

Why cultivate?

Anthropological and Archaeological Approaches to Foraging–Farming Transitions in Southeast Asia

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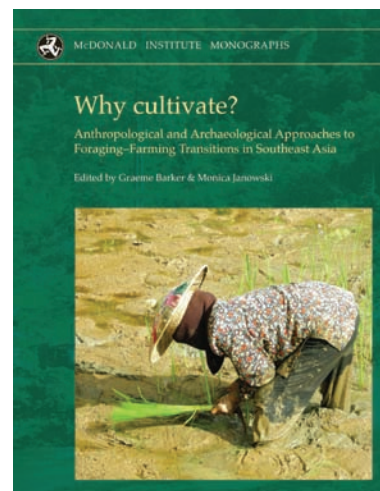
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Chapter 9

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Chapter 9

Footprints and Marks in the Forest: the Penan and the Kelabit of Borneo

Monica Janowski & Jayl Langub

In this chapter we propose to look at two different ways of relating to and of living in the landscape, focusing on the Kelabit and the Penan living in the highlands of Sarawak on the island of Borneo. The joint authors of this paper have experience over a long period of research among these two peoples: Monica Janowski among the Kelabit and Jayl Langub among the Penan. The Penan are usually classed as hunter-gatherers but they also ‘manage’ and harvest sago, and have adopted a degree of rice agriculture in recent decades; the Kelabit are keen and proficient cultivators of rice in both shifting and wet fields who also hunt and gather wild resources. They represent two points along a continuum between complete reliance on wild resources and complete reliance on cultivated resources.

This paper is an attempt at juxtaposing the world-views of these groups in relation to the ways in which they see themselves as leaving traces on the landscape which they inhabit. We will consider in particular the role of rice agriculture and ask whether this is a ‘rubicon’ which has led to the replacement of one way of perceiving the human relationship with the landscape with another. We will focus on the way in which the use of two terms for the impressions made by people on the landscape reflect different attitudes to the landscape: the Penan term *uban* and the Kelabit term *etuu*. *Uban* may be glossed as ‘footprints’, and are temporary, light impressions, but have a permanent impact in the domain of memory, passing from generation to generation, while *etuu* may be glossed as ‘marks’, and are impressions which are intended to be as permanent as possible. Although it might at first glance appear that *uban* should be associated with a ‘hunter-gatherer’ lifestyle and *etuu* with a ‘farming’ lifestyle, we will suggest that things are more complex than this. While the Penan, before they began to plant rice in recent years, made only ‘footprints’, the rice-growing Kelabit are, we suggest, in a complex relationship with the natural environment which involves the

making of both ‘footprints’ and ‘marks’. We want to further suggest that it is not farming *per se* (as some kind of ‘package’) which has introduced this complexity, but the cultivation of rice. Rice-growing has led to the making of ‘marks’ on the landscape, which are associated with specific social and kin relations.

Kelabit and Penan

The Kelabit Highlands is close to the source of the Kelapang, the ultimate source of the Baram river, and to the source of its first tributary, the Dappur river. The highland area is surrounded by mountains on all sides and is part of larger tableland broken by low ranges of mountains which is inhabited predominantly by a group of peoples speaking what Hudson describes as Apo Duat languages (Hudson 1977), after a range of mountains more correctly described as the Apad Uat¹ (*apad* means mountains among speakers of this group of languages) running down the middle of the area and separating the Kelabit Highlands from the rest of the highland area. This highland area is divided between East Kalimantan, Sarawak and Sabah, with the bulk of it in Kalimantan and a small part of it in Sabah. Apo Duat/Apad Uat languages are also spoken by peoples outside the highlands, including Sa’ban, Lun Dayeh and Lun Bawang groups on both sides of the Malaysian–Indonesian border.

The Kelabit have no stories of migration into the Kelabit Highlands as a people, although they tell of in-migration of individuals and groups from other parts of the highland area; they believe that their ancestors have always lived in the highland area. They grow rice in both dry swidden and wet fields, and hunt and gather in the forest. Groups of Kelabit have a sense of attachment to specific parts of the highlands; although they regularly moved their longhouses until the 1970s, this was within a limited area, usually the watershed of a given river or stream. Since the 1960s, when an air service began to Bario, now the main

population centre in the Kelabit Highlands, many Kelabit have left the highlands for education and work. Most of these live in the town of Miri on the coast. Many people spend periods of time in the highlands and periods of time on the coast, making the exact population of the highlands themselves difficult to establish, but this is probably between 2000 and 3000.²

The Penan population may be divided into Eastern and Western Penan (Needham 1972), inhabiting the Baram and Rajang river basins respectively. There are 28 Penan groups³ located on the western and southern sides of the Kelabit Highlands, seven of which are found along the western edges of the Pulong Tau National Park. Banks (1937, 435) mentioned that there used to be Penan on the eastern side of the Tama Abu Range, but that there were none when he visited the Kelabit Highlands then. In the 1980s and 1990s there used to be a group of Penan at Pa' Berang in the Kelabit Highlands but they were asked to vacate the place by the Kelabit, who claim customary rights to the area. A small number of Penan live near the Kelabit settlement of Arur Dalan in Bario on a temporary basis, to be close to their children enrolled at the primary and secondary schools in Bario. While in the area some of them have found wage employment from the Kelabit in Bario. They live in much smaller groups than Kelabit, based on one nuclear family, and these split regularly. It appears that a group of Penan has an attachment to a specific area and that they move around within that area, exploiting the resources of different parts of it. However individuals often marry into distant groups, and this, together with regular fission of groups, means that ties exist over very wide areas and the make-up of groups is fluid. Among the Kelabit, by contrast, it was in the past only individuals from high-status families who married into distant groups.

The Penan have not, until recently, grown rice. They have been easily able, until recent logging activities reduced the forest area, to produce sufficient food from the forest. Forest resources on which they draw include most importantly the starch of four different kinds of sago palm but primarily *Eugeissona utilis*; a variety of wild fruits; and the meat of a number of wild animals, primarily pigs (*Sus barbatus*, the bearded pig, and *Sus scrofa*, the wild pig).

In the 1950s Urquhart, a District Officer, wrote that the nomadic Penan had told him that they had no wish to lead a settled life and grow crops because: 1) their *adat* (custom) did not allow them to cut big trees; 2) they loathed the sunlight (*lekoo petee*) which gave them headaches and hurt their eyes; 3) when a person died, the band moved elsewhere; and 4) when they

had a bad omen or dream they abandoned their work (Urquhart 1951; 1959). They also told him that God had already provided the necessary resources in the forest for their needs, meaning that they did not need to grow rice. We have found that many Penan, particularly those who are semi-settled or are still nomadic, still concur with what Urquhart found. They say that they have no knowledge of growing rice and that they do, on the other hand, have an intimate knowledge of the forest and how to manage its resources.

Despite their reluctance to adopt rice-growing (Langub 1993) the Eastern Penan are being forced to change their way of life due to reduced access to forest. Many are now settling close to the Kelabit communities just outside the highlands — Long Peluan, Long Seridan, Long Napir and Long Lellang — and are being taught rice-growing by the Kelabit. With the exception of nine bands of nomadic Penan in the Magoh and Ubong rivers in Baram District (Fig. 9.1), and the Adang in Limbang District, all Eastern Penan are now semi-settled or settled, engaging in some cultivation of cassava, rice and other crops and moving less often than in the past. Semi-settled groups, who are involved in little cultivation and still move every few months, continue to see the forest as their main source of food, and even settled Eastern Penan draw on the resources of the forest as an important food source and many still spend periods of time in the forest.

The Penan attitude to the forest: leaving footprints

The Penan word for forest is *tana'*, which means both forest and earth/land. *Tana'* essentially refers to the whole of the natural environment in which they live. Their attitude to the *tana* involves a fundamental awe. 'When I look at the *tana'*, (the forest/land), that's *urip* (life)' (*Hun akeu' na'at tong tana', pu'un urip kebit*), as Agan,⁴ an elderly Penan, told us in 2007. They believe the forest to contain many spirits (*bale'*). Improper behaviour will elicit anger from all types of spirit (Brosius 1986; 1990; 1991; Needham 1964). Agan and other informants told us that the two main types of spirit are *ungap* and *penakoh*. These are associated with water, earth and plants, especially trees — in other words, with the *tana'*. The proper relationship with the spirits of the *tana'* is, we were told, closely related to the way in which humans manage its resources. If they waste those resources or are not gentle in the way in which they use them, the spirits will retaliate with illness. Besides more minor spirits, the Penan also believe in a 'great spirit' (*Bale Ja'au*) which is associated with high mountains.

The Penan view their relationship with the forest as one of stewardship, through the system known as



Figure 9.1. The nomadic Penan community at Ba Puak in the Tutoh river, a tributary of the Baram. (Photograph: Monica Janowski, 2008.)

molong, which means to lay claim to a resource, to foster it and conserve it for future use (Brosius 1991, 144).⁵ *Molong* involves a harvesting strategy which rotates the extraction of resources from one area to another, allowing harvested areas to regenerate. Mature sago trunks are harvested, while young sago trunks are preserved (*molong*) for future use, in the next rotation of harvest. The Penan adhere to a philosophy of sustainable use of resources, known as *minut*; this is both for fear of the wrath of supernatural powers and for fear of the loss of community respect (*be' seva'*) for wasteful use of resources (*ngeburah*).

Eastern Penan live in small groups based on nuclear families, which split regularly. Each group has its own hunting and foraging area (*tana' pengurip*; literally 'land which is the source of life') within the forest. *Tana' pengurip* have relatively defined boundaries (*sang tana'*) which follow streams, watersheds, mountain ridges and landmarks. Boundaries are recognized and

respected by each group. Sometimes the *tana' pengurip* of one group may overlap with that of another. Indeed it is bound to be the case, in a situation where groups are small and frequently split, that there will be overlap, as in effect each individual will inherit different areas from his or her parents. In the context of such overlap, individuals and groups agree to share areas. Rights to an area are asserted through the concept of *okoo bu'un* (place of origin) or *tana' pohoo'* (ancestral land). Within the *tana' pengurip* of a group, resources are stewarded (*molong*). Through this, an individual establishes exclusive rights to the resources; rights are heritable and pass from one generation to the next. Other members of a group may harvest with the permission of the person who *molong* a resource. *Molong* may also be carried out on a communal level. When this is the case, every member of the group has rights to it. Rights to the resource are inherited by succeeding generations of group members.

As the Penan pass through life and the landscape, they see themselves as leaving *uban* or ‘personal traces’ — places where an individual has lived, had a *molong* relationship with sago plants, given birth, died. *Molong* as a relationship with the resources of the environment and landscape in which humans live is different from the relationship created by rice-growing among the Kelabit. Like the leaving of *uban*, *molong* builds up a network of relations between humans and the other living things of the *tana*’ which establishes rights, but does not express absolute ‘possession’ and is not the basis of differentiation between individual people. The relations which *molong* sets up with the environment are reciprocal, with humans helping a resource to thrive and in return receiving the rights to use it. Such rights are associated with individuals who are responsible for *molong*; but others may also use that resource, so long as they inform the individual who has the *molong* relationship with it. The growing of rice, on the other hand, sets up an absolute relationship of ownership with the crop and, in Kelabit eyes, a much more definite right over the rice crop and over the land on which the crop is grown. It also sets up differentiation between people (Janowski 2007).

Penan relations with rice-growing peoples

Penan have been involved in relations through trade with rice-growing peoples whom they call *lebo* for as long as their oral history stretches back. *Lebo* in the Penan language means a settlement or a house, and is a term they use to refer to their settled neighbours who are non-Penan. Each Penan group has a particular group of *lebo* with whom they interact.

The *lebo*’ with whom Penan living around and in the Kelabit Highlands interact are the Kelabit. Many Kelabit speak Penan, and some Penan speak Kelabit. The purpose of these relations, as far as the Penan are concerned, is access to goods from outside the forest. In the early days this was through trade in forest products including camphor wood, wood from the *jelutong* tree (*Dyera costulata*), *dammar* resin from dipterocarp trees, *gaharu* from *Aquilaria* trees, and bezoar stones from monkey intestines, and rattan, which Penan weave into mats and baskets. Today, they still trade rattan mats and baskets, as well as *gaharu*, with their *lebo* neighbours. They also work for payment in cash. As far as the Kelabit are concerned, the purpose of the relationship with the Penan is to gain access to forest products, including meat, either for resale or for their own use; to gain access to handicrafts made by the Penan; and to be able to employ the Penan.

The relationship between Penan and their *lebo*’ has often been a tense and difficult one. Penan declare

that they have often been cheated by longhouse traders (Urquhart 1957; Needham 1959; Nicolaisen 1976). There are records of blood pacts being established between Penan and their *lebo*’ neighbours, to reduce or eliminate conflict and treachery (Needham 1971). Perhaps because of the awareness of the fact that the Penan were often cheated, as well as to set up a regular and controllable source of jungle produce, the Brooke government decided to supervise barter trade, known locally as *tamu*, between Penan and their neighbours. However, there is no record of any supervision of the trade between the Kelabit and the Penan, probably because the highland area was too far away for officials to be able to organize official *tamu*.

The Kelabit nowadays place a lot of emphasis on the need for the Penan to adopt rice agriculture; this is, for the Kelabit, not only a physical necessity due to the loss of forest but a cultural necessity. Growing rice is, Kelabit informants say, a sign of ‘development’, and many consider it their mission to help the Penan to adopt it. The Penan themselves have now accepted that they must make the transition to growing rice, although it is less clear that they accept rice-growing as desirable ‘development’. Rather, perhaps, they realize that because the forest is being destroyed they will not be able to maintain a nomadic lifestyle dependent on the resources of the forest much longer. Although many Eastern Penan have now taken up some rice agriculture, the quality of their rice-growing is the butt of many jokes. It is said that the Penan do not look after the crop while it is growing or weed it often, and that they get a small harvest. This appears to be borne out from the observations of one of the authors (Langub) in relation to most Eastern Penan settlements and from what the Penan themselves say; most Eastern Penan, although they may grow rice, have not made the transition to liking rice agriculture. Instead of a primary focus on rice, many fields include a good deal of cassava (*Manihot esculenta*), which can be turned into a flour similar to that made from sago and can be cooked in the same way; cassava also requires less constant attention, allowing time for trips into the forest. The Penan of Long Anying told us in 2007 that they only grow rice because they need to be able to provide food which their visitors can eat when people from other tribes visit. The Penan of Long Kevok said in 2008 that their children are now accustomed to and prefer rice; but older people, if they do not eat sago, prefer to eat cassava starch.

When Penan adopt a settled life, part of the *tana*’ *pengurip* is cleared and made into farms and gardens. Beyond the farms and gardens is a stretch of forest where they continue to exercise stewardship. For the settled Penan, *tana*’ *pengurip*, therefore, includes:

1) cultivated land (*luma'* [Western Penan] or *terek* [Eastern Penan]) including secondary forest that has been farmed (*bekan*); and 2) areas where the villagers collect building materials (*pulau kayeu'*), rattan (*birai wai*), fruit (*birai bua'*), jungle vegetables, honey and other forest produce (*birai* = wild orchard). The Penan, in other words, continue to place a good deal of emphasis on the forest.

The Kelabit attitude to the forest

The Kelabit term for the forest is *polong*, which is not the same as their word for earth/land; this is *tana*, which is closely cognate to the Penan word for the earth + what grows on it. The term *polong* refers to what grows on the earth rather than the whole complex of earth and growing things. However, Kelabit talk of the term *polong* as though it were one entity, rather than a collection of singular entities. It is differentiated from the areas created by humans: rice fields (*late'*), buffalo pastures (*laman*), gardens (*ira* and recently the more managed *kebun*) and houses (*ruma*). Thus, the Kelabit create areas which are conceptually separate from the *polong*; the Penan, until recently when they began to grow rice and cassava, did not.

Although the Kelabit consider themselves to be rice-growers and not people of the forest, they, like the Penan, rely heavily on the forest for their subsistence (Janowski 2003). Like the Penan, Kelabit men hunt game in the forest, most importantly wild pigs (*baka*) and sambhur deer (*payo*), barking deer (*tela'o*) and mouse deer (*planok*). Women gather a wide variety of vegetables in the secondary forest. They gather rattan, wood, bamboo, grasses, tree resins and other materials for craftwork and medicine in the primary and secondary forest. In a community like Pa' Dalih (Fig. 9.2), which still has easy access to forest, all everyday meat and a large (although decreasing) proportion of vegetables are wild. Even in Bario, the largest community in the Kelabit Highlands, which has much less easy access to the forest, a good deal of meat and vegetables are still wild.

The Kelabit, like the Penan, see the land on which they live and the resources growing on the land as divided into areas which are managed by different communities; these were probably relatively shifting in the past when settlements split, moved and reformed more frequently, but they have become more fixed nowadays, with permanent settlements linked to the provision of government facilities and the growing of more rice in permanent wet fields. Between these areas are boundaries called *rang tana*, using a term which is closely cognate with the Penan term (*sang tana'*). The Kelabit do not rely on sago for starch (although they use sago leaves for thatch for tempo-

rary shelters, and, until the 1990s, for field houses, and they eat sago shoots as a vegetable), and do not practice explicit *molong* of forest resources. Nevertheless, within the *rang tana* in which they live the Kelabit, like the Penan, see themselves as the custodians as well as the exploiters of the wild resources of the area. There is no customary concept of individual ownership of any part of the land, not even of areas used for agriculture; the land cannot be owned under Kelabit customary law. It is only the results of investment of labour — and by implication, also stewardship — that create rights over the use of the land.

Like the Penan, Kelabit believe that it is important to treat other living creatures and plants with respect. Until the Kelabit became Christian in the period following the Second World War they viewed the *polong* as an important reservoir of *lalud*, which can be glossed as life force/power. The *polong* was and is believed to be inhabited by many spirits (*ada'*) who are dangerous as well as normative, exacting retribution on those who do not behave appropriately (although now that they are Christian they do not fear this any longer). Like the Penan, the Kelabit believe that spirits are associated with certain trees and with places where the earth has been disturbed or where water emerges from the earth, and that spirits will become angry if people misbehave. They, like the Penan, have a traditional belief in sanctions from spirits of the forest for wasting resources, although belief in this is now waning. Like the Penan, they believe in a 'Great Spirit' (*Ada' Raya*), which they also call *Pun Tumid* or 'Grandfather Heel' (so called because he became a spirit through his feet being inverted back to front after a rockfall). Both Penan and Kelabit are clear that the Penan *Bale Ja'au* and the Kelabit *Ada' Raya* are the same entity. Certain men used to have relationships with *Pun Tumid/Ada' Raya*, and obtained from him powerful substances which allowed them to cure and kill. As people nowadays pray to Jesus for hunting success, in the past they prayed to *Pun Tumid*.

The Kelabit believe, in common with many Borneo people, that there are supernatural sanctions for laughing at animals, which lead to hail and subsequent petrification. There are many tales among the Kelabit and other highland Apad Uat peoples of longhouses petrified in this way. Even nowadays, although they are wholeheartedly Christian, the Kelabit and other Apad Uat peoples like to pray in the forest and on mountains. While one of the authors (Janowski) lived in Pa' Dalih in the late 1980s the people of the community regularly went to pray on a forested hill nearby, where they had set up benches and made a kind of open-air church. In 1987 there was a pilgrimage to the spirit-ridden mountain of



Figure 9.2. The Kelabit community of Pa' Dalih; in the background is the Apad ke Ruma, a mountain which is believed to be a longhouse turned to stone because its inhabitants laughed at a dancing frog. (Photograph: Kaz Janowski, 1987.)

Batu Lawi, and since then a yearly pilgrimage has developed to another mountain, Mount Murud, organized through the local Sidang Injil Borneo church to which the Kelabit belong, which all Apad Uat peoples join (Amster 1999).

The Kelabit attitude to rice

The Kelabit, unlike the Penan, are deeply engaged in and committed to rice farming. They grow rice in both wet fields (*late baa*) and dry, shifting fields (*late luun*), in the latter growing rice together with other crops; and they make gardens called *ira* for a variety of other crops. Nowadays they are increasingly making more permanent gardens called *kebun*, borrowing the Malay word. The people of Pa' Dalih are currently engaged in a project of expanding their wet rice fields (Janowski 1988; 2004), which began after the Second World War when they obtained access to many more metal tools, and which has gained momentum with access to mechanical diggers lent by the logging companies which are currently logging in and around the Highlands. The Kelabit see themselves as rice-growers first and foremost. They cannot envisage eating any other staple food than rice. They say they quickly become hungry if they eat a different type of starch, such as bread, roots or sago. These foods cannot, they say, satisfy as rice does.

This attitude to rice as the ideal staple is usual among agriculturalist tribal groups in Borneo. However, not all groups are able to grow enough rice to eat only rice as their staple starch (although they would like to if they could), and the Kelabit are proud of their ability to achieve this. Not only do they want to produce enough; they want to produce more than enough, always more and more. When asked why this is so, informants say they want to be able to feed guests and to send rice to relatives in town. The reason for the Kelabit commitment to rice growing is arguably the association between rice and both adulthood and status, which are essentially the same thing (Janowski 1995; 2007). To be able to feed others rice — and in the past rice beer (*borak*) — is fundamental to being a *lun merar* or 'big person' and to having status within the Kelabit community. Through the rice meal, consisting of rice and wild foods, wild life force, *lalud*, is converted into human life, *ulun*. The making of rice fields is therefore an important achievement, essential to the generation of *ulun*.

Making marks on the landscape

An important aspect of the way in which the Kelabit and other Apad Uat peoples live in the landscape is the making of *etuu* or marks. For the Kelabit, these demonstrate that people not only live in a landscape,



Figure 9.3. Batu narit (carved stone) carved at the secondary funeral (irau ate) held by the Chief of the Kelabit, Penghulu Miri, for his father, Penghulu Tinggang in the 1930s. (Photograph: Monica Janowski, 1987.)



Figure 9.4. Batu narit (carved stone) near Pa' Bengar in the Kelabit Highlands, said to have been carved long ago at a secondary funeral feast (irau ate). (Photograph: Kaz Janowski, 1988.)



Figure 9.5. Baye Ribuh points out the nabang — ditch cut in a ridge — made at the irau feast held by Pun Tanid at the secondary funeral for his father in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. (Photograph: Monica Janowski, 2008.)

but that they have altered the landscape over generations and have therefore a right to use and develop the resources of the land and the forest.⁶ *Etuu* include menhirs (*batu senuped*), stone cysts (*batu nangan*), stone jars (*batu longon*), carved stones (*batu narit*) (Figs. 9.3, 9.4), ditches (*nabang*) (Fig. 9.5), mounds of stones (*perupun*) — and wet-rice fields. Essentially, an *etuu* is a long-lasting mark on the landscape, with the most important *etuu* involving the moving of stone or earth.

While some *etuu* were made until the 1950s and are associated with named ancestors, Kelabit also point to *etuu* which they believe were made in the past by culture heroes who are considered to be their ancestors living in the time of *getoman lalud* — the mythical time of ‘joining with cosmological power’, when people were able to achieve marvellous and now impossible feats in the blink of an eye or the snap of a finger. *Etuu* include marks made at secondary funerals

to commemorate prominent individuals and the actual tombs of the dead. *Etuu* are proof, for the Kelabit, of the ancient ancestry of the Kelabit occupation of the highlands, as well as the Kelabit link to the mythical time of power. The people of Long Peluan, a community settled about 100 years ago just outside the highlands proper, point to the megalithic cemetery and *perupun* which they found in the area as proof of the fact that they have a right to the territory, as they believe that their ancestors made these on the grounds that only Kelabit make such things. The Kelabit used Chinese jars and log coffins for the disposal of the dead immediately before they became Christian, when they adopted the burial of the dead in separate, Christian cemeteries. However, Chinese jars and log coffin jars were placed in close association with, and sometimes inside, the stone jars and tables said to have been put there by their more potent ancestors, emphasizing their consubstantiality with those ancestors.

Wet fields, which involve the moving of earth, are definitely considered *etuu*. Until the 1960s they involved only the moving of earth for irrigation and drainage ditches (Harrison 1960); since the 1960s they have involved the making of bunds as well, and they are relatively permanent features of the landscape. This means that they have become much more definite *etuu*, since they involve more of a change, and a more long-lasting change, in the landscape. One of us (Janowski) has argued elsewhere that this is one reason for the increasing interest in making wet fields since the 1960s (Janowski 2004). Dry fields and gardens do not involve significant movement of earth. However, it seems that the alteration of the vegetation through removing, moving and planting trees and plants may be considered to create *etuu*, although these are not as strong a mark as are stones and the movement of earth. One of the types of memorial mark made at secondary funerals was *kawang* — cuts in the tree line on ridges. When a group of informants was asked in 2007 whether settlements themselves, gardens and dry fields were *etuu*, there was some discussion and some people thought that they were. Others thought that they were probably not. The confusion may be linked to changes in settlement patterns over the past forty years. Until the 1960s, longhouses were shifted every two to five years. Now settlement is relatively permanent and so is the use of land for permanent wet rice fields (*late baa*) and for permanent gardens (*kebun*) around the longhouse. The history of resource use by a group of people (described as *panen*, using the same word used to describe a herd of animals) has always been remembered through the planting and marking of trees, particularly fruit trees. It is also remembered through the long cycle of using swiddens for different

purposes over many years (see Belharte, Chapter 3 this volume). Individual rights over a particular piece of land gradually become vaguer but the group as a whole continues to remember that the area was used by their common ancestors and that trees were planted by them. However, most settlements have not moved since the 1970s and rights over land for all purposes are becoming more permanent. It would appear that while in the past settlement sites, swiddens and gardens were more like Penan *uban*, they are perhaps in the process of taking on some of the characteristics of *etuu* — i.e. permanent alteration of the physical environment — with increasing permanency of settlement and use of the land and its resources.

Simply growing rice, whether in a wet or a dry field, set in motion, until the 1960s, a sequence of events which led to the making of *etuu* — *batu senuped* monoliths, *nabang* ditches and *kawang* vegetation cuts on ridges. These were made at *irau* feasts, which hosted large numbers of people who provided the labour to make the *etuu*. Nowadays, *irau* feasts are held to celebrate the birth of the first child of a couple, and the parents and grandparents of the child take new names. In the past, they were held by the child or children of a dead man or woman to memorialize the dead, and *etuu* were a permanent mark to achieve this. An *irau* could only be held, and an *etuu* made on the landscape, if the hosts had the wherewithal to feed the guests and provide them with *borak* — rice beer (Janowski forthcoming). The making of a mark was ‘*irau* work’; it was repayment on the part of the guests for lavish entertainment, and this was a tribute to the wealth and status of the holder. In hosting an *irau* for a parent, the *irau* hosts would make a name for themselves, through their clearly stated inheritance of status from the dead person, evidenced through their ability to hold *irau*.

The holding of *irau* was, in the past, restricted to those of high status. The growing of rice was organized by the leading family of a longhouse settlement, generated surplus rice, and made *irau* possible. *Irau* were the confirmation of social differentiation, which was based on the feeding of rice and the construction of rice-based kinship (Janowski 2007). Growing rice, holding *irau* and making *etuu* meant creating a socially differentiated society.

Making marks and leaving footprints

In terms of intention, these two ways of relating to the landscape — making *etuu* and leaving *uban* — echo in some ways Ingold and Vergunst’s discussion of the difference between making ‘stamps’ and leaving ‘footprints’ (Ingold & Vergunst 2008). The making of a mark or stamp separates the marker or stamper

from that which is marked or stamped; the leaver of a footprint expresses a consubstantiality with that on which he or she is walking. Kelabit *etuu* lay claim to an area, and in doing so separate themselves from it as a kind of blank canvas on which they are placing a mark. In making *etuu*, they express a different relationship with the landscape and the natural environment to that of the Penan, who leave *uban*.

In some respects, however, the Kelabit have a parallel relationship with the natural environment to that of the Penan: they too can be said to leave 'footprints', although they have no term for this equivalent to the Penan term *uban*. The concern on the part of the Kelabit with making marks or *etuu* in the landscape, through rice agriculture, *irau* marks and cemeteries, is in contrast to the attitude of both Kelabit and Penan towards places in the landscape where wild resources are harvested, and what the Penan call *uban* have close parallels in the Kelabit relationship with the landscape. Both Penan and Kelabit remember well the places where their ancestors up to about three generations back used wild resources. They remember old campsites (for the Kelabit, these are places where men have camped in the forest when harvesting wild resources), salt springs (*sungan* in Penan, *lubang main* in Kelabit), pig wallows, and trees which have been tapped to get poison latex for darts. The very psyches of both Kelabit and Penan are bound up in these places and their regular visits to them, through them and into them. Among Kelabit, this is particularly true of men, who visit the 'big' forest (*polong raya*) much more often than women.

Kelabit rights to wild resources and to wild resources which are planted and/or managed, such as fruit trees and bamboo, are established and operate in a similar way as among the Penan. Among both the Kelabit and the Penan, it is usual to allow others to use these resources, so long as they ask permission. This remains the case so far among the Kelabit, even with increasingly permanent settlement. Such resources are not owned as is rice, which no-one would dream of harvesting from someone else's field. It is also notable that crops other than rice are treated as wild resources; they are shared with others, although permission has to be given. It is very common for women to invite others to go with them and collect vegetables from their swidden fields, which are then taken home by the invitees. Thus, it appears that the Kelabit, like the Penan, should be seen as *molong*-ing resources (except rice), and that when resources are *molong*-ed they are not seen as 'owned', or associated with 'marking' of the landscape with *etuu*. Thus, there is a sense in which the use of resources from the forest/earth, whether planted, encouraged or wild, has a strong flavour of

uban and not *etuu*. It is only rice which changes this.

The Penan are explicit that they do not wish to make *etuu*. The Penan of Long Anying told us in 2007 (out of politeness?) that the *etuu* which the Kelabit make, and the *irau* associated with them, are 'good' (*jian*); but that they (the Penan) could not and would not make them. It is noteworthy that the hierarchical relationships which are generated through the making of *etuu* do not fit well with Penan social relations. Penan share food; they do not feed each other. Nomadic and semi-settled Penan are particularly emphatically egalitarian and always share all food which any individual member of a group obtains, including rice. Rice does not yet appear to be used as a means of generating social differentiation, although it is likely that this will occur with increasing sedentarization and levels of rice-growing.

It is important to note that the meaning and implications of *etuu* and *uban* are not the same for Kelabit and Penan. For the Kelabit, *etuu* and *uban* are contrasted, with the former conferring clear rights while the latter does convey rights but of a different, and somewhat secondary, nature. For the Penan, who do not make *etuu*, *uban* are the principal source of rights to use the resources of the environment. For them, *etuu* are something which Kelabit make, and which relate to the way in which the Kelabit define and divide up rights among themselves; they are not (or should not be) relevant to Penan rights. However, with increasing competition over resources with others, including the Kelabit, Penan are becoming much more emphatic about the rights implied by *uban* in the wider social and political arena. There is even a sense in which they appear to be ascribing a more *etuu*-like nature to the *uban* they make, in order to assert the need to accept rights associated with *uban*.

This needs to be borne in mind in the context of the fact that the Kelabit see the Penan failure to make *etuu* as putting them in a weak position in relation to tenure. The Kelabit emphasize the importance of making *etuu* in order to lay claim to an area. Penan living in the vicinity of other Kelabit longhouses around the Kelabit Highlands are not considered by the Kelabit to have rights to the land. This is expressed in the fact that the Kelabit often liaise with the logging companies for compensation without consulting the Penan; as far as they are concerned, the Penan, because they have not left *etuu*, do not have rights to compensation.⁷

It is noteworthy that despite the fact that there is an overt emphasis on the making of *etuu* as the basis for land claims among the Kelabit, other rice-growing peoples have openly emphasized the fact that they do use resources in ways similar to the Penan — just as



Figure 9.6. A batu longon, or stone burial jar, at the megalithic cemetery at Long Diit near Pa' Dalih. (Photograph: Monica Janowski, 2007.)

the Kelabit do, as pointed out above — and that this should be regarded as the basis for rights to that land by the government.⁸ One of us has argued elsewhere (Langub 2007) that the Penan notion of *tana' pengurip* is no different from the Iban notion of *pemakai menua*. There are strong parallels between the Penan practice of *molong* and the management of trees among the Iban (Sather 1990), and similar practices exist among the Kelabit.

Death in the landscape

The difference between the Penan and Kelabit views of their relationship with the landscape is expressed in the different ways in which they deal with death. While the nomadic Penan leave their dead where they die, and move on to make a new camp, the Kelabit — and settled Penan, nowadays — make cemeteries (*menatoh*; nowadays *tanem*). Kelabit cemeteries are considered to be *etuu*; the places where Penan dead have been left in the past are considered by the Penan to be *uban*, personal traces, the last in a series of *uban* left by an individual in his or her passage through the landscape.

In pre-Christian times, until the 1950s, the Kelabit believed that individuals had to be returned, if at all possible, to the cemetery where their ancestors had

been placed. If they were not put in the right cemetery, the other dead would reject them. There is therefore a sense of repeatedly marking the landscape with ancestors put in the same place, with ancestors building up on top of ancestors. The use of stone and dragon jars at cemeteries (Fig. 9.6) is an expression of this 'hardening' and 'making permanent' of the *etuu* made by the ancestral group. While the Penan use the placing of the dead in certain campsites as important ways of establishing that they have rights to use an area as *tana pengurip*, the mark left by each ancestor is personal.

For both Kelabit and Penan, whilst living humans move around, marry and are in flux, the dead are stationary. While living Kelabit and Penan, in pre-Christian times, did not live in permanent settlements — although the Penan moved much more often than the Kelabit — the Kelabit dead did. Informants are clear that Kelabit pre-Christian cemeteries were the *bawang* or settlements of the dead. The permanent nature of such *bawang* of the dead recalls Maurice Bloch's analysis of Merina death and the 'placing of the dead' in permanent settlements (Bloch 1971), fixing what was in flux during life and creating a kind of pool of ancestors in one place. In death, the Kelabit marked the landscape in the most permanent way possible, in stone and with continuity over time, with more related dead always being added. Nomadic Penan, on the other hand, did not mark the landscape in the form of cemeteries equivalent to settlements. Their dead, while at rest in one place, are alone.

Conclusion: of rice and rubicons

The Kelabit, as we have seen, are both footprint-leavers and mark-makers, and see themselves as both 'stewards' and 'owners' of the natural environment in which they live. This puts them in a complex relationship with that environment. While as stewards they have a close relationship with it, as rice-growers and owners they impose themselves, placing marks and carving out human spaces which are clearly distinguished from the rest of the environment. The Penan, on the other hand, live in a simpler world where they take on the role of straightforward stewards, adhering to behaviour which does not alienate them from the natural environment.

While on an ideological level the Penan and the Kelabit see themselves as having different relationships with the environment in which they live, however, on a practical level they are not so far apart. Both draw heavily on wild resources from the forest; and both manipulate their environment to increase its production of foods which they value. The Penan manage sago; the Kelabit plant rice. Both are some-

where in the middle of a continuum between complete reliance on the wild and complete reliance on cultivation. In other words, while on an ideological level they see themselves as being on two sides of a 'transition' between two ways of life, in practice they are not so far apart.

In their adoption of the cultivation of rice, whilst still remaining very much dependent upon the natural resources growing 'on their own' (*mulun sebulang*) around them, the Kelabit are like many other people who have been described as 'agricultural'. It is rare to find people who are either hunters and gatherers or agriculturalists. Most are both. It is almost certainly a mistake to think in terms of a simple transition from one way of life to the other; we should rather be examining the implications of specific paths of change (see Belharte, Chapter 3 this volume). These paths of change are gradual: the distinction between *etuu* and *uban* is one which is complex and we should be cautious of seeing it as clear-cut. We should also, perhaps, be trying to understand how different people cope psychologically and cosmologically in a context where they are very close to that environment from one perspective but which from another perspective they treat as a canvas on which to impose human society and achievement.

If there are 'rubicons' (practical and/or ideological) to be crossed between different relationships with the natural environment, then these are, we would suggest, associated with the adoption of certain new techniques or crops, rather than the adoption of 'agriculture' in some general sense. The adoption of rice and all that it implies is one such rubicon. Adopting rice-growing, as far as both the Kelabit and Penan are concerned, means a conscious, if partial, breaking away from the forest/earth (Kelabit *polong*, Penan *tana'*), and the construction of a what is conceived of as a distinctive way of life, which can, according to Kelabit informants, only be lived by humans. The Kelabit are clear that crossing this rubicon is fundamental to the entire structure of their society; but they leave one foot on the other side. The Penan, on the other hand, are reluctant to cross the rubicon. They are currently testing the water, under some duress; but they still find it pretty uncomfortable.

Notes

1. See Eghenter & Langub (2008).
2. There were estimated to be 5059 Kelabit in 1987 and a growth rate of 4% from 1970 to 1980 Ko (1987). If this growth rate is applied to population growth after 1987, this would imply a total of around 11,000 in 2008. However, this may be an overestimation, even taking into account that the majority of Kelabit probably now

live in Miri. Lian and Bulan state that, in 1989, less than 50% of the population lived in longhouse settlements (Lian-Saging & Bulan, 1989, 92) and a smaller proportion certainly now lives in the Highlands than in the late 1980s.

3. Our research focused on the groups at Long Anying (semi-settled), Long Siang (settled) and Ba' Puak (nomadic). On our way to these groups we also visited and interviewed the settled Penan of Long Kevok, Long Leng and Long Kawah near the Kayan settlement of Long Bedian.
4. Agan was born Jawa Segu but changed his name to Agan Kujai.
5. Brosius (1991, 144) refers to a personal communication from Rodney Needham that the Eastern Penan do not *molong Eugeissona utilis* nor any other resource, but this is contradicted by data collected by Langub. It is possible that Needham did not differentiate between different sago palms: while *Eugeissona utilis* will survive and even thrive if it is thinned, other sago palms utilized by the Penan do not sucker and will die after being felled. Therefore there would be no point in *molong*-ing them.
6. These rights are being codified as part of Kelabit *adat*. With the advent of logging and commercially-oriented agriculture, there are conflicts and challenges over what rights are entailed.
7. However, Western Penan, and more recently Eastern Penan, have successfully submitted claims for compensation for areas they claim as their *tana' pengurip*.
8. The Iban in particular have been active in recent years in seeking rights for land used for purposes other than rice-growing (for example, see Cramb 2007).

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