangulus</td>
<td>mejingring/ no value</td>
<td>upun/ beams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dipterocarpus gericulatus</td>
<td>kovong aput/ timber</td>
<td>latid/ fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elateriospernum tapos</td>
<td>boheng/ fuelwood, craft</td>
<td>pogoh/ fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gluta sp.</td>
<td>Ngah/ no value</td>
<td>rangas baduk/ dermatitis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goniothalamus velatinus</td>
<td>tilikut/ insecticide</td>
<td>kalampanas/ magic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnacranthera contracta</td>
<td>raha/ fuelwood</td>
<td>ndara/ shelters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horsfieldia polyspherula</td>
<td>raha/ fuelwood</td>
<td>ndara/ shelters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isora glomeruliflora</td>
<td>bekayu/ chop sticks</td>
<td>bila pinggan/ chop sticks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knema cf. laurina</td>
<td>raha/ fuelwood</td>
<td>ndara/ shelters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knema cf. rufa</td>
<td>raha/ fuelwood</td>
<td>ndara/ shelters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolidepas longifolium</td>
<td>batang kevok/ no value</td>
<td>mpagas purak/ snares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koompasia malaccensis</td>
<td>paa/ no value</td>
<td>mbarugh/ craft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licuala sp. 1</td>
<td>itot (daun)/ edible pith, craft</td>
<td>bidang/ edible pith, craft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oncosperma horridum</td>
<td>nyivung/ edible heart</td>
<td>nighb/ edible heart, beams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiria tomentosa</td>
<td>manan mitus/ fruit</td>
<td>ntungol/ no value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scaphium macropodum</td>
<td>rangah/ timber</td>
<td>kapayang/ fruit, medicinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorea amplexicaulis</td>
<td>abang/ oil</td>
<td>abang/ oil, timber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorea biawak</td>
<td>utong sulat/ fuelwood</td>
<td>arak-arak/ machete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 21 Species

36.2 per cent of the total number of taxa he recognised. For Kilat, this represented only 11.4 per cent of his total. In addition, only five of these 21 taxa are employed for similar purposes by Udhi and Kilat, and only three folk labels from this list are clearly cognates (*medong* and *madang lutud*; *nyivung* and *nibung*; *abang* and *abang*). Thus, this forest plot represents a distinctly different resource base and lexical domain for these two forest dwellers.

There were marked differences in the range of culturally significant life forms recognised by Kilat and Udhi (Table 11.4). On the one hand, the proportions of trees, treelets, and shrubs were very consistent for the two. In each case, Kilat recognised roughly three times more species than Udhi, quite similar to the 3:1 ratio of total recognised species. The principal differences were exhibited by vines, which included climbers and lianas, and herbs. Udhi recognised the significance of 40 per cent less vines than Kilat. Most importantly, 8.4 per cent of the species recognised by Kilat were herbaceous, whereas Udhi could not provide names or
utility for a single herb. Nearly all of the culturally significant herbs that Kilat recognised (80 per cent) were medicinal species.

### CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE RESULTS

Both Udhi and Kilat provided basic labels for plants that did not have cultural significance, material or otherwise. Nevertheless, for both informants, these ‘useless’ taxa represented a small but markedly consistent proportion of their total recognised species. For Udhi, 87.9 per cent (51 of 58) of the species that he recognised had cultural significance. For Kilat, 88.7 per cent (164 of 185) of the species had cultural significance. Thus, for both the Penan and Dusun, cultural significance and plant salience appear to be tightly linked (see Hunn 1982).

Closer examination of what constitutes cultural significance for these informants underscores the dominant role of material utility. In Table 11.5, cultural significance is divided into eight categories. Six of these are materially useful groupings, such as ‘food’ and ‘medicine’, whereas two of these, ‘magic’ and ‘avoidance’, do not fit into a simple utility framework. Importantly, Udhi did not recognise plants in either of these latter two categories. All of the culturally significant plant taxa he recognised were materially useful. Of the plants that Kilat recognised, 4.9 per cent were ‘avoidance’ and 6.7 per cent were ‘magical’. The named avoidance taxa were mostly rangas (dermatitis) species, meaning that they are known to cause rashes if touched. Magical plants, on the other hand, were used (or avoided) for a variety of reasons. Some were believed to enhance rice harvest, some were used in divination ceremonies, and some were used to keep snakes away from dwellings. Others were not used, per se, but were perceived to be jinx species (sisil). These are plants that should generally be avoided or that should not be used to fashion snares. When the magical plants that are materially useful (e.g., in ceremonies or divination) are
added to the other useful categories, species salience for Kilat is similar to that of Udhi. In this case, only 11 culturally significant taxa, or 6.7 per cent, are not materially useful in any sense. In both cases, material value and cultural significance are nearly synonymous.

In terms of total number of taxa, Kilat recognised more species than Udhi in almost every category of cultural significance. At the high end was ‘medicine’, for which Kilat recognised 27 times more species than Udhi. This was followed closely by ‘insecticide/piscicide’ and ‘wood for structures’, for which Kilat recognised 8.1 and 7.1 times more species than Udhi, respectively. At the low end was the ‘food’ category, for which Kilat recognised 1.5 times more species, and the ‘fuel’ (mostly firewood) category, in which Udhi recognised the value of nearly twice as many species as Kilat.

Examination of the raw numbers of species per category is particularly revealing. Three of these categories – medicine, craft, and wood – resolve much of the disparity in quantitative ethnobotanical knowledge maintained by these two informants. Kilat identified a total of 135 species in these three material categories, compared to 20 species for Udhi. For Kilat, these categories encompassed 82.3 per cent of his culturally significant species; for Udhi, these covered 39.2 per cent of his culturally significant species.
The ethnobotanical data provided by these informants strongly support Brown’s (1985), Berlin’s (1992), and Hunn and French’s (1984) prediction that cultivating societies maintain larger plant lexicons, and thus a greater breadth of ethnobotanical knowledge, than hunter-gatherer groups. These figures are particularly revealing since they were drawn exclusively from old-growth forest habitat and involve only native, uncultivated species. Thus, these differing knowledge profiles have no relation with the plethora of plant varieties that accompany the adoption of a swidden cultivation regime (see Chin 1985, Christensen and Mertz 1993, Lian 1987). Nor apparently is increased ethnobotanical knowledge a result of simply heightened curiosity of the floristic landscape, since the vast majority of culturally significant species for both groups are materially useful. Rather, it appears that the subsistence niches associated with foraging versus farming present functionally different necessities about plant knowledge, and that these differences are translated into sharply divergent paths of ethnobotanical knowledge acquisition and retention.

Most of this variation in total number of known plant species is derived from differences in material culture, especially wood and fibre for construction and crafts. Permanent settlement is accompanied by a dramatic growth in quantity and durability of possessions, and most of these items are fashioned from plants. For example, longhouse construction entails a detailed understanding of timber properties, such as resiliency to long-term wear, weather, and insect damage. As can be seen in Table 11.2, the Dusun incorporate this understanding into their choices of tree species for different purposes, such as ceiling beams, floors, walls, roofs, verandas, and supporting poles. These are areas of knowledge that have no relevance to nomadic hunter-gatherers and, given the total absence of these features from Table 11.1, have not been translated into the Penan’s plant knowledge. Prior to settlement, the Penan had neither the capacity to transport nor the need to possess bulky musical instruments, fish traps and animal snares, tools for swidden preparation and planting, materials for rice harvest and storage, toys, and other material goods that are inconsistent with a foraging existence. As in the case of most heavy construction materials, these items are completely absent from the Penan’s plant list. It appears then, for the Penan and Dusun, that settlement and farming are associated with a florescence of material culture, and this is necessarily accompanied by a significantly enhanced understanding of the old growth flora.

Brown (1985) suggested that permanent settlement and increased population density would likely lead to greater risk of illness and, in turn, a keener understanding...
of the medicinal properties of plants. The data above appear to support this idea. There is, unfortunately, no information available on illness profiles among the Eastern Penan or the Dusun prior to this century. Thus, any conclusions regarding differential exposure and response to diseases must be considered speculative. Nevertheless, in one local study, Zulueta (1956) determined that nomadic Penan in Sarawak suffered significantly lower rates of malarial-derived splenic enlargement and parasites than neighbouring cultivating groups that occupy similar habitats. He also noted that infection rates were higher among Penan groups that had settled as opposed to those that had remained nomadic. This at least suggests that settlement is associated with enhanced risk of illness in this area (for Africa, see Kent and Dunn 1996).

Further clues are provided by the Dusun and Penan’s own accounts of disease and treatment. The Dusun, for example, recognised and treated a broad array of medical problems in the past. These ranged from life threatening ailments, such as heart, liver, respiratory, and reproductive problems, to everyday ailments, such as diarrhoea, headaches, fevers, oral blisters, rheumatism, vertigo, worms, and blemishes, to name only a few. They responded, in turn, by developing a large pharmacopoeia of medicinal plants and associated healing formulas (Voeks and Nyawa 2001). The Penan at Sukang, on the other hand, report that they suffered from a limited suite of illnesses prior to settlement. These included stomachaches, coughs, eye infections, snake bites, superficial wounds, and skin problems. They also suggest that their plant pharmacopoeia was modest as well, with at most 20 healing species.

The contrast in the health and healing systems of these two groups is likewise manifest in their views of magic and the spirit world. The Dusun, on the one hand, retain an elaborate ethnomedical system wherein cosmology and etiology are tightly linked (Antaran 1993). Aside from their general healing pharmacopoeia, the Dusun draw on the knowledge of specialised shamans who orchestrate healing activities, divination ceremonies, spirit possession, and magical rituals. As in most traditional societies, Dusun medical problems are often the result of transgressions against the spiritual realm (see Voeks 1997: 69–114). Thus, in order to maintain a level of equilibrium with the spiritual world, the Dusun respect a range of prohibitions, including bad-luck (jinx) plants. They also attempt to protect their crops by magical means, again employing specific plant taxa. Several of these taboo or magical plants appeared in this plant census, and thus augmented their list of labelled species (Table 11.2).

The Penan at Sukang, on the other hand, maintain an ethnomedical system that is limited both in scope and substance. Unlike the elaborate cosmology of neighbouring cultivators, the spirit world of the Penan is generic and poorly defined.
They recognise the role of spiritual transgression in disease etiology, but they are relatively lax in respect to taboo violation and propitiation (Voeks and Sercombe 2000). As a result, the Penan at Sukang have assigned neither spiritual nor magical properties to any specific taxa. This, in turn, is reflected in their ethnobotanical lexicon, which is wholly lacking in species possessing these occult powers.

Brown’s (1985) and Hunn and French’s (1984) prediction that cultivators maintain a more extensive inventory of food sources than foragers appears to be supported by the plot census results as well. The Penan informant recognised 20 species that supply food of some sort, including fruit, vegetable oil, sago flour, and palm heart. The Dusun informant recognised a total of 29 esculent species, covering roughly the same range of uses. The Penan informant thus perceived the food value of 45 per cent less species than his cultivating counterpart. On the other hand, it should be noted that the 20 Penan edible species represent 39 per cent of Udhi’s total list of culturally significant species. The 29 Dusun food plants, on the other hand, represent a mere 18 per cent of Kilat’s culturally significant taxa. Thus, although quantitatively small, the Penan food list constitutes a much greater share of total ethnobotanical knowledge than that of the Dusun.

In spite of these differences in edible-plant perception, the role of famine as a driving force in the differential acquisition of wild food knowledge, at least in this region, is far from clear (see Voeks 1999). In the case of the Penan and Dusun, for example, there is no direct evidence of serious famine, either in the past or in recent times. Nor does the climatic record point to periods of extended crop failure (Becker 1992). Annual droughts are of relatively short duration, and Brunei is only marginally affected by the devastating El Niño-related droughts and conflagrations that desiccated other parts of Borneo (Goldammer and Seibert 1990, Walsh 1996). Thus, the case for environmentally induced famine, at least in this region, appears relatively weak.

The notion that foragers in this region are somehow less subject to food shortage than cultivators is also problematic. Southeast Asia’s Dipterocarp forests are renowned for their mast-fruiter characteristics, with years of little or no flower and fruit production punctuated by the infrequent bumper crop (Ashton et al. 1988, Toy 1991). This mast-friuting phenology necessarily places stress on a society whose subsistence is derived solely from collection. Moreover, fruit and seed shortage during off years is accompanied by the fluctuating population level of Bearded pig, the Penan’s preferred protein and fat source, which appears to rise and fall with the condition of the fruit crop (Dove 1993b). Thus, complete dependence on plant and animal extraction, even under favourable conditions, is probably as precarious a subsistence strategy as that maintained by groups that depend on cultivated crops.
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Finally, it should be noted that several authors have seriously questioned the capacity of tropical forests to sustain populations of human foragers on a permanent basis (Bailey et al. 1989, Headland 1987). According to this view, hunter-gatherer subsistence in these ‘biological deserts’ is possible only if food can be acquired through trade from sedentary cultivators. In principle, this limited carrying capacity should have historically excluded foraging as a subsistence mode in tropical forests until the arrival of cultivating societies. Although more recent work has cast doubt on the validity of this hypothesis (see Bellwood 1993, Brosius 1991a, Roosevelt 1997), it at least casts doubt on the notion that tropical forests are somehow less precarious sources of sustenance for foragers than for farmers.

PENAN ETHNOBOTANY IN TRANSITION

The Penan at Sukang, as elsewhere in Borneo, are in a rapid state of economic and cultural flux (Sercombe 1996a; see also Cleary and Eaton 1992: 175–189, Sellato 1994a: 163–214). Although they continue to depend more on native forest resources than cultivating societies, there are very few Penan groups that have not settled and at least attempted to adopt small-scale cultivation techniques (Langub 1996a). How these changes will affect the Penan’s unique relationship with nature is open to conjecture. However, two processes are clearly indicated. First, the Penan may well witness an expansion of their plant lexicon. New plant names and uses are likely to be incorporated. Much of this will derive from the simple action of permanent settlement. As noted earlier, this process is associated with an array of novel, mostly material necessities. Lumber species and rice varieties would seem to be at the top of the list. Udhi noted, for example, that eight of the ten tree species now used to construct dwellings were not traditionally employed by the Penan. He stated that the use of these species had been learned from cultivating groups (especially the Dusun and Iban) in the process of his group’s permanent settlement in Sukang. It is also likely that the Penan will acquire a hitherto unknown appreciation for herbaceous plants, especially weedy invaders, which represent constant companions of cultivators. Overall, then, the Penan are likely to significantly amplify their knowledge of materially useful (or harmful) plant species.

On the other hand, it needs to be remembered that ethnobotanical erosion is increasingly affecting small-scale agricultural societies inside and outside of Borneo. The combined forces of acculturation, deforestation, and globalisation are associated with rapidly declining interest in and knowledge of plants and plant uses. Thus, while the Penan slowly assimilate the ethnobotanical skills of their cultivating neighbours, these same groups are for the most part quickly and purposely
abandoning their own plant knowledge. Cultivar variety, increasingly subject to market pressure, is being replaced by monoculture (Lian 1987). For forest healers, the long-established cognitive link between people and medicinal plants is broken, as Western medicine and monotheistic religion expand their influence. Healers are frequently elderly, and the younger generation is unwilling or unable to serve as the next receptacles of collective oral tradition (Plotkin 1988). The result is that any efforts by the Penan to assimilate the ethnobotanical expertise of neighbouring cultivating groups is likely to be hindered by their own wholesale abandonment of plant knowledge.

CONCLUSIONS

Brown (1985), Berlin (1992), and Hunn and French (1984) have suggested that traditional societies that pursue a primarily foraging subsistence strategy maintain significantly smaller lexicons of labelled plants than the small-scale cultivators. In addition to lack of familiarity with domesticated plants, foragers are thought to be less prone to food shortage and disease than their cultivating counterparts. This, it has been proposed, has led to a relatively limited breadth of ethnobotanical knowledge concerning famine foods and medicinal species among hunter-gatherer groups.

I tested this hypothesis by means of a plot-based comparison of ethnobotanical knowledge between a foraging and a cultivating group – the Penan and the Dusun of Brunei Darussalam. In each case, a knowledgeable informant from each group was asked to identify names and cultural significance for plants in a 1-ha old-growth, mixed Dipterocarp forest.

The results for the most part support the hypothesis. The Penan informant provided names and cultural significance for a smaller number of species than the Dusun informant. The Penan supplied 45 basic labels for plants in the plot, which were distributed among 58 species. The Dusun informant identified 84 basic plant names distributed among 185 different species. Overall, the Dusun identified 2.3 times more culturally significant plant families, 2.2 times more genera, and 3.2 times more species. The Dusun likewise recognised roughly three times as many trees, treelets, and shrubs as the Penan. In addition, 8.4 per cent of the species recognised by the Dusun informant were herbaceous, whereas the Penan informant did not recognise or ascribe cultural significance to a single herb. Furthermore, the species recognised by these informants included only 21 species in common, suggesting that this forest represents a distinctly different resource base and lexical domain for the Penan and Dusun.
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Cultural significance and plant salience appear to be nearly synonymous for these two groups. The Penan and Dusun attributed cultural significance, either material or otherwise, to 87.9 per cent and 88.7 per cent, respectively, of the species for which they maintained labels. Cultural significance and material value were likewise highly associated. All of the culturally significant plants recognised by the Penan had material value, and only 6.7 per cent of the Dusun’s culturally significant taxa were not materially useful in any way.

In terms of raw numbers of culturally significant species, wood, craft, and medicine resolve much of the disparity in quantitative ethnobotanical knowledge maintained by these two informants. The Dusun informant identified a total of 135 species in these three material categories, compared to 20 species for the Penan. Wood and fibre for construction and crafts, much of which is associated with permanent settlement, account for most of this difference. Settlement, increasing population density, and higher likelihood of contracting disease appear to be significant factors in plant knowledge acquisition and retention. In this case, the Dusun informant recognised 27 times more medicinal species than the Penan. Unlike the farming Dusun, the Penan appear neither to possess a large pharmacopoeia of medicinal species, nor to have ascribed magical properties to specific taxa. Finally, although there were significant differences between these two informants in terms of recognition of esculent species, the argument for famine-induced variance in food plant knowledge does not seem compelling.

Penan hunter-gatherers and Dusun cultivators occupy essentially the same floristic landscape. They nevertheless exhibit distinct differences in their knowledge of the plant realm. Most of this variation appears to be a consequence of permanent settlement, particularly expanded material culture and illness. As a result, the Dusun lexically encode and materially exploit a much broader spectrum of their available plant resources than do the Penan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project benefited greatly from the assistance of Peter Sercombe and Samhan Nyawa. I also thank the Biology Department of the Universiti Brunei Darussalam, especially Peter Becker, for orientation and use of the enumerated plot. Determinations would not have been possible without the assistance provided by the Brunei Forestry Herbarium, especially Idris M. Said and Joffre H. Ali Ahmad. Kelly Donovan kindly produced the map (Map 10.1). Field research was funded by a grant from the National Geographic Society, Research and Exploration Division. Finally, I am grateful to Udhi anak Kutok and the late Kilat bin Kilah for sharing their profound knowledge of the forest.
Chapter 12

PRIOR TRANSCRIPTS, DIVERGENT PATHS: RESISTANCE AND ACQUIESCENCE TO LOGGING IN SARAWAK, EAST MALAYSIA

By J. Peter Brosius

Abstract: Since 1987, Penan foragers in Sarawak, East Malaysia, have resisted the incursions of timber companies by the erection of blockades and have become the focus of an international environmental campaign. Significantly, however, not all Penan have participated in this movement. While Eastern Penan have engaged in acts of resistance, Western Penan have been conspicuously acquiescent to the activities of logging companies. This article represents an attempt to account for the differential response of Eastern and Western Penan to deforestation. Three factors are considered: (1) the contemporary political context; (2) the historical context in which these two societies have existed; and (3) the nature of social relations characteristic of these two populations. Explication of how the political, historical, and social contexts have produced the contrastive responses of Eastern and Western Penan to logging is seen to have several implications for theorising structures of domination.

INTRODUCTION

In 1987, there was an uprising of sorts in the remote interior headwaters of Sarawak, East Malaysia, on the island of Borneo. In March of that year, Penan
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hunter-gatherers in the Baram and Limbang Districts of Sarawak suddenly erected more than a dozen blockades against logging companies. Since that time, scores of Penan have been arrested for resisting the activities of these companies by erecting more blockades and engaging in other acts of civil disobedience. In doing so, they have achieved a great deal of international renown among environmentalists, indigenous rights activists, and the Euro-American public at large. Their story has received broad international media coverage, and scores of celebrities, from Al Gore and musician Jerry Garcia to Prince Charles, have spoken out on their behalf. The Malaysian government has responded to these efforts with a vigorous media campaign of its own and, in the process, has come to play an increasingly visible role as a critic of what are portrayed as neo-colonialist attempts at control over environmental affairs in the South.

Recently I have been examining the international campaign that emerged around the Penan issue in the late 1980s. In a series of interviews with European and American environmentalists, Penan resistance to logging was repeatedly cited as an important influence in the growth of movements promoting rainforest preservation and indigenous rights. Virtually everyone describes the Penan as exemplars of how an indigenous people can assert control over their own destiny and, in the process, halt the loss of global biodiversity. In short, the Penan have become an icon of resistance for environmentalists worldwide.

In the international campaign waged on their behalf, environmental groups have made numerous statements about the Penan. Yet for all the attention that this issue has received, both in the context of campaigns by nongovernmental organisations and in the media, one key fact has been consistently overlooked: not all Penan have resisted logging. Many in fact have acquiesced quite readily, and a number even appear to favour logging. Whether we focus on the causes or the dynamics of resistance, it would seem that an examination of those who have not erected blockades can be as instructive as an examination of those who have. In the case of Penan, there is a clear pattern defining those who have resisted and those who have acquiesced. Elucidating this pattern requires that we first establish a basic ethnographic distinction.

The Penan of Sarawak can be divided into two distinct populations: Eastern and Western Penan [Needham, in this volume]. Eastern Penan comprise all those groups living to the north and east of the Baram river, in the Tutoh, Patah, Pelutan, Apoh, upper Akah, Selaan, Selungo, and upper Baram Rivers, as well as in the upper Limbang watershed. Western Penan include all those in the Belaga District, as well as communities in the Silat River watershed, and at Leng Beku (see Map 12.1). Though sharing many
characteristics, these two populations display a number of significant differences with respect to subsistence technology, settlement patterns, social organisation, and in the tenor of social relationships. Eastern Penan conform much more closely to the pattern that anthropologists take to be typical of band-level societies, but Western Penan depart from this pattern in striking ways. Though these two populations speak mutually intelligible sub-dialects of the same language and recognise each other as Penan, they nevertheless consider themselves to be of only very distant ancestry. They have little contact with each other and almost never intermarry. In short, these are two discrete populations, with distinctive adaptations, histories, and social norms. These differences have important implications for the way they have responded to logging. Almost without exception, all the communities that have resisted logging with blockades have been Eastern Penan. Western Penan, by comparison, have been conspicuously acquiescent to, even willing participants in, the activities of logging companies. This divergent pattern of resistance and acquiescence is striking in its clarity.

Map 12.1. Distribution of Eastern and Western Penan in Sarawak
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The Malaysian government has attributed the occurrence of Eastern Penan resistance to logging to the influence of Western environmentalists. While it is undeniable that environmentalist influence has played some role in recent events, attributing Eastern Penan resistance to logging entirely to this cause is much too simplistic. Among other things, it ignores the forms that civil disobedience have taken, the persistence of unrest; and it does not answer the question of why Eastern Penan have been so influenced by environmentalists in the first place. An adequate account of Eastern Penan resistance must consider the social and historical context in which that resistance occurs and which precedes the much more recent influence of environmentalists. Further, our understanding of the Eastern Penan response to logging can be enhanced by examining the contrastive case of Western Penan. As such, I consider a set of three factors which elucidate the contrastive patterns of Eastern and Western Penan response to logging: These factors reflect differences between the two in their contemporary political contexts, particularly in recent efforts to organise Penan; in the historical contexts in which these two societies have existed, particularly with respect to their relations with colonial authorities; and in the nature of social relations characteristic of these two populations.

The value of the present enquiry lies not in the degree to which it allows us to determine the true causes of Eastern Penan resistance but in elucidating what these points of contrast between Eastern and Western Penan might reveal about the dynamic social and historical contours of resistance and acquiescence. In an important sense, then, this discussion represents an attempt to address what Ortner (1995) has termed ‘the problem of ethnographic refusal’. According to Ortner, ‘Resistance studies are thin because they are ethnographically thin: thin on the internal politics of dominated groups, thin on the cultural richness of those groups, thin on the subjectivity – the intentions, desires, fears, projects – of the actors engaged in these dramas’ (1995: 190). She suggests that, contrary to the impression conveyed in most contemporary analyses of domination and resistance, ‘there is never a single, unitary, subordinate’ (1995: 175). She argues for greater attention to the ‘psychological and socio-political complexity of resistance and non-resistance’ (1995: 176) and urges us to recognise that subalterns have ‘an authentic, and not merely reactive politics’ (1995: 180).

In the following discussion, I first examine the history of logging in interior Sarawak and its impact on Penan. Next, I consider the patterns of resistance and acquiescence that have characterised Eastern and Western Penan responses to logging. I then examine how each of these three factors cited above have contributed to the divergent responses of these two populations. Finally, I consider some of the
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implications of the contrast between Eastern and Western Penan responses to logging for theorising domination, resistance, and acquiescence, with particular reference to Scott’s distinction (1990) between hidden transcripts and public transcripts.

THE IMPACT OF LOGGING

Despite centuries of swidden farming along the major rivers by indigenous peoples, upland forests in the Belaga, Baram, and Limbang Districts of Sarawak have remained largely undisturbed. However, with the advent of large-scale mechanised logging in recent years, the areas covered by primary forests have been reduced drastically, and deforestation continues at a rapid rate. Sarawak is today a major supplier of tropical hardwood on international markets, and is currently experiencing one of the highest rates of deforestation in the world. The speed with which logging has progressed is remarkable. Though timber companies only began to penetrate the interior in the late 1970s, by the 1980s they had moved into areas occupied by Penan and have now nearly reached the Indonesian border in several places.

Logging has a dramatic effect on the lives of Penan, both nomadic and settled. The most immediate effect is on the forest resources which they depend upon for subsistence and trade. Though most Penan today are settled, they continue to exploit the forest. Among their most frequent complaint is bulldozers have uprooted the sago palms (Eugeissona utilis) which form the basis of Penan traditional subsistence. This is indeed a common occurrence, in part, because the greatest concentration of sago exist on steep ridges and slopes where roads are built and where slides from this construction occur. Penan also complain that the trees from which they get fruit and blowdart poison are felled and that as often as not the trunks of those trees are taken. Yet another frequent objection to logging is that the activities and people associated with logging scare off game because logging activities are noisy, because downed trees can no longer provide forage for pigs and other types of game, and because loggers use shotguns when hunting. Penan are concerned about river siltation, because it kills fish and makes it difficult to find clean water for drinking or to process sago and they are also concerned about the destruction of rattan, which diminishes their ability to participate in the cash economy. Finally, one of the most common complaints of Penan is that graves are obliterated, a concern of all Penan but voiced with particular frequency by nomadic Eastern Penan, who almost always bury their dead where they construct their camps – on the very ridges where logging roads are constructed.
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For Penan – Eastern and Western, nomadic and settled – logging means hunger. But it means more than this. Logging completely alters a landscape with which Penan have a deeply historical relationship. What is of as much concern to the Penan as the privation caused by logging is the way in which logging has altered the landscape in which they live. Though it gives the appearance of a complete wilderness, the landscape is imbued with biographical and cultural significance, a repository for the memory of past events, and thus a vast mnemonic representation of social relationships and society. There exists a strong coherence between the physical landscape, history, genealogy, and the identities of individuals and communities. With logging, the cultural density of the landscape – all those sites with biographical, social, and historical significance – is obliterated. Thus, logging not only undermines the basis of Penan subsistence but also destroys the very things that are iconic of their existence as a society.

When Penan talk about logging, they focus not only on the tangible effects of logging – hunger, river siltation, the destruction of graves, and the obliteration of familiar places – but also on those that are less tangible: the sounds and smells of the forest, coolness and heat, sunlight, vegetation and mud. The words and images they employ are contrastive and tinged with nostalgia: what the forest was like before and after logging. One nomadic Eastern Penan said that once their land is finished, they will have a life of doing nothing but sitting under gogong, a large-leaved tree that grows along logging roads and is associated with bright sunlight, heat, and dust: an image, for Penan, of utter desolation.

Among the most poignant expressions of concern about logging are those that refer to sound. Associated with this form of rhetoric is a theme of contrast and separation: that it is appropriate to hear some things in the forest and appropriate to hear other things downriver. One man stated that in the forest it was good to hear the call of the Argus pheasant but not the crowing of chickens owned by loggers; it was good to hear the creaking of trees but not the whining of chainsaws. In statements about the appropriateness of separation, Eastern Penan state that they do not interfere in the lives of downriver people and do not bring their sounds to them; likewise it is inappropriate that downriver people should bring their sounds to the forest.

FORMS OF RESISTANCE AND ACQUIESCENCE

While most recent media attention has been on one small group of Penan – those nomadic Eastern Penan groups in the Tutoh and Limbang watersheds – logging
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affects nearly every Penan community. Whether they are actively engaged in resistance or appear to acquiesce, Eastern and Western Penan everywhere are, with but a few notable exceptions, opposed to logging. The subject of logging is one that is raised constantly in every Penan community. In particular, Penan narratives tell of confrontations between themselves and company representatives or state authorities, and recount the arguments which they put forth: why a particular watershed belongs to them, why bulldozers have no place in the forest, why surveyors should not mark trees, why they decided to blockade, why they should not be blamed for those blockades, and who they believe to be responsible for the present unrest. Logging is, for Penan, an all-consuming topic.

Over and above their feelings about deforestation itself, the Penan response to logging is a product of the way they perceive themselves to have been treated by those with an interest in its continuation: camp managers, police, politicians, and others. In short, Penan feelings about logging as a destructive activity which directly affects their livelihoods must be distinguished from their feelings about those who are carrying it out. Both Eastern and Western Penan feel that they are looked down upon, ignored, and treated unjustly. Consistently their response has been to try to familiarise themselves and their situation, both to those representing timber interests and to environmentalists. Most often, they do so in the form of analogies which they feel will express their feelings in a way intelligible to outsiders, comparing the forest to a warehouse, a shop, or a bank; contrasting their way of life with that of civil servants who must merely go to their offices to make a living; and comparing the act of felling the forest to driving a bulldozer through the middle of someone’s house.

Penan recognise that their efforts to explain their situation have had little effect, and they find it inconceivable that their concerns are so completely disregarded. They hold two parties responsible for the present situation: logging companies and the government. In fact, they often conflate these, assuming either that they are a single entity or that logging companies are working under direct instructions from the government. As evidence of this, Penan cite the fact that when they have blockaded logging roads, it is the police who come to dismantle their blockades. Penan assume that most government officials are acting as agents of logging companies for purely personal gain. To the extent that they recognise the distinction between the government and logging companies, Penan believe that the government does not listen to them and supports only logging companies because it looks down on them. While I was with the Penan, I repeatedly heard statements such as: ‘When they look into our eyes, they see the eyes of a monkey, the eyes of a dog’; ‘They think we have tails’; and ‘They look at us as they look at dog shit’.
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In short, Penan are responding not only to logging as an activity that directly affects their lives but also to the agents of logging. Overwhelmingly, the mood expressed by Penan is that of frustration because those agents are not listening to them. This applies to virtually all Penan: Eastern and Western, nomadic and settled. Despite cultural and acculturative diversity, the Penan perspective on current affairs is remarkably uniform: Penan are unvaryingly opposed to logging and to the way they feel they are treated by its agents. Notwithstanding this similarity in their perspectives, the ways in which Eastern and Western Penan have responded to logging contrast markedly.

The Eastern Penan response to logging has been the aforementioned erection of blockades. Before constructing these in 1987, Eastern Penan made numerous efforts to air their grievances to government officials. At last they felt compelled to issue a warning that if their grievances were not addressed, they would take some unspecified action. Having exhausted all other avenues of response, blockades were erected. These remained in place for some eight months before being torn down. Though scores of Penan were arrested in this first wave of blockades and in subsequent actions, the government were frustrated by the fact that they were unable to prosecute: there was no law on the books making blockades illegal. This was remedied in 1988 when the new Forest Ordinance was passed. Blockades, however, not only did not end, but continued to spread into other areas occupied by Eastern Penan through the late 1980s and early 1990s. When these blockades were erected, sometimes as many as several hundred Eastern Penan at a time, many from distant groups, flocked to these blockade sites to lend support. Inevitably these blockades were broken up, and those present were arrested and incarcerated. After several weeks, they were allowed to return to their communities to await trial. To date, most trials have proved inconclusive. The last major Penan blockade, in the Ba Mubui area of the Baram District, began in March 1993 and was forcefully broken up by a police field force in September 1993. In November 1993, the Dewan Undangan Negeri (State Legislative Assembly) passed a draconian new forest ordinance that makes it not only illegal to blockade logging roads, but presumes that those apprehended near such blockades are guilty. It is this scenario of blockades by indigenous rainforest peoples clad in loin cloths and carrying blowpipes – and the counter-images of their arrest – that has proved so compelling for environmentalists. What is most striking about these blockades is the degree to which they have been characterised by a sense of unity among bands of people who have no history of unified political action.

In describing why they have erected blockades, Eastern Penan provide one reason more than any other: they feel that their voices are not being heard.
Among the most common refrains among contemporary Eastern Penan is that ‘the government does not hear what we say’. Their expressions of frustration about this convey utter exasperation. One man stated that even if his mouth ripped open all the way down to his feet, company people would still not hear what he said to them. Another said that talking to representatives of timber companies or the government was like talking to a drawing: they neither hear nor respond. When Eastern Penan describe their actions, they say that these blockades are their only recourse, a last resort. They see the government’s refusal to acknowledge the validity of their complaints as evidence of the legitimacy of their actions.13

Eastern Penan are very concerned to avoid any implication that they are at fault in their decisions to act. They stress that they are not blocking anyone else’s land, but only their own. When they talk to the government or companies, they say that they sit back and wait for some result, something that they are willing to do repeatedly. They portray themselves as patient, slow to anger, and unwilling to act precipitously. From their perspective, they are entirely without fault when they take action because they patiently make numerous good faith attempts at dialogue. They are driven to do the blockades by the government’s inaction. Such statements are intended to exonerate Eastern Penan from blame and definitively lay it at the feet of companies and the government. The fact that the government uses police and that companies must resort to fear tactics and gangsters only confirms the rightness of their cause for Penan.

The Western Penan response to the activities of logging companies contrasts markedly with that of Eastern Penan. Though Western Penan were in fact the first to resist logging companies, they have not responded with blockades.14 To the degree that they have undertaken acts of resistance, they have done so for very different reasons. What has most marked the Western Penan response to logging has been their cooperation with timber companies, which is based on their desire to benefit materially from those companies. Though they are familiar with the blockades that have occurred in the Baram area, Western Penan assume that they are unable to do anything about the entry of logging companies into their areas, and feel they have no other choice but to try to derive as much benefit as they can from them. They are, in short, trying to make the best of what they view as a bad – and inevitable – situation. The form this cooperation has taken is a willingness to negotiate compensation packages and to work for companies.

Western Penan in most communities today receive several forms of compensation from timber companies: a bulk sum compensation amount, a monthly allowance, and special gifts on major holidays. The government provide no guidelines for granting compensation, nor have they established any laws
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mandating it. Although companies initially resisted paying compensation to local communities, they eventually came to accept it as a necessary business expense, particularly after civil unrest began in the Baram District. When talking to company managers today, they in fact seem anxious to provide compensation packages to communities. Although anxious, bargaining is done by companies on a community to community basis, and timber companies negotiate the least costly packages they can afford. For local communities, the success of negotiations is very much dependent on the insistence of individual headmen.

Western Penan headmen can be very insistent indeed. They are not at all hesitant to argue forcefully with timber camp managers. In one recent case, the headman of a Western Penan community travelled repeatedly to a timber camp to collect compensation. Frustrated by the repeated failure of the company to produce the compensation expected, he grabbed the camp manager by the ears, yelling that he must be deaf and should listen to what was being said to him. On another occasion, the members of one Western Penan community seized four bulldozers from a timber camp because a company would not provide them with what they felt was sufficient compensation. Despite such acts of apparent resistance, they are undertaken for very different reasons than Eastern Penan blockades: not to exclude companies but to obtain whatever they can from them. One more way in which Western Penan have cooperated with timber companies has been by working for those companies, carrying out tasks such as block surveys and bark removal. Though these are among the lowest paying jobs available, Western Penan are nevertheless eager to take advantage of the opportunities for cash income that such jobs provide.

Another characteristic of the Western Penan response to logging has been a distinct lack of unity among communities. In fact, as logging has entered the areas claimed by various communities, Western Penan have devoted as much attention to undermining each other’s claims as they have responded to the incursions of logging companies. The reasons for such antagonisms vary, but they are often associated with conflicting claims over certain plots of land for which communities are demanding compensation. Among many Western Penan communities, there are long-standing disputes over rights to land. Even before the advent of logging such disputes were a central feature of Western Penan intercommunity relations. The entrance of logging companies has only exacerbated an already existing situation. Disputes also occur with regard to employment. Western Penan have repeatedly attempted to persuade companies to deny employment to individuals from other communities, arguing that only members of their own community have a right to employment within the areas
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to which they lay claim. In 1992, Western Penan from one community came upon an empty forest camp being used by a survey crew which included members of another Western Penan community. Upon finding this camp, they slashed all the tins of rice, biscuits, and other supplies.

In examining the contrast in Eastern and Western Penan responses to logging, it is important that this contrast not be overstated. Many Eastern Penan have recently negotiated compensation packages with timber companies, and increasing numbers have begun to work for them. This has led to some tension between groups of Eastern Penan, particularly members of settled communities who are working for companies, and nomadic groups on whose lands they are working. Likewise, there have been several incidents in which Western Penan have resisted timber companies in various ways. Clearly patterns of resistance and acquiescence are still evolving. Penan not only respond to logging, timber companies and the government have also responded to Penan. In an effort to isolate those groups which are still resisting, timber companies are now more willing to work out compensation packages, the State Legislative Assembly has passed the aforementioned 1993 Forest Ordinance, and the police Special Branch has been actively trying to undermine resistance by recruiting Penan informants and disseminating disinformation. Among other things, this has had the effect of convincing many Eastern Penan that logging is inevitable and resistance futile.

THE CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL CONTEXT:
ENVIRONMENTALISTS, ORGANIZERS, INSTIGATORS

Since blockades first began in the Baram and Limbang Districts in 1987, Malaysian government officials have dismissed them as the product of foreign ‘instigators’. This charge is repeated in any number of statements by government officials. One official declared foreign ‘instigators’ to be ‘worse than communists’. Sarawak Minister of Environment and Tourism, James Wong, has recently written that:

It is [...] despicable for foreigners [...] to enter into this country to instigate and finance the local people to break the law and take the law into their own hands by putting up road blockades and carrying out other illegal acts (Wong 1992: 33).

The rhetoric of instigation is thus used to portray Penan as misbehaving children under foreign influence, deluded objects of pity to whom only sympathy is due. Eastern Penan are well aware of the government’s rhetoric about the role
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of foreign instigators, and vigorously reject such assertions. In any number of ways these Penan declare that decisions to blockade were made by themselves alone. As one Eastern Penan explained, they blockade ‘because we know the difficulties in our own land’, that is, they do not need outsiders to point this out to them. Another woman, refuting the suggestion that *orang putih* (Bahasa Malaysia, white person/people) had anything to do with their decision to blockade, patted her stomach and said ‘This is our *orang putih*, our *rajah*.’ Penan assertions aside, if we wish to understand something of the contrast between Eastern and Western Penan responses to logging, it is necessary that we consider what role, if any, foreign involvement may have played in influencing Eastern Penan to erect blockades. One of the most significant points of contrast in this whole affair has been that Eastern Penan have been visited by numerous Western environmental activists while, with a few exceptions, Western Penan have not been.

Any account of resistance to logging in Sarawak must acknowledge the role of Swiss artist Bruno Manser. In 1984, breaking off from a cave-exploring expedition to which he was attached, Manser disappeared into the forest and took up residence with a band of nomadic Eastern Penan in the upper Tutoh river area and remained among various nomadic groups for some six and a half years. The story of blockades and Manser are inextricably linked. More than any other single actor, it is Manser who is most responsible for bringing the situation of the Penan to world attention. Beginning in 1985, Manser began writing to a number of environmental organisations. In a very short time reporters, film-makers, and environmentalists began to seek him out in the forest. At the same time that Manser was working to make the Penan’s situation known outside of Sarawak, he was simultaneously engaged in organising the normally retiring Eastern Penan to resist. Manser travelled extensively throughout the Baram and Limbang areas, organising large meetings which were attended by representatives from numerous communities. At these meetings, Penan representatives discussed cases of harassment by timber company employees, the desirability of blockading, what they should do if arrests occurred, and other such issues. The overall purpose of these meetings was to gauge the degree to which Penan were of a common mind and to persuade them to act in concert. By all accounts, Manser developed into a very effective communicator: Penan remark often on the eloquence with which he spoke. Several times they told me how, when they asked Manser whether it was advisable for them to work for companies, he replied that for them to take timber company money would be like holding feathers in their hands. At that point, they would mimic Manser raising his cupped hands and blowing feathers away.
The 1987 blockades, which brought a great deal of attention to the Penan, resulted in the beginning of a concerted international campaign. The first Penan blockades were established not long after the founding of the Rainforest Action Network, which took on the issue of logging in Sarawak as one of its first projects. Numerous other rainforest groups were also forming in Europe, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Japan, in response to a growing awareness of the scale of tropical deforestation. Penan became an icon of forest destruction for many of these organisations.

As the Sarawak campaign accelerated, numerous individual environmentalists attempted to visit Eastern Penan in order to document their plight for international audiences. In their visits to Penan communities, these individuals frequently told Penan of efforts made on their behalf in Europe, Australia, and the United States. From the talks with Eastern Penan today, it is evident that the stories told to them about outside efforts to support them, and indeed the very fact of visits by foreign environmentalists, provided them with a strong sense that their own efforts were legitimate.

Another important factor in the growth of resistance to logging among Penan (and other indigenous communities in Sarawak) was the role played by the Malaysian environmental organisation, Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM, Friends of the Earth, Malaysia). SAM became instrumental not only in the worldwide Sarawak campaign but also in supporting Penan (and others) at the local level. Indeed, SAM had been active in supporting indigenous rights in Sarawak since it opened an office in the upriver town of Marudi in 1982. A key figure for Penan was SAM coordinator Harrison Ngau, himself a Kayan. Ngau became an outspoken advocate of indigenous rights in Sarawak and was regarded by Penan as their most reliable Malaysian defender. The SAM office in Marudi provided something of a refuge for Penan. SAM representatives helped Penan draft letters in an attempt to establish land claims, provided lawyers, and helped Penan with material support at blockade sites. Of equal importance, SAM played a prominent role in educating local people about their rights under the law. And, as with the visits of foreign environmentalists, SAM support provided Penan with a reinforced sense of the rightfulness of their actions.

Eventually, other organisations became involved in the Penan cause. SAM was instrumental in the formation of the Sarawak Penan Association. Indigenous activist Anderson Mutang formed the Sarawak Indigenous People’s Alliance (SIPA), which provided a conduit for information and support to Penan involved in civil disobedience. All the while still more foreign visitors – film crews, travellers, environmentalists – continued to seek out Penan. Later I will discuss
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something of the background of Penan perceptions of these visitors. For now it is sufficient to say that their mere presence (and in many cases it was indeed merely a presence, since Penan describe numerous visits by persons with whom they were unable to communicate) confirmed for them the legitimacy of their cause.

In contrast to the Baram and Limbang Districts, Penan in the Belaga District have not been visited by foreign environmentalists to any significant degree. Manser himself never visited Western Penan, nor has SAM had any significant presence among them. One Western Penan from the Belaga District described to me how he had met some people from SAM on a trip to the coastal town of Miri. He described how they told him not to be afraid to stand up to timber companies and that he should prevent them from destroying his land. This man had heard of SAM but, in recalling this encounter, was vague about what they represented and expressed uncertainty about whether they were good or bad. Another NGO, the Institut Pengajaran Komuniti (Institute for Community Education), has had some presence in the Belaga District but not among Penan. Where efforts to organise Western Penan have been attempted, they have not been successful. One Eastern Penan, who travelled to several Western Penan communities in the Silat River to organise resistance to logging, described to me the strong frustration he felt on that trip. He said that Penan Silat showed no interest in establishing blockades, and that all they talked about was their fear of being arrested or beaten up. In short, Western Penan have not been the subject of attention by environmental or indigenous rights organisations in the way that Eastern Penan have. In speaking to Western Penan about their response to logging, one hears no reference to individual environmentalists or environmental organisations, something which occurs with considerable frequency among Eastern Penan.

There are clearly significant differences in the efforts that have been made to organise Eastern and Western Penan. The question is whether such efforts – and the presence (or absence) of individuals who have promulgated them – can alone account for the ways in which these two populations have responded to the activities of timber companies. While it would be wrong to dismiss the influence of external agents, it is equally wrong to assume that this alone accounts for the contrast between resistance and acquiescence that we observe among Eastern and Western Penan.

COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS

It is a so far unremarked fact that the historical contexts in which Eastern and Western Penan existed, particularly with respect to their relations with colonial
authorities, differed considerably. Penan historical narratives (both Eastern and
Western) are framed with reference to three main periods: The distant past,
before the establishment of colonial rule; the colonial period, including both the
Brooke period (1841–1946) and the British period (1946–1963), often conflated
because there was little change in the way Penan were administered;17 and the
post-1963 period when Sarawak joined Malaysia, recognised by Penan as marked
by Malay rule.18 Before considering the implications of this shared historical
paradigm, it is necessary to briefly consider the traditional place of Penan in the
central Bornean social and economic milieu.

From a regional perspective, hunter-gatherers such as the Penan have long
occupied a specific niche in the economies of central Borneo. They have been a
major source of forest products which are traded to Orang Ulu19 and thence to
the coast for consumption or export. The types of products collected have varied
through time. Camphor, jelutong (a type of latex), damar (a resin), and rhinoceros
horn have been the important trade products at various times in the past. Both
in the past and at present the Penan have been known for the fine woven rattan
mats and baskets which they produce. In exchange for these products, Penan
have received items such as metal, cloth, salt, and tobacco.

More than merely a system for the exchange of commodities, Penan relationships
with longhouse peoples were deeply embedded in the social and ethnic fabric of
interior Sarawak. The presence of a Penan band in an area meant access to forest
products and to the income generated by trade in those products. Longhouse
aristocrats were proprietary about ‘their’ Penan, and jealously guarded their
prerogatives to trade with certain groups. Various longhouses frequently competed
to monopolise their relationships with particular Penan bands. Historical records
detail numerous disputes brought to colonial authorities resulting from attempts
by longhouse aristocrats to lure Penan from one watershed to another. In short,
Penan were regarded by longhouse peoples as a form of wealth.

The relationship between longhouse people and neighbouring Penan was –
and is – highly paternalistic. Penan relied upon longhouse peoples to act as
mediators with the outside world, the conduit by which both information and
material goods from downriver reached them. This was a system maintained
both by Penan timidity and by indebtedness to longhouse patrons. Historical
accounts portray Penan as fearful of downriver society, a pattern that continues
to this day among both Eastern and Western Penan, but is particularly marked
among nomadic Eastern Penan. Too fearful to visit market centres themselves,
and thus ignorant of market prices, Penan were at a distinct disadvantage in their
relationships with longhouse traders.20 Virtually all historical accounts agree that
goods were exchanged with Penan at usurious rates: One colonial officer reported profits of 600–1,000 per cent (Ermen 1927: 185). At the same time, patrons compelled Penan to work for them through the creation of debt.

When describing past relationships with longhouse peoples, and particularly with reference to specific Orang Ulu aristocrats, both Eastern and Western Penan use the word *tagung* (to take care of), and refer to being ‘held’. They evaluate these relationships in either positive or negative terms, depending upon how these aristocrats treated them. Penan historical narratives are filled with such descriptions. If Penan felt that they were treated fairly, they were willing to go to some length to maintain these relationships, even to the extent of moving great distances to follow a longhouse that had moved. In other cases, relationships were severed because Penan were dissatisfied with their trading partners. To make such a change, Penan only needed to move to another watershed. In short, the continued maintenance of such relationships was conditional on the perceived benevolence of longhouse patrons. Thus, being *tagung* implied a benevolent relationship and did not imply unconditional loyalty.

This was the situation into which colonial authorities inserted themselves beginning in the late nineteenth century. From their earliest encounters with Penan, Brooke regime officials in both the Baram and Belaga Districts voiced concern about how Penan were exploited and expressed a desire to protect them. In April 1883, a mere ten months after the Baram District was ceded to the Brooke Raj, District Officer De Crespigny wrote of his plans to visit the Tutoh River:

> I hope to be able to spend a month or more in Tutow [sic] during the present year, and I should like to bring here from Kabulu […] some of the civilised Penans with their chief Tama Nideng, partly to explore, and partly to draw together the numerous Penans in the multitudinous streams of the Tutow, with a view of releasing them from the strange conditions of life under which they exist and the slavish service which they owe to the mere sprinkling of Long Patas and Batu Balas [Orang Ulu communities] inhabiting Tutow (De Crespigny 1883: 37).

In 1912 Baram District Officer Douglas stated that:

> Tama Saging and Tama Treng brought down the Tutau [sic] Punan tax. These wild people complained of the way that Kayans, Kenyahs and Milanaus were worrying them about their debts and trying to force them to come and live in certain rivers near to them. I informed them that I would come upriver at the end of the year and enquire into their grievances (Douglas 1912: 256).
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In July 1940, the Belaga District Officer commented that ‘Awang Sutoh says Kayans are again still treating the Punans [...] as their slaves, ordering them to work for them and cheating them at trading, etc’. Despite the concern by authorities in both the Belaga and Baram Districts that Penan were exploited, the response to this state of affairs in each district differed.

In the Baram District, government-supervised trade meetings were established. These meetings, called *tamu*, were begun in 1906 by Douglas. In a 1905 visit to the upper Tutoh, Douglas reported that:

On the return journey I met Tama Treng and all the Tutau [sic] Penans at Long Magoh and I made arrangements by which these wild people were not to be persecuted by their Kayan and Kenyah creditors, who never give them any rest. I told them that the Punans were all to meet once in 3 months at Long Lesat, when they could exchange their rubber etc. for trade goods. The Punans seemed very pleased with this arrangement and promised to carry it out faithfully (Douglas 1906: 68).

These meetings were held at several mutually agreed upon places in the Baram District three or four times a year. Penan brought their products to be weighed in the presence of a government official and their value calculated. Once this was completed, Penan could then barter with Kayan and Kenyah traders for the goods they desired.

The explicit purpose of these meetings, reflected in numerous statements from officials, was to protect Penan from exploitation. In 1930, for instance, Hudden stated that ‘although rarely met with, these people are protected from exploitation by regulations forbidding anyone to trade with them except in the presence of a representative of Government’ (Hudden 1949: 110). Colonial officials established strict regulations about contact and trade with Penan. One colonial officer:

visited the Tutau [sic] in order to meet the Penans at Long Malinau and find out which place they wish to tamu for trade purposes and then warn the Natives in the Tutau and Apoh that whoever trades with these people outside the appointed place will be heavily fined (Owen 1925: 85).

District reports reveal a constant effort to enforce these rules, as well as frequent violations. Fines were assessed and government-appointed chiefs were dismissed over infractions.

Trade was not the only point of these meetings. Government officials also collected taxes from Penan and provided medical services. An important part of
these meetings were dialogue sessions. Penan and government officials exchanged news; officials informed Penan of pertinent information regarding government activities and regulations; and Penan queried colonial officers about items of news that they had heard. Penan were asked to report violations of trade rules and were assured that violators would be punished. These trade meetings became a central event in the lives of Penan in the Baram District. This institution continued for some 70 years: the last tamu was held in 1976 (Langub 1984: 12). An attempt made to revive them in the mid-1980s was unsuccessful.

Eastern Penan in the Baram District today recall these trade meetings with great nostalgia. One nomadic Penan leader in the upper Tutoh fondly recalled his participation in these meetings. He spoke of receiving great quantities of tobacco, the provision of pig meat, being able to purchase shotguns, and sitting together under lanterns talking and dancing until late at night in a mood of relaxed joviality. Referring to what he perceived as the benevolence of colonial authorities, another man, who was himself too young to have attended these meetings, stated that when colonial authorities gave them shotguns at these meetings, it was the same as if Penan had taken food directly from their hands. Among the most common themes expressed in contemporary Eastern Penan accounts of tamu are the messages of reassurance that colonial officers gave them. Eastern Penan today recount how colonial officials regularly told them to bring their problems to them if anyone bothered them. They recall being told not to worry about various matters, and that the government would look after them and protect them. Eastern Penan also recall being told that their lands were reserved for them alone, and that they should report any attempts at entry by others. Indeed, the colonial government did remove Brunei traders, Iban forest product collectors, and others when their presence was reported. When talking to Eastern Penan today, one senses that these meetings provided them with a very real sense of reassurance that the government would look after their interests.

The involvement of colonial officials in the lives of Western Penan in the Belaga District contrasted markedly with their involvement in the lives of Baram District Penan. Though the government was aware of the exploitation of Penan by longhouse peoples in both regions, regular trade meetings were never institutionalised in the Belaga District; and statements by District officials convey a general impression that Penan in the Belaga District were visited much less frequently than those in the Baram. District records do reveal several attempts to establish trade meetings in Belaga, but they seem never to have been instituted on a regular basis. Why this should have been the case is unclear.
In 1936, the District Officer of the Kapit District (which at that time included Belaga) stated that ‘some system of organised trading with the interior Punans is desirable but it is difficult to see how it can be managed with the present Kapit staff of two Native Officers, and no Government representative at Belaga other than a village constable’ (Anonymous 1936: 226). More recently, a former post-colonial administrative officer, noting that contact with Penan in the Belaga District was rare, stated that ‘distance and isolation of one settlement from the other make it impossible to organise barter trades between the Punans and local traders under government supervision’ (Langub 1972a: 221). Such explanations obscure more than they reveal. While Belaga District Penan were indeed quite isolated, they were no more so than those in the Baram District. This contrast between the Baram and Belaga Districts is particularly vexing given that many government officers served in both Districts: it is reasonable to think that this would have contributed to a consistent policy of government contact with Penan.

The contrast in colonial government policy with regard to the establishment of trade meetings is reflected today in Penan recollections of the period. For Eastern Penan, accounts of trade meetings are the embodiment of the colonial era. They mention these meetings with great frequency, always in the fondest terms: such meetings are the signal feature of their memory of colonialism. In contrast, what is striking when one talks to Western Penan in Belaga today is how seldom they recall being visited by colonial authorities. Those visits that did occur are remembered in considerable detail, but such events were very rare indeed. Though they recall the visits of colonial officials in generally positive terms (particularly because they were given shotguns), their accounts lack the deep sense of nostalgia that is so evident in Eastern Penan accounts.

Penan began to settle in large numbers precisely at the time that Sarawak joined Malaysia in 1963. District reports reveal a dramatic change once this occurred. Suddenly, district officials began to make numerous trips to Penan communities, particularly after helicopters were introduced in the 1970s. In both the Baram and Belaga Districts, there was a determined interest in providing the Penan with incentives to build permanent houses and improve their farming methods. Increasingly through the 1970s and 1980s, the Sarawak state government supplied Penan communities with goods intended to help them make the transition to a settled life: chainsaws, outboard motors, corrugated zinc roofing, plywood, and the like. As a result, Penan today associate the period from 1963 to the present with the provision of these items. They also associate this period with the other great development in their lives:
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the advent of logging and all the negative effects that accompany it. Equally significant for the present discussion, they associate the period after 1963 with Malay authority.

Though they employ a common tripartite historical scheme, Eastern and Western Penan make something very different of it. As noted, Western Penan express little in the way of colonial nostalgia. They often complain about the present government, but they nevertheless accept it as a legitimate, inevitable fait accompli. Eastern Penan take a very different view on the matter. The recent period of Malay hegemony is seen as contingent, merely the most recent transition in the locus of political authority: from the pre-colonial period, to the Brookes and British, and now to Malays.

Previously I noted that when speaking of past relationships with longhouse aristocrats, both Eastern and Western Penan refer to being held or tagung, and that while this implied a benevolent relationship, it did not imply unconditional loyalty. Just as with longhouse patrons, in describing their relationships with government officials – whether in the colonial past or at present – Penan employ this same vocabulary of dependency. In doing so, the evaluative aspects of this vocabulary are clearly in evidence. This is particularly conspicuous among Eastern Penan. Eastern Penan narratives about contemporary political conditions are filled with statements to the effect that, in contrast to the colonial government, the contemporary government ‘does not know how to hold us’. Just as engagement in relationships with longhouse patrons was conditional on the perception of benevolence, so too do Eastern Penan conceive of their relationships with government – whether colonial or Malaysian – in similar terms. For this reason, Eastern Penan have today turned towards a belief in the imminent return of colonialism. For them, the nation of Malaysia is merely another historical moment. The Eastern Penan desire for a return to colonialism is the equivalent of the previous practice of movement to another watershed to seek more benevolent longhouse patrons.

Contemporary Eastern Penan seem intent on insisting that contemporary Malay rule is illegitimate but that colonial rule is legitimate on the basis of precedence and historical depth. It was orang putih, they state, who governed them in ancestral times. Malays, by contrast, are mere newcomers. One elderly man told me of a lecture that he had given to a senior police officer when he had come with a larger force to break up a blockade: ‘I am a child of Rajah Brooke, a child of the Queen. You are a child of the Malay government’. This man was, in effect, asserting his seniority and telling this policeman that from his own historical experience he knew how a government should act.
While Western Penan perceive logging as a matter which must be negotiated in the present, with contemporary government authorities, Eastern Penan have historicised the logging issue. That is to say, Eastern Penan maintain an historical dichotomy which opposes and idealises life in the colonial past with their present hardship. The current struggle between Eastern Penan and the Sarawak government can be seen as one over the meaning of that past, and its relevance for the future. In the Eastern Penan view, during the colonial period, government authorities behaved in a manner that was appropriate to their role. Colonial officers interceded for Penan in trade meetings between Penan and Orang Ulu, brought about an end to headhunting, never contested their rights to land, and never refused to lend credence to what they might have to say.

The historical dichotomy created by Eastern Penan is manifested in all manner of statements. Remarks about their current situation are constantly contrastive. On several occasions, I was told that *orang putih* were like real fathers to them, whereas the present Malay government was like a stepfather. Often people said that they did not want to take the medicines given to them by Malays, but that they wanted medicines from *orang putih*. Before, Eastern Penan say, it was easy to get shotguns; today it is impossible to get them. *Orang putih*, they say, were happy to sit and eat with them; Malays refuse to do so. Eastern Penan portray colonial officers as predictable and trustworthy, people who abided by their word. The present government, by contrast, is portrayed as duplicitous. The point of this pervasive Eastern Penan contrast is that they believe that the colonial government respected them and the integrity of the lands they occupied, while the current government does not. The colonial government not only left them alone, but made sure that others did as well. They not only did not transgress Eastern Penan boundaries, they maintained those boundaries so that others would not violate them. The current government, by contrast, is not only transgressing that boundary, but does so on a massive scale. As one nomadic Penan man said, they have never had to raise blockades against *orang putih* but only against Malays.

The nostalgia Eastern Penan feel for the colonial period has in fact been transformed into a tangible sense of hope. Many Eastern Penan see their only salvation in a return to colonialism, manifested in the person of the Queen. Foreign environmentalists who have surreptitiously visited them in recent years are the embodiment of the colonial past and are seen as the vanguard of its return. When Eastern Penan describe their present situation to Western environmentalists, they believe they are talking to individuals who have the power to put an end to Malay hegemony and the condition with which it is
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associated: logging. Among Eastern Penan today there are any number of expressions of this hope for the return to colonialism, the most common being the declarations of how they feel when seeing foreign visitors. On numerous occasions I was told that orang putih were like the sun. Once, upon arriving among a group of nomadic Penan in the upper Tutoh, a man commented that my arrival was his good fate. He told those assembled that he had had a dream recently: The sun was in the sky, and he saw all of their mothers and fathers descending to the earth. This, he said, was a sign that I would be coming. On another occasion, while speaking to a group of Eastern Penan, another man commented wistfully, ‘When we think of you [orang putih], we think of our mothers and fathers’. One older man said that when he had heard I had arrived, he felt as though he were full, as though he had eaten his fill of pig, his bones felt strong, and his breath returned.

Another expression of Eastern Penan hope for a return to colonial rule are direct questions about when orang putih can return. One woman asked me ‘When you leave, when are orang putih coming back? We will just stay here and wait’. One man declared that he refused to work for companies because he was waiting for orang putih to return. Another man said that he had refused to take money from companies, and that even if he had to revert to wearing bark cloth, he would continue to do so until orang putih returned. Such declarations of steadfastness are common. Often they are accompanied by direct questions about why the Queen has abandoned them. One woman asked: ‘Doesn’t she pity us? Does she no longer have any feelings for us? Doesn’t she want us?’

One of the most tangible Eastern Penan expressions of this expectation is that they consistently refer to Westerners as perita (‘government’, a borrowing of the Iban and Sarawak Malay term perintah), or use the terms orang putih and perita as synonyms. Many times Eastern Penan addressed me as ‘ka perita’ (you [plural] government). On one occasion, I walked through the forest with a group of nomadic Penan, and passed a series of marks painted on trees by timber company survey crews. As we did so, one man stopped, pointed to one of these, and asked, ‘When we meet survey crews, they always tell us that they are here at the request of perita. Is this true?’ I replied that it was true in the sense that the government gave companies timber licences and that many politicians held these licences. Somewhat confused, he said ‘Really? You orang putih ask them to do this?’

Yet another expression of the Eastern Penan conflation of orang putih with government is that they frequently seek advice or permission from foreigners to do certain things. On numerous occasions, I was asked by Eastern Penan what they should do about the incursions of logging companies onto their lands:
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should they construct blockades? Should they continue to wait? Should they accept compensation from companies? Eastern Penan also seek reassurance in a way reminiscent of their relations with colonial officers. One man said that he had heard from Penan in another community that *orang putih* would put them in jail if they collected *Aquilaria* sp. (an aromatic wood which Penan trade), and he was anxious to seek reassurance from me that this was not true.

It is into this environment of colonial nostalgia, violated trust, transgression, and expectation that contemporary environmentalists have stepped. Though they may be ignorant of the workings of government, or exactly who the government is, Eastern Penan feel that the critique of the political economy of logging which foreign environmentalists offer is accurate. They believe that Western environmentalists speak honestly, directly, and clearly, and think that these individuals express not merely sympathy but actively oppose the transgression of the boundaries of Penan lands. From the Eastern Penan perspective, foreign environmentalists are acting in a way that is consistent with the past behaviour of colonial authorities, and they project their past experience with colonial officers onto these individuals.

For Western Penan, logging is an issue that is negotiated entirely with reference to the present. When Western Penan talk about the colonial past it does not have nearly the same resonance as it does among Eastern Penan. Among Western Penan, one rarely hears about the Queen or is asked for advice on how to respond to logging. Certainly visitors are never told that their presence is like seeing the sun rise. In short, for Western Penan, colonialism does not provide any sort of image from which they in turn project a future, as is the case among Eastern Penan. This contrast between Eastern and Western Penan appears to be the product of the more frequent and sustained contact which occurred between Penan and colonial authorities in the Baram District relative to the low degree of contact in the Belaga District.

SOCIAL FORMS AND THE CONSTITUTION OF COMMUNITIES

*The Demographic and Ecological Basis of Penan Communities*

Despite occupying superficially similar rainforest ecosystems and relying on a similar range of resources, Eastern and Western Penan constitute social existence in very distinct ways. These differences have important implications for the way these two societies have responded to the activities of timber companies. Among
Both Eastern and Western Penan, the band or community is the primary unit of social and political identity. However, the way in which they are constituted and the degree to which they persist is strikingly different. A primary feature of Western Penan communities is their long-term stability for these are enduring social aggregates. Associated with this stability is a very strong sense of community cohesion and solidarity. We lack comparable census data for Eastern Penan – but, as we shall see, it is clear that Eastern Penan bands are much more fluid in their composition and much more ephemeral with respect to long-term historical identity.

A starting point in the analysis of Eastern and Western Penan social organisation is to note the contrast in band size existing between these two populations. Western Penan communities tend to be much larger than those of Eastern Penan, generally with 60 to 200 members. Eastern Penan communities, by comparison, average only 20 to 40 members. Associated with this contrast in band size are differences in the settlement systems of these two populations. Western Penan traditionally maintained a two-tier settlement system comprising central base camps occupied for up to one year, and ephemeral satellite camps. After moving to a new base camp, Western Penan exploited sago in an ever-expanding circle outwards, establishing satellite camps from which sago could be worked and transported to the main settlement. When transport distances became too great, preparations were made to move to a new area.

In contrast, Eastern Penan maintain only a single-tier settlement system: bands move from site to site rather than move out in a radial pattern from a base camp. Furthermore, camp occupation among Eastern Penan is much shorter – generally only a few weeks – than among Western Penan. Associated with the larger size of Western Penan bands, each band traditionally occupied a much larger foraging area than did Eastern Penan. The Penan Geng Belaga, for instance, occupy an area of some 1,500 sq. km. Eastern Penan, on the other hand, rarely forage over areas larger than 400 sq. km.

Both Eastern and Western Penan conceive of their territories as a shared corporate estate over which all members of a community have rights. However, there exists one very significant point of difference between Eastern and Western Penan with respect to land tenure. A concept of key significance to Western Penan with reference to the management and exploitation of forest resources is *molong* (to preserve or to foster). Implicit in the Western Penan concept is that resources fostered are claimed, either by communities or by individuals. A community may *molong* a particular watershed in order to allow the growth of resources there for future harvest. Although the term *molong* also applies to the claiming of particular sago clumps or fruit trees by specific individuals, it
does not constitute ownership of those resources, but is a slightly proprietary sort of stewardship. Other members of the community may exploit resources which are individually claimed but must inform the individual who claimed that resource. The *molong* system provides a way to monitor information on the availability of resources over vast tracts of land and prevents the indiscriminate use of resources which might otherwise be depleted. In a sense, the Western Penan settlement system may be seen as a temporalised manifestation of the *molong* concept. The existence of the *molong* complex is one of the factors associated with the cohesive character of Western Penan communities. Western Penan bands possess a strong sense of belonging to a particular portion of landscape, and this is validated economically and historically by the management of resources in an area. In contrast, Eastern Penan do not *molong* resources to any significant degree, so this concept plays little role in notions of resource management in either its individual or community aspects.

This contrast in concepts of resource management is also associated with the degree of overlap in Eastern and Western Penan foraging ranges. Among Western Penan there is very little overlap in the areas occupied by various bands, while among Eastern Penan the degree of overlap appears to be considerable. In neither of these populations are foraging ranges bounded. However, the lack of specified boundaries should not be taken to indicate a lack of territorial claims. What is important to both Eastern and Western Penan, rather than specified boundaries, is the recognition of rights over particular watersheds.\(^{32}\) However, as we shall see, there is variation in what constitutes rights, and to whom they are extended.

**The Nature of Penan Communities**

One of the most conspicuous indicators of the nature of Western Penan communities, in contrast to those of Eastern Penan, is group names. When addressed to Eastern Penan, questions concerning the name of a particular group are met with incomprehension. Western Penan, by contrast, unhesitatingly indicate that they are Penan Apau, Penan Seping, Penan Lusong, or the like. Individuals may speak of themselves as belonging to several groups, some of which no longer exist. Such names are used in a segmentary manner, with an historical and genealogical referent. No single name is the correct name but depends on the immediate context of inclusiveness with other Western Penan groups. That is, these names are used to express a shared history, and therefore kinship, however distant. The Western Penan use of group names points to the significance of band identity, an identity that persists for many generations. Eastern Penan contrast markedly in this respect: even extant groups do not
designate themselves by the use of group names. The historically situated segmentary group identification of Western Penan is associated with three other aspects of Western Penan society: Community partition associated with population growth, genealogical knowledge and claims to aristocratic status, and conceptions of band membership.

It is clear from settlement sequences, genealogies and historical accounts that Western Penan bands have continually fissoned through time. There are a number of proximate, political reasons why bands may fission, as is evident in the fact that the narratives of such events frequently refer to conflict, but the ultimate causes of partition are demographic and ecological. Among Western Penan, there has been a very high rate of population increase in the twentieth century. Between 1955 and 1987 alone, this population increased by over 200 per cent. As individual Western Penan groups expand, provisioning becomes increasingly difficult. Task groups must travel increasingly far to reach sago groves and experience decreased hunting success. Further, when game is brought back to the community, it is difficult to provide each household with sufficient meat, creating more pressure to partition.

Following partition, an independent set of processes begin to occur, mostly a product of decisions concerning marriage and post-marital residence. These will be discussed shortly. For now it is sufficient to note that Western Penan strongly prefer community endogamous marriage. Given the small size of new bands, and thus the limited number of marriageable partners, most marriages which occur during the first few years after partition occur with persons from the parent community. In time, however, as the community grows, more people are able to marry within the community, and children being born at this point have fewer direct links to the parent community. Through time a progressively higher percentage of marriages occur within the community and the ramifying effects of endogamy reinforce a community’s sense of internal solidarity and of distinctiveness from other communities.

The process of community formation among Eastern Penan differs greatly from that of Western Penan. We lack the information necessary to determine whether significant population growth has occurred among Eastern Penan. Nevertheless, it is certain that Eastern Penan bands have partitioned through time, though in a way that is very different from those of Western Penan. To fully comprehend this, it is necessary that we understand the ways in which Eastern Penan bands are constituted, which will be considered shortly. For the present, it can be said that among Eastern Penan, partition does not appear to be the traumatic affair that it is among Western Penan.
The members of a Western Penan community retain a strong sense of community based on descent from common ancestors. Relative to Eastern Penan, Western Penan have an exceedingly rich genealogical tradition transmitted orally. The fact that Western Penan retain this knowledge to such a remarkable degree, and that communities have narratable histories, says much about the nature of Western Penan society. In the abstract, Western Penan recognise themselves as all related to each other to varying degrees. Some type of relationship can nearly always be established between two individuals in different communities, however distant. What is remarkable about Western Penan genealogical accounts is not just their depth (five to seven generations), but their breadth as well. Rather than simple vertical recitations of ancestors, these genealogical sequences broaden out to incorporate the ancestors of virtually all Western Penan. Not only are they used to relate individuals from different groups to each other, they are also deployed in asserting claims to leadership and, by extension, to land.

One characteristic of Western Penan society which stands in sharp contrast to that of Eastern Penan is a strong institution of leadership. Though both Eastern and Western Penan bands have headmen, Western Penan are adamant in insisting that their headmen are of aristocratic status. The source of such claims generally lies in reference to the marriage of ancestors with the offspring of Orang Ulu aristocrats many generations before. Significantly, however, though recognition of aristocratic status is a matter of general consensus within a community, it is very often not a matter of consensus between communities. Indeed, one of the most common and contentious foci of intercommunity conflict is claims to aristocratic status. Such claims not only validate the status of headmen but also serve to validate the claims of bands to particular watersheds. Western Penan historical narratives are framed in terms of headmen bringing followers to or from certain places, and the contemporary occupation of particular watersheds is validated with reference to ancestral occupation of those areas. When we consider such narratives with reference to the ongoing process of band growth and partition, it is evident that the territories claimed by Western Penan communities have not been occupied by those bands in perpetuity. Communities are enduring social aggregates and strongly corporate with respect to land. But the territories of those communities, viewed over time, float over the landscape. Particular portions of the landscape may be abandoned, only to be reoccupied, perhaps many generations later.

Considering that over the course of several decades it is likely that community partition has occurred, it often happens that, on genealogical grounds, several
communities can claim an equal right of access to the same watershed. Upon reoccupation, trees claimed (molong) by aristocratic ancestors are cited as verifying contemporary claims to land. However, such claims are frequently contested by members of other bands who contest the aristocratic status of the ancestors of rival claimants. In denying the significance of the ancestors of members of another community, Western Penan are by extension denying the claims of contemporary headmen to aristocratic status, and thus their rights to assert their claim to land.

With regard to matters of genealogical knowledge and claims to aristocratic status, Eastern Penan stand in stark contrast to Western Penan. Though they recall certain luminary ancestors, Eastern Penan genealogies lack depth and breadth relative to those of Western Penan. Few people can name ancestors beyond their grandparents, and though every band has a headman, Eastern Penan do not invoke the principle of rank as a qualification for this office. As such, we do not observe the forms of contestation typical of Western Penan, wherein communities denigrate the claims of other communities by denigrating the claims of certain individuals to aristocratic status. When they do contest the claims of other communities to particular watersheds, Eastern Penan may cite previous or continuous occupation to justify the exploitation of a particular area, but rarely are such claims made with reference to aristocratic ancestors.

The Constitution of Communities: Filiation, Marriage Patterns, and Post-Marital Residence

Among both Eastern and Western Penan there are two foundations for band membership: filiation and post-marital residence. The first is, for any individual, a matter of circumstance: an individual becomes a band member by being born into the community in which his or her parents are resident. On the second principle of recruitment – post-marital residence – Eastern and Western Penan differ greatly. As noted, Western Penan espouse a very strong preference for community endogamy as they prefer to have people remain in their natal community throughout life: the desire to live with anyone but their own closest consanguine kin, even after marriage is inconceivable to them. The strength of preference for community endogamy has produced among contemporary Western Penan a high percentage of marriages to first cousins, marriages that are not only possible but preferred. Among Eastern Penan, we observe a higher incidence of band exogamy than among Western Penan, a pattern produced by the relative lack of availability of marriage partners in their typically smaller bands. Further, the Eastern Penan form of household is the nuclear family,
unlike the three-generation stem family typical of Western Penan. In cases of community exogamous marriage, nuclear families practise reciprocal residence in that they move back and forth between the respective natal communities of each spouse.35

In general, for Eastern Penan, community exogamous marriage does not have the associations that it does for Western Penan. This difference in attitude is in part due to differences in Eastern and Western Penan conceptions of community. As noted, Western Penan communities identify themselves much more as discrete entities and, as I will discuss, tend to be much more inward looking than Eastern Penan communities. As such, there is a sense among Western Penan that those marrying into another community and taking up residence elsewhere are marrying out into a community of others. Among Eastern Penan, community exogamy denotes the one who has married somewhat away. The Western Penan perspective is distinctly oppositional – the natal community versus other communities – and post-marital residence decisions are regarded as a zero-sum game. The Eastern Penan perspective is more relative: One marries into a band of those who happen to live elsewhere. To fully understand this, it is necessary that we understand something of the oppositionality characteristic of Western Penan communities.

Despite the fact that nearly all Western Penan are related to each other in known ways, in their relations with others they make a fundamental distinction between kin and others (*ire beken*). Given Western Penan patterns of marriage and post-marital residence, genealogical, social, and physical distance are mostly isomorphic. Such distance is central to Western Penan notions of relationship. Being considered *ire beken* is a function of this distance. For the most part *ire beken* are those of one’s more distant kin whose natal communities are other than one’s own. This is, I have demonstrated, an historical process. There is not some particular point at which those in a particular community become *ire beken*. Rather it is a kind of peeling away, as relationships between individuals in these communities become genealogically and socially more remote. This distance is expressed not only in terms of relationship but in terms of perceived moral qualities as well, in statements which have a strongly evaluative, even negative, sense to them.

**The Core Characteristics of Penan Communities**

A fundamental characteristic of Western Penan communities is that they are closed, thus conforming to a pattern widespread among central Bornean peoples. As noted, recruitment to band membership is through filiation and
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post-marital residence. With the exception of reciprocal residence, it is unheard of for a Western Penan household to move from one community to another: Western Penan do not wish to live with anyone but their closest kin. By contrast, Eastern Penan communities are relatively less closed. This is not to say that Eastern Penan households move randomly to other communities, but they may somewhat more easily detach themselves from one band and attach themselves to another, for instance if one member of a conjugal pair wishes to be with a sibling who resides elsewhere. Among Eastern Penan we notice a pattern wherein clusters of two or three bands enjoy a particularly close relationship, within which there is a greater tendency for marriages to be contracted and among which households can easily move.

A second major feature of Penan communities is that they are strongly corporate in character, though there is variation between Eastern and Western Penan in certain aspects of this kind. The corporateness of Penan communities is manifested most clearly in the distribution of food and other material goods, in ritual status, and in notions of land tenure. Among both Eastern and Western Penan, the household is the primary unit of production and consumption.\(^3\)

Between production and consumption, however, lies a great deal of redistribution: all food brought back to the community is shared. With respect to ritual status, Penan communities observe certain annual rituals, are frequently under a common set of prohibitions following a death and, in the case of transgressions against the supernatural, the community as a whole is at risk from retribution.\(^3\) With regard to land tenure and the definition of territory, I have already considered this matter in the discussion of foraging areas and the molong concept: this is a significant point of contrast between Eastern and Western Penan. Western Penan are more strongly corporate in the sense that their communities – and the lands which they occupy – are conceived of as much more discrete, closed, and exclusive. Further, communities are perceived as having some permanence beyond the lives of individual members. Eastern Penan, by contrast, do not conceive of the lands which they occupy as closed to the same degree as Western Penan. They do feel an attachment to specific watersheds and feel some sense of proprietariness over them, but there is a much greater degree of merging at the boundaries, both in terms of overlap in foraging areas and in terms of the community as a social unit. This relatively lesser degree of boundedness is a product of the way in which Eastern Penan bands are temporally constituted. These bands may be considered to be a product of the developmental cycle of domestic groups writ large. As such, to the degree that they are corporate and closed, they are not perceived as existing in perpetuity.
A group of close kin with certain rights to land live together to raise families and age together, and move back and forth among each other. The openness of Eastern Penan bands with respect to the greater tendency toward exogamy means that through time they exhibit a much higher degree of reconstitution in band affiliation and band identity.

Another important dimension of the constitution of Penan communities is the degree to which they are autonomous. A key characteristic of Western Penan communities is that this autonomy exists to an extreme degree, relative to Eastern Penan. In all respects, Western Penan communities act as independent political entities. As noted, once partition occurs, communities increasingly close in upon themselves and develop a strong sense of insularity. This autonomy and insularity of Western Penan communities is expressed in many ways, among the most evident being the way in which members of one community refer to those in others. In general, Western Penan assume that members of other communities are morally inferior to themselves. Disparaging comments about individuals in other communities, or about those communities as a whole, are made with great frequency, most often in comments that focus on alleged dishonesty, laziness, or unwillingness to share. The degree to which this is done varies with the degree of relatedness and time since partition: The more recent the partition, the less morally ‘other’ members of another community are held to be.

Perceived differences between communities are expressed with reference to adet (adat in Bahasa Malaysia). As in much of insular Southeast Asia, the Western Penan concept of adet conveys a sense of custom or tradition. For instance, Western Penan often contrast ‘true adet’ with more recent cultural innovations. One of the most important contexts in which the term adet is used is in highlighting particularity and contrast, whether in reference to ethnicity or community: Penan adet versus that of Kayan or the adet of one’s own community versus that of other Penan communities. Used in this way, the term adet is at once contrastive and evaluative. The language of judgement for Penan is almost entirely framed in terms of adet. To be characterised as lacking in adet or not knowing adet is one of the strongest forms of condemnation. When not intended to refer to particular individuals, it is most often applied to a community, such as one’s own community versus other communities.

The insularity of Western Penan communities can also be seen in relations with in-marrying affines. A person marrying into a community, being considered ire beken, is always an outsider. Having no close relatives around, such individuals are felt to experience a sense of isolation, to have their feelings easily hurt, and to be subject to feelings of abandonment and vulnerability (mesikau), a state Western
Penan describe as similar to being orphaned. Far from their families, these individuals are also thought to be subject to a form of chronic worry or panic about death. Western Penan thus make a conscious effort to express regard for the feelings of in-marrying affines, and take considerable pains not to offend them. Underlying such deliberate expressions of regard is the recognition of a fundamental gulf lying between the members of different communities.

More than mere insularity, Western Penan communities exist in a mildly antagonistic, competitive relationship. Such competitiveness takes many forms. Among the most distinctive (albeit oblique) manifestations is an extreme sensitivity to insult (*munyi*). Among Western Penan, there exists a general suspicion that people from other communities are critical of, or feel superior to, the members of one’s own community, and thus relish insulting them. Even where insult is not intended, it is significant that members of one community often interpret the statements of those from other communities as if they were. On one occasion, during a visit of some people from the community of Leng Jek to the community of Leng Luar, a man from Leng Luar quite innocently referred to Leng Jek as *la’ bui*’ (above), despite the fact that these two communities are at almost identical elevations. This suggestion greatly angered the visitors from Leng Jek. In suggesting that Leng Jek was at a higher elevation, the man from Leng Luar was seen to be implying that those from Leng Jek were more remote, and thus somehow less sophisticated than themselves. In relations with other communities, the suspicion of intent to insult always exists, a characteristic which fosters the insularity described earlier.

As noted, one of the biggest foci of competitiveness – and thus autonomy – is with respect to claims to aristocratic status. Indeed, the fact that Western Penan make such claims is itself a manifestation of competitiveness. Among Western Penan, issues of community and aristocratic status are tightly linked. Which people in other communities hold most solid claim to aristocratic status, particularly relative to those in one’s own community, is a matter of considerable interest and debate. The claims of a particular headman to aristocratic status are frequently deprecated in other communities. To do so is to disparage not merely an individual, but an entire community.

When Western Penan began to settle, an entirely new realm of competitiveness emerged, as the state government began to provide development projects. Western Penan view the provision of such projects as a competitive matter, responding to the allocation of projects to other communities with jealousy and resentment. For example, the state government has recently indicated plans to locate a school in the Plieran River area, although the precise location has yet to
be decided. The communities concerned have defined the resolution of this issue as being of a competitive nature. Each wants a school near their community rather than elsewhere and believe that if it is built in another community, the members of that community will feel superior.

Eastern Penan differ most significantly from Western Penan in terms of the autonomy of communities. Eastern Penan are not less autonomous per se: Like Western Penan, Eastern Penan communities act as independent political entities. What differs is the character of that autonomy. Previously, I described how Western Penan communities progressively close in upon themselves following partition, and how they are characterised by a quality of insularity. It is the nature of that insularity that distinguishes Eastern Penan. This is most immediately evident in how Eastern Penan talk about persons in other communities. Although Eastern Penan are by no means immune to make disparaging remarks about persons in other communities, they do so with notably less frequency than Western Penan. More significantly, when they do feel the need to make critical remarks, they are more often directed at particular individuals rather than at communities. Used as an evaluative device, adet is most often spoken of as a quality of individuals and not nearly as often generalised to communities. In short, Eastern Penan seem less inclined to make blanket statements about the shortcomings of persons in other communities by virtue of community affiliation. 38

Earlier I described the case of relations with in-marrying affines as an example of the insularity of Western Penan communities. Among Eastern Penan, one senses none of the distance between affines that exists among Western Penan, nor do Eastern Penan portray in-marrying affines as subject to feelings of abandonment, isolation, and vulnerability, nor susceptible to panic attacks.

Lacking the profound insularity of Western Penan communities, Eastern Penan display neither the competitiveness nor the extreme sensitivity to insult characteristic of Western Penan. Munyi is a word employed with great frequency among Western Penan, but its Eastern Penan equivalent, muau, is only rarely heard. Although Western Penan are most sensitive to insult from members of other Penan communities, Eastern Penan seem more subject to insult from external agents: government officials, company representatives, and the like. It is further interesting to consider the vocabulary that Eastern and Western Penan use in describing or responding to insult. When they feel they have been in some way insulted, Western Penan interpret this as due to the fact that they are not respected. The Western Penan verb mengadet (to respect) is derived from the stem adet. Mengadet denotes more than respect in a formal sense; it also conveys
something of the notion of regard. This association between respect and regard is evident in the context of reduplicative evaluative statements which are so common among Western Penan, such as when it is said of a person that they ‘do not know adet, do not know feelings’. Among Western Penan, this link between adet and feelings – how one’s words or actions affect the feelings of another – is made very directly, and breaches of adet are seen to reflect a lack of regard of one person or community for others. To conform to adet, therefore, is to show regard for the feelings of others. What Western Penan would take to be purposeful insults – for instance some disparaging statement – are, among Eastern Penan, interpreted as slights caused not so much by a lack of respect as by the lack of ability to pity, think, or to know how to feel: in short, a lack of adet. Thus, for instance, Eastern Penan speak frequently of persons who ‘don’t know how to pity’ or ‘don’t know how to think’. That is to say, they believe these people to be in some way incapable of empathy. Western Penan do also speak of persons lacking pity, but interpret it more as a wilful corruption of character. The distinction between Eastern and Western Penan notions of respect and regard is subtle to be sure. The Eastern Penan conception is closer to empathy or pity, while the Western Penan is closer to respect. It is as if Eastern Penan absolve others of some responsibility for what they see as a lack of ability of those persons to pity or understand, while Western Penan attribute slights to a conscious disregard, an unwillingness to pity. The active verb prefix meng- in the Western Penan term mengadet refers much more directly to the agency of the accused.

This contrast between Eastern and Western Penan has important implications for interpreting their response to current affairs. As noted, a product of the corporateness, closedness, and autonomy of Western Penan communities is a quality of insularity, an insularity which constantly closes in upon itself, producing a strong sense of competitiveness and an extreme sensitivity to insult. Prior to the influx of loggers, the sphere in which this social competition was manifested was that of claims to aristocratic status, conveyed through the medium of genealogical accounts. Once Western Penan began to settle, the terms of competition shifted somewhat, as the provision of government development projects became an arena in which to manifest such relationships. Today the terms of competition have shifted yet again. Timber companies bring in what appear to Penan to be unlimited amounts of money. As such, the most recent manifestation of this competitive pattern is in attempts to extract as much as possible from those companies. In speaking to Western Penan about compensation negotiations with timber companies, they seem to be more concerned with what other communities are receiving than with the fairness of
the compensation packages that they themselves are negotiating. In one recent case, the members of one community were upset that the members of another community had inflated the number of households in their community in their request for compensation. Not only was this felt to mean that they were getting more than was their due, they were also concerned if the company considered the other community to be larger, they might then appoint the headman to some supervisory position within the camp.

The most visible manifestation of contemporary Western Penan competitiveness is the desire of Penan communities in the Belaga District to acquire Toyota Landcruiser trucks, something unheard of among Eastern Penan. Today virtually all Western Penan communities in the Belaga District are striving to acquire these, and several communities have already done so. Those that have not desperately wish to, and are in the process of negotiating with companies for help in acquiring them. The present Western Penan competition for Landcruiser trucks is merely a contemporary manifestation of a fundamental pattern of community autonomy and competitiveness. As they have encountered timber companies moving into their areas, Western Penan have been as concerned with the response of other communities to those companies as they have with their own response. They appear to identify other communities, even more than timber companies, as opponents. Indeed their embrace of timber companies derives from a desire to foil the ambitions of their perceived competitors, and is entirely consistent with the traditional Western Penan pattern of intercommunity relations.

As noted, the Eastern Penan response to logging companies has been very different from that of Western Penan, and the reasons for this contrast lay partially in the characteristics of Eastern Penan society. The competitiveness evident among Western Penan, expressed in their relations with timber companies, is lacking almost completely. Even where they have accepted compensation, it seems that to Eastern Penan it represents an unfortunate departure from a formerly united stand against companies: For them this is a kind of letdown, an admission of defeat, something they would prefer not to talk about – decidedly not something they are in competition with other communities over, as is the case among Western Penan. Even as Eastern Penan appear to be moving towards a more acquiescent stance in response to logging, it nevertheless remains the case that the Eastern Penan pattern of response to logging is very different from that of the Western Penan. By far the most prevalent locus of dispute among Western Penan is in relations between communities, and such disputes arise from a pre-existing ethos of competitiveness. Among Eastern Penan, intercommunity tensions also exist, but they seem to arise less from competitiveness than from a
sense of violation. Among Eastern Penan many of the present tensions that exist within communities, something that is decidedly less common among Western Penan. There has emerged something of a generation gap, as younger Eastern Penan men have begun to work for timber companies against the strong protests of older persons within their communities. There are also numerous intra-community disputes concerning decisions to accept compensation. Many Eastern Penan remain vehemently against compensation, while others in their own communities have begun to accept it.

CONCLUSIONS

Up to the present, commentators on the present situation in Sarawak have not acknowledged the distinction that exists between Eastern and Western Penan, nor have they acknowledged that these two populations have responded to logging in markedly different ways. In the preceding discussion, I have examined three factors which have played a role in the contrastive Eastern and Western Penan responses to logging which were based on differences in the contemporary political context, particularly in recent efforts made to organise Penan; in the historical context in which these two societies have existed, particularly with respect to their relations with colonial authorities; and in the nature of social relations characteristic of these two populations.

In examining each of these factors, I have not intended to determine which of them is the most direct cause of the apparent difference between Eastern and Western Penan responses to logging. It would be easy enough to attribute Eastern Penan resistance to logging to environmentalist influence and be done with it. Certainly it appears that individuals such as Bruno Manser have played a role in the Eastern Penan decision to erect blockades, both in organising directly and in playing a legitimising role. However, to attribute Eastern Penan resistance entirely to the presence of environmentalists ignores a great deal that is significant and can only be supported as a proximate cause. Underlying environmentalist influence is the broader historical and social context in which Eastern Penan have existed. Without the colonial precedent described above, it is doubtful that Eastern Penan would have responded as they did to Manser and other environmentalists. It is likewise the case that the distinctive features of these societies have contributed to their response to logging. Western Penan acquiescence to the influx of logging companies is clearly associated with the insularity of communities and the competitiveness that exists between them, just as Eastern Penan resistance is associated with social patterns that contribute to solidarity.
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My broader purpose in examining the contrastive cases of Eastern and Western Penan resistance and acquiescence is to consider the implications of this contrastive situation for theories of domination. In this respect, the acquiescence of Western Penan to logging is as significant as is Eastern Penan resistance. Interest in acquiescence, of course, has a long genealogy. Not only is it addressed explicitly by authors such as Scott (1985 and 1990) and Gaventa (1980), but it is central to the work of Marx and is foundational to the Gramscian concept of hegemony. It infuses the work of Foucault and is a central element of contemporary feminist theory. Nevertheless, I believe that there are certain aspects of the Western Penan pattern of acquiescence which makes it worthy of our attention and which has implications for analysing structures of domination.

The theorising of domination and subordination has consistently been framed contrastively and hierarchically, with reference to those who exercise power and those who respond to it, whether by acquiescence or resistance. It seems to be assumed that the key relationship in any context is that between those who dominate and those who are subordinate. Too often the social formations of subordinate agents – comprised elements such as concepts of community, width of social field, and marriage patterns – are reduced to generic categories such as class or caste. The present analysis is intended to point to a recognition of the fact that subordination can only be understood within a field of culturally constituted social relationships. When Penan respond to various forms of domination – whether embodied in the actions of government officials or timber companies – they do so not only with reference to those external agents but to other Penan. Who those other Penan are, how ‘other’ they are thought to be, how their identity is constituted relative to one’s own, and what their motivations for certain actions are thought to be, are very different matters among Eastern and Western Penan. Understanding this wider context in which domination occurs allows us to better understand the relationship between forms of subordination and how existence in a wider social field might lead subordinates to act in certain ways in response to domination: whether they will resist or acquiesce.

It is perhaps useful to think of this dynamic in terms that James Scott defined. In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990), Scott distinguished between what he termed public transcripts and hidden transcripts. The former are defined as ‘a shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate’ (1990: 2), while the latter are defined as ‘discourse that takes place “offstage”, beyond direct observation by power holders’ (1990: 4). It is, he notes, ‘specific to a given social site and to a particular set of actors’ (1990: 14). What Scott is particularly interested in is the relationship between
these two transcripts: ‘The hidden transcript is produced for a different audience and under different constraints of power than the public transcript. By assessing the discrepancy between the hidden transcript and the public transcript we may begin to judge the impact of domination on public discourse’ (1990: 5). In elaborating his argument, Scott provides a scale of ‘hypothetical discursive sites’ (1990: 26) in terms of the audiences for whom public and hidden transcripts are intended in one particular type of context, that of slavery. What produces this scale, lying between the extremes of ‘immediate family’ and ‘harsh master/overseer’ is the degree of freedom from ‘intimidation from above’ (1990: 26). Though this particular example is intended to elucidate degrees of discursive openness in one particular context, Scott’s schematic representation of the multiplicity of discursive sites is intended to be illustrative of a more general way of conceptualising structures of domination. Scott recognises the linearity of this scheme and later asks, in an extended attempt to correct this shortcoming, ‘How cohesive is the hidden transcript shared among members of a particular subordinate group?’ (1990: 134). He states that

asking how unified a hidden transcript is amounts to asking about the resolving power of the social lens through which subordination passes. If subordinates are entirely atomized […] there is no lens through which a critical, collective account can be focused. Barring this limiting case, however, the cohesion of the hidden transcript would seem to rest on both the homogeneity of the domination and the social cohesion of the victims themselves (1990: 134).

Referring to the matter of social cohesion, Scott refers to the ‘process by which such high moral density develops’ (1990: 135).

This analysis points to a way to interpret how particular patterns of ‘moral density’ might be differentially constituted in the context of particular structures of domination. Identical forms of domination imposed over dissimilar subordinate social contexts seem likely to produce differential results. As such, structures of domination are not simply a product of the character of hegemonic forces but of how subordinates constitute themselves both prior to, and in response to, domination. Domination occurs only in particular social contexts, and the contours of that context have a great deal to do with the response to domination.

Scott’s argument clearly has implications for our interpretation of the distinctiveness of Eastern and Western Penan responses to logging. What we see contrasted in the Penan case is differential patterns of ‘moral density’, and differential configurations of discursive sites. It is evident that the dimensionality
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of discursive sites in which the hidden transcript may be spoken differs between the Eastern and Western Penan. Shared critiques of domination (Scott 1990: xi) may not necessarily be divulged among those with whom they are held in common: while they may be held in common, the person (or entity) to whom one reveals them is another matter. Given the composition of Eastern Penan households and communities, we see more breadth in the constitution of their discursive sites. Among Western Penan, on the other hand, discursive sites are considerably more discrete in their distribution and much more confined by the boundaries of communities. Between the Eastern and Western Penan, what constitutes the domain of the hidden and what constitutes the domain of the public differs considerably.

Among other things, the contrastive cases presented here have implications for reconsidering a rather traditional sub-field of anthropology that is concerned with the analysis of social organisation. Despite the recent publication of a number of innovative studies concerned with the intersection between kinship, social inequality and gender (Collier and Yanagisako 1987; Kelly 1993), the study of social organisation has been a rather moribund field of study within anthropology in the last two decades or so (Faubion 1996). I believe that a more concerted effort to link kinship and inequality should be made, in order to bring the insights (and methods) of kinship theory to the study of the relationship between domination and the ideological and performative aspects of social forms which are subjected to hegemonic processes. Such an effort would extend Scott’s analysis, yielding important insights into the ways in which structures of domination are configured in the process of confronting particular social formations.

A second issue that a comparison of these two cases leads us to consider is the significance of external influence in the dynamics of resistance. Most treatments of domination are based on the premise that when explicit acts of resistance occur, it is sufficient to assume that they are autochthonous, that the forms or conditions of domination are themselves sufficient to produce explicit acts of resistance. The facts in the Eastern Penan case seem to suggest that foreign environmentalists did play some role in fostering or legitimising Eastern Penan civil disobedience. This is a particularly appropriate question in the present case because it also raises questions about the authority of external influence. When Eastern Penan encounter environmentalists, they do not perceive individuals whom they recognise as having an interest in preserving global biodiversity, asserting the rights of indigenous peoples, or – more narrowly – helping them to stop logging. Rather, Eastern Penan believe they are encountering individuals
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who are, or perhaps only may be, agents of the Queen. For Eastern Penan, logging is an issue that has not been simply politicised by foreign environmentalists, but historicised by Penan themselves. Perhaps it is inaccurate to suggest that for Eastern Penan it is NOT an historical matter at all but, rather, one of imminent return: an imagined political future. The current struggle between Eastern Penan and the Sarawak government can be seen as one over the meaning of the colonial past, and its relevance for the future. This raises a further set of questions concerning the extent to which patterns of resistance or acquiescence are a function of historical experience. Not only are Penan engaging in the production of both public transcripts and hidden transcripts, they are also possessors and deployers of prior transcripts. Such prior transcripts, both social and historical in nature, configure contemporary transcripts.

In the preceding discussion, my goal has not been to form a precise definition of what accounts for Eastern Penan resistance and Western Penan acquiescence to logging but to try to frame what this difference might have to contribute to theories of domination more broadly. Perhaps more than anything, the Western Penan case stands as a kind of mirror for interpreting Eastern Penan resistance. By considering both, I hope to have provided some perspective on the relations between particular structures of domination, the historical context in which those structures are embedded, the multiple dimensionalities of social contexts and discursive sites, and the relation of these to forms of acquiescence and resistance.

AUTHOR’S NOTE

The research upon which this article is based could never have been undertaken without the support and assistance of a great many people. Foremost I wish to thank En. Lucas Chin and Dr Peter Kedit, past and present directors of the Sarawak Museum, and Dr Hatta Solhee, formerly of the Sarawak State Planning Unit. Many civil servants – Residents, District Officers and Sarawak Administrative Officers – also provided invaluable assistance in Kapit, Belaga, Miri, and Marudi. I am particularly indebted to those Penan in both the Belaga and Baram Districts with whom I resided for most of my time in Sarawak. Without their patience, generosity, and tolerance, this work could not have been undertaken. I am especially indebted to Matu Tugang for his constant companionship on our many travels, for the many insights that he provided on Penan language and culture, and for his friendship. Special thanks must also go to Jayl Langub whose
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contributions to my work are incalculable. I must also thank Aram Yengoyan, Ann Waters, and the anonymous reviewers for CSSH for their many valuable comments on an earlier draft of this manuscript. Finally, I must thank my wife, Ellen Walker, for the many insights that she provided on the material presented here and for her superb editing. My research was supported by grants from the Social Science Research Council (which supported both my research in the 1980s and my more recent research), the National Science Foundation (Grant No. BNS-8407062), the U.S. Department of Education (Fulbright-Hays), the L.S.B. Leakey Foundation, the University of Georgia Research Foundation, and the Body Shop Foundation (special thanks to Shane Kennedy for his efforts to help me secure the latter). The support of each of these is gratefully acknowledged. All responsibility for statements here is expressly mine.

NOTES

1. This discussion is based on three years of research among Western Penan (1984–1987), seven months of research among nomadic and settled Eastern Penan in 1992 and 1993, interviews with rainforest activists in the United States, Canada, Europe, the United Kingdom, Japan, and Malaysia from 1993 to the present, and interviews with numerous Malaysian officials and timber industry representatives over the same period.


3. See Brosius (1990, 1991a, 1992a, and 1993a) and Needham [in this volume].

4. For instance, until logging began in the area in the early 1980s, the Belaga District of Sarawak was over 90 per cent forested. Conspicuous exceptions are the extensively deforested areas of the Baram and Limbang Districts occupied by Iban swiddeners.

5. Among both Eastern and Western Penan the trend towards sedentism has accelerated greatly since about 1960. In 1960, I estimate that 70–80 per cent of all Eastern and Western Penan were still nomadic. Of 7,000 Eastern and Western Penan today, fewer than 400 Eastern Penan in the vicinity of the Magoh, Tutoh and upper Limbang
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River areas remain fully nomadic, approximately 5 per cent of the total. The last nomadic Western Penan settled in 1970.

6. I will not detail the relationship between government officials and logging interests except to say that politicians and their families overwhelmingly hold rights to forest concessions and profit from the activities of timber companies.

7. Many Penan, especially the nomadic groups, do not exactly know what the government is. I have been asked by Penan on more than one occasion to explain the meaning of the word ‘Malaysia’.

8. A source of particular resentment for Eastern Penan is the overwhelming presence of police and company gangsters in the Baram and Limbang Districts. Since blockades were first erected in 1987, timber companies have come to rely increasingly on the presence of Chinese gangsters for security, and Eastern Penan live in great fear of them. Numerous individuals have been assaulted, and Penan suspect gangsters in several mysterious deaths in the past several years.

9. In defence of state civil servants, this is decidedly not the case. Despite recent attempts by elected officials to politicise the civil service, the vast majority of civil servants in Sarawak maintain a very high level of professionalism.

10. One cause of Penan frustration is that the power of district-level authorities to adjudicate local disputes has eroded in recent years, particularly following the passage of the 1988 Forest Ordinance. Before the advent of logging, District Officers had the authority to arbitrate a wide range of local conflicts. As political pressures have been exerted on the civil service in recent years by high-level proponents of the timber industry, the power of local authorities has diminished. Today the Forest Department, police, and timber companies have appropriated much of that authority. Yet Penan and other local peoples are still expected to take their complaints to District Offices.

11. The break-up of this blockade was the most forceful yet. Tear gas was used and several persons were severely beaten. One boy died as a result of the effects of tear gas. The organisers of this blockade were forced to hide in the forest, and a reward was offered for their capture. Since that time Eastern Penan in various parts of the Baram District have continued sporadically to erect blockades.

12. Sarawak state law does not recognise Penan principles of land tenure. In contrast to the longhouse communities of Kayan, Kenyah, and other ethnic groups, even settled Penan generally lack the prerequisites to obtain legal recognition of land claims. According to Sarawak land law, communities can only claim land which they cultivated before 1958. However, the majority of Penan settled after that. Thus, their claims to land are without legal basis. Nomadic groups are in an even more difficult position with respect to land claims. Burials are one basis for the recognition of Native Customary Rights land in longhouse communities. Because Penan graves are scattered and are visible for only a few years, the government does not recognise these as having any legal significance.

13. This does seem to be the case. On numerous occasions, government officials indicated to me that they simply did not comprehend Penan concerns. One described how a particular blockade made no sense to him because the people were not making any demands: They were not asking for a longhouse, a water supply, or compensation but
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were merely blocking the company. Another said: ‘We don’t know what they want. They are just asking the company to go away’.

14. In 1983, Western Penan living in the upper Belaga River, working in concert with members of a nearby Kenyah community, raided a timber camp along the Belaga River after they were denied compensation by the logging company. A bridge across the Belaga River was cut down with chainsaws and axes, and the camp manager was forced to promise that compensation would be forthcoming.

15. Despite being the object of a massive manhunt by government authorities, Manser was never successfully apprehended, largely because the Penan uniformly denied any knowledge of his existence.

16. Mutang was arrested in February 1992, after bringing a Canadian MP to a blockade site. The SIPA office was ransacked by police and the organisation was disbanded.

17. The period of Brooke rule began in 1841 when British adventurer James Brooke assumed control of the area surrounding the present-day Kuching in order to establish a British presence on the island of Borneo and to suppress piracy and headhunting. Between 1841 and 1946 (excepting the period of Japanese occupation during World War II), Sarawak was ruled by three so-called ‘White Rajahs’: James Brooke (1841–1868), his nephew Charles Brooke (1868–1917), and Charles’ son Vyner Brooke (1917–1946). During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Brooke Raj continually extended its territorial holdings to encompass much of the territory claimed by the Sultan of Brunei. The Rejang-Balui River was ceded to the Brooke Raj in 1861, while the Baram was ceded in 1882.

18. This, of course, is not completely accurate. Though Malays (or Malay-Melanau) are politically dominant in Sarawak, both state politics and the civil service are conspicuously multiethnic, to a much greater degree than in peninsular Malaysia. Hereafter, references to ‘Malay rule’ or ‘Malay government’ should be understood to refer to the Penan conception of political authority.

19. In Sarawak, the phrase Orang Ulu is used to designate groups such as Kayan, Kenyah, Kelabit, Berawan, Kajang, and other such central Bornean ethnic groups, not including Iban. In most contexts Penan are classified as Orang Ulu, but for present purposes I use this term to refer only to stratified, longhouse-dwelling swidden agriculturalists.

20. This is no longer so much the case. Contemporary Penan have become increasingly accustomed to visiting upriver towns such as Belaga and Marudi, though they still consider them to be dangerous places.

21. In many colonial and post-colonial documents, Penan are referred to as Punan, and there is a long history of debate over their proper designation (see Brosius 1992a and Needham 1954b).


23. For instance, on a visit to the Tutoh river area in April 1913, Resident 2nd Class H. D. Aplin warned two Orang Ulu headmen not to trade with Penan ‘and told Penghulu [a Government-appointed chief] Tama Saging to report to me if he heard […] of
anybody trying to break the regulations re Punans, as drawn up by the Hon’ble the Resident, when the offenders would be severely punished’ (Aplin 1913: 120).

24. In both the Belaga and Baram Districts, persons travelling upriver were required to register with District Offices. A ‘Prohibited Areas Ordinance’ was enacted by the Sarawak Legislative Council (Council Negeri) in 1939. See Ritchie (1994: 124) and Urquhart (1956: 292).

25. In 1950, for instance, Belaga District Officer Ian Urquhart visited Western Penan in the upper Belaga River, saying that it had been a long time since these groups had been contacted by government agents and that he thought it unlikely that they would be visited in the next 18 months (Urquhart 1950: 279).

26. In the 18 June 1938 preface to the Belaga Station Diary, for instance, under the heading ‘Duties of Upriver Agent, Belaga’, the District Officer lists 11 responsibilities. The second of these is “Twice per annum to visit the Punans of Long Kajang and make arrangements for their “meeting”. To supervise the Punan trading and to see that produce is auctioned and sold fairly. To see that Punan are not cheated by local traders’ (Belaga Station Diary, 18.6.38). See also Hudden (1936: 96).

27. For instance, Eastern Penan describe how they hear so much talk from the government about development, and they contrast this with what they see of their present situation. On one occasion, speaking with a group of Eastern Penan about development, a man who was being sought by police and was in hiding in the forest, responded sarcastically: ‘Development? Jail is our Development’.

28. None of this should not be taken to imply that environmentalists see themselves as colonial agents. Indeed, I do not think that Western environmentalists are in any sense aware of who Penan believe they are talking to.


30. These figures refer to band size prior to settlement. Both Eastern and Western Penan communities tend to experience growth once they have settled. See Arnold (1958), Needham [in this volume], and Urquhart (1951a).

31. Because all Western Penan are today settled, the traditional Western Penan settlement system no longer exists. However, in many of its systemic aspects the present system in more traditional communities differs little.

32. With the adoption of agriculture, boundaries have become more important in those areas where communities are adjacent to each other.

33. Settled Eastern Penan may refer to themselves with reference to the locations of their communities, but this is a recent innovation.

34. There is variation between communities in the degree of preference for first-cousin marriage and in the percentage of such marriages. For instance, in a community of 86 persons, 7 of 21 marriages (33 per cent) were exogamous, while in a community of 250 persons, only 5 of 58 marriages (9 per cent) were of this type. This variation is in large part a function of group size: in larger communities it is possible to marry more distant kin and still maintain community endogamy. First-cousin marriage among Western Penan appears to be a recent phenomenon. Contemporary Western
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Penan state unambiguously that first-cousin marriage was adopted only within the past few decades, and they are able to point to many contemporary marriages that would previously have been prohibited. It is difficult to determine why the status of first-cousin marriage should have changed from a prohibited union to one that is, in smaller communities at least, preferred. See Needham [in this volume].

35. Western Penan also practise reciprocal residence in such circumstances, but they regard it very differently from Eastern Penan. Pressure is exerted on both the husband and wife by their respective families to remain in their natal communities. Reciprocal residence is always a compromise at best and never truly satisfactory to either party.

36. It should be noted that though the household is the primary unit of production, members of different households cooperate frequently in subsistence activities.

37. Though today virtually all Eastern Penan (and many Western Penan) have converted to Christianity, it is notable that Eastern Penan bands now often refer to themselves by the Malay term sidang (council, board, assembly, and congregation).

38. Altogether the Eastern Penan style of social interaction differs markedly from that of Western Penan. Both among themselves and in their interactions with outsiders, Eastern Penan tend to be exceedingly soft spoken, with a shy, gentle bearing. Western Penan, on the other hand, tend to speak strongly, deliberately, and with a marked confidence. They are fond of biting sarcasm, and are given to frequent loud arguments.

39. This is often manifested in matters such as the proper (or affectionate) use of personal names, kinship terms or death names. Incorrect usages are taken to be indicative of an utter lack of regard for the feelings of others. For a discussion of Penan death names, see Brosius (1992a, 1995b, and 1995–1996).

40. For instance, several nomadic groups have threatened Penan from settled communities who work for companies in their areas. One nomadic Penan leader circulated a letter threatening that any Penan caught doing survey work in his area ‘will be shot with a blowpipe: no discussion’.
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Abbreviations

AA American Anthropologist
BKI Bijdragen tot de Land-, Taal- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië
BMJ Brunei Museum Journal
BRB Borneo Research Bulletin
CA Current Anthropology
CIFOR Center for International Forestry Research
CSSH Comparative Studies in Society and History
HE Human Ecology
JMBRAS Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Malaysian Branch
JRAI Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute
JSEAS Journal of Southeast Asian Studies
MNJ Malayan Nature Journal
SG Sarawak Gazette
SMJ Sarawak Museum Journal
SWJA Southwestern Journal of Anthropology
WWF World Wide Fund for Nature


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