

**RICE, WORK AND COMMUNITY  
AMONG THE KELABIT OF SARAWAK,  
EAST MALAYSIA**

**Submitted for the degree of Ph.D.**

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This thesis is dedicated to Molly,  
without whom I would never have fully understood  
what it means to be lun merar.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about the significance of rice growing and eating for the Kelabit. It is divided into ten chapters. This first chapter will look at the background to the study. Chapter two looks at the geographical context, at settlement in the Kelabit Highlands and at the community of Pa' Dalih in which fieldwork was carried out. Chapters three and four look at the growing of rice in the context of other ways of obtaining food which the Kelabit also utilize. Chapter five looks at the Kelabit longhouse, at its structure and the significance of the different parts of it. In chapter six the consumption of food is examined, in particular the rice meal, which is focal to the constitution of the basic unit of Kelabit society, the hearth-group. Chapter seven looks at the way in which the category of social adult, lun merar - the focus of the hearth-group - is constituted. Chapter eight looks at generation of prestige among the Kelabit, and argues that this is based on the same achievements as is the generation of the status of lun merar. In chapter nine feasts, irau, are examined; at irau the status of lun merar is publicly stated and constituted through the holding of a huge rice meal. Finally, chapter ten is the conclusion.

#### 1. The Kelabit in ethnic and linguistic context

The Kelabit are a group now numbering about 5,000, most of whom either live or were born in the highland plateau area at the far headwaters of the Baram river in what is now the Fourth Division of Sarawak, East Malaysia, on the island of Borneo<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>The Kelabit population appears to have suffered a decline in the century or so before the Second World War, but to have

Hose and McDougall are among the first writers to mention the Kelabit, whom they class under the same general name as the group which they term the Muruts, to whom they consider the Kelabit to be 'closely allied'. Also included in this set of allied groups are those which they list as the Adang, the Saban, the Kerayan, the Libun, the Lepu Asing, the Tagal, the Dusun and the Tring. Hose and McDougall consider the 'Murut' group to show affinities to their Klemantan category (1912:I:34-35). It has subsequently become clear that, on linguistic and cultural grounds, the Tagal and the Dusun (which are groups in North Borneo, now known as Sabah) do not belong to the same group as the Kelabit. It has also become apparent that the term Murut has been used to refer to two quite separate linguistic groups, one of which is usually deemed to include the Tagal and is found exclusively in Sabah, the other of which is to be found almost entirely in Sarawak and what is now Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo) although small numbers of them live in Sabah (Appell 1969; Crain 1970a:17-35; Prentice 1970). The Adang, the Saban, Kerayan and the Tring and Libun do belong to the same linguistic group (see below). It is unclear who the Lepu Asing might be; Rousseau in his survey of 'Central Bornean' peoples, a category which includes the Kelabit and related peoples, (1990) does not mention them.

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recovered since then and to be increasing now. Noakes reports that they numbered 1,734 in 1939 and had decreased to 1,612 by 1947 (Noakes 1950:48-49). Jones, reporting on the census of 1960, reports that by 1960 the Kelabit population had increased to 2,040 (Jones 1962). According to the population census of 1968, the Kelabit numbered 3,715 (cited in Eilers and Loi 1982:1). There were estimated to be 5,059 Kelabit in 1987 (Ko 1987:35). At least half of the total population of Kelabits now lives on the coast, mostly in the town of Miri. The emigration which has led to this situation is recent, having occurred over the last twenty years, and it is continuing. It is often difficult in individual cases to say whether a person is resident in town or in the highlands since there is a good deal of residence alternation. Rousseau estimates that there

Rousseau includes the Kelabit and related peoples in the category of Central Bornean. 'Central Borneo' for Rousseau, 'is the area from which the Kayan, Mahakam, Kapuas, Rejang and Baram rivers originate...(it) is the area above the rapids, but some groups who are culturally part of the centre have moved closer to coastal areas, especially in the Kayan and Baram basins' (Rousseau 1990:9). Thus, the area is, essentially, defined geographically. In fact, Rousseau himself admits that the assumption that 'Central Borneo' has a cultural unity is weak (1990:302). There are certain features which societies classed by Rousseau as 'Central Bornean' do share, but there are groups outside the area which also have most of these features. Those that Rousseau sees as particular to 'Central Borneo' are the presence of stratification and the articulation of agriculturalist groups with hunter-gatherer groups (1990:301-307). However, there are peoples whom he has not included among his Central Borneans who have the more developed 'stratification' which he sees as characteristic of 'Central Borneo', such as the Maloh (1990:302) and the Ngadju (Scharer 1963).

Not only are there groups with what he calls 'stratification' outside 'Central Borneo', but 'stratification' as a defining feature is itself problematic. Rousseau implies that groups which have less rigid named strata, including the Melanau and other groups outside the 'Central Borneo' area but closely related to the Kelabit, used to have the system of the Kayan and Kenyah, who appear to take the status of prototype 'Central Borneans' (ibid:212). However, there is a case for seeing these peoples, which would include the Kelabit, as constituting a separate group of peoples, which Metcalf

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are 1,800 Kelabits in the highlands (1990:19, note 16).



refers to as the people of the 'nulang arc' (Metcalf 1976), rather than as some sort of degenerated Kayan/Kenyah. It may be that these peoples actually have a rather different conceptualization of prestige differentiation, and that it is not a case of their having 'lost' a previous more rigid system of 'stratification' (see chapter eight for a discussion of the basis of stratification among the Kelabit and related peoples).

On the basis of linguistic evidence, it would appear that the category of 'Central Borneo' makes little sense. It consists of peoples belonging to quite different groups; linguistically as well as culturally, the Kenyah-Kayan are a distinct group, while other 'Central Borneo' peoples belong to either the Rejang-Baram or the Apo Duat language groups (Hudson 1977).

The 'Central Bornean' groups which have been in contact with the Kelabit traditionally are the Kayan and the Kenyah. However, although there are certain similarities between arts, crafts and bodily adornment between the Kayan, Kenyah and Kelabit, this may be due to borrowing on the part of the Kelabit, since peoples related linguistically and culturally to the Kelabit (which I describe as Apo Duat - see below) do not share the traits concerned.

It appears that the term 'Kelabit' originated with Charles Hose, the Resident of the Baram Division<sup>2</sup>. Numerous authors report that people coming down to Marudi to trade and pay taxes from the 1890's onwards either said themselves that they came from or were said by Kayan and Kenyah to come from 'Pa' Labid' (a former Kelabit

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<sup>2</sup>Although Talla says that some elderly Kelabit told him that the term 'Kelabit' had already long been in use by the Kenyah and Kayan of the Baram to refer to the people now known as Kelabit when Charles Hose began to use it (Talla 1979a:6).

settlement outside the Kelabit Highlands, named - 'Pa'' meaning 'river' - after the river on which it stood, which was a tributary of the Tutoh river, itself a tributary of the Baram). It seems that Hose understood Pa' Labid as 'Kalabit' (T. Harrisson 1958a; Toynbee 1965:218; LeBar 1972:159; Talla 1979a:5; Lian-Saging 1976/77:4). The term 'Kelabit' or 'Kalabit' came to be applied to the whole group of people living in what is now known as the Kelabit Highlands and to people who originated fairly recently (probably within the last hundred or two hundred years) from the Kelabit Highlands, including those at Pa' Labid (which is now abandoned). The spelling 'Kalabit' tended to be used in the early part of this century but 'Kelabit' is now current.

The flat tableland which forms the Kelabit Highlands is difficult of access. On three sides it is bounded by mountains. On the fourth the highlands drop away steeply and the terrain, which is rugged, is uninhabited for a long distance (three or four days' walk). The Tamabo range of mountains on the western side of the Kelabit Highlands represents a really formidable barrier, rising very quickly from 3000-3500 feet above sea level in the highlands to about 6000 feet and then dropping on the other side, again very quickly, to 1500 feet. The Apo Duat range to the east of the Kelabit Highlands, which gives access to highland areas inhabited by related peoples in Kalimantan (whom T. Harrisson describes as Potok, Milau and Berau [1949b:map]) and in the Fifth Division of Sarawak - Bah Kelalan and Long Semadoh - is less difficult to cross. These mountains are in fact high areas in what is basically one tableland of which the Kelabit Highlands forms a part. The Apo Duat range is lower than the Tamabo range, reaching about 5000 feet, there are relatively easy passes and the descent on the other side is to an altitude only slightly lower than that

of the Kelabit Highlands (which appears to be the highest part of the tableland)<sup>3</sup>.

Although it is probable that the Kelabit themselves did not use the term to apply to themselves before the Second World War (T. Harrisson 1959a:195; but see Talla 1979a:6), they now accept the term and indeed it seems that the use of the term has generated a degree of cohesion among them which may be greater than existed in the past.

The Kelabit are closely related linguistically and culturally to a much larger group of people to which peoples immediately over the Apo Duat range also belong. The separation of the Kelabit from these people in Kalimantan by the existence of an international border between them has certainly contributed to the consciousness on the part of the Kelabit that they are a distinct people. However, there is a cohesiveness among the people now known as Kelabit which derives from more than recent political history. Two key factors appear to distinguish the Kelabit from closely related people across the Apo Duat range: the presence of bridewealth in that area, absent among the Kelabit; and the presence of an elaborate system of parental and grandparental names and titles (discussed in chapter seven) among the Kelabit. The system of parental and grandparental names, in its developed Kelabit form, is absent among related peoples immediately over the border, although my data suggest that they have a less elaborated version of the Kelabit system.

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<sup>3</sup> For altitudes, I have relied on the maps drawn up in 1964 by the Royal Air Force, at the time of the 'Confrontation' with Indonesia, and published by the British Ministry of Defence in 1967 for the Director of National Mapping, Malaysia (series T735, sheets 3/115/2, 3/115/3, 3/115/6 and 3/115/7). Altitudes for the Indonesian settlements are not given on these maps, but those of hills and mountains are and these indicate that the Indonesian settlements are at a lower altitude than those in

Hudson, on the basis of linguistic analysis, has proposed that the much larger linguistic group to which the Kelabit belong be called the 'Apo Duat', after the mountain range which follows the international border between Sarawak and Kalimantan (which is part of Indonesia) and which divides the Kelabit Highlands from other highland areas inhabited by related people (Hudson 1977). This mountain range is, in fact, said by the Kelabit of Pa' Dalih, where I did my fieldwork, to be the origin of all mankind (see Lian-Saging [1976/77:50-52] and Talla [1979a:13-15] for versions of this legend). Other writers have called the entire cultural and linguistic group the Kelabitic Murut (LeBar 1972; Rousseau 1990:13), and some have proposed calling it simply Kelabit (Schneeberger 1979; Blust 1984:108<sup>4</sup>). The people themselves tend, as do many other peoples in Sarawak, to refer to themselves by the name of the river or stream on which the particular community to which they belong resides at the time, or by some other geographical feature, but this does not give any clue as to linguistic or cultural relationships. The term Murut has been until recently, and often still is, used to refer to a large portion of them - those living in the Trusan and Limbang river basins in the Fifth Division of Sarawak and in the Mengalong in Sabah. Related peoples at the headwaters of a number of rivers in Kalimantan - the Bawang and Milau (tributaries of the Kerayan), the Kinayo (the Kerayan and the Kinayo are tributaries of the Mentarang, itself a tributary of the Sesayap), the Bahau, the Limbang, the Padas, the Trusan and possibly the Sembakong - are sometimes said to speak Murut dialects (Southwell 1949:105; Bolang and T. Harrisson 1949:123-124). It has been argued by a number of writers (for example by Crain

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the Kelabit highlands.

<sup>4</sup> Although more recently Blust seems to be following Hudson in calling

[1970a:209-29] and Langub [1987]), however, that the term Murut is misleading and inappropriate, largely because it has also been applied to an unrelated group in Sabah. Crain, who studied a group in Sipitang in the Mengalong river in Sabah which had been previously described as Murut, argues for the use of the term Lun Dayeh for the linguistic and cultural group to which they belong; this is the term used to describe themselves by the people he studied (Crain 1970a:29). Deegan, who studied a related group in Lawas Damit near Lawas town in the lower Trusan, prefers the term 'Lun Bawang' (1974:note 1, p.83). Langub (1987) discusses the use of the terms 'Lun Dayeh' (sometimes spelt 'Daye'), which literally means 'upriver people', 'Lun Lod', literally 'downriver people', 'Lun Ba', literally 'people who cultivate wet [padi]', 'Lun Tana' Luun', literally 'people who cultivate dry [padi]' and 'Lun Bawang', literally 'people of the country, village or place'. All of these have been used to describe themselves by people who have been called 'Murut' or 'Southern Murut' (to distinguish them from the 'Northern Murut', who are the Sabah 'Murut' group). He proposes that the term 'Lun Bawang' be used for all those people previously labelled 'Southern Murut', i.e. those related linguistically to the Kelabit and living in the areas listed above, because this term is able to subsume the other terms. I shall follow Langub and use the term 'Lun Bawang' for those peoples previously referred to as Murut and who are related linguistically to the Kelabit, including those living in highland areas in Kalimantan.

There does also seem to be a need for a name for the entire language group, which includes not only the Kelabit and those people linguistically related to them who have been called Murut, but also other, smaller groups which have also been shown to be linguistically related to them.

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the language group 'Apo Duat' (Blust 1989).

These include:

1. Trings or Trengs. Blust argues that the implication by Kennedy (1945) that `Tring' and `Treng' refer to distinct ethno-linguistic groups is false (Blust 1984:102). Under this label Blust (1984) includes, on linguistic evidence collected by other writers, the Balait and the Tabun of Brunei, the latter formerly of the Limbang (St. John 1862,II: note on p. 27; Moulton 1912b:97), and also, tentatively, on historical evidence presented in an unpublished account by G. Simon Devung discussed by Blust (1984:114), a group called the `Hwang Teriing' on the Lower Mahakam river in Kalimantan. According to the unpublished account by G. Simon Devung discussed by Blust (1984:114), these people say they migrated from the Baram. Blust collected data on the Tring language at Long Terawan on the Tutoh river, a tributary of the Baram, where a language called Berawan is also spoken. According to Ray (1913:18) the Treng used to inhabit the headwaters of the Limbang, Madihit, Tutau (Tutau) and Baram rivers. He divides the Trengs into Long Patas, Balaits and Tabuns (Ray 1913:18). Blust concludes that the `Treng' portion of the bi-lingual present-day community of Long Terawan (which speaks Berawan and what they call `Treng') originates from the community of Long Pata, originally Berawan (Proctor 1979:103), which was joined by a group of `Treng' speakers (Blust 1984:116). However Moulton, who derives his information partly from Douglas and partly from his own travels, says that Long Patas, Pa Liits and Tabuns are remnants of the Trengs, who used to live in the headwaters of the Limbang, Madihit, Tutau and Baram and who were decimated and dispersed by the incoming Kenyah and Kayan, and that Murut, Kelabit and Tabun speech seems much alike (Moulton 1912b:94, 97). Lian-Saging too, from data collected from elderly Kelabit, says that the Trengs were split up into these three divisions (1976/77:22-23).

He also says that the Trengs are said to be closely related to the Kelabit. Talla (1979a:4) mentions another related group called the Limiting, an early population of the Tinjar and lower Baram.

2. Adangs. These are the previous inhabitants of the Adang river, a tributary of the Limbang, an area now uninhabited. The Adangs are said by the Kelabits to have been closely related to them (Lian-Saging [1976/77:14]; Talla [1979a:8] says that the people of Long Napir in the Limbang, now considered a Kelabit settlement, are the remnants of the Adang). St. John met people he called 'Adang Muruts' when travelling in the Adang in the 1850's (1862 II:89-90).

3. Sa'bans or Sabans. Most live in the upper Bahau river in Kalimantan but some of them have crossed the border within the last century and have a settlement called Long Banga' near the Kelabit settlement of Long Peluan in the upper Baram but outside the Kelabit Highlands proper. Lian-Saging says that the Kelabit also know the Sa'bans as the Pa' Nar people and that Kelabit legends relate that they used to live in the Kelabit Highlands with the Kelabit (1976/77:26). Rousseau (1990:19, note 16) says that the Sa'bans have also been known as Merau or Berau.

4. Libuns or Nyibung. This group lived on the Pujungan river, a tributary of the Bahau, in the nineteenth century (Jongejans 1922:215-6, cited by Rousseau 1990:312).

5. Potok, Milau and Berau. These peoples inhabit the highland areas in Kalimantan from which many of the peoples who have been described as Murut migrated quite recently and the Potok, at least, appear to speak Apo Duat languages which may be described as dialects of Lun

Bawang. I propose to describe these people as Lun Bawang<sup>5</sup>.

It is probably politic to use a term which is neutral to refer to the linguistic group to which the Kelabit belong rather than extending a term which has come to be used for one part of the group to the rest of it. It would seem that the term Apo Duat proposed by Hudson is a good one; of the areas inhabited by the group, the highland area appears to have been inhabited for the longest period by this group (see below), and so to call it after one of the central ranges within this area makes some sense.

The Kelabit, then, are a group closely related linguistically and culturally to the larger group which we shall, following Langub (1987), call the Lun Bawang, and part of a larger linguistic and probably cultural group<sup>6</sup> which we shall, following Hudson (1977), call the Apo Duat group. Map 1 shows the position of the Apo Duat area in Borneo, and map 2 shows the distribution of the different Apo Duat groups within the area which they inhabit.

Blust (1989:1-4) reviews the status of research on Apo Duat dialects. He argues that they fall into three distinct clusters: (1) Lun Dayeh/Lun Bawang (the group which I am calling Lun Bawang), (2) Kelabit, (3) Sa'ban. He notes that it is likely `that the Apo Duat language complex includes upwards of a dozen fairly distinct

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<sup>5</sup> Tom Harrisson provides a map of the distribution of these peoples (1949b). He says that the Potok probably include the people of the Bawang wet rice areas (the Lun Bawang of the headwaters of the Bawang river) (1967: 116), and refers to the Potok and Milau as `Kelabit-Murut groups' living in the `mountainous land and upland valleys in the north-west corner of what was then [in 1945] Dutch Borneo'. (T. Harrisson 1959a: 250).

<sup>6</sup> There are not sufficient data on all the constituent groups of the larger Apo Duat linguistic group to make definitive statements as to their cultural cohesiveness.



dialects' (1989:1).

Tom Harrisson has estimated the numbers of the group of peoples related to the Kelabit (the Apo Duat group) in mid-1946 as 30,400, although he says that is unsure of the extent of the portion which he refers to as 'Murut' (by which he means those living in Sarawak and what is now Sabah) (1949b:141). Rousseau estimates (in 1990) that there about 39,000 'Kelabitic' (Apo Duat) people (1990:19, note 16).

It is not clear to what extent the Apo Duat group are, historically, a group focused on or originating in the interior highland area. Many now live in coastal areas, in the lower Limbang, which was acquired by Sarawak from Brunei in 1890, the lower Trusan, taken over by Sarawak from Brunei in 1885, and the Lawas river basin, taken over in 1905 (Reece 1982:4-5). It appears likely that in the past Apo Duat groups occupied a wider area in headwaters of tributaries of the Trusan and Limbang which are now unoccupied and stretching downriver into the Baram and into river basins in Brunei (T. Harrisson 1958a:187; 1959a:20-21). If this is so, groups listed under 'Tring or Treng' and 'Adang' above may be remnants of this population, while those previously described as Murut are immigrants from the highlands. Kelabit stories tell of strong associations between the Kelabit and the Brunei and Brunut valleys of the state of Brunei and Kelabit adih (traditional songs) contain references to Brunei (Lian-Saging 1976/77:61; Talla 1979a:17; Arnold 1959:188-190). The fact that certain Kelabit personal names (Dayang and Pangiran) are used as titles in Brunei seems to some Kelabit to point to close associations with Brunei and perhaps even with Brunei royalty (and see T. Harrisson 1959a:21).

Rousseau considers that the Kelabit had been expanding from the plateau highland areas but their expansion was checked by the Kayan and Kenyah migrations (1990:24). It is certainly true that there have been migrations out of the Kelabit Highlands within what is probably the last couple of hundred years, establishing settlements mostly along the western side of the Tamabo range of mountains. It is unclear whether this may be said to constitute expansion. These settlements do not appear to have been affected by the Kayan and Kenyah expansion into the area; both latter groups are riverine people who found it difficult to operate in highland areas where travel was largely on foot. The Kelabit settlements outside the Kelabit Highlands were in the upper reaches of small rivers which offered only very limited boating possibilities.

The Kayans, entering the Baram from the south-east in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and pushing further north, put a good deal of pressure on Apo Duat peoples, causing many of those who were not killed to migrate, often inland. St. John records this for the Lun Bawang of the Limbang river (St. John 1862 II:30-34; 54-58). A Kelabit has recorded Kelabit stories which describe the inroads of the Kayan as pushing as far as the Kelabit Highlands themselves (Maran 1969a; also see Lian-Saging 1976/77:185); and a Kayan has recorded folk tales of the conflict between the Kayan and the Kelabit (Usun Ngau 1968). It is probable that those Kenyah who entered the Baram after the Kayan from the same direction put similar pressure on the Apo Duat groups.

The Kelabit themselves believe that they have always lived in the highland area. They tell of all mankind originating on the Apo Duat range between the Kelabit Highlands and the headwaters of the Kerayan over the

international border; but all were dispersed by a great flood except the ancestors of the Kelabit and related peoples, who built the heaviest rafts and were therefore not washed away (for a version of this legend see Lian-Saging [1976/77:50-51])<sup>7</sup>. There are no stories of migrations except out of the Kelabit Highlands. A Kelabit legend tells that the Kelabit and other related peoples - highland Lun Bawang and Sa'bans - originally lived in the Kelabit Highlands, and that they were one people. Because of pressure of population, the legend relates, they split up and some crossed the Apo Duat range into Kalimantan (Lian-Saging 1976/77:58-59). No other people is believed to have lived in the Kelabit Highlands before the Kelabit. There are no human traces here which are not said to have been made by their ancestors. The Kelabit say that the numerous megalithic monuments which exist in the Kelabit Highlands were made by their ancestors, either by named human ancestors or by mythical proto- or semi-human giant ancestors.

The stories told by Maran (1969a) seem to imply that it was the pressure from the Kayan that caused the Kelabit to establish themselves in the Kelabit Highlands. Lian-Saging, however, argues (1976/77:66) that this was not the case. He believes that the Kelabits were already living in the Kelabit Highlands and were merely joined by other related peoples fleeing the Kayans. Other stories told by the Kelabit seem to agree with Lian-Saging's contention. It seems probable that the Apo Duat peoples living in the highland areas at the headwaters of various rivers, in what Schneeberger has called the Kerayan-Kelabit highland (1945, 1979), have been there for some considerable time, but it is impossible at the present time to say for how

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<sup>7</sup>The Ibans, for example, are said to have once lived at a site near Pa' Dalih, my fieldwork site. Both the site of the Iban longhouse and an Iban graveyard are readily pointed out by Kelabit of Pa' Dalih.

long. It is unclear whether it was the highlands or the downriver areas which were settled first by Apo Duat peoples. Archaeological investigation in the highlands might help to establish some dates; there are a number of abandoned field systems apparently used in the past for wet rice agriculture within the Kelabit Highlands (see note 2, p. 77) and numerous megalithic burial sites exist in all Apo Duat highland areas, which might yield some dates.

## **2. Kelabit contacts with the outside world**

Until the Second World War, the area now known as the Kelabit Highlands was very isolated, with the journey from Marudi, the Divisional capital on the Baram river, taking about a month one way: by boat to the highest navigable point on the Baram, Lio Mato, and then on foot<sup>8</sup>. It is about a week's walk from the Kelabit Highlands to the nearest longhouse inhabited by non-Apo Duat people. The closest contacts which the Kelabit had with non-Apo Duat groups appear to have been with Kenyah groups in Kalimantan at the headwaters of the Bahau, with a group which they call the Wang Paya; the Kelabit have beads traded from this group. The Kelabit were in really regular contact only with Lun Bawang groups in the headwaters of the Kerayan and Bawang rivers across the Apo Duat mountain range in what is now Kalimantan Timur, and in the headwaters of the Trusan in the Fifth Division of Sarawak. They were on hostile terms with Kenyah and Kayan further down the Baram, and ventured downriver seldom.

There does not appear to have been any attempt by

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<sup>8</sup> Tom Harrisson (1959: 16-20; 1960d: 68) lists the various ways into the Kelabit Highlands from the Baram. It is also possible to enter from the headwaters of the Trusan, via Ba' Kelalan, or from the headwaters of the Kerayan river in Kalimantan.

coastal powers prior to the Brookes to control the highland area in which the Kelabit live. The coming of the Baram river basin under Brooke control as the Baram Division of Sarawak in 1862 led to peace being established between the tribes of the Baram, including the Kelabit, at the peace conference at Claudetown (now Marudi) in 1898 and at subsequent smaller peace conferences. The first time that the Kelabit are recorded as paying taxes was in 1898 (Hose 1898:121), when a delegation came down to Claudetown to pay taxes and to trade. This may have been the second contact that the Kelabit had with a European; St. John met what he describes as 'Main Muruts' from the highlands when he was travelling in the Adang river in the upper Trusan in the 1850's (1862 II:127). Tom Harrisson takes these 'Main Muruts' to be Kelabits (Tom Harrisson's introduction to new edition of St. John, 1974:xiv).

Even after the Kelabits became subjects of the Brookes and began paying tax, they were largely left alone by the administration; by the time of the Second World War only a dozen Europeans had visited the Kelabit Highlands. All but one of these were members of the Sarawak administration and visited in the course of duty.

The first European to visit the Kelabit Highlands was Douglas, Resident of the Baram Division. In 1906 he visited Long Seridan, a Kelabit community in the Tutoh, a tributary of the Limbang river which had been established by migrants from the Kelabit Highlands. In October 1908 he visited the Kelabit Highlands themselves with a force of two hundred Kayans and Kenyahs; these were joined by another two hundred Kelabits at the now abandoned Kelabit village of Panglah (near the present Pa' Tik) just outside the Kelabit Highlands, which he entered at the northern end above the present-day Bario. This expedition followed up an expedition mounted a couple of years before (the

exact date does not appear to be recorded), which was authorised by the administration but not led by it. This first expedition involved a large force of Kayans and Kenyahs, joined by the Kelabits, attacking the Lun Bawang across the Apo Duat range, destroying 30 villages and killing some hundreds of Lun Bawang (Douglas 1912:18). The Kelabit had since the nineteenth century (Lian-Saging 1976/77:76) been intermittently feuding with these Lun Bawang and had complained that they were being attacked; this led to the administration authorising the expedition.

It seems that the Lun Bawang who were attacked sued for peace and Douglas during his visit in 1908 witnessed the swearing of peace and blood brotherhood between Kelabits and Lun Bawang. The latter came under the Sarawak flag at that time; it was only later in the century that the Dutch came to control the headwaters of the Kerayan and Bawang rivers.

Among the members of the Sarawak administration who visited the Kelabit Highlands following Douglas and before the Second World War were two Curators of the Sarawak Museum in Kuching<sup>9</sup>. These were Mjoberg, who climbed Murud mountain to the north of the Kelabit Highlands in 1922 (Mjoberg 1925), and Banks, who visited the Highlands in 1930 and 1936 (Banks 1931, 1937). Banks particularly interested himself in the megalithic monuments which were still actively being erected in the Highlands at that time, and continued to be until after the Second World War.

A visit was made not only to the Kelabit Highlands but to the Lun Bawang highland areas over the border by Schneeberger, a geologist working on a survey for the Batavian Oil Company. Schneeberger published an article

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<sup>9</sup>A third (Moulton) tried to reach the highlands in an attempt to reach Batu Lawi mountain to the north of it but was twice forced to

on the geology of the highland area in 1945 and much later, in 1979, a book giving ethnographic information collected on his trip. Like Banks, he appears to have had a particular interest in the megalithic monuments in the area.

### 3. Tom Harrisson

In the latter stages of the Second World War, Tom Harrisson was parachuted into the Bario area of the Kelabit Highlands<sup>10</sup> to participate in operation *Semut*, whose objective was to organize various operations against the Japanese 'from the inside out'. He spent more than two years in the highland Apo Duat area, from March 1945 to July 1946 and from September 1947 to August 1948. He became Curator of the Sarawak Museum after the war and made numerous further trips to the Kelabit Highlands, some with his German wife Barbara, who photographed and filmed in the area. Although the airstrip which he constructed in the interior during the war was actually in the Dutch (later Indonesian) part of Borneo, in the Brian area at the headwaters of the Bawang river, Tom Harrisson became particularly attached to the people of Lam Bah (literally 'in the wet area' or 'in the wet rice fields'), the only longhouse, at that time, in the flat swampy area which is now called Bario. The label 'Bario' appears to originate with Tom Harrisson and to derive from 'Lam Bah Ariu', 'in the windy wet rice field area' (Lian-Saging 1976/77:94). After the war he wrote numerous articles, mostly for the new series of the Sarawak Museum Journal which he initiated and edited after the war<sup>11</sup>, and a book (Harrisson 1959a) about the Kelabits, particularly those of Lam Bah

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<sup>10</sup> turn back through misfortune (Moulton 1912a; Mjoberg 1925:414). Where, he says, he was taken to be either the Rajah Muda, Mr. Anthony Brooke, or his spiritual equivalent (T. Harrisson 1959c: 208).

<sup>11</sup> The earlier series of the Sarawak Museum Journal had

or Bario. He also did a good deal to further the development of the area. Tom Harrisson had a strong and charismatic character, and he became a powerful, almost legendary figure for them. He remained Curator of the Museum until 1967 when he left Sarawak for good; but the memory of him lingers strongly even now.



#### 4. Christianity

The Lun Bawang of the highland areas, both of the Fifth Division of Sarawak and in what is now Kalimantan, showed an earlier interest in Christianity than did the Kelabits. The Borneo Evangelical Mission (BEM), operating from the Sarawak side, did not make headway with the Kelabits until after the war; only one trip was made to the Kelabit Highlands proper before the war by missionaries of the BEM, Mr. and Mrs. Davidson and Mr. Southwell. During the war two evangelists, 'Tuan Aris' (an American) and 'Tuan Agong' (a converted Celebes Malay) attached to the American Christian Missionary Alliance operating from the highland Lun Bawang areas in what is now Kalimantan, had some success in converting the Kelabit. Three Kelabits went to attend a mission school at Belawit in the Lun Bawang highland area. During and after the war a Timorese called Paul Kohuan appears to have catechised among the Kelabit. He had fought with Harrison during the war and, under Harrison's encouragement, opened the first school among the Kelabit in 1946 at Pa' Mein. Harrison denies that Paul was a catechist (T. Harrison 1947:42) but the Kelabits themselves say that he was (Jacks 1946:57; 1947:174; Lian-Saging 1976/77:251). After the war the BEM took over the evangelising of the Kelabit, and the airstrip built under the supervision of Harrison in 1952 or 1953<sup>12</sup> was used by mission planes. The Kelabit experienced what they describe as a Christian 'Revival' in 1973 (and according to Talla, an earlier one in 1967 [Talla 1979a:477]), which began among the schoolchildren at the secondary school in Bario and spread beyond the Kelabit Highlands. This 'Revival' has contributed powerfully to Kelabit

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Tom Harrison says it was in 1952 (T. Harrison 1959b: 268) while Lian-Saging says it was in 1953 (Lian-Saging 1976/77:

Christianity becoming an extremely powerful force in Kelabit life. The adoption of Christianity has influenced the Kelabit to give up smoking and to give up making and drinking borak, rice wine. In 1959 the Sidang Injil Borneo (SIB), a local church intended to eventually take over from the BEM, was formed. Local SIB religious leaders have now almost completely taken the place of foreign BEM missionaries<sup>13</sup>.

### **5. The Kelabit Highlands after the Second World War**

The opening of a new airstrip by the Governor of Sarawak, Sir Anthony Abell, in April 1961 (Lian-Saging 1976/77:109) and the initiation of scheduled services in July of that year (Anon 1961:175) meant that the Kelabit Highlands were much more accessible to the coast and that the coast was more accessible to the Highlands. Visitors became more frequent, both members of the Sarawak administration and, later, more casual visitors as well, and the Kelabits visited the coast more often. Although it was wondered at first what the Kelabits could trade to the coast by air in order to be able to purchase the trade items which could now be taken up to them (Anon 1961:175), it turned out that a group of races of small-grained Kelabit rice (pade adan and pade dari) grown in wet fields in the Highlands were extremely well liked on the coast. The Kelabits of Bario have been able to generate quite substantial income by sending this kind of rice by air to the coast - particularly since the Malaysian Airline System (M.A.S.), which now operates scheduled flights to Bario, allows a special, cheaper rate for rice.

The Confrontation with Indonesia in 1963, like the Second World War itself, is considered by some Kelabits to

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See Lees (1979) for a history of the B.E.M. and S.I.B.

have been a 'blessing in disguise' (Lian-Saging 1976/77:111) - for the Kelabit in general and particularly for the Kelabit of Lam Bah (Bario) longhouse. It was made the pretext for resettling a large proportion of the Kelabit population in the area around Lam Bah longhouse, the area now known as Bario. Because of the concentration of population here, Bario became the focal centre in the Kelabit Highlands for the development of medical, educational and administrative facilities. Before Confrontation, primary schools had been established at a number of settlements in the Kelabit Highlands (Toynbee 1965:218). All of these except that at Bario were closed in 1964 with the resettlement. Bario primary school took in all the pupils from the other schools. None of the schools closed were reopened after the Confrontation except that at Pa' Dalih. Pa' Dalih primary school now caters for the children of the remaining southern settlements and Bario primary school for the rest. A secondary school was opened in Bario in 1967. Bario is also the site of a 'sub-health station' (a large rural clinic with a staff of medical assistants and nurses), an agriculture station, a police and border scout station and the office of the up-river agent, the representative of government administration in the Kelabit Highlands. The only other clinic in the Highlands is a small one in Pa' Dalih, staffed by a medical assistant. The people who resettled at Bario have not returned to their previous areas; indeed there has been further migration to Bario. The majority of the Kelabits in the Kelabit Highlands now live in Bario.

## **6. The status of anthropological research in Sarawak**

Leach, when he carried out his social economic survey of Sarawak (Leach 1950), did not regard research among the

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from the missionary point of view.

interior peoples as a priority. The first priority, as he assessed it, was to undertake studies of the Iban and Land Dayak, and such studies were undertaken almost immediately by Freeman and by Geddes (Freeman 1955a; Geddes 1954a). Since that time a number of studies have been made of the Iban, of which perhaps the most well known is that of Jensen, which focuses on Iban religion (Jensen 1974). The second priority was a study of the Melanau, and this was undertaken by Morris (Morris 1953).

As lower priorities, Leach also recommended, for the interior area, studies of the 'Kenyah-Kayan-Kajang' group and of the nomadic 'Punan'. Anthropological studies have, since 1950, been undertaken on a number of the inland peoples in Sarawak. Among these are studies by Needham of the nomadic Penan<sup>14</sup> (1953), by Whittier of the Lepo Tau Kenyah (1973), by Metcalf of the Berawan (1982, 1989), by Rousseau of the Kayan (1974a), by Strickland of the Kejaman (1986) and by Nicolaisen of the Punan Bah (1976). Much of the work on interior peoples remains in Ph.D. theses and in the form of articles. There have been studies undertaken recently in the Belaga area, but much of the data has not yet been published. The fullest published ethnography and analysis stemming from these studies is that of Metcalf, who has now published three books (Huntingdon and Metcalf 1979, Metcalf 1982 and Metcalf 1989). Rousseau has very thoroughly surveyed the literature and the state of research on the interior groups which he classes as Central Bornean (Rousseau 1988 and 1990).

## **7. The status of research on Apo Duat peoples other than the Kelabit**

<sup>14</sup> See Needham 1954b for a discussion of the terms 'Penan' and 'Punan'.

Although the majority of Apo Duat peoples live in Kalimantan, there appears to be nothing written on them by Dutch administrative officers from the Dutch colonial period<sup>15</sup>. The writings of Sarawak government officers on the interior peoples appear to be unparalleled. This may be due to the different attitude adopted to the interior peoples by the Dutch and the Sarawak government under the Brookes<sup>16</sup>. Most of what has been written on the Lun Bawang is about those in what is now the Fifth Division of Sarawak and was written by individuals associated with the Sarawak government administration.

The first writings on the Lun Bawang (then called Muruts) are by St. John (1862). He travelled far up the Trusan and up the Limbang into the Adang, its tributary. In 1890 Ricketts, the Resident of Limbang from 1890-1909, journeyed to the Kuala Madihit and Adang area, and in 1899, accompanied by Haviland (later Curator of the Sarawak Museum) up the Trusan river to the 'Bah' country (Bah Kelalan at the headwaters of the Trusan) (Moulton 1912a:3-4). Ricketts published articles on the 'Murut' (whom I am calling the Lun Bawang) in the Sarawak Gazette (1963 [1894-5]). Various other individuals associated with the Sarawak government visited the upriver Lun Bawang areas and Bah Kelalan before the Second World War; some of these also visited the Kelabit Highlands (see Moulton 1912a:3-4; Owen 1913, 1918, 1919; Banks 1931). Some of the articles written by these visitors contain ethnographic information about the Lun Bawang. Schneeberger, in the course of his geological survey, visited the highland Lun Bawang areas in Kalimantan (Schneeberger 1945, 1979). Pollard has written articles about the 'Muruts' (Lun Bawang) of Lawas and Trusan

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<sup>15</sup> Rousseau, in his exhaustive bibliography on 'Central Borneo' (1988), does list Dutch sources, but he lists none for 'Kelabit and related peoples'.

<sup>16</sup> See Tom Harrisson's comments on this (1959a:218-219).

(Pollard 1933, 1935).

Two scholars from the United States have worked on the Lun Bawang: Crain in 1968-69 on those on the Mengalong river in Sipitang district in Sabah (Crain 1970a, 1970b, 1970c, 1973, 1972, 1976, 1978, 1982), and Deegan in 1969-70 and 1976-77 (Deegan 1979:72, note 1) on those living in Lawas Damit near the town of Lawas in the Fifth Division of Sarawak (Deegan 1970, 1973, 1974, 1979, Deegan and Usad 1972). Crain, in his Ph.D. thesis (Crain 1970a) looked at aspects of exchange, using data derived from analysis of furut-sulang (bridewealth and 'counter prestations') exchanges between the families of marriage partners. He considered the way in which prestige was generated via participation in these exchanges. Deegan, in his Ph.D. thesis (Deegan 1973), looked at the reaction to change among the Lun Bawang of Lawas Damit.

Another American scholar, Padoch, carried out a seven-month survey in the Kerayan highland Lun Bawang area in Kalimantan in 1980 (Padoch 1981). She focused on gathering information about the wet rice agricultural system of this area.

## **8. The status of research on the Kelabit**

A number of those who visited the Kelabit Highlands before the Second World War wrote articles on their visits which contain data on the Kelabit themselves (Douglas 1907, 1909a, 1909b, 1912; Owen 1913, 1918, 1919; Moulton 1912a; Mjoberg 1925; Banks 1930, 1937; Pollard<sup>17</sup> 1933, 1935; Cutfield 1936; Schneeberger 1945, 1979; Chong Ah Onn 1954a, 1954b). Some of the administrators who visited the Kelabit Highlands after the war also wrote short articles

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<sup>17</sup> Tom Harrisson (1946-7: 56) says that Pollard visited the Kelabit highlands.

about the Kelabit, all for the Sarawak Gazette, a Sarawak government publication (Jacks 1946, 1947; Tremeer 1961; Smith 1963), as did the Colombo Plan teacher at Bario primary school from 1963-1965 (Lian-Saging 1976/77:304; Toynbee 1965).

Tom Harrisson's voluminous writings on the Kelabits are very useful and full of information and insights but they are often unfinished and quite often contain inaccuracies. His strong attachment to the Kelabit arguably meant that his insights were sometimes distorted by the fact that he saw what he wanted to see rather than what was really there. He never wrote a proper ethnography of the Kelabit. World Within, published in 1959, is more a prose poem than an scholarly piece of writing, although it contains flashes of acute analysis.

One of the missionaries of the Borneo Evangelical Mission has published a book which contains information about the Kelabit (Lees 1979).

Arnold, who took part in an Oxford University Expedition to Sarawak in 1955 during the course of which he visited the Kelabit Highlands, has published a book which includes some information on the Kelabit, including some Kelabit adih (a type of traditional story) (Arnold 1959).

A French journalist, Villard, spent some months, probably in 1974, staying in Long Lellang, a Kelabit community outside the Highlands on the Akah river, a tributary of the Baram, on the western side of the Tamabo range. She published an article (Villard 1975a) and a short book (Villard 1975b, listed in Rousseau 1988:116) about the Kelabit. The book, however, was published in France and I have not been able to obtain it in England.

Rubenstein, who worked in collaboration with the Sarawak Museum 1971-3 on a project to collect songs and chants of the indigenous peoples of Sarawak, included Kelabit material in publications which resulted (Rubenstein 1973, 1981), although her work has been criticised for errors in transcription and translation<sup>18</sup>.

A number of Kelabits have now written on their people (Lian Labang 1958, 1962; Galih Balang 1965a, 1965b; Malarn C. Maran [or Marandt] 1969a, 1969b, 1971; Robert Lian-Saging 1976/77; Yahya Talla 1979a, 1979b; Lucy Bulan n.d.; Lucy Bulan and David Labang 1979). Lian Labang worked at the Sarawak Museum and was Tom Harrisson's assistant at the Sarawak Museum from the 1950's until Harrisson left Sarawak in 1967. Galih Balang was one of the first Kelabits to go to school - during the Second World War, in Belawit in Kalimantan - and he was instrumental in introducing Christianity to the Kelabit (Lian-Saging 1976/77:249). Malarn C. Maran is presently the headmaster of Pa' Dalih school in the Kelabit Highlands. Robert Lian-Saging and Yahya Talla both wrote long reports on the Kelabit as part of their B.A. studies at Universiti Malaya and Universiti Sains (Penang) respectively (Lian-Saging 1976/77 and Talla 1979a)<sup>19</sup>. Lucy Bulan and David Labang (the latter the brother of Lian Labang) are married and live in Kuching, the latter working at the Forestry Department. Stories told by illiterate Kelabits have also been published, collected by Tom Harrisson (Lu'un Ribu 1955; Lu'un Ribu and T. Harrisson 1955; T. Harrisson and Pulu Ribu 1955).

<sup>18</sup> See Rousseau 1988:34; Rubenstein 1989; Rousseau 1989; Maxwell 1989.

<sup>19</sup> I have just heard of work done by two more Kelabits, Garnette Jalla and Tilai Balla Udan, as project papers done as part of their undergraduate studies at the Universiti Malaya (Jalla 1981a, 1981b and Balla Udan 1979) but have not yet obtained copies of these.



During the course of the Soil Survey carried out 1974-76, which included the whole of the Kelabit Highlands and the Long Peluan Kelabit settlement outside the Highlands, some information was recorded on Kelabit settlement as well as on their agriculture (Eilers and Loi 1982). The Highland Development Study, carried out 1983-84, covers only the Bario area and not the rest of the Highlands (Highland Development Technical Committee 1985). It contains a good deal of information about settlement and agriculture in Bario.

## **9. Background to the present study**

### **9.1 The spread of rice in South East Asia**

Rice has come to be a major crop in South East Asia over the last few millennia. It seems to be accepted now that the botanical evidence indicates that rice was domesticated somewhere in the piedmont zone of Assam, Upper Burma and Thailand, Southwest China and North Vietnam and that the cultivation of rice spread north, south and east from there (Bray 1986:8-10; Grist 1953:2-3). Rice may have been domesticated as early as 9000 B.C., and there is clear evidence that it was cultivated in Central and Southern China by 3000 or 2000 B.C., perhaps as early as the fourth millennium, and possibly in North Thailand before 4500 B.C. (Bray 1986:9-10) It seems that rice did not spread into the Malay peninsula and into the Indonesian archipelago, including Borneo, until rather late, however, and partly from India rather than mainland Southeast Asia (Bray 1986:10). Spencer suggests that although the first beginnings of rice growing were introduced into the island world a long time ago, it has taken a long time for the growing of rice to replace other cropping patterns (Spencer 1963:88). The spread of rice as a crop is still taking place.

Spencer considers that the whole of S.E. Asia and the Archipelago were once characterised by a yam-taro-sago horticultural system, of which the NW margin has been slowly retreating over the past three millennia (Spencer 1963:88). It has also been suggested that the earliest staple foods grown in monsoon Asia were tuber crops and millets (Kano 1946, cited by Bray 1986:9). There are indications that in peninsular Malaysia millet was grown as a major crop, particularly in the interior, before rice became dominant (Hill 1977:12). Pawley and Green argue, from linguistic evidence, that the proto-Austronesians, some 5000 years ago, may have had rice (Pawley and Green 1975:36, cited in Bellwood 1978:122) and not millet, however, although Blust (1976), also from linguistic evidence, adds millet to the list of cultigens given by Pawley and Green, which includes taro and other aroids, yams, banana, sugar cane, breadfruit, coconut and sago. It has even been suggested that rice may have been one of the first domesticated plants in South East Asia (Gorman 1974, cited by Bellwood 1978:152, note 35).

The history of the cultivation of rice in South East Asia, in terms of its simple presence or absence, is fairly obscure. It must be borne in mind, in addition, that the possession of a cultigen is no indication of the importance of that cultigen to the people concerned, either in terms of quantity or in terms of significance. The relationship between different cultigens can vary a great deal, even where the same repertoire of cultigens is in use. It is possible that rice was known as a cultigen very early on but that it was a considerable time before its cultivation became as central as it is now wherever it is cultivated in SE Asia and Indochina.

Within Borneo, rice is still in the process of

gaining ground among agriculturalists at the expense of previous staples. Hose and McDougall suggest 'most of the present Kenyahs first began to plant padi not more than two, or at the most three, centuries ago' (1912 II:244).

Earlier staples included root crops, originally varieties of taro [*colocasia esculentum*, Schott.] and yam [*dioscorea*, Linn.] and more recently varieties of cassava [*manihot utilissima*, Pohl.] as well. They also included sago (*metroxylon sagus*, Rottb., and *metroxylon rumphii*, Mart.)<sup>20</sup>. Cereals other than rice may also have been significant staples in the past. Cereals which are still grown in Borneo, but in small quantities, include millet (*setaria italica*, Beauv.), Job's tears (*coix lachryma-jobi*, Linn.) and sorghum (*sorghum vulgare*, Pers.).

In Borneo, rice agriculturalists appear commonly and perhaps universally to grow some of the above tubers as well as rice, and some, such as the Melanau and the Kejaman, continue to cultivate/manage sago palms (Morris 1953; Strickland 1986). Most, perhaps all, rice growers in what Geertz terms 'Outer Indonesia' (1963:14) also grow one or more of the above grain crops, probably mainly millets; whether this indicates that one or a combination of these cereals, with or without rice, used to be grown as a major crop or major crops is unknown. Millet is at the present time the focal crop, with a status comparable to that of rice, in Tanebar-Evav in Eastern Indonesia (Barraud 1979). Nowadays, at least in Borneo, where rice is grown such cereals do not carry much, if any, prestige. The emphasis is on rice, where it is grown. Rice is the prestige food.

In Borneo, tubers are eaten only as a snack food or as a 'famine' food, mixed with rice if the rice crop is

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Strickland has documented this for the Kajaman of the Rejang (1986).

inadequate; the so-called 'famine' is not a true one, but refers to insufficient rice. The cereals other than rice which are planted are often, at least in Sarawak, used mainly to make alcoholic drink to supplement that made with rice, rather than eaten.

It is possible that the earliest irrigation in S.E. Asia may have been associated not with the cultivation of rice but with that of taro (Hill 1977:10-11). The fact that rice grown in dry fields is considered to be tastier throughout the area may suggest that dry fields were the preferred form of cultivation of rice and that wet fields may have been used for rice cultivation only where circumstances necessitated it (Hill 1977:39). This argument does not necessarily apply everywhere; the varieties of rice which the Kelabit grow in wet fields are, in the case of all but one group of varieties, also grown by them in dry fields. However, both Barbara and Tom Harrisson have argued that the traditional wet rice cultivation techniques used in Bario in the Kelabit Highlands (which are distinctive, quite different from sawah rice fields and even different from highland Lun Bawang rice cultivation methods - the latter now being adopted by the Kelabit) may have originated with the irrigated cultivation of taro. Both have suggested that Kelabit traditional-style wet rice fields may have originally been used for a pre-grain crop (B. Harrisson 1964; T. Harrisson 1964:333), and Tom Harrisson has pointed out the similarity between these fields and irrigated taro fields in the New Hebrides (T. Harrisson 1963-4). It seems possible that the irrigated cultivation of taro which is so important in the Pacific may have its origins in insular SE Asia, whence the Austronesian language, a substantial migration of people, and all Pacific crops originated (Bellwood 1978).

The idea that the growing of rice was associated with a distinct and widespread cultural tradition in the area, other elements of which were the building of megaliths and the working of bronze and iron, has been disputed (Hill 1977:6) and the possibility that the Kelabit did not cultivate rice when they entered the Kelabit Highlands does not therefore imply that their strong megalithic tradition is recent.

It is difficult to make an assessment of when the Kelabit adopted rice cultivation, or of whether they had rice when they entered the highland area, the date of which entry is in any case quite obscure, as has been discussed above. They are generally reluctant to concede that they have ever cultivated any other crop as a staple, although Bulan and D. Labang, themselves Kelabits, suggest that the Kelabit 'have but recently developed a dependence upon agriculture' (Bulan and D. Labang 1979:43). Given the prestige associated with rice cultivation, a reluctance to admit recent adoption of rice is understandable. The Kelabit are successful cultivators of rice, both wet and dry, relying very rarely on other staple starches<sup>21</sup> except as snack foods (see chapter five), and this might suggest that they have been cultivating rice for a longer period than some of the peoples of the Baram, many of whom rely regularly on sago and root crops as the staple starch at meals (rather than as snacks) (Pollard and Banks 1937:405; Rousseau 1990:132). But it is also possible that they adopted rice cultivation fairly recently but quickly developed a proficiency in it; both the Kelabit and Lun Bawang have been widely perceived to be a highly experimental people, and this experimentation, which is generative of prestige, focuses on agriculture and particularly on the growing of rice (e.g. see T.

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<sup>21</sup> Although Owen, District Officer of the Baram, who visited the highlands in 1912, reported a complete failure of the rice

Harrisson 1959a:70; Rubenstein 1981:42; Crain 1970a:245; Padoch 1981; Langub 1984).

## **9.2 The symbolic centrality of rice in South East Asia**

The reason for the transition to a reliance on rice-growing rather than on previous staples is not at all clear. It seems clear that tubers and sago provide a much less labour and land intensive source of calories than does rice (Hill 1977:12-13; Strickland 1986). Hill suggests that the transition to a reliance on rice may have been due to a lesser reliance on meat, particularly from hunting, and that rice, which is a better source of fat and protein than tubers or sago, provided an alternative source. He also suggests that a transition to a reliance on cereals in general, including rice, may be partly due to the much more palatable alcohol produced by cereals than by taro or yam (Hill 1977:13). The former suggestion would not explain the adoption of rice as a crop by those who continue to have access to wild game in large quantities, as has been the case in most of Borneo.

The latter suggestion is interesting but does not explain the choice of rice rather than another cereal. Bray suggests that rice was adopted because of its superior natural characteristics. The very large numbers of varieties mean that very variable conditions are suitable for its cultivation, it can be very high-yielding, it has a high yield to seed ratio, and it is very palatable (Bray 1986:11-19). In fact, the discussion of yields relates, as Bray herself admits, to wet rice cultivation of the sawah type, as practised in delta areas throughout SE Asia and beyond in Java, Bali and Lombok. Elsewhere, where rice is planted in dry fields and in less well-established and/or less sophisticated types of wet field, yields are much less predictable and often very poor. This is the

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harvest at Remudu (1919: 144).

case in Borneo. The fact that rice is adaptable probably does explain its wide geographical spread, but does not explain its take-up in a particular spot; the availability of appropriate varieties for particular conditions merely makes the growing of rice possible, it does not ensure that it will be grown in preference to other crops, equally appropriate to the environment. In fact in many of the ecological environments in which rice is grown it appears to be a less successful and hence less appropriate crop than other available staples. This appears to be the case in the type of tropical forest which originally covered most of Borneo. As far as high yield-to-seed ratio is concerned, Bray compares rice to wheat, barley and rye, rather than to millet and other grains grown in the area, whose yields she does not discuss. Palatability, finally, is culturally constructed to a large extent.

It appears that the transition from a dependence on other staple starches to a growing reliance on rice which has occurred in mainland South East Asia and in some of insular South East Asia, including Borneo, may be at least partially attributed to the high level of prestige which is associated with rice. Wherever rice has been adopted as a crop in South-East Asia, it has taken up a central symbolic position, and its cultivation and consumption have become prestigious. Other, older crops are relegated to the background in terms of emphasis and in terms of prestige generation, although it is often clear from the continued cultivation of small quantities of these crops and from ritual surrounding them that they may have been focal in the past. Strickland has argued that the transition which the Kejaman have experienced from a dependence on sago to a growing reliance on rice over the past century has been due to the prestige of rice as a food (Strickland 1986:3).

The prestige attached to rice has been associated with a symbolic centrality accorded to it. However, the reasons for the prestige and symbolic centrality of rice remain largely unknown. It is possible that the centrality of rice is 'contagious'; once one group has taken it up in this guise, other contiguous cultures may be influenced. It might be tentatively suggested that the attraction of rice cultivation lies partly in the difficulty of growing it in the tropical forest environment, so that success in this enterprise comes to have significance; in this context, it is to be noted that the Kelabit say that rice is more difficult to grow than other grain crops.

In Borneo, rice has now become the focal crop, although there is still considerable dependence in some areas on other starches, most importantly sago and cassava; cassava is now the major root crop, where it seems that taro used to be. Taro is still grown, but only in small quantities, and much of it is fed to pigs. The only people who have moved away from rice cultivation are the Melanau of Sarawak, who used to grow rice but now depend on growing sago as a cash crop. With the money that they make from selling sago, however, they buy rice, which is the starch staple valued by them (Morris 1953:165,30).

For Bornean agriculturalists - and to a very large extent town dwellers - rice is generally synonymous with proper food. To say that one is 'eating' is to say that one is eating rice with side dishes, unless a qualifier is added to make clear that this is not the case. Other starches should only be eaten as snacks. However, rice harvests are often inadequate and cassava or sago is then mixed with rice or even eaten instead of rice at what should be a rice meal. Not to have enough rice is



described as being 'hungry' (Rousseau 1990:132), although in terms of nutrition this is an inaccurate description. The implication is that only rice is capable of properly nourishing<sup>22</sup>. The assumption that agricultural success is equated with rice-growing success is so strong that it has been pervasive in official circles, even in colonial times when those who governed were not themselves originally rice-growers; Strickland points out (1986:2-3) that the mixed farming complex of the Kajaman, which has relied a good deal on sago, was regarded critically by the authorities during the colonial period, whose aim appears to have been that the tribal groups should manage to rely on rice alone.

To be forced to rely on starches other than rice is unprestigious and a mark of poverty (Whittier 1973:95; Metcalf 1974:34, 1989: note 37 p. 113). Success in rice cultivation generates prestige and wealth, which is measured in rice stores and in heirloom articles which were traditionally purchased largely or wholly through the sale of rice. To be successful in growing rice is essential in a leader, who by definition has more prestige and is wealthier than other individuals. Such success may be through individual effort, as is the case with Iban or Kelabit. It may be through the labour of slaves and what Rousseau calls 'corvee' labour, as is the case among groups like the Kayan and Kenyah, whose leaders are ritually separate from the majority of the population and

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The Melanau, although they no longer grow rice, consider that a gallon of rice per week is necessary per person to maintain health, although in fact it seems that, at least in the 1950's in the Oya river, they only managed to purchase and consume an average of about a gallon a month per person. Their aim is to eat rice at two meals a day, but only the wealthy achieve this regularly (Morris 1953:165). Even when the Melanau eat sago as a starch staple at meals, they mix it with rice bran, which they buy for this purpose; the ideal mixture is said to be 50/50, but this is too expensive and less bran is normally used. (ibid:30).

who do little work in the fields themselves. Among the Kayan and Kenyah, however, although they do not work in the fields, rice agriculture is ritually associated with longhouse leaders - whom Rousseau describes as 'aristocrats' - who initiate ritually important parts of the rice cultivation cycle (King 1978a:29; Rousseau 1974a:174-5, 177-8; Morris 1978:52-53; Whittier 1978a:110; King 1978b:208).

The symbolic centrality of rice has, for Borneo, been most fully explored for the Iban (particularly by Jensen 1965, 1974; also by Sather 1977, 1980; and by Davison 1987), but there is evidence of an equally strong religious emphasis on rice among the Dusun (Evans 1953) and the Selako (Schneider 1974:12). For the Iban, rice defines being human, which is synonymous with being Iban (Jensen 1974:151). It is seen as being related, in a chain of being, to human beings: the spirits (samengat) of the long-dead fall as dew on the rice crop and are consumed by living people (ibid:153). There are indications that the Kelabit too see rice as related to humans, although this is not elaborated as among the Iban<sup>23</sup>.

### **9.3 The symbolic centrality of rice for the Kelabit**

The choices made by the Kelabit regarding techniques of rice cultivation and processing for consumption can only be fully understood in the light of the symbolic importance of rice.

I found that the symbolic centrality of rice is

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Talla points out that when a grain of rice falls on the ground the Kelabit react by saying puh ayam, which he describes as 'the most loving of all kinship terms' (1979a:327). This expression is normally used by grandparents when they are expressing sympathy and love for a grandchild.

particularly clearly demonstrated and the symbolic logic of this centrality is made clear conspicuously at the rice meal. Because of this, much of this thesis focuses on an analysis of the rice meal, both on an everyday level and as it is enacted at irau, feasts, and on an analysis of what the rice meal 'says' about the Kelabit conception of society - and about the nature of human life itself.

## **10. Fieldwork**

I carried out fieldwork in the community of Pa' Dalih in the southern part of the Kelabit Highlands from September 1986 to April 1988, accompanied by my husband Kaz and daughter Molly, who was born in August 1985.

We arrived in Kuching, the capital of Sarawak, in late July 1986 and stayed there for one month, while I made contact with officials at the Sarawak Museum and at the State Planning Unit, and made use of the library and archives at the Sarawak Museum.

In early September we flew to Marudi on the Baram river, accompanied by Ipoi Datan, the Government Archaeologist at the Sarawak Museum - who is a Lun Bawang from Lawas - to await a flight to Bario in the Kelabit Highlands, delayed by rain (the airstrip in Bario is grass and often becomes waterlogged). We flew up on 10 September. In Bario, we were hospitably received by the Penghulu of the Kelabits, Ngimat Aio', at his longhouse of residence, Ulung Palang. We stayed in Bario until the 16 September and then set out with porters for Pa' Dalih, where we arrived on 17 September, having stayed overnight in Long Dano. Ipoi Datan returned to Kuching a few days before we left for Pa' Dalih.

It seemed desirable to choose a community outside the

Bario area because of the difficulty of dealing with the large number of people in Bario, and because communities outside Bario practise both wet and dry cultivation of rice, while those in Bario practise only wet cultivation.

Pa' Dalih is 25 km south of Bario, and the walk from Bario takes from 7-12 hours depending on the state of the ground and on the physical condition of the walker.

We were received very hospitably at Pa' Dalih by the headmaster of the primary school there and his wife, Baye Ribuh and Sinah Baye Ribuh, with whom we stayed for a month until we moved into a vacant 'apartment' in the bigger of the two longhouses.

Having a child had very fundamental implications for our position in Pa' Dalih. It meant that we were adults (lun merar, literally 'big people'), rather than anak adik ('children' or 'young people who do not yet have children') (see chapter seven in particular for a discussion of these terms) and this meant that we were expected to have our own, separate hearth-group (see chapter five for a discussion of the nature of the hearth-group). The idea of our lodging with another hearth-group appeared quite out of the question to the Kelabit. Although being lun merar earned us respect, the practical implications of taking on the running of a separate hearth-group were many.

We did manage to bring food up from town at long intervals but this was extremely complex to arrange. It meant making the long journey to town (Miri, on the coast, or Marudi, a few hours' up the Baram river by fast boat), buying supplies, sending them up by air freight to Bario and then arranging for them to be carried to Pa' Dalih. A trip to town with Molly was not a simple outing. She had to be carried through the forest to Bario. The flights

between Bario and the coast are very unpredictable, and there is very little room on the tiny aircraft for freight, so our supplies might wait weeks before going up; if we did not remain in Marudi to ensure their departure they might never leave for Bario at all. Arranging for things to be carried to Pa' Dalih was difficult since we had to rely largely on people from the southern longhouses who were going home without anything to carry themselves, and this was unusual. Some things were available in Bario but the problem of getting them to Pa' Dalih remained. Two or three people in Pa' Dalih had a few things for sale but this was very limited because of the perennial problem of getting things carried to Pa' Dalih.

We therefore had to rely largely on obtaining food in Pa' Dalih. We were able to buy rice there but relied largely on casual gifts of vegetables and wild meat for something 'to eat' [with rice] (nok penguman) - side dishes at the rice meal, in other words. It turned out to be difficult to pay for vegetables and meat, which are traditionally shared freely (see chapter three). There was a feeling that should we pay it would set an undesirable precedent within the community.

At first we employed a succession of people to cook, but this was unsatisfactory, largely, I think, because of the awkwardness of 'mixing' hearth groups which this entailed. The person cooking for us was the lun merar of another hearth group, and it is not usual to cook at a hearth which is not your own (see chapter five). Eventually we cooked for ourselves, although it took a while to learn how to start a wood fire and keep it going satisfactorily.

We also had a succession of people looking after Molly, and periods where we looked after her, until we

eventually set up a satisfactory arrangement with a young mother who had Molly at her hearth during the day. Because of the absence of milk in Pa' Dalih (although the Kelabit keep buffaloes, they do not milk them) and the unreliability of arrangements to bring up powdered milk, I breastfed Molly until November 1987 when she was two and a quarter.

During fieldwork, we left the Kelabit Highlands four times for breaks cum shopping trips.

### **11. Fieldwork methods**

Because of my interest in rice growing and the fact that the majority of adults (lun merar) were absent from the longhouse during the day, mostly spending their time in or around their rice fields, I spent a good deal of my time going with cooperative work groups and joining in with their work. The longhouse is, during most of the year, almost empty during the day. During work in the fields and at lunch, which, if the field is too far from the longhouse to return, is taken together at the host hearth-group's fieldhouse (daan), a great deal of conversation goes on. This I found to be most interesting and informative, and I found people to be relaxed and willing to chat with me in these contexts. In particular, for obvious reasons, attitudes towards rice and rice-growing tended to be particularly evident.

The fact that we were running our own hearth-group made me particularly aware of what it meant to be doing so. This was particularly true with regard to events within the longhouse, although it also applied to what happened and to what was said in the rice fields, where work is organized based on reciprocal exchange of work between separate hearth-groups. The ways in which

territory is used within the longhouse, how different foods are kept separate or shared between hearth-groups, the ways in which visitors to the longhouse are treated, the different manner in which different kinds of people are treated as members of hearth-groups or as non-members - all of these I was very conscious of because I had to learn to operate the rules as a major actor - as a lun merar. I could not just remain on the sidelines and observe what others did (although I did that as much as possible), as I could have if I had been a lodger in another hearth-group, with the status of anak adik (young person or child). Anak adik are not major actors; they are peripheral to what one might call the 'plot' of the play being acted out by the lun merar of the various hearth-groups. If I had been an anak adik, perhaps I might have become particularly aware of the co-running minor 'plots' played out by them, but what I believe to be the dominant one, that of the lun merar (anak adik, after all, eventually become lun merar) might not have been so clear to me. It is this dominant lun merar 'plot' which is the theme of this thesis.

Kaz spent most of his time during fieldwork in the forest, where he went every day, for the whole day, except during the periods when we had no-one to care for Molly. In the forest, he spent his time observing and identifying animals, birds and plants and photographing plants and insects. He went mostly alone. Occasionally he went with other men, but since he did not have a desire to hunt and that was mostly what other men did in the forest, he usually did not go with others. However, he went on a couple of longer trips into the forest, lasting a few days, with Kelabit men whom he asked to accompany him, and on these trips he came to understand aspects of the male attitude to the forest which I could not have perceived. He also went with a large group of Kelabits and Lun Bawang

on a journey to Batu Lawi, the double-peaked mountain north-west of the Kelabit Highlands which is a central symbol to the Kelabit. The object of this trip was to pray on Batu Lawi, in the hopes of miraculous appearances of signs from God. I was unable to go on this trip because I could not leave Molly, and the information which he brought back was very valuable.

I was, because of Molly, unable to travel very much during my fieldwork, and so my data derive largely from Pa' Dalih. I did make fairly regular trips to the neighbouring communities of Long Dano (two hours' walk from Pa' Dalih), Remudu (three hours walk from Pa' Dalih) and frequent trips to Batu Patong (45 minutes walk from Pa' Dalih). However, I was unable to visit the communities in the northern part of the Kelabit Highlands which are some distance from Bario itself - Pa' Ukat, Pa' Lungan and Pa' Umor - and my knowledge of the communities in the immediate Bario area - Bario Asal, Arur Layun, Arur Dalan, Pa' Ramapoh and Ulung Palang - is limited.

Most of my information was collected without the use of a tape recorder. During conversations, I made short notes in a notebook which I wrote up later, because I found that using a tape recorder made people much less willing to talk freely and casually. I did tape interviews of a formal nature which I held on certain defined subjects, such as pre-Christian customs (which is a rather sensitive area and which I was only, therefore, able to collect data on towards the end of my fieldwork when people were more sure of me). I also taped traditional songs and stories which were performed (without charge) at my request by our neighbour in Pa' Dalih, Balang Pelaba, who is a skilled performer and very knowledgeable about Kelabit customs. In addition, I was able to record some songs which were performed



spontaneously in the rice fields.

As far as more systematic information gathering goes, I carried out a simple census of the population of Pa' Dalih, including members of hearth-groups resident in town, and made an attempt to work out the complex kin relations between different individuals (which can be traced, in many cases, through a number of different routes). I employed a young man from Pa' Dalih, Sidi, to carry out a careful survey of the areas of land used by different Pa' Dalih hearth-groups for different purposes.

I collected a good deal of detailed information on agriculture, only a small part of which I am able to present in this thesis. I took samples of all the rice varieties which are presently grown in Pa' Dalih, over 30 varieties; unfortunately the officer at the Agricultural Research Station in Kuching who agreed to arrange for these to be planted and their characteristics analyzed left Sarawak for Brunei shortly afterwards and this was never done. Kelabit rice varieties are of particular interest because they can almost all be grown in both wet and dry fields. I also took samples of other grains which are grown by the Kelabit. In Pa' Dalih, only millet (*setaria italica*, Beauv.) is now grown, although they say that in the past other grains were cultivated. When I returned to Sarawak in August 1990 I was able to collect samples of grains grown in Long Lellang, a Kelabit community outside the Highlands on the Akah, a tributary of the Baram. These have been identified by Wye College and Kew Gardens as black sorghum (*sorghum vulgare*, Pers., probably subsp. *dochna*<sup>24</sup>), millet (*setaria italica*, Beauv.) and Job's tears (*coix lachryma-jobi*, Linn.). As regards

<sup>24</sup>

According to the Enquiry Unit at Kew Gardens, black sorghum is also known as 'blacktop' and is *sorghum dochna*.

tuber identification, I was not able to take specimens for identification and so I am not able to go beyond the statement that the Kelabit grow some taro (*colocasia esculentum*, Schott.), which they call opa', a good deal of cassava (*manihot utilissima*, Pohl.), ubi kayu in Kelabit, some sweet potatoes (*ipomoea batatas*, Lam.), ubi sia' in Kelabit, and occasionally some potatoes (*solanum tuberosum*, Linn.), ubi ketam in Kelabit. The Kelabit identify numerous varieties of all of these, but it is not possible for me to relate these to botanical descriptions of races of these tubers.

While in Pa' Dalih Kaz and I took about 2000 photographs, and Kaz did some filming. I made two collections of Kelabit handicrafts, one for the Sarawak Museum and one for the Museum of Mankind, and we took photographs to accompany the collection, of items being made and used. I commissioned the making of a batch of earthenware pots (which ceased to be made in the 1970's) as part of the making of the collections, and we photographed and filmed this process.

## **12. The dialect of Pa' Dalih**

The Kelabit language varies a good deal: there are differences between varieties of Kelabit spoken in communities within a few hours' walk of each other. The variety spoken in Pa' Dalih is quite distinct from that spoken in Bario; not only is pronunciation quite different but items of vocabulary are often different. It is the Bario variety of Kelabit which has been recorded by Blust (1989). However, I have throughout this thesis used the Pa' Dalih variety of Kelabit, which I know much better than the Bario variety. My transcriptions of words thus follow Pa' Dalih pronunciation and some vocabulary items which I have recorded are different from what would be

recorded in Bario. It must be noted that in Bario there is some linguistic confusion. Because of the large influx of Kelabits speaking varieties of Kelabit different to the Bario variety there is a good deal of flux and variation in both pronunciation and vocabulary. Pa' Dalih Kelabit is, in contrast, unitary, and this is a definite advantage in recording the language.

The fact that I have relied on my own collection of linguistic data has meant that I could not utilize Blust's work on Bario Kelabit to provide a consistent spelling based on a phonemic analysis. Although I did attempt to isolate phonemes for Pa' Dalih Kelabit, I am not sure how correct my work has been; Beatrice Clayre (personal communication), who has been working on the Kelabit and Sa'ban languages, has told me that I isolated the wrong number of phonemes. I have therefore not attempted a proper phonemic analysis or transcription. I can only apologize for the very rough nature of my transcription of Kelabit words, which does not follow an explicit phonemic logic and which is certainly full of inconsistencies.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**SETTLEMENT IN THE KELABIT HIGHLANDS AND**  
**THE COMMUNITY OF PA' DALIH**

**1. The pattern of settlement in the Kelabit Highlands**

Settlements in the Kelabit Highlands vary from 3481 feet (Bario) to 3220 feet (Batu Patong) above sea level<sup>25</sup>. The distance between Pa' Lungan, the northernmost present-day settlement, and Batu Patong, the southernmost of the settlements within the highlands proper (Long Peluan is much further south but is outside the highlands) is about 30 km. The Kelabit Highlands and the settlements within it are shown on map 3.

The Soil Survey carried out in Northern Interior Sarawak in the early 1980's (Eilers and Loi 1982) found that the Kelabit Highlands have a climate quite unique in the state. There is very low rainfall; this is hypothesised to be due to the 'rain shadow' effect of the Tama Abu (Tamabo) range of mountains (ibid:13) along the western side of the Highlands. The temperature range, of 19.6 - 22.8 degrees celsius, is lower even than that of the area which Eilers and Loi call the Central Uplands, an area which includes the Lun Bawang highland community of Ba' Kelalan in the Fifth Division of Sarawak (ibid:9). The Central Uplands is otherwise similar in geographical situation to the Kelabit Highlands.

The Kelabit Highlands are drained by two rivers, the Kelapang and the Dappur or Dabpur; the latter has

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These altitudes are those given in the maps referred to in the Introduction, note 3 (series T735, sheets 3/115/6 and 3/115/7). Although some settlements have moved since then, Bario and Batu Patong are on sites close to those which they occupied in 1964 and whose altitude is little different.

sometimes been known as the Libbun or Labun<sup>26</sup>. These join after leaving the Highlands to form the headwaters of the Baram. As far as the Kelapang is concerned, all communities are now settled on the main Kelapang river, although in the past settlement appears to have been predominantly on smaller tributaries. The communities in the Bario area, however, are settled on small tributaries of the Dabpur, which are little more than small streams and are suitable for use in irrigation.

The Soil Survey revealed that there is a good deal of alluvial and residual soil in the Kelabit Highlands which is good for agriculture, and stated that the 'Bareo (sic) area' (by which is meant the entire valley floor extending down as far as Remudu) has a very good potential for agriculture (Eilers and Loi 1982:45). All Kelabit communities are sited on soils which are mapped as having only one limitation for agriculture, except for Bario, which is mapped as consisting entirely of organic soils (peat) which are unsuitable for agriculture unless the layer of peat is removed (Eilers and Loi 1982: maps 4a and 4b).

Settlement in the Kelabit Highlands appears to have been concentrated in two sorts of areas: areas of fertile soil on the one hand and flat areas formed by the slow-flowing, sluggish, meandering rivers characteristic of the tableland in general (Schneeberger 1945:550-551) on the other. These rivers have in many places caused water-logging of the land. This has in some places led to the formation of fresh water peat. The Soil Survey gives an analysis of the soil in the Kelabit Highlands. There was found to be a good deal of peat, especially in the Bario

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<sup>26</sup>

Schneeberger (1945) uses the latter term; Harrisson in all his writings uses the former. The Kelabit nowadays call this river the Dabpur.

area<sup>27</sup>. Some of these peaty soils, classed as `Bareo (sic) family', are technically too deep to be used for agriculture (but see below). However other peaty soils, classified as Umor family, are more shallow (Eilers and Loi 1982:77). Areas of deep peat were not used in the pre-war system of shifting wet rice agriculture, almost certainly because there were not the tools to do so. Since the late 1950's, however, much of the area of Umor family soils and possibly even some of the area of Bareo family soils has been brought under permanent wet rice cultivation through the removal of the layer of peat. This has occurred mainly in Bario, where there is now a good deal of pressure on land, but it has also occurred at Pa' Dalih. Wet rice, traditionally relied upon in the Bario area, can be grown successfully in fairly poor land, probably because of the nutrients brought in by irrigation water<sup>28</sup>.

It seems probable that in the past the Kelabit Highlands supported a much larger population, although Harrisson's suggestion that it was ten times larger than at present (Harrisson 1958d:189) may be exaggerated. The existence of abandoned wet rice field systems along the base of the Tamabo range (see note 2, page 22) suggests a previously larger area of settlement. So do migration histories telling of larger numbers of longhouse settlements than there are at present in the areas which are still occupied. These settlements do not appear to have been smaller than present-day ones; indeed, they are often said to have been much bigger. To some extent, this can be attributed to the fact that the Kelabit tend to attribute larger size to everything in the past, but there

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<sup>27</sup> However, it is to be noted that not all of the Bario area is described by the Kelabits as being paya, which can be translated roughly as `peaty'. This would imply that parts of the Bario area consist of non-organic soils.

<sup>28</sup> See Geertz 1963.

is some evidence supporting the claim as well. The British Royal Air Force map shows Batu Patong near Pa' Dalih, now nearly abandoned, to have been made up of four longhouses as recently as the 1960's<sup>29</sup>. I have been told that there were settlements in the past which were made up of one hundred longhouses. Although this is almost certainly an exaggeration, it seems quite possible that the level of concentration of population that exists presently at Bario may have occurred quite regularly in the past.

## **2. The Kelabit bawang**

Among other groups categorized by Rousseau as 'Central Bornean' (a category within which he includes the Kelabit) the community often consisted of a single longhouse, and was of an average size of 347 (Rousseau 1990:107, 112). Kelabit communities, termed bawang, however, often consist of more than one longhouse, and the longhouse rarely has more than 100 inhabitants. This appears to have been the case in the past as well. Deegan (1973:32) and Crain (1970:18) report much more variable size among the Lun Bawang and a general tendency to larger communities, but both did their work in communities in downriver areas. Here, the encouragement from the government for smaller communities to cohere into larger ones has been stronger than in the highland areas.

It seems that there were two levels of cohesion within a community which consisted of more than one longhouse: one at the level of the individual longhouses and one at the level of the community as a whole. The strength of the latter level of cohesion obviously had a lot to do with the likelihood of a multi-longhouse community lasting. It seems that it was the magnetic

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<sup>29</sup>

Sheet no. 3/115/7; see note 3 in Introduction.

attraction of a strong, charismatic leader which led to the formation of multi-longhouse communities in the past, and often his death which dissipated the cohesion of the multi-longhouse community and led to its eventual break-up.

The term bawang refers, nowadays, to the whole of a community and its territory, whether it consists of one longhouse or two. The exception to this is Bario. Bario, which consists of seven longhouses and the settlement at the airstrip, would not be referred to as one bawang. Six of the longhouses are in fact paired, with two longhouses sited very close to one another. In each case the pair forms one sidang, or parish of the SIB church, to which the Kelabit now belong (see chapter one). One might perhaps refer to these pairs as bawang, but I have not heard this terminology.

The present-day pattern of settlement in Bario, where there are eight longhouses which are discrete, distinct entities but physically close to each other, does have some parallels to agglomerations of longhouses in the past. It is difficult to know in what way it differs since details of the political, economic and ritual relations between the constituent longhouses of past agglomerations is not available. However, the reason for the coming into being of the multi-longhouse settlement at Bario is different from that which led to multi-longhouse settlements in the past. It is largely because of the fact that Bario became the centre of government services and the destination of scheduled air services from the coast that it developed as a focus of settlement. There is very little cohesion at the level of Bario as a whole. The fact that Bario is not referred to as one bawang suggests a difference between Bario and past agglomerations. The implication that strong leadership is



associated with the existence of Bario is probably present, however, and the friction and competition which exists in Bario may be partly attributed to this, since it is not at all clear to which leader of which of the constituent longhouses such key leadership might be attributed.

Each Kelabit bawang had in the past an area which it considered its own, which included not only areas used for agriculture but an area of forest as well. Bawang migrated on what was probably a roughly cyclic basis through this area. Such migration, although it often involved a very short move, appears to have occurred very regularly, and in each case involved a change of name for the community. Names were after a geographical feature, usually a river or stream, of the site moved to<sup>30</sup>. Longer migrations to other parts of the Kelabit Highlands also appear to taken place on the part of whole communities or on the part of small numbers of hearth-groups, but these were less common<sup>31</sup>.

Some of the migration was due to changes in political alignments. There appears to have been a certain amount of fluidity as far as membership of communities was concerned. Communities formed and split up according to the strength of their leadership, with strong leaders attracting large numbers of 'followers', anak katu. Migrations were also sometimes due to quarrels<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> This follows a very common pattern in this part of Borneo, except among the Iban. In the case of the Kayan and some Kenyah - those who have entered the Baram from the Apau Kayan within the last two hundred years or so - however, they appear in many cases to retain the name of a previous longhouse site, named after a geographical feature in that abandoned spot (see Rousseau 1990:115-116).

<sup>31</sup> Robert Lian-Saging describes the history of migrations within the highlands which are within or relate to the Bario area (1976/77:95-104)

<sup>32</sup> See Lian-Saging (1976/77:81-89) for examples of this.

### 3. Political divisions within the Kelabit Highlands

Although the Kelabit do appear to have cultural cohesion vis-a-vis other Apo Duat peoples (see Introduction), the degree of political cohesion at the level of the the Kelabit Highlands as a whole in the past was not great. Groups of settlements would come together under a strong leader, and would sometimes settle together for a time (see above), but these groupings were fluid. There appears to have been a tendency, within recent times at least, for the Kelabit to divide into two broad groups defined roughly geographically; one can describe these as the Northern and Southern groups. When the Brooke administration appointed the first Kelabit Penghulus at the beginning of this century<sup>33</sup> they appointed two for the Kelabit Highlands, one for the southern part and one for the northern part. This probably reflected not only geographical distance but existing political divisions. The description which Lian-Saging (1976/77:176-207) gives of the history of the Kelabit Penghulus since then makes it clear that a division has existed since then, and this probably relates to an earlier one.

The Kelabit are quite diversified in terms of dialect considering the small area within which they live<sup>34</sup>. It is unclear whether the two broad political groupings which may be said to have existed traditionally, and which still exist to some extent nowadays despite the resettlement in the Bario area<sup>35</sup>, may be said to have had distinct dialect clusters. It seems probable that there was a continuum of

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<sup>33</sup> In 1902 according to Henry Jalla, one of Lian-Saging's informants (Lian-Saging 1986/77:176).

<sup>34</sup> This is probably good grounds for believing the Kelabit occupancy of the Highlands to be old.

<sup>35</sup> Those who have resettled in Bario but who were originally from outside the Bario area have, at least until now, retained a definite cohesion.

change rather than a sharp break between the speech of the different parts of the Kelabit Highlands. In the past each community is said to have had a quite distinct way of speaking. There are some quite radical differences between the speech of communities at the far northern and southern ends of this continuum<sup>36</sup>.

#### **4. The present distribution of settlement in the Kelabit Highlands**

Map 3 shows all present-day Kelabit communities in the Highlands, and communities which existed until recently. All of the present-day communities were established at their present sites within the last ten or twenty years, but most of the past communities from which they derive, excluding those resettled in 1964, were previously sited within a couple of miles of the present sites. Present-day communities are often made up of individuals deriving from a number of past communities. This probably indicates diminution of population, as mentioned above, as well as the fluidity of membership also alluded to above. This is true of Pa' Dalih at its present site (it has moved since 1949), which contains individuals who derive from at least five past communities: Pa' Dalih, Lam Saog, Pa' Kelit, Pa' Bengar and Batu Patong.

The area now known as 'Bario' collectively, now the major population centre of the Kelabit Highlands, is made up of the following communities, all consisting of a single longhouse plus a few separate houses (ruma' sebulang): Bario Asal and Arur Layun (paired), Ulung Palang Deta' and Ulung Palang Bawah (paired), Pa' Ramapoh

<sup>36</sup> Hudson (1977:24-25) and Blust 1989:7) present data which supports this. At the moment, the only detailed work has been done on the Bario dialect, by Blust, particularly in Blust 1989.

Deta' and Pa' Ramapah Bawah (paired), Arur Dalan and Padang Pasir. There is also a settlement, inhabited mostly by traders, at the airstrip. It was the inhabitants of this settlement who built the longhouse settlement at Padang Pasir and theoretically intend to move there, although not all appear to be doing so. Most of the people living in Bario are from outside it, predominantly from the southern part of the Kelabit Highlands from Pa' Main southwards<sup>37</sup>. Besides these communities, there are eight longhouse communities outside Bario: Pa' Lungan, Pa' Umor, Pa' Ukat, Pa' Derong, Remudu, Pa' Dalih, Long Dano and Batu Patong. The first four are within a couple of hours' walk of Bario north-east and north-west, while the last four are a day's walk or more away to the south-east.

Kelabit communities are nucleated, and have strong cohesion. Between settlements, beyond the area of secondary growth deriving from the use of land for farming by each settlement, there is forest (polong raya) which is either primary or very old secondary growth. Outside Bario, each settlement is cut off quite clearly from other settlements by the polong raya surrounding it. In Bario, the distinction between settlements has been maintained. Although there has been re-grouping of individuals from previously existing settlements, these have all joined specific settlements in Bario. Bario thus consists of a number of distinct settlements with separate farming land, even though these settlements are considerably closer to each other than was usual in the past (as close as five or ten minutes walk in some cases). However, the territory of each settlement, which used to be separated by a clear boundary in the forest from territory belonging to other settlement, is, in Bario, not clear. It is clear that

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<sup>37</sup> Lian-Saging (1986-77: 173-174) describes the patterns of resettlement of previous longhouse communities in Bario.

this creates tensions, the complexities of which I was not able to explore since I did not spend prolonged periods in Bario.

The increase in population in the Bario area since the Second World War and especially since Confrontation has meant, through the adoption of a more permanent form of wet rice agriculture, a much more intensive use of the land. With the influx of Kelabits from other communities it was necessary to agree on an apportionment of the land. Each hearth-group<sup>38</sup> which moved to Bario was given some land suitable for transformation into wet rice fields and was expected to stick to that land. The people of Lam Bah, now known as Bario Asal, made a statement of which land they were going to use on a permanent basis and were expected to utilize only that land for rice.

While a great deal of rice is being grown in Bario now, a shortage of other foods, particularly wild foods, is becoming a problem. I discuss in chapter three the extent to which the Kelabits traditionally relied on wild foods. The relatively poor land in Bario and pressure of population has meant that it has proved difficult to grow enough vegetables and snack foods.

The changes which have taken place in the Kelabit Highlands associated with the growth in importance of Bario have led to a sharp contrast between Bario on the one hand and communities outside Bario on the other. While Bario has become increasingly a cash oriented, economically differentiated centre of population, other communities have been affected much less economically by influences from outside the Kelabit Highlands. This particularly applies to the southern communities, which are farthest from Bario and are almost totally unable to

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See chapter five for a discussion of this term.

export rice due to the difficulty of getting it out of the Highlands. It is, however, to be noted that the people of the southern longhouse settlements have begun to make permanent wet rice fields like those in Bario (see chapter three for a discussion of this).

It seems likely that from now on communities will tend to be more permanent than they have been in the past. Houses are being built of more permanent materials, and the considerable investment in the construction of permanent wet-rice fields in the vicinity of longhouses and a lesser reliance on swidden farming of rice makes a more settled life-style appropriate.

#### **5. Kelabit settlements outside the Highlands**

There are at present four settlements outside the Highlands which consider themselves Kelabit. These are Long Peluan on the Baram river, Long Lellang on the Akah, a tributary of the Baram, Long Seridan on the Tutoh, also a tributary of the Baram, and Long Napir on the Limbang river. The way in which these settlements were established, by emigrants from the Kelabit Highlands, is well remembered by Kelabits in the Highlands and in the settlements concerned. There were other settlements established by Kelabits from the Highlands in the past, now abandoned. Those which are remembered by the Kelabit of Pa' Dalih are in the Kubaan/Pa' Tik/Pa' Anglah area on the other side of the pass through the Tamabo mountains near Bario (whose position is shown on map 3) and in the Pa' Labid river. All of these settlements were, like Long Lellang nowadays, on tributaries of the Tutoh river and were, also like Long Lellang, just on the other side of the Tamabo mountain range from the Kelabit Highlands. Banks says that in the mid 1930's there were four or five Kelabit villages 'this side of the mountains' [i.e. along

the western side of the Tamabo range in the Baram] and the same in the Seridan (Banks 1937:425). According to Moulton, who travelled up the Limbang in 1910 and 1911, there were also at that time some Kelabit settlements in the Madihit river, a tributary of the Limbang (Moulton 1912a:28).

## 6. The community of Pa' Dalih

The population of Pa' Dalih at the time that I carried out my simple census of it in October 1986 was 122; 63 in the fifteen-hearth group longhouse (where one hearth group apartment was vacant and another was occupied by my family), 29 in the six-hearth group longhouse and 32 in the separate houses (ruma' sebulang)<sup>39</sup>. Of the hearth-groups resident in these separate houses, three belonged to the community of Pa' Dalih, of which two were living in houses provided by the government for staff at the school.

The other hearth-groups were inhabited by hearth-groups containing individuals from other Kelabit communities who were employed by the school, the clinic or the SIB church.

All of the inhabitants of Pa' Dalih were Kelabit with the exception, in October 1986, of the pastor, who was Penan<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> These figures would only have been valid for a short time, in fact, since there is a good deal of to-ing and fro-ing on the part of children and young people (anak adik) who technically 'belong' to Pa' Dalih hearth-groups. They typically spend time both in Pa' Dalih and elsewhere: in town, in Bario, and/or over the Indonesian/Malaysian border in the Kerayan Lun Bawang area with relatives. This fits well with my suggestion that anak adik are less firmly associated with the hearth-group than are married people with children (lun merar), which I discuss in chapter five.

<sup>40</sup> The Penan pastor has now been replaced by a Kelabit; the young Penan left in 1987, apparently not being able to adapt to living in Pa' Dalih, and it was not until mid-1988, around the time when I left, that another pastor, a Kelabit woman, was finally appointed. In the meantime the people of Pa' Dalih managed very well; the ketua' sidang ('head of the parish') and other elected officers, male and female, led services and preached as is quite usual even when there is a pastor.

Pa' Dalih is one of the four existing communities (each of which forms both a bawang and a sidang [a parish of the SIB church]) in the southern part of the Kelabit Highlands - Remudu, Long Dano, Pa' Dalih and Batu Patong. The last of these has since the early seventies been inhabited by only one hearth-group. However, a number of Lun Bawang from over the border in the area known as the Kerayan have recently come to live in Pa' Dalih, and some of these have started to make late, rice fields, at Batu Patong. It seems that these people may be considering settling there permanently.

Batu Patong is forty-five minutes' walk from Pa' Dalih. The paths between Remudu, Pa' Dalih and Long Dano form a triangle, with the distances between the communities being between one and three hours' walk (see map 3). From Long Dano, which is the closest to Bario, it is 7-10 hours' walk to Bario. Thus, these four communities are able to visit each other easily, while a journey to Bario is a more major undertaking and involves staying overnight. These four communities had the same Penghulu in the past<sup>41</sup>. Although the southern area has not had its own Penghulu since 1961, it has a `wakil (vice) Penghulu', who lives in Long Dano. The Penghulu, who in fact comes from the southern area originally, lives in Ulung Palang Deta', one of the communities in Bario.

It seems that the two longhouses in Pa' Dalih do in

<sup>41</sup> The term Penghulu, roughly equivalent to `chief', was bestowed by the Brooke administration and continues to be utilized by its successors. According to Lian-Saging, who derives his information from a Kelabit informant, the first Kelabit Penghulus were appointed in 1902, one for the northern area and one for the southern; there were separate Penghulus for Long Seridan and Long Lellang. The Kelabit did have leaders of groups of longhouses before that, however. These groups tended to be roughly northern and southern Kelabit, within the Highlands (Lian-Saging 1986-77: 157, 176).



some sense contain alliances which relate to the different origins of the inhabitants of them, but this is complex and I found it impossible to disentangle properly. There is a reluctance to admit to alliances of this kind to an outsider, which implies that the cohesion of the bawang of Pa' Dalih is now fairly good. The two longhouses in Pa' Dalih do appear to be partly derived from the separate origins that different members of the community have. However this was not the explanation which I was given for the existence of two longhouses rather than one; I was told that the lie of the land prevented one longhouse being built.

As well as the two longhouses and some individual houses (ruma' sebulang) there is, in Pa' Dalih, the school itself and the school dormitory, the clinic and the church building (see figure 1). The school has four teachers, all of whom are Kelabit; one of them is from Batu Patong, another from Remudu, the remaining two are from longhouses in Bario. The medical assistant too is Kelabit, from Bario Asal. The present pastor (1988 onwards) is Kelabit, from Bario, although for a period until early 1987 the pastor was Penan. All of the teachers are men, as is the dresser, but the present pastor is a woman.

Not only the schoolchildren from Remudu, Long Dano and Batu Patong, but almost all of those from Pa' Dalih as well board in the school dormitory. This is separated into a girls' and a boys' bedroom, with a common dining room in between. The children attend school from the age of seven, and from that age they take a great deal of responsibility for themselves.

The school is given money by the government to buy food to feed the children, and the headmaster purchases this from the people of Pa' Dalih, Remudu and Long Dano.

This is done largely on a rota system, although the school also buys a lot of food when it is offered for sale casually. The school is, for many of the hearth-groups in the four communities it serves, the major source of income in its role as buyer of food.

### **7. The history of the community of Pa' Dalih**

When asked to trace their history back, Pa' Dalih Kelabits provide details of previous community sites, and of how communities formed, broke up, reformed, and moved around. Some individuals know much more than others, and what they know varies according to the longhouse from which they or their parents originated. They are able to trace backwards in time in this way, knowing of major site changes and important formations and break ups of bawang, for a period of time which is difficult to estimate. Although for the last century or so they know the names of all supra-longhouse leaders, who appear to have led what one might term the southern Kelabit federation, before that only certain very significant leaders' names are remembered.

Pa' Dalih was established in the early 1970's at the site where it is now. Before that it was at a site about fifteen minutes' walk away, on the way to Batu Patong. At that time it was composed of the same hearth-groups, deriving from the same original communities, as at present. Previously, however, it appears that the separate component communities of the present-day Pa' Dalih were at different sites, all but one of which (Pa' Bengar - see map 3) were not more than half an hour's walk from each other. Before that things get vaguer. Since Kelabit communities are known by the site they occupy at any particular time, it is difficult to establish a continuity between communities moving from one site to

another. However, except for Pa' Bengar, the ancestors of the inhabitants of Pa' Dalih - Batu Patong - appear to have basically inhabited different tributaries of the Kelapang. It is said that at certain points in the past they came together and formed very large communities.

The territory which they use for various purposes - agriculture, gathering, hunting, salt-making and collection of jungle products - is well known to the local Kelabit inhabitants of any part of the Kelabit Highlands.

Navigation is by following the contours of the land and the courses of streams and of rivers, and distances are calculated in hours' walk. The territory of a particular community is fairly specific. To some extent, the community of Pa' Dalih utilizes the territory of the community of Batu Patong; most of the inhabitants of Batu Patong have moved to Pa' Dalih and to some extent the two communities operate as one. They form one parish, sidang.

### **8. Links out of the community of Pa' Dalih**

The most regular links outside the community of Pa' Dalih are with the other Southern Kelabit communities of Long Dano, Remudu and Batu Patong. There is coming and going very regularly between these four communities. Most of this is for the purpose of visiting kin, since there is a good deal of intermarriage between the communities. There is little contact based on economic interaction; cases of 'ownership' of land in bawang other than that in which the individual is resident are very rare, largely perhaps since wet rice fields have only been being made in the last 15 or 20 years at the most, and this is the only kind of land which may be in some sense 'owned'<sup>42</sup>. The

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The Kelabit say that land cannot be owned; however if labour is invested in land this creates rights in the land for those investing the labour. Such rights only last as long as the investment of labour in the land diminishes

school in Pa' Dalih is a magnet because all individuals and hearth-groups in the four Southern communities regularly sell food to the school, as mentioned above. The clinic too acts as a magnet, particularly when the flying doctor service visits once a month. There is also contact through the S.I.B. church; once a month a communal prayer service, including communion (which is only held at these occasions, never at prayer services where only the inhabitants of one sidang are present) is held for all inhabitants of the four Southern communities, rotating around the churches of all of them.

Outside the immediate Southern Kelabit area, the most important direction in which Pa' Dalih nowadays has links is towards Bario. Now that so many Kelabit communities have resettled in the Bario area and a great deal of economic prosperity has come to Bario with the opening of the airfield and the export of rice and of people to work in towns further downriver, Bario has become a major focus, not only for other Kelabit communities in the Highlands but for Lun Bawang across the border who go there to find employment.

Pa' Dalih also has quite important links across the border to the Lun Bawang communities of the area which they called the Kerayan. This forms part of the headwaters of the Kerayan river. Bario's links across the border are with another Lun Bawang area, in another part

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the amount of labour which needs to be invested in the land in order to cultivate it. Although I was told that such rights are inherited by the children of the investor of labour, in practice this is little taken up as far as dry, swidden fields are concerned, and never where the individual has moved out of the bawang. Where wet rice fields are concerned, the end product of investment of labour to make permanent fields is as good as ownership, so long as labour continues to be invested either by the owner of the rights or on behalf of him/her (e.g. by hired labour, as is common in Bario nowadays).

of the headwaters of the Kerayan river, which the Kelabits call the Brian. Before the Confrontation there was a community called Ba' Siok which was in the border area culturally between Lun Bawang and Kelabit, although it was politically in Kalimantan. The inhabitants of this area appear to have split up at Confrontation, with some going into the Kerayan area and some to Southern Kelabit longhouses, particularly Pa' Dalih. There is, as it appears there was in the past, a good deal of intermarriage between Kelabits and Kerayan people. Nowadays whole hearth-groups have begun to come and settle in the Southern Kelabit area from the Kerayan area - four at present in Pa' Dalih. There is very frequent contact across the border. Many of the teenagers belonging to hearth-groups with kin links across the border spend part of their time there and part of their time in Pa' Dalih. Kerayan people often come to Pa' Dalih to get employment, particularly in the making of new wet rice fields; although Pa' Dalih is not wealthy compared to Bario, there appears to be a good deal more cash in Pa' Dalih than there is in the Kerayan communities.

Links with Kelabit communities outside the highland area are not regular. Now that all of those communities which used to lie along the bottom of the mountain range to the west of the Highlands, except Long Lellang, have resettled in the Bario area, the most quickly (if not easily) accessible Kelabit communities outside the Kelabit Highlands have gone. With the coming of air travel, people are reluctant to make the journey on foot to Long Lellang, and visit via Marudi by air. Contact with the most distant Kelabit communities, Long Seridan and Long Napir, is very infrequent; the journey through the forest takes weeks and even going by air is a very long business. Contacts with the community of Long Peluan, whose inhabitants' ancestors came, it seems sometime around the

early part of this century, from the Southern Kelabit area, are now rare, since even Long Peluan is four days' or more walk distant. Going round by plane to Long Peluan is complicated, involving going upriver from Marudi after having flown there from Bario, and then walking through the forest from Lio Mato. Although there have been quite recent intermarriages with Long Peluan people, and there is a strong feeling of kinship with them, actual contact is restricted to two or three visits a year, usually by pelawat, which I gloss as 'religious travellers'. Visits by pelawat, although ostensibly made for purely religious reasons, appear to be a system also of maintaining contacts among communities which see themselves as part, in some sense, at some level, of the same people, lun tau - literally 'our people'. Lun tau may refer to a community at any level, although it usually refers nowadays to the Kelabit people as a whole.

Links with non-Kelabit, non-Lun Bawang peoples have always been restricted as far as the highland Kelabit are concerned. The only people with whom they appear to have had regular contact are the Penan, who wandered through the Highlands in the past as they do now. There is a community of settled Penan within a day's walk of the immediate Bario area (Pa' Berang; map 3). There is another community of semi-settled Penan near Long Peluan, and Penan regularly pass through the southern Kelabit area - not, however, through Pa' Dalih, but through Remudu. Remudu thus has privileged access to the handicraft goods which the Penan make.

Although Pa' Dalih has less regular contact with the coastal towns than do communities in the Bario area, almost all of the inhabitants of Pa' Dalih have been to Marudi or Miri, most many times. Almost all have some close kin in Miri, and go to the coast to visit them.

However the separation between the life in Pa' Dalih and that on the coast is quite radical, much more so than that between Bario and the coast, with which Bario is in daily air contact. While there is an ever increasing quantity of items manufactured outside the Highlands in both Bario and Pa' Dalih, the quantity is considerably greater, and growing faster, in Bario. It is very difficult to transport things through the forest to Pa' Dalih, and money is scarcer there, so only things which are of very real use and difficult to make a local version of, or things of prestige, are so transported.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### OBTAINING FOOD

In this chapter, I want to give an overview of activities associated with the production of food engaged in by the Kelabit. The Kelabit rely both on agriculture and on the wild for their sustenance. They are successful rice cultivators, grow a number of crops besides rice and keep domestic animals (which are eaten only when visitors from outside the community are present) but they derive a good deal of food from the forest (which I will describe as unmanaged resources). They are, in fact, an agriculturalist/hunter-gatherer group.

Despite this, I may appear to concentrate overly on the cultivation of rice. This is partly due to the fact that it is more difficult to obtain information on the cultivation of other crops, because little emphasis is placed on the processes and decisions involved in the growing of them. It is also, however, because it seems appropriate to concentrate on what the Kelabit concentrate on, and this is rice.

Rice, I argue, is 'special' for the Kelabit. Its cultivation is elaborated in a way that the cultivation of other crops is not. I want to bring this out later in this chapter by looking at the process of decision-making in rice-growing. While little is made of decisions relating to the cultivation of other crops, those associated with rice-growing are highlighted. Prestige<sup>43</sup> is associated with successful decisions and with leadership in the cultivation of rice.

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I will be discussing prestige and the ways in which it is generated in chapter eight.



## **1.Kelabit rice cultivation**

### **1.1 Kelabit rice cultivation in context**

The Kelabits have apparently always practised both wet and dry cultivation of rice, as have the Lun Bawang (Crain 1973; Deegan 1974 chapter 3; Langub 1984; Padoch 1983). Kelabit and Lun Bawang techniques of swidden cultivation of rice in dry fields do not appear to differ greatly from methods used by other Bornean shifting cultivators. Their wet rice agriculture, however, marks them out. Apo Duat peoples, including the Kelabit (see chapter one), appear to be the only groups traditionally practising wet cultivation of rice in the interior of Borneo.

In the Kelabit Highlands, wet rice cultivation seems to have been practised largely or only by communities living in swampy, flat areas along the base of the Tamabo range including those living in the Bario area<sup>44</sup>. Dry shifting cultivation was the form of rice agriculture practised traditionally in other parts of the Kelabit highlands.

The traditional wet rice cultivation techniques used by the Kelabit were very distinctive. Kelabit wet rice agriculture before the 1960's was not permanent, as wet rice agriculture usually is; fields were used for about 8-10 years and then abandoned. Return to an area does not appear to have been based on an organized system of fallow, and it might not occur at all. This has similarities to the way many groups in Borneo operated dry

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There is clear evidence of previous, fairly recent, use of other areas below the Tamabo range for this type of agriculture, although they have now been abandoned (see Harrisson 1949a:191, 1954a:106; and the Ministry of Defence map of the Bario area published in 1967, series T735 sheet

shifting cultivation, although in dry cultivation distances moved were greater and fields were abandoned (usually and ideally) every year.

However, since about 1960 a permanent form of wet rice cultivation has been adopted in the Kelabit Highlands. This has apparently been copied from the Lun Bawang of the Brian area (the term which the Kelabits use for those living over the Apo Duat range at the headwaters of the Bawang river, a tributary of the Kerayan). This permanent form of wet rice cultivation has been adopted not only in Bario and Remudu, which traditionally relied on the traditional system of shifting wet cultivation<sup>45</sup>, but by communities living in areas which, before the Second World War, did not practice wet rice agriculture. These latter now rely on a mixture of permanent wet and shifting dry cultivation of rice.

The form of permanent wet rice cultivation practised in the highland Lun Bawang areas and nowadays in the Kelabit Highlands has many similarities to the sawah method as practised elsewhere in South East Asia. However, it is not such a finely-tuned and fixed system as the sawah method appears to be in places like Java and Bali. Padoch shows how it is in a state of flux, with new methods being tried out (Padoch 1981). An example of this was an ongoing discussion in the Kelabit Highlands while I was there as to the relative merits of leaving the water in after the harvest or letting it out.

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Judging from data I gathered from informants, Harrisson is probably right in saying that wet rice cultivation is traditional in Remudu (Harrisson 1962c), although when Owen, Resident of the Third Division, visited the Kelabit highlands in 1912 he seems not to have found wet rice being cultivated (Owen 1919:143-144). Remudu is at the base of the Tamabo range some twenty miles south and slightly east of Bario.

Whether the Lun Bawang living in highland areas in Kalimantan have always made the permanent type of wet field which they use now is unclear. They seem, even before the Second World War, to have constructed terraces (Schneeberger 1979:51-2) and the system of constructing bunds and irrigation channels which the Kelabit now use was, they say, adopted from the Lun Bawang of the Brian area at the headwaters of the Bawang. The traditional Kelabit system of irrigation was much simpler and involved little earth moving. It appears likely that the Lun Bawang of the Brian area, across the border in Indonesia, were already practising a more permanent system before the war, although this is not certain, and it is difficult to be sure how completely permanent the system was at that time. Schneeberger reported seeing terracing there in 1939 and this would indicate a more permanent use of the land. However the Lun Bawang, like the Kelabit, have displayed adaptability and a willingness to try new methods in rice-growing. For example, they began, around 1956, to transplant seedlings where before that they used to broadcast seed (Padoch 1981:35). It is quite possible that originally the Lun Bawang system of wet rice cultivation was less permanent, perhaps even originally similar to the Kelabit traditional system, and that they have intensified their use of the land and created permanent fields. Padoch argues that the reason for the use of wet rice agriculture rather than shifting cultivation in the interior Lun Bawang areas may have been the shortage of iron (Padoch 1983). This may well explain the making of the simple and impermanent type of wet rice field which was made by the Kelabit and perhaps the Lun Bawang traditionally. The new permanent wet fields are said by the Kelabit to have only become possible after the Second World War with the greater availability of metal tools.

Wet rice agriculture is predominantly practised in delta areas in South East Asia, mainly using a method which is known as the sawah method. This method usually involves transplanting and other practices commonly associated with transplanting. Sometimes broadcasting of seed is carried out instead of transplanting and a set of practices has been taken to be associated with this (Hanks 1972, chapter 3). Padoch has pointed out that the assumption or implication that methods of rice cultivation can be simply divided into modes such as shifting cultivation, broadcasting and transplanting is erroneous, and that there are not sets of characteristics which invariably go together (1981:29). She argues that Lun Dayeh (highland Lun Bawang) methods of wet rice cultivation in the headwaters of the Kerayan in Kalimantan cannot be pigeonholed in this way, since methods belonging to different 'types' of rice cultivation are brought together. This is a quite justified argument as regards the Lun Bawang of Lawas Damit too, who have a continuum of methods ranging from what might best be described as most permanent to least permanent (Deegan 1973:53-4), and I have observed that the Kelabit will sometimes use 'dry' methods in a 'wet' field where conditions dictate this.

It might seem appropriate to look at methods of wet rice cultivation practised in interior, upland areas such as the Ifugao area in the Philippines, the Toradja areas in Sulawesi and the Angami Naga in Burma separately from those used in lowland, predominantly delta areas. However it is not at present clear whether it would be possible to find broad similarities between methods of wet cultivation practised in different upland areas in South East Asia because no attempt has been made to make a comparative study of them.

The reason for the complete reliance of the Kelabit of Lam Baa (Bario) on wet rice cultivation is argued by

Talla (1979:310-311), and also by the Kelabit of Pa' Dalih, to be the impossibility of making swiddens there because of the peaty soil; the best land in the Bario area is in the flood plain of the Dappur River and is therefore not used. What good land there was in the Bario area was almost certainly that used for the swidden vegetable and snack food gardens termed ira. It appears that ira paired in the past with the making of wet fields. They are very little made in the southern part of the Highlands, which until recently relied on dry fields. Their function appears to be to provide a site for the planting of crops which, when dry fields are made, would be planted in the rice field.

The suggestion that the Kelabit of Bario used in the past to make wet fields because they could not make dry ones suggests that wet cultivation was not regarded as better than dry cultivation. It is not now possible to retrieve any data which would indicate how labour-effectivity compared as between traditional wet and dry fields, and so the question cannot be addressed from this angle. My data from Pa' Dalih suggest that present-day permanent wet rice fields do not necessarily always compare favourably with dry fields.

There appears to be definite prestige associated with possessing permanent wet rice fields, and it seems likely that this has been a motivating force in the making of them, particularly in places like Pa' Dalih. There is enormous pride in having well-made and successful wet rice fields in Pa' Dalih, and what might be described almost as an obsession with making them. It would not appear that the traditional wet rice fields were regarded as a prestigious asset in the way that the present-day permanent ones are. It is arguable that the prestige of permanent wet-rice fields is due to the fact that they are

a public advertisement of investment of highly valued rice-growing labour; I will be discussing the special importance attached to this type of work in chapter seven.

## 1.2 The Kelabit rice calendar

The rice calendar was traditionally the only calendar providing a regularity, a cyclicity, to the passing of time among the Kelabit, in an environment where there are no clearly defined seasons; even the monsoon seasons are less marked in this highland area than they are in the coastal areas. Crops other than rice are planted to fit in with the rice calendar where they are planted in conjunction with rice, or at any time when it is felt that they are needed if they are planted separately. Except where crops are planted in association with rice they are not planted at any particular time of year.

The Kelabit nowadays obtain one rice crop a year in both wet fields (late baa, literally 'wet late') and dry fields (late luun, literally 'late on the surface of the ground'); late refers to a field containing rice, which may or may not contain other crops. A number of early visitors to the Kelabit Highlands reported that the Kelabit and highland Lun Bawang were obtaining two or even three crops a year in wet rice fields (Douglas 1912:20; Owen 1918:127; Owen 1919:107; Mjoberg 1925:418; Pollard 1933:148). The Kelabit of Bario Asal with whom I have discussed this deny that this occurred, however. Schneeberger, who visited in 1939, does not mention more than one crop a year. He says that rice is sown in seed beds in the wet rice fields in October and harvested in April (1979:52). Some visitors report seeing fields in a number of stages of growth at one time in both the Kelabit highlands (Douglas 1912:20) and in the Ba' Kelalan area (Pollard 1933:148). It is possible that what was happening was that not all wet fields were being planted at the same time rather than that one field was being

planted more than once in a given year<sup>46</sup>, although Pollard says that in Ba' Kelalan one crop is planted immediately after another in the same field and that the fields are almost never fallowed (ibid:148). It appears possible in the context of the remark concerning fallowing that the system in Ba' Kelalan was a more permanent system, closer to that of the highland Lun Bawang in Kalimantan<sup>47</sup>.

The Kelabit rice calendar before the Second World War was timed by the arrival of various species of birds. After about 1955 the Gregorian calendar began to be used although the timing of activities appears to have been approximately the same as under the bird calendar. From about 1968 the rice year was brought forward by about three months. Nowadays both wet and dry fields are planted in July or August, although there is some variability according to the state of the weather. They are harvested from late December to early February<sup>48</sup>.

### **1.3 The introduction of permanent wet rice fields**

From the late 1950's radical changes began to take place in Kelabit rice cultivation, of which the change in the rice calendar was a part. These involved the adoption in the Bario area of the more permanent system of wet rice cultivation practised in the Lun Bawang Brian area, and the spread of this system to Kelabit communities which had not practised wet rice cultivation before.

The traditional Lam Baa (Bario) system of wet rice cultivation practised in Bario involved an ingenious

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<sup>46</sup> Although this might seem unlikely in the Kelabit highlands given the nature of the rice calendar there, which was based on the arrival of different birds, as discussed below. There are no data available on the nature of the highland Lun Bawang traditional rice calendar.

<sup>47</sup> The data given by Langub (1984) and Owen (1919: 106-7) would seem to suggest this.

<sup>48</sup> See Talla (1979: 312-356) for a description of the three



system of irrigation through tiny subdivisions of the field separated by tiny bunds made of rotting vegetation, made each year (see figure 1). Large bunds around the field were not made and the water was kept quite shallow.

This system only necessitated reasonably flat land which did not have to be completely levelled. It avoided any necessity to move large amounts of earth - although the presence of traces of previous field systems in abandoned areas along the eastern side of the Tamabo range suggests that some earthworks were involved (see note 2, p. 77).

The new, permanent system involves the levelling of land to make rice fields and the construction of high bunds between them. The water in these fields is kept much deeper than in the traditional system, about a foot or two. The making of these permanent fields has involved enormous investment in earth-moving, by very labour intensive methods. Although labour has been invested in irrigation works, most has gone into the making of bunds and the levelling of fields; irrigation is probably not much more complex than it was before, although the extension of the cultivated area has necessitated more of it. It certainly does not compare with the irrigation systems of people like the Ifugao (Conklin 1980). In Bario, there is still only the simplest of terracing, necessitated by the gradual slope of the valley; hillsides are not utilized for wet rice fields. Outside the Bario area, more substantial earth moving has been necessary to achieve reasonable flat areas (a couple of acres is considered worthwhile), although terracing is, as in Bario, simple.

One of the main reasons for the introduction of this permanent system of wet rice agriculture in the Bario area after 'Confrontation' with Indonesia was the resettlement

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systems of timing of agriculture.

of a large proportion of the Kelabit population in the Bario area; this is discussed in chapter one. This put pressure on the land, and necessitated it being used more efficiently. The inhabitants of Lam Baa held a meeting at which it was decided which land the members of the community of Lam Baa laid claim to on a permanent basis<sup>49</sup>. Rights were retained to land currently being cultivated. The rest of the land was put under the jurisdiction of a Land Committee which was entrusted with the responsibility of allocating land to Kelabit coming to resettle in Bario.

It appears arguable, however, that shortage of land was not the only reason for the making of permanent wet rice fields. The fact that communities outside the Bario area have also taken to making permanent wet rice fields suggests that there are reasons other than population pressure involved. The new permanent wet rice fields have become a status symbol (Janowski 1988). They represent success in rice cultivation of a particular and novel kind. Only in wet rice fields can a group of rice varieties in demand on the coast, known as pade adan and pade dari in the Highlands, be grown. All other varieties grown by the Kelabit (a total of 29 in Pa' Dalih in 1987 - see Appendix) can be grown well in either wet or dry fields. Pade adan and pade dari have become extremely sought after on the coast and they can be sent down for sale by air for a good financial return.

Permanent wet rice fields also represent a permanent mark on the landscape. The Kelabit, before their conversion to Christianity, were in the habit, at feasts (irau), of making marks on the landscape in the form of cuts in ridges, diversions of streams and the erection of stones, all as marks of status. It seems possible that the permanent wet rice fields may have replaced these as

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Talla (1979: 29-30) describes this meeting.

marks on the landscape, and that as such they may be seen as markers of status.

Nowadays, all except one of the eight communities (bawang) in the Bario area rely totally on late baa for the cultivation of rice. Very little of the land not being used for late baa now is really suitable for any agriculture, being steep slopes with poor soil. Ira gardens for crops other than rice are nevertheless made on these slopes. There is not enough of even this sort of steep land to allow everyone to have some land. Initially, such land was not allocated, and those who had foresight simply took to using it. Now disputes are arising in which it is being claimed that land is owned by people other than those using the land.

The whole arena of ownership of land is becoming a very topical one in Bario. The Kelabit of Pa' Dalih, where there is very little pressure on land, say that land cannot be owned, and indeed this appears to be theoretically the case in Bario. The Kelabit say that it is the investment of labour in land which is sold when land is sold, not the land itself. It seems that investment of labour, making the land usable for some human purpose such as rice-growing or the pasture of buffalo, creates a lien on that land, and the greater the continuing effects of that labour the greater the lien. However, there is now effective ownership of wet rice land in Bario, although this is not recognized by Kelabit custom - or indeed by the government, since titles have not been issued for land in the Kelabit Highlands<sup>50</sup>.

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The Sarawak Land Laws presently allow for claims, leading eventually to title being granted, to be made only on land which has been used by the applicant before 1958. Such use does not have to be for rice fields but is quite widely defined (see Hong 1987, chapter four). Nevertheless, this date in practice means that much of the land presently treated as though it were privately owned in Bario could never be

Very substantial quantities of money are now entering Bario via the sale of rice to town. Largely due to the inequitable distribution of land in Bario (which was carried out in a somewhat haphazard fashion with the first come often being the best served) some communities have more and better land than others. These have been able to sell their surplus to town by air. They have concentrated on growing pade adan and pade dari for sale. Not only are many people unable to sell rice to town, but it is said that there are cases of some not having enough rice to see them through the year. This is appalling to the Kelabit, who have normally always seen ample rice harvests, and to whom not having enough rice to see you through the year is the most unprestigious and embarrassing thing that could happen.

#### **1.4 Rice cultivation in Pa' Dalih**

The people of the communities outside the Bario area live a very different life to the life in Bario. Here, there is no shortage of land. Those communities which are within a few hours walk of Bario have been able to sell some rice to town by air via Bario, and are more cash-oriented, like Bario. However those in the southern part of the Highlands, including Pa' Dalih, have so far not been able to sell any appreciable quantities of rice to town, although one or two enterprising individuals have sent rice out by charter plane. The charter plane cannot land in Pa' Dalih, which has only a too-short mission airstrip, although it can land at Remudu and Long Dano. A good deal of labour has been and is being invested in moving earth to lengthen the (mission) airstrip in Pa' Dalih so that it can receive the charter for this purpose.

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registered, since most of the inhabitants of Bario only came to live there in the 1960's.

It costs a good deal more to send rice out from Pa' Dalih, whether by portering it to Bario (which I have never known to happen except to send rice to family members in town) or by charter from Long Dano or Remudu, than it does from Bario. From Bario a substantial proportion of rice is sent out on the MAS plane, which gives special rates for rice.

Before the 1960's, the people of Pa' Dalih did not make wet fields, late baa, but only dry fields, late luun. Since the 1960's, when permanent late baa began to be made in Pa' Dalih, late luun have continued to be made, but they are said to be much smaller than they used to be. Late luun in Pa' Dalih are now made, as far as I know, exclusively in secondary forest, partly because it is not necessary to go far to find enough land, due to the efficiency of land use involved in making some permanent late baa and partly because increasing sedentarization has meant more rotation of land used recently.

The feeling in Pa' Dalih regarding late baa versus late luun is confused. Although to own late baa is prestigious, it is obvious that there is a strong attachment to late luun. To a large extent this is related to the convenience of being able to plant other crops in late luun. Only *ipomoea aquatica*, kangkong, which is eaten as a vegetable at the rice meal, can be planted in association with late baa, while a whole host of plants used to make side dishes for the rice meal, fruits, grains besides rice and root crops are planted in late luun. During the years 1986-88, when I was resident in Pa' Dalih, only one hearth-group<sup>51</sup> did not make late luun. Although other hearth-groups talked after the 1987

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I use the term hearth-group to refer to the domestic unit which cultivates, cooks and eats together, equivalent to the Iban bilek-family (Freeman 1955). I discuss the term in chapter five.

harvest of not making late luun for the next rice year, in the end they all did make them. Although it would theoretically be possible to make ira gardens for other crops and late baa for rice - and I have heard this proposed - when it comes to it few people seem to see the point of not planting some rice in the ira, which makes it a late luun.

The shift to a partial reliance on wet fields has been striking. All hearth-groups in Pa' Dalih now have late baa. The making of these fields has involved a vast investment of labour, a large proportion of it within the last 15 years, and this is continuing.

One type of site in which wet rice fields in Pa' Dalih are made is the widened beds of streams or adjacent to the beds of streams, particularly in ox-bow lakes<sup>52</sup>. This amounts to a primitive form of irrigation, since the streams are fed into the field. Wet rice fields may also be made in spots where there are said to be springs to play a partial part in feeding water into the field and some fields rely largely or completely on rain for water. This contrasts with the wet rice fields in the immediate Bario area, which rely almost solely on irrigation.

The other main sort of site in which wet rice fields are made is flattish peaty areas, like those in Bario; these are probably areas with Umor family soils rather than Bareo soils (see chapter two). Where this type of site is used, the top layer of peat has to be removed.

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It appears that in the past one of the feats accomplished at feasts, irau, was the diversion of rivers or streams in order to create ox-bow lakes (saog). It is not proven that these were for wet rice fields, but it is very likely. Ox-bow lakes are liable to occur naturally in this environment, however, particularly in the area around Bario; rivers are small and slow-moving and the relatively flat terrain makes natural diversion very likely following floods.

The Pa' Dalih wet rice fields are quite widely scattered around the settlement, some being as far as an hour's walk away. The first area made into wet rice fields by the people of Pa' Dalih was the saog (ox-bow lake) which encircles the present settlement of Pa' Dalih.

In the early sixties, certain of the hearth-groups in Pa' Dalih began to turn parts of the saog into wet rice fields of the new-style permanent type being introduced in Bario.

These were hearth-groups whose members belonged to the community which had been resident on or near the present site of Pa' Dalih before joining the people of other settlements in the airstrip area, and who therefore considered themselves to have rights over this land. The first wet rice fields are said, by his widow, to have been made by the chief of the southern Kelabit at the time, Penghulu Miri; this is disputed by others, but the claim indicates the prestige associated with both being the first to do something new (I have mentioned earlier in this chapter the premium put by Kelabit and Lun Bawang on innovation, particularly where rice agriculture is concerned) and with making these permanent wet rice fields. The saog is the most suitable site for a reasonably-sized, properly irrigated wet rice system in the Pa' Dalih area. It is fed by a substantial stream which provides enough water for all the fields in the system. The late baa in the saog system are thus the most successful of the late baa in the Pa' Dalih area and are the most reliable, in general, in producing good crops of rice in relation to the labour invested in them.

In the 1960's more late baa were made by other people in Pa' Dalih, on sites near the airstrip, many very near or on previous longhouse sites used by the people of Pa' Dalih at that time. These late baa sites have not been so successful as the saog site, mainly because of the poorer

irrigation. Not all of these sites have streams or even springs feeding into them and even those streams that exist in that area cannot be relied upon to supply adequate water after a period of little rain. For this reason all of these fields rely partly or wholly on rainwater. In the 1987-88 rice year, one of the late baa in this area, which had no stream feeding into it, was dibbled as though it were a late luun because it was so dry that rice seedlings could not be transplanted into it.

This shortage of stream water feeding into the late baa in the airstrip area is recognized as a problem not only in terms of not enough water being supplied to the growing rice plants but in terms of the fertility of the soil. One older man who has a farm in this area told me that his late baa there, which is now 20-25 years old, is not really very good any longer because it has not enough stream water feeding into it. The fact that streams bring nutrients in the form of silt is recognized. It seems unlikely that the nutrients provided by springs which feed into some of these fields will equal those provided by streams, which bring silt.

In the late 1970's, another more distant site on the way to Batu Patong, about half an hour's walk from the new settlement of Pa' Dalih, was brought under wet rice cultivation. This site was opened up by three hearth-groups which are closely related, those of two sisters and their parents, originally from Batu Patong. This was an area where these hearth-groups had previously made late luun and they felt they had rights to the land; the late luun concerned were recent enough to have meant that the vegetation was still small and quite easy to clear<sup>53</sup> and they had also planted fruit trees on some of the ex-late

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As has been mentioned already, it is the degree to which cultivation of a given parcel of land is made easier by previous clearing and cultivation of it that creates a lien on the land.



luun.

The particular group of relatives concerned pride themselves on being rajin (hard-working). To be hard-working is prestigious, as will be explored further in chapter seven. They have put a lot of work into the new late baa and these have done well in general, though they do not enjoy the same reliable supply of water that the late baa in the ox-bow lake by the community of Pa' Dalih do. One part of this site is supplied solely by rainwater and is subject to flood if there is too much rain (because of inadequate drainage) as well as to drought if there is not enough rain. The rest of the site is stream-fed, but the stream concerned is not as reliable as the stream feeding the ox-bow lake by Pa' Dalih, being smaller.

The process of making and enlarging late baa has continued in the 1980's, with more late baa being made in the airstrip area and with the enlarging of existing late baa. The most recent and one of the most extensive late baa areas recently brought under cultivation has been in the ox-bow lake at Ra'an Baa beyond Batu Patong. It appears that this area had in the past already been made into late baa by Batu Patong people who migrated to Bario in the early 1970's, abandoning them.

The area at Ra'an Baa which has recently been brought under cultivation again was being farmed when I left in mid-1988 by hearth-groups which are composed either entirely or partly of members who are Lun Bawang from the Kerayan area.

### **1.5 The significance of the introduction of permanent wet rice fields: the focus on rice**

The introduction of a permanent system of wet rice

cultivation, even in Bario, has meant the investment of significant amounts of labour. This is particularly true in areas like that around Pa' Dalih, where the terrain is not so flat as it is in Bario, and where the supply of water to fields is less reliable. In Bario, irrigation is generally more developed and there are few fields which rely to a significant extent on springs or rain. This means that unless the rain fails to the extent that the streams feeding the irrigation system dry up, fields will not be left without water. While it appears to be common in Bario for streams to be smaller than is ideal in certain years, it is rare for there to be no water at all.

In Pa' Dalih, however, there are fields which have been made with great investment of labour which remain completely dry through lack of rain. Basically, the making of a wet rice field in many sites in Pa' Dalih cannot be relied upon to pay a certain return on the investment of labour. There is no evidence that labour is more efficiently invested in wet rice fields in Pa' Dalih; the data I collected show a very great deal of variability but seem to indicate that labour invested in dry and wet fields is approximately equally efficiently invested. Despite this, people continue to make wet fields in Pa' Dalih. They talk of the possibility of very large harvests, and this is clearly a major reason for the concentration on making wet rice fields. However, the large harvests which are obtained in some late baa in Bario are much less common in Pa' Dalih, where conditions are not so favourable.

The fact that there is a willingness to involve oneself in such a risky investment is associated with the prestige associated with rice, which is associated with the prestige deriving from the possession of permanent wet rice fields as advertisements of investments of rice-growing labour. There seems little doubt that the Kelabit

could survive on other starch staples. Of the starch crops besides rice cultivated by the Kelabit cassava (*manihot utilissima*, Pohl., or 'sweet manioc'; ubi kayu' in Kelabit) in particular is extremely easy to grow, very productive and requires little investment of labour; most labour is invested in harvest (Pearson, Falcon and Jones 1984:4). Although I was not able to make a computation of the comparative efficiencies of labour invested in terms of calorific output for cassava versus rice comparable to that carried out for sago versus rice by Strickland (1986), the Kelabit themselves say that cassava is more efficient in these terms. When asked why she did not just plant cassava and not bother with rice, a Kelabit female informant said to me: 'Da'at kinan (ubi kayu). Pengah male lemulun kuman pade' ('We don't like to eat (cassava). People are used to eating rice'). The Kelabit grow considerable quantities of cassava and it contributes a large proportion of their starch, although it is not eaten at meals, but only as a snack food (see chapter six).

It is difficult to make a comparable claim for the other root crops grown by the Kelabit - taro (opa), sweet potatoes (ubi sia') and potatoes (ubi ketam) because of the small quantities involved<sup>54</sup>.

Of the grain crops besides rice grown by the Kelabit, maize (dele), which is grown in fair quantities for consumption as a snack food, appeared to me on an

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It appears likely that in the past, before cassava was introduced (it originates in the New World) they used to grow much more taro, as did other Borneo groups (for example see Rousseau 1974a:140 for the Kayan). It is not clear when sweet potatoes entered the area or whether they were at any time in the past a major crop; they may be quite ancient, but there is no evidence that they were relied upon significantly. The sweet potato is probably native to the New World, where it has historically been a major staple. It is possible that it entered insular South East Asia via Polynesia; there is evidence that it was brought to that area from South America in

impressionistic basis to be at least as productive as rice related to labour invested and to be less prone to disease. Other grains grown in small quantities made into wine in the past and now eaten as snack foods - millet (bua' lenamud), black sorghum (kuloi in Kelabit) and Job's tears (dele arur) are said by the Kelabit to be easier to grow than rice<sup>55</sup>.

The fact that the Kelabit think that other crops give a better return and can give no reason for not relying on them other than that it would be unthinkable, regardless of whether such crops are really more labour efficient, suggests that the Kelabit reliance on rice is due to something 'special' about rice. Rice is the core crop for the Kelabit, around whose cultivation the growing of other crops rotates.

## **2. Decision-making in rice cultivation**

There is a marked difference between the attitude to rice and the attitude to other crops. While the choices involved in the growing of rice are made much of, with much thought going into them, the choices involved in the growing of other crops are de-emphasised. Also, the choices involved in rice-growing tend to be publicised. They are major topics of conversation. Choices regarding the growing of other crops are made privately by individual women, and it is difficult to retrieve them.

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pre-Colombian times (Heyerdahl 1963).

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It is in fact impossible to separate out labour invested in rice and that invested in other crops grown together with rice in late luun, since some of the labour, in particular weeding, benefits all crops. However weeding is supposed to be for the benefit of rice, according to the Kelabit; as far as they are concerned they are investing that labour in rice growing. Certainly it is around rice that the weeding is actually done and other crops only benefit if they happen to be close (which, however, most of them are, since rice and other crops are interplanted).

They are simply seen as unimportant. It is not at all difficult, by contrast, to retrieve choices made regarding rice-growing.

The complexity of the process of rice-growing may be said to be made much of and the difficulty of cultivating rice to be emphasised. The possibility of failure in the enterprise of persuading rice to grow and multiply is clearly perceived and highlighted. All processes and choices are highly elaborated, and the 'specialness' of rice is made very clear. For other crops, the processes and choices involved in growing them are unelaborated. It is made to appear that crops besides rice grow 'just like that', 'willy-nilly' (mo'-mo); that human beings are minimally involved in their success.

Decisions regarding rice-growing lie with the separate hearth-groups. They are however influenced heavily by rice-growing decisions made by other hearth-groups. In fact, decision-making regarding rice-growing develops within a bawang as a whole, with certain hearth-groups spearheading decisions which are then followed by the whole bawang. Such hearth-groups are those of high status<sup>56</sup>.

Decisions regarding rice-growing - e.g. regarding choice of site, choice of varieties, time of carrying out activities at different stages of the rice year - made by individuals of high status tend to be respected and are often followed. The widow of Penghulu Miri, the chief of the southern Kelabits in the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's, told me the first wet rice fields in Pa' Dalih were made by Penghulu Miri and herself. This should be seen in the light of the status associated with being the leader in

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I will be discussing the way in which status is generated in chapter eight.

rice-growing decisions.

I want to go on to examine three key points in the rice-growing year - the choice of varieties, the choice of sites for late (rice fields), and the initiating of the rice year - when the possibility of different choices being made is made much of. I want, through a discussion of these three areas of decision-making, to highlight the elaboration of the decision-making process in the case of rice-growing. I also hope to show how there is a tendency for the choices made by certain prestigious hearth-groups to be followed by other hearth-groups. The end-result is a high degree of convergence in the decisions made.

### **2.1 Choice of varieties of rice**

One of the most important of the decisions involved in rice-growing is the choice of which varieties to plant. The final decisions are based on a large number of considerations and are perceived as being 'difficult' decisions. There is much emphasis on the decision-making process and a great deal of interest is shown in what decisions are made by different hearth-groups, particularly those whose status is high.

It is a notable fact that almost all of the varieties of rice cultivated in Pa' Dalih can be cultivated in both dry and wet fields. The only exception are a group of small-grained varieties which are distinctive in a number of ways, one of which is that they can only, apparently, be successfully grown in wet fields, late baa, since they are said to 'fall over' (loket) if planted in dry fields. These are the varieties known pade adan and pade dari. These varieties are thus associated with the creation of the prestigious permanent wet fields. There are sub-varieties of pade adan and pade dari which are qualified

by an additional adjective; it seems likely that the use of such adjectives to denote sub-varieties, which does occur with other varieties but is particularly important with these small-grained varieties, indicates that selection is particularly active on them. These are very important varieties at the moment because they are the varieties which are sold in town at high prices as 'Bario rice', and they represent the major means which the Kelabit of the highlands have of acquiring money. Such sale, and the consequent accumulation of cash, is prestigious.

Pade adan and pade dari are not produced for 'home consumption'. If they are not sold, they are used to feed visitors. Their association with provision for visitors, which is prestigious, makes the decision to grow them a prestigious one.

Only when a hearth-group is sure that it has enough rice for its own domestic use will it grow these varieties on any scale, whether for sale or to feed visitors. The decision by one hearth-group in Pa' Dalih to concentrate on growing these varieties in the rice year 1987-88 was publicised by that hearth-group. This was prestigious, because it implied both that the hearth-group concerned had plenty of rice stored away for domestic consumption and that the rice grown would be used for prestigious purposes, either for sale or to feed visitors.

I was able with reasonable ease to collect data on varieties of rice; this is a subject of great interest to all adult Kelabits. I found that 32 named varieties were being grown in Pa' Dalih in 1986-88<sup>57</sup>. It was also easy to

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Crain found that among the Sipitang Lun Bawang ten to fifteen varieties are planted each season, with each family planting from two to four varieties (Crain 1970:245). This is much less than in Pa' Dalih, but is close to the situation in Bario,

ascertain, with newly-introduced varieties - at least according to the particular informant with whom I was dealing; they did not all agree - via whom the varieties first entered Pa' Dalih. It is a matter of prestige to have introduced a new rice variety, especially if it is widely taken up. There is a good deal of experimentation with new varieties of rice and interest in trying out seed of rice plants which are unusual in some way, and varieties appear to develop quickly through selection.

Choices of varieties to plant in a given rice year begin to be made at the end of the previous one, when seed stock is gathered. In general, such seed is intended to be used for the following year, though some is put aside for storage. When it comes closer to the time of sowing (in late baa nurseries) and dibbling (in late luun) final decisions are made.

An important factor influencing decisions as to varieties to plant is that there is a tendency to plant a number of varieties, for variety in consumption and probably to guard against the failure of certain varieties in any one year due to pest attack. Different hearth-groups vary greatly in how many varieties they plant, however; whereas some plant only a handful, others plant as many as fifteen varieties in one rice year. Some hearth-groups may rely heavily in a given year on a particular variety, planting very little of other varieties, while other hearth-groups may plant approximately equal quantities of a number of varieties.

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where there is a great deal of focus on the pade adan varieties which are sold on the coast. Other varieties, planted for consumption and on limited land, are limited in number. The main feature looked for in them is high yield; in Pa' Dalih a balance is sought between a number of factors, the two most



A given hearth-group in Pa' Dalih will not necessarily make the same choices from rice year to rice year, although there is a tendency for a hearth-group to develop a liking for certain varieties. The two most important characteristics of a rice strain are taste and productivity, although there is no complete unanimity as to which varieties are tastiest or most productive. While one year taste may appear to be the main criterion for a given hearth-group in choosing varieties to plant, the next year productivity may appear to be more important. Hearth-groups generally try to balance the two considerations in the choices which they make.

The selection of varieties each year is not solely from the stock of a given hearth-group. While rice for consumption belongs to the separate hearth-groups of a community and cannot be given away without debts being created, seed is made freely available to other hearth-groups. This mainly occurs through the custom of readily giving seed to hearth-groups which request it when they participate in a cooperative work group harvesting rice in a field in which the variety or varieties desired is or are growing.

It is usually prestigious individuals who are asked for seed, although sometimes other individuals who have had outstanding success with their rice strains may be asked. It is a matter of pride for a hearth-group if others request seed from it, because this is proof of rice-growing success and of status.

It seems likely that there will tend to be more of a similarity between seed stock held by different hearth-groups and given the same name within a given bawang than there is between seed stock held in different bawang and

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important being high yield and tastiness.

given the same name, although in order to establish this a detailed botanical analysis would be necessary. Selection is in effect being done to a large extent in common by the bawang and not separately by the different constituent hearth-groups because of the readiness with which seed stock is given away and exchanged between hearth-groups of a bawang. The fact that seed is not given away at random within the bawang but that certain hearth groups' seed stock tends to spread quickly within the bawang due to their general rice-growing success and prestige probably contributes to an even greater uniformity in the development of rice varieties within the bawang. As between different bawang, because seed is not so often given away, there is likely to be more difference between seed, even where it is described by the same name.

## **2.2 Choice of sites for late (rice fields)**

The choice of sites for late luun (dry rice fields) is one that has to be made every year, since the Kelabit never use the same site for growing rice two years in succession. They do sometimes use fields a second year in order to grow other crops, if the site is a particularly fertile one, known as patar - in which case the late becomes an atar rather than a late luun, once rice is no longer grown in it. The choice of site is seen as a key one, because on it is seen to depend to a large extent the success of the crop. Certain land is considered particularly suitable for rice, and late luun sites are always chosen with this in mind. Although other crops will be planted together with the rice, their needs are not considered in choosing the site - although once it is chosen different areas within the late luun will be selected for other crops, according to the perceived needs of those crops.

Choice of sites for late luun begins to be considered as early as the previous rice year. Hearth-groups begin thinking about which general areas would be good ones for making late luun, and discussions on this topic occur frequently. It is considered desirable for there to be blocks of late luun belonging to different hearth-groups concentrated in an area, in order to protect against pest attack and so that cooperative work, central to the cultivation of rice, is easily organized.

The need for a consensus on which area to use is obvious to all. Different views as to desirable areas need to be aired in order to achieve this. This does not occur at a couple of formal or even informal meetings but through an ongoing discussion which goes on at every gathering of people in the period preceding the slashing and burning of the sites chosen, which takes place in late May. Such gatherings are not called specially to discuss this topic but occur for other reasons. Most commonly this topic is discussed during cooperative agricultural work groups, both during the work itself and at the midday meal, when this is eaten together in a field hut.

No formal decision appears to be taken as to which area or areas is eventually selected for making late luun. Through the constant discussions focus comes to rest eventually on a certain area or on certain areas, but it is not possible to say for sure which of these will actually be used until the work begins. The constituent hearth-groups of a community put up markers at sites which they propose to use for late luun, not all at once but gradually, with the hearth-groups keenest on using certain areas putting theirs up first, presumably hoping that others will follow in numbers sufficient for this area to be a viable late luun area. But these markers are not definitive, and changes of mind may be made at the last moment. Those hearth-groups which succeed in leading others to use a certain area will end up with the best sites because they were the first to put up markers (this is likely to enhance their harvest, and build further on their status). These hearth-groups are likely to be those containing individuals of the highest status. Hearth-groups which failed in their bid to get a certain area used will have to either farm alone, which exposes them to a greater likelihood of pest attack and isolates them as regards cooperative work, or choose a site at the last minute in an area being used by others. Such a site will inevitably not be one of the best in the area.

The end result of this system of choosing late luun sites is, in Pa' Dalih, that one area, each year, ends up being used by the majority, with another area or a couple of other areas being used by small groups of hearth-groups. Certain hearth-groups, though, seem to have developed a liking for a certain area, because it is near their late baa (wet rice fields), and such hearth-groups make late luun in this area year after year, moving from one site within it to another, regardless of where other

hearth-groups site their late luun. For these hearth-groups the proximity of their late baa may mean that their late luun and their late baa form a block lessening the likelihood of pest attack in any given part of the fields, in the same way that a block of late luun does. When a hearth-group acts in this way, however, it does seem to be regarded as rather eccentric. It may participate less in cooperative work groups than other hearth-groups because of the siting of its rice field. This is seen as undesirable and is not approved of.

The choice of sites for late baa is made more infrequently, since a hearth-group hopes that a late baa will be relatively permanent, given the amount of labour which must be invested in making it. However at the moment decisions about both making new late baa and extending existing ones are made fairly frequently, since most hearth-groups are trying to increase the amount of land they are using as late baa.

The decision made by a hearth-group as to where to site a late baa is apparently made without direct recourse to the opinion of other hearth-groups. However patterns of siting of late baa have emerged in practice, with concentration of late baa in certain areas. It is thus apparent that the decisions made by a given hearth-group are not unrelated to those made by other hearth-groups.

Late baa are not made all at once but gradually. A small area is first dug out and used, followed by extensions to this in subsequent years. The first few years in which a late baa is used, it fails to give a very good crop. Mature late baa are much more productive than young ones. This is said to be due to the development of a layer of packed earth reasonably impermeable to water under the top soil, which allows water to be retained in

the late baa. Also it is probable that the irrigation system is improved and works better, and that the field is, over the years, levelled out properly, avoiding drier and wetter areas. Where late baa have been made on peaty soil, the top layer of peat has to be removed, and this is only thoroughly achieved after a few years. It is, in short, necessary to be both hard-working and not to change one's mind in making a late baa, trusting one's initial decision to make a field in a particular spot, and following it up with regular improvements and extensions.

The focal nature of decisions made by those of high status is apparent in the choice of sites for both late luun and late baa. It is likely to be bids by them for late luun areas which are eventually followed, and they are usually better at working out which site would be best for making late baa. Any hearth-group which has any pretensions to prestige would be very unwilling to be seen to abandon a late baa once the site is decided upon; it would be all their prestige is worth not to extend it year after year. To stick to decisions, once made, is decidedly prestigious. This means that it is areas begun upon by prestigious hearth-groups which tend to become ones in which a number of hearth-groups end up making late baa.

### **2.3 Decisions regarding the initiating of the rice year**

For late luun, the decision as to when to burn sets the clock for the whole rice cycle. For late baa no one decision fulfils this function. Three decisions are important for late baa: when to put the rice seeds to soak, when to sow them and when to transplant them. The one decision for late luun and the three for late baa are of focal importance. It is considered that these key tasks should be carried out as close to the same time as possible by all the hearth-groups of the community. For late luun, the burn and the planting a few days later should be synchronised as closely as possible. For late baa, there is more latitude - necessarily, since there are three decisions involved, and also because there is always the possibility that soaked seed will not sprout and that sowed seed will not grow at the same rate and cannot therefore be transplanted at the same time. However, even for late baa the putting to soak tends to be carried out within a day or two by all hearth-groups. This is done a few days before the new moon, a time which is considered a good one to sow all seed.

These decisions are made not separately by the individual hearth-groups but following a consensus generated by all the hearth-groups in a given community through a series of informal conversations, as in the case of the decision as to which areas to use for late luun in a given year. The consensus regarding when to burn only finally makes its appearance on the morning of the day of the burn, which is not decided upon in advance but is suddenly initiated by one or two hearth-groups, with others following.

The views and decisions of high-status individuals

are more likely to be listened to than those of individuals who have little prestige. The higher the status of a couple or the greater their pretensions to high status are, the more likely it is that the man will actually go out and be the first to start the burn, and the more likely that the woman will be the first to put her seed to soak and the first to sow it. It is considered proper for the rice seed of the more prestigious ladies to sprout first and for them to successfully plan to plant at the new moon; in 1988 I witnessed scarcely suppressed outrage on the part of a very prestigious lady at the fact that the seed of a woman of low prestige, generally very unsuccessful in rice cultivation, had sprouted before hers. Even the latter lady was fairly taken aback, and she in fact refrained from sowing her seed on the day considered most appropriate, presumably preferring to wait in the background for the more prestigious ladies to sow first.

### **3. Crops other than rice and unmanaged resources**

The crops grown by the Kelabit besides rice provide foods which are consumed in two different ways. The first is together with rice, as side dishes at the rice meal. I call these crops vegetables. The second way in which these crops are eaten is on their own. I term these snack foods. Fruit and grains other than rice are also eaten as snacks; fruit is always eaten as a snack food, whether cultivated or wild/semi-wild<sup>58</sup>.

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By the term semi-wild I mean fruit trees which have been planted in late luun or ira at some time in the past. When these cultivated areas are abandoned, the fruit on the trees continues to be harvested, although it is given no attention otherwise. If it is known who planted the tree, his/her descendants have prior right to the fruit. If the identity of the person who planted the tree has been forgotten then anyone has the right to harvest the fruit. This latter category is often difficult to distinguish from truly wild trees, since the fruit planted occurs naturally in the forest. It is possible



The Kelabits gather many wild vegetables. Their reliance on cultivated vegetables may derive more from a desire for variety than from need, since they are easily able to obtain a selection of plant foods for vegetables from the forest and from secondary growth areas. Nevertheless the desire to have cultivated vegetables to turn to is quite strong. It is very unusual for a hearth-group not to plant any cultivated vegetables. I list cultivated vegetables in table one and wild vegetables in table two.

**TABLE ONE**

**Most important cultivated plants grown to be eaten as side dishes (vegetables) at the rice meal**

KELABIT NAME	ENGLISH NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	WHERE GROWN
<u>da'un ubi sia'</u>	sweet potato leaves	leaves of <i>ipomoea batatas</i> (Lam.)	<u>late luun, ira</u>
<u>da'un ubi kayu</u>	cassava leaves	leaves of <i>manihot utilissima</i> (Pohl.)	<u>late luun, ira, atar</u>
<u>da'un tisak</u>	pumpkin leaves	leaves of <i>cucurbita pepo</i> (DC.)	<u>late luun, ira, atar</u>
<u>da'un tsimun</u>	cucumber leaves	leaves of <i>cucumis sativus</i> (Linn.)	<u>late luun, ira, atar, kebun</u>
<u>da'un tabu</u>	gourd leaves	leaves of <i>crescentia?</i> (Linn.)	<u>late luun, ira, atar</u>
<u>lawa opa'</u>	taro stalks	stalks of <i>colocasia esculentum</i> (Schott.)	<u>late luun, ira</u>
<u>ubud ba'ong</u>	banana shoots	shoots of <i>musa</i>	<u>late luun,</u>

that human selection has improved certain species of fruit tree, but in many cases the wild and the planted varieties are likely to be identical.

		<i>sapientum</i> (Linn.)	<u>atar</u> , <u>kebun</u>
<u>ubud bua'</u> <u>rosan</u>	pineapple shoots	shoots of <i>ananas comosus</i> (Merr.)	<u>ira</u>
<u>da'un bua'</u> <u>ladah</u>	chilli pepper leaves	leaves of <i>capsicum</i> <i>frutescens</i> (Linn.)	beside longhouse
<u>pertuk kadang</u>	bean	var. of <i>phaseolus?</i> (Linn.)	<u>late luun</u> , <u>ira</u> , <u>atar</u> ,
<u>pertuk padan</u>	bean	var. of <i>phaseolus?</i> (Linn.)	<u>late luun</u> , <u>ira</u> , <u>atar</u>
<u>pertuk Jawa</u>	bean	perhaps <i>phaseolus</i> <i>lunatus</i> (Linn.)	<u>late luun</u> , <u>ira</u> , <u>atar</u>
<u>bua' kalamati</u>	tomato	<i>lycopersicum</i> <i>esculentum</i> (Mill.)	<u>late luun</u> , <u>ira</u> , <u>atar</u>
<u>bua' tisak</u>	pumpkin	<i>cucurbita pepo</i> (DC.)	<u>late luun</u> , <u>ira</u> , <u>atar</u>
<u>bua' pub</u>	gourd	<i>crescentia?</i>	<u>late luun</u> , <u>ira</u> , <u>atar</u>
<u>bua' tsimun</u>	cucumber	<i>cucumis</i> <i>sativas</i> (Linn.)	<u>late luun</u> , <u>ira</u> , <u>atar</u>
<u>bua' peria</u>	bitter gourd	probably <i>trichosanthes</i> <i>anguina</i> (Linn.)	<u>late luun</u> , <u>ira</u> , <u>atar</u> , <u>kebun</u>
<u>kachang tanah</u>	peanuts	<i>arachis</i> <i>hypogaea</i> (Linn.)	<u>ira</u>
<u>krid kuru</u>	?	?	<u>late luun</u> , <u>ira</u> , <u>atar</u>
<u>kobis</u>	cabbage	<i>brassica</i> <i>oleracea</i> (Linn.)	<u>kebun</u>
<u>sawi</u>	<i>sawi</i> (Malay)	probably <i>brassica</i> <i>juncea</i> (Cosson or Czerniaew)	<u>late luun</u> , <u>ira</u> , <u>atar</u>

<u>pertuk pulut</u>	okra	?	<u>late luun,</u> <u>ira, atar,</u> <u>kebun</u>
<u>kangkong</u>	water convolvulus?	<i>ipomoea</i> <i>aquatica</i> (Forsk.) also known as <i>ipomoea</i> <i>reptans</i> (Poir.)	beside <u>late</u> <u>baa</u>
<u>banna</u>	?	?	beside longhouse
<u>bua' ladah</u>	chilli pepper	<i>capsicum</i> <i>frutescens</i> (Linn.)	beside longhouse
<u>krid sia'</u>	`spinach'	<i>amaranthus</i> (Linn.), probably <i>amaranthus</i> <i>gangeticus</i> (Linn.)	<u>late luun,</u> <u>ira, atar</u>
<u>bua' terong</u>	aubergine	<i>solanum</i> (Linn.), probably <i>solanum</i> <i>melongena</i> (Linn.) and/or <i>solanum</i> <i>aculeatissimum</i> (Jacq.) or <i>solanum ferox</i> (Linn.)	<u>late luun,</u> <u>ira, atar,</u> <u>kebun</u>
<u>kusai</u>	Chinese chives	<i>allium odorum</i> (Linn.)	<u>late luun,</u> <u>ira, atar</u>

**TABLE TWO****Wild plants eaten as side dishes (vegetables) at the rice meal**

<b>KELABIT NAME</b>	<b>ENGLISH NAME</b>	<b>BOTANICAL NAME</b>
<u>ubud kenangan</u>	sago shoots	shoots of <i>metroxylon rumphii</i> (Mart.)
<u>ubud poo'</u>	wild banana shoots	shoots of species of <i>musa</i> (Linn.)
<u>ubud uee</u>	shoots of a species of rotan	unknown genera or species
<u>ubud derma</u>	shoots of thorny palm	?
<u>ubud bua' salah</u>	shoots of small plant	?
<u>ubud nanong</u>	shoots of small plant	?
<u>ubud bua' tubu' tanah</u>	shoots of small plant	?
<u>ubud lekwa</u>	shoots of small plant	?
<u>ubud kawit</u>	shoots of plant	?
<u>kulat beruk</u>	`pig mushroom'	?
<u>kulat berangan</u>	`bear mushroom'	?
<u>kulat pra</u>	mushroom	?
<u>kulat itm</u>	`black mushroom'	?
<u>kulat buda'</u>	`white mushroom'	?
<u>kulat laam</u>	`sour mushroom'	?
<u>kulat belu'an</u>	mushroom	?
<u>kulat long</u>	mushroom	?
<u>kulat laping</u>	mushroom	?
<u>kulat tetadiw</u>	mushroom	?
<u>kulat udang</u>	`prawn mushroom'	?
<u>kulat aleng</u>	mushroom	?
<u>kulat kerubau</u>	`buffalo mushroom'	?

<u>kulat ulub</u>	`white bead mushroom'	?
<u>kulat paduk</u>	mushroom	?
<u>pa'o paya</u>	`swamp fern'	perhaps <i>pleopetlis nigrescens</i> (Carr.)
<u>pa'o pa'</u>	`water fern'	perhaps <i>diplazium esculentum</i> (Swartz.)
<u>tangayan</u>	creeper	?
<u>abang</u>	stem of plant	?
<u>lanau</u>	stem of plant	?
<u>da'un bekeriup</u>	leaves of shrub	?
<u>bua' payang</u>	kernel of fruit	?
<u>bua' ludu</u>	flower of <u>bua'</u> <u>salah</u>	?
<u>bua' kiran</u>	unripe fruit	?
<u>dore</u>	leaves	?
<u>bua' ulim</u>	fruit of shrub	?

The Kelabit plant many kinds of fruit tree. Some of these are fast-growing, such as banana and papaya, yielding within a year or two of planting. Others are varieties which grow wild in the forest; these, like the fast-growing fruit trees, are planted in late luun, but, because they live for so long, they create a lien on the land. As well as eating the ripe fruit as a snack foods, the unripe fruit and kernels of certain fruit trees are cooked and eaten as vegetables. I list cultivated fruits in table three and wild or semi-wild fruit in table four.

**TABLE THREE**

**Cultivated fruit, eaten as snack food**

<b>Kelabit name</b>	<b>English name</b>	<b>Botanical name</b>
<u>ba'ong</u>	banana	races of <i>musa sapientum</i> (Linn.)

<u>bua' majan</u>	papaya	<i>carica papaya</i> (Linn.)
<u>bua' rosan</u>	pineapple	<i>ananas comosus</i> (Merr.)
<u>bua' sikoi</u>	watermelon	<i>citrullus vulgaris</i> (Linn.)
<u>bua' kelapa sawit</u>	oil palm fruit	?
<u>bua' libu</u>	guava	<i>psidium guajava</i> (Linn.)
<u>bua' butan</u>	coconut	<i>cocos nucifera</i> (Linn.)
<u>bua' boyo</u>	green mandarin	<i>citrus nobilis</i> (Lour.) or perhaps <i>citrus retusa</i> (hort.)
<u>bua' boyo tuan</u>	pomelo	<i>citrus maxima</i> (Merr.)
<u>bua' boyo pade</u>	lemon	<i>citrus limon</i> (Burm.)
<u>bua' boyo lipi</u>	mandarin?	<i>citrus nobilis</i> (Lour.)?
<u>bua' boyo duru'</u>	mandarin?	<i>citrus nobilis</i> (Lour.)?

**TABLE FOUR**

**Wild and semi-wild tree fruit, eaten as snack food**

<b>KELABIT NAME</b>	<b>ENGLISH NAME</b>	<b>BOTANICAL NAME</b>
<u>bua' bupu</u>		perhaps <i>nephelium malaiense</i> (Griff.)
<u>bua' lengaat</u>	langsar	<i>lansium domesticum</i> (Jack.)
<u>bua' rambutan</u>	rambutan	<i>nephelium lappaceum</i> (Linn.)
<u>bua' meritm</u>		species of <i>nephelium</i> (Linn.)
<u>bua' sia'</u>		species of <i>nephelium</i> (Linn.)
<u>bua' metot</u>		species of

		<i>nephelium</i> (Linn.)
<u>bua' pangin</u>		?
<u>bua' kiran</u>		?
<u>bua' laam</u>	horse mango	<i>mangifera foetida</i> (Lour.)
<u>bua' keramut</u>	mango	species of <i>mangifera</i> (Linn.)
<u>bua' dato' alo'</u>	soursop, Dutch durian	<i>annona muricata</i> (Linn.)
<u>bua' dato'</u>	durian	<i>durio zibethinus</i> (Linn.)
<u>bua' medela</u>		probably species of <i>durio</i> (Linn.)
<u>bua' badok</u>	jackfruit	<i>artocarpus integra</i> (Merr.)
<u>bua' iyau</u>		?
<u>bua' lupi</u>		?
<u>bua' itan</u>		?
<u>bua' kesi</u>		?
<u>bua' ario</u>		?
<u>bua' terbak</u>		?
<u>bua' neput</u>		?
<u>bua' puak</u>		?
<u>bua' kelopa</u>		?
<u>bua' ubir</u>		?
<u>bua' pao</u>		?

I have already mentioned the type of garden called ira, which appears to have been coupled, traditionally, with the making of late baa, for the purpose of growing the crops which are grown together with late luun when this type of rice field is made. Ira are uncommon in Pa' Dalih, as I have discussed above; while I was there, only a handful of hearth-groups made them. Recently, a new kind of garden for other crops has been introduced called kebun. Kebun, the making of which appears to have been

borrowed from coastal areas (kebun is a loan word from Malay), are intended to be semi-permanent, while ira are used for a couple of years at most. During the period I was in Pa' Dalih, only four hearth-groups had kebun; they were commoner in Bario, presumably partly because of the shortage of land. The amount of work invested in these was considerable and the reward appeared not to be at all certain. Crops grown in kebun are subject to considerable attack from pests; the use of kebun for a number of years appears to allow numbers of pests to build up. It is also likely to detract quickly from the fertility of the soil.

The crops grown in kebun include ones grown in late luun but also recently introduced temperate vegetables, the seeds of which are bought in town. A major motivation for making kebun appears to be the prospect of selling these vegetables, although they are eaten as vegetable side dishes at the rice meal. In Pa' Dalih, they are sold to the school for high prices; the government, which sets the prices of different foods sold to the school, has set the prices of these temperate crops very high. Apart from the school, few buyers are found for these crops, which are not much liked. In table one I have indicated which vegetables are grown in kebun.

There are a few vegetables which are planted immediately around the longhouse. Many hearth-groups plant these vegetables, but in small quantities. These are looked after carefully, as are crops grown in kebun. They are not normally sold, however, but are consumed by the hearth-group cultivating them.

Most cultivated vegetables grown in Pa' Dalih are grown in late luun. Vegetables planted in late luun are planted the day after the burn, a few days before the rice. They are harvested when they are ripe; for some crops this means before the rice, for some after. Once



the rice is harvested, further crops (but not rice) may be planted in late luun which are considered to have particularly good soil, to be harvested when they are ready; the late luun becomes an atar. Vegetables planted in other places - on the bunds of late baa and by the longhouse - are planted at any time.

Besides vegetables, root crops - cassava, taro and sweet potatoes - various fruits and grains other than rice are planted to be eaten as snacks. Two grain crops besides rice are planted nowadays by the Kelabit of Pa' Dalih: millet and maize. Only the latter is of significance at present in terms of quantity. Other grain crops - black sorghum and Job's tears - are grown in small quantities in Long Lellang, a Kelabit community outside the Highlands. It is not clear whether these used to be grown in the past in Pa' Dalih. I was told that another grain called bua lengoh was grown in the past in Pa' Dalih, which used also, according to the people of Long Lellang, to be grown there. I never saw a sample of this grain and was therefore unable to identify it. I list root crops in table five and grains other than rice in table six.

**TABLE FIVE**

**ROOT CROPS CULTIVATED BY THE KELABIT AS SNACK FOODS**

<b>KELABIT NAME</b>	<b>ENGLISH NAME</b>	<b>BOTANICAL NAME</b>
<u>ubi kayu</u>	cassava	<i>manihot utilissima</i> , Pohl.
<u>opa'</u>	taro	<i>colocasia esculentum</i> , Schott.
<u>ubi sia'</u>	sweet potatoes	<i>ipomoea batatas</i> , Lam.
<u>ubi ketam</u>	potatoes	<i>solanum tuberosum</i> , Linn.

**TABLE SIX****Grain crops besides rice grown by the Kelabit now or in the past**

<b>KELABIT NAME</b>	<b>ENGLISH NAME</b>	<b>BOTANICAL NAME</b>
<u>dele</u>	maize	<i>zea mays</i> , Linn.
<u>bua' lenamud</u>	millet	<i>setaria italica</i> , Beauv.
<u>kuloi</u>	black sorghum	<i>sorghum vulgare</i> , Pers., probably var. <i>dochna</i> (see note 24, Chapter One)
<u>dele arur</u>	Job's tears	<i>coix lachryma-jobi</i> , Linn.
<u>bua' lengoh</u>	?	?

Cassava, sweet potatoes and taro are grown in the late luun together with the rice, planted scattered amongst it. Where rice is being grown in the field, root crops are planted some weeks after it.

Millet is planted at the same time as the rice, around the edges of the late luun, as is Job's tears. Black sorghum, where it is still cultivated, is planted mixed with the rice, the seed intermingled. Maize is planted separately from the rice but usually throughout the late luun.

### **3.1 Attitudes to crops other than rice**

There is a notable difference between the attitude to rice and that to all other crops. Fruit and vegetables are simply planted and then left to get on with it. Other potential staples are not given the special care that rice is. Millet, black sorghum, Job's tears and maize are considered to be easier to grow than rice; in other words

they require less attention. Roots are considered to grow even more easily than grains other than rice. Very little attention is given to roots once they have been planted.

This contrasts strongly with the attitude to rice, the success of which is of great moment, and considered to depend on human action. The success of other crops is generally expected to be likely; this is particularly the case with roots. For the Kelabit, whether or not crops other than rice succeed does not appear to depend on humans to a very great extent, although this may simply be because little is invested in them. Although they do not grow 'on their own' (mulun sebulang), crops other than rice are much more independent than rice, which requires constant human attention to thrive.

While rice is planted only in the fields made by a particular hearth-group, crops other than rice are not planted only in the late luun being made by one's own hearth-group, but may be planted in those made by other hearth-groups. This applies to all crops, including corn, and, I assume, to other grain crops too (the very small amount of millet planted while I was in Pa' Dalih was planted in the late luun of the hearth-groups concerned, but only two hearth-groups planted it while I was there).

A hearth-group plants crops in late luun belonging to another hearth-group when it is not making any late luun itself, when its own late luun are at a distance or when another hearth-group is making late luun on what is considered to be particularly good soil. This is done without any ceremony whatsoever; it appears to be considered a matter of no significance at all.

This ties in with a very slight concept of ownership of these crops, which markedly contrasts with the very definite ownership of rice. Cultivars other than rice are

freely and very casually shared with members of other hearth-groups; the sharing of rice is rare and occurs only in very specific contexts, as will be seen.

Decisions involved in the planting of crops other than rice are made individually by the separate hearth-groups. No public consultation takes place regarding these decisions, and no public emphasis is placed on them.

It is clear that they are not regarded as important decisions. Although pleasure is taken in planting these crops, and it is probable that varieties are passed around, this happens invisibly, without anything being made of it. Although I participated very fully in agricultural activities and tried to learn all I could about them, I rarely heard any discussion of varieties of crops other than rice, and I never witnessed varieties being passed on, although I heard comments which implied that this was done. While it quickly becomes evident to an outsider which rice varieties exist and how selection occurs, it is much longer before equivalent information regarding other crops comes to light.

There appears to be no prestige involved in having successful varieties of other crops, although pleasure is certainly taken in having a good supply of them. The pleasure, however, is of a completely different order to that associated with having a good rice crop. Plenty of vegetables and fruit means that everyone in the community will benefit through sharing. Plenty of rice, on the other hand, is prestigious.

### **3.2. Unmanaged Resources**

The Kelabit eat so many wild foods that it was not possible for me to obtain an exhaustive list. Both men and women are involved in obtaining these foods, men hunting

and fishing and women gathering and fishing. I have included a list of the most frequently gathered wild vegetables in table two. Because I did not go hunting or fishing with the men, I was not able to make a proper list of hunted animals; they will hunt any animal, as far as I could gather, but the most commonly hunted are the wild pig (*sus barbatus*, S. Muller and other varieties of *sus*, Linn.; baka in Kelabit) and various kinds of deer (*cervus unicolor* var. *equinus*, Cuvier, payo in Kelabit [the sambhur deer]; *cervulus muntjac*, Lydekker [the barking deer], tela'o in Kelabit; and *tragulus rarus*, Miller [the mousedeer], planok in Kelabit). A number of different fish are taken from the rivers by the men and from the streams near the settlement by the women, but I was unable to identify these.

It is to be noted that the majority of wild plant foods derive from secondary forest, in which women operate. Protein foods, fish and meat, derive both from primary forest, which is largely men's territory, and from secondary forest.

Wild foods are not considered to be 'owned'. The obtaining of them is considered to involve a strong element of chance. Wild foods are hunted or gathered by particular individuals, but as soon as they enter the longhouse they are shared out amongst a number of hearth-groups. In all forms, cooked and uncooked, uncut and prepared for consumption, as snack foods or as side dishes for the rice meal, wild foods are always shared if more is obtained than a hearth-group can immediately consume.

### **3.3. The equivalence of unmanaged resources and of crops other than rice**

Crops other than rice, and wild foods, are treated in

much the same way. Both are freely shared, both in the field and in the longhouse. This will be illustrated in the next chapter, when the organization of labour involved in the harvesting of crops other than rice is discussed. Both wild foods and crops other than rice are seen as growing on their own, without human help, although clearly this is more true of wild foods than of crops other than rice.

Cultivars other than rice appear to be treated as though they were closer to unmanaged resources from the wild than to rice, although they are not conflated linguistically. The significant attribute of wild foods is the fact that humans are not involved in making them what they are but only in 'trapping' them. Thus, the fact that the involvement of humans in growing cultivars other than rice is de-emphasised backs up the contention that these are conflated with wild foods.

The way in which wild foods and to a large extent crops other than rice are treated strongly recalls the way in which Needham describes the Penan attitude to all foods (including sago), particularly that of the Eastern Penan. The Penan are hunter-gatherers and until recently have had little contact with settled peoples except in occasional trade. 'The hard things we worked for, but the food we just found', they say (Needham 1953:134). There is, in other words, no logic in the finder keeping it for himself, because there is no sense in which it could be said to be 'his'. He simply found it ready for consumption; he did not cause it to grow. It should therefore be shared without implication of any kind. Among the Penan Needham found an immensely strong prescription to share food with the whole of the group. The same could be said to exist among the Kelabit as regards wild foods and crops other than rice.

It is rice that is 'different'. The cultivation of rice has involved a created complexity, an emphasis on decision-making and on the possibility of failure or success. In short, rice would not grow without human aid.

This is explicitly stated by Lian-Saging and Bulan, themselves Kelabits: 'Rice is the one essential item in Kelabit life which cannot come, go or grow of itself naturally. It has to be farmed or cultivated' (Lian-Saging and Bulan 1989:102).

#### **4. The keeping of domestic animals**

On an everyday basis, only wild meat is consumed. Although domestic animals are kept for meat - pigs (berak in Kelabit; *sus*, Linn.), buffaloes (kerubau in Kelabit; *bos bubalus*, Linn.) and chickens (la'al in Kelabit; *gallus gallus*, Linn.), and, in the past, goats (*capra hircus*, Linn.) and sambhur deer (*cervus unicolor* var. *equinus*, Cuvier). The latter was probably always captured in the forest rather than bred; the other animals are all bred. These animals are and have been for as long as the Kelabit remember only slaughtered when visitors from outside the hearth-group are present, either on a casual basis (chickens) or at irau feasts (pigs and buffaloes). Meat from such domestic animals provides only a small proportion of the diet of the Kelabit, even of the protein they consume.

There are no totally wild buffaloes; they do not occur in the forest naturally, in other words. All buffalo are owned. However, many, perhaps most of these are allowed to wander about freely, only being captured when they are required for slaughter. An attempt is made to keep them in a certain general area, and buffalo pastures (laman kerubau) are made or encouraged to develop

where buffalo spend most of their time. Other buffaloes are fairly tame, and are kept tethered in one spot. These buffalo are let into the rice fields after harvest to trample the earth; in the past this was not done and buffaloes did no work. It is probable that before the making of permanent wet rice fields there were no tame buffaloes, even in Bario. While the new permanent wet rice fields allow for the use of buffaloes, the traditional ones did not. However, not all hearth-groups have tame buffalo.

While buffalo feed themselves on grass, pigs and chickens are fed and may be said to be more fully domesticated than buffaloes. In the past pigs were allowed to roam freely in the vicinity of the house, eating refuse as well as being fed. Now they are kept penned and it is necessary to feed them everything they eat. They are fed rice husks, the leaves of a variety of taro (opa'), other roots and vegetable matter. Chickens are fed rice; they are allowed to wander freely during the day and are penned at night.

In the past, the only reason for keeping these domestic animals was for slaughter. Meat from domestic animals is not casually shared as is meat from wild animals. It is eaten infrequently, its consumption is heavily marked, and is prestigious, as is the provision of rice for those outside the hearth-group. I will explore the significance of the sharing of meat from domestic animals in later chapters.

## **5. The role of gender in decision-making in rice cultivation**

The ability to effectively make choices regarding rice-growing is may be said to be made to appear to the



outsider as held jointly by the couple, by men and women together. Decisions and choices are publicly presented, for example at meetings, as having been made by the couple as a unit. It was only after I had been in Pa' Dalih for some time that I realized that certain choices, those key ones considered to necessitate a particularly close understanding of the rice and its needs, appear to be made by adult women. It is women who are most prominent in deciding which varieties of rice to plant in a given year.

It is almost invariably only women who put aside especially good ears for seed during harvesting in their own fields and it is women who tend to take seed from each other's fields during cooperative work groups, or who go and ask for it if there is no convenient cooperative work day in the field from which seed is desired. Women show a greater interest in discussing different varieties and know more about their respective merits than do men.

However, it is not the case that men know little about varieties or that they never select seed. Although women learn earlier about different varieties, many men know a good deal. They do participate in the selection of seed although women's opinions are considered generally more authoritative. Although I was told that men are not skilled at selecting seed, this was not a comment which was repeated often and it was said in rather a secretive tone, as though it were something which should not rightly be revealed. It can be said that the involvement of men in seed selection is publicly stated to be pretty much equivalent to that of women, but in practice women are more involved.

Both men and women are involved in the choice of site for both late luun and late baa. In this case men show a keen interest in the decision; they tend to be particularly involved in the selection of sites for late

luun. Men are also very involved in the decision as to when to initiate the year in late luun by carrying out the burn. However, it is almost always women who make the decision as to when to put seed to soak and when to sow it, although, again, this is not made public; it is the couple which is held responsible for the decision. The reason for the particularly strong involvement of men in the initiation of late luun may be attributed to the fact that men are considered to be knowledgeable regarding when it is likely that it will rain, how dry the wood is, and so on - they know more about natural phenomena. The decision is not related to the state of the rice to be planted. In the case of late baa, this kind of knowledge is not so relevant; decisions relate more directly to the rice itself, to an estimate of how likely it is to grow and thrive. This kind of estimate is considered far more likely to be successfully made by a woman.

## **6. Conclusion**

I have in this chapter discussed how rice is seen to be 'special' by the Kelabit, how it is seen to be different from other foods, including other crops, even other grains.

Other cultivated foods are simply planted and then left to grow, with little attention from human beings. This applies to crops planted to be eaten as vegetables (side dishes at the rice meal) and also to those planted to be eaten as snacks. It also applies to starch foods other than rice - other grains and root crops. It is as though the Kelabits believed that all these crops are able to grow by themselves. I have only once seen anyone specifically weeding a crop other than rice (cassava). Crops other than rice are not guarded from pests. As far as I am aware prayers are not said when crops other than rice are planted. In short, I suggest that crops other

than rice are treated as though they were more similar to what I have called 'unmanaged resources' than they are to rice.

The cultivation of rice, on the other hand, is seen as a great human achievement. Rice is cared for lovingly while it is growing, and every effort is made to make its growing environment as favourable as possible. Prayers are said at every stage of rice cultivation. This makes it clear that it is considered likely that a rice crop may fail.

Because rice cultivation is considered so difficult, success in this enterprise is prestigious. There is an emphasis on the complexity of rice cultivation, on the difficulty of decisions regarding rice growing. Success in these decisions generates and legitimates prestige.

Decisions regarding rice-growing are made at the individual hearth-group level, in one sense, and prestige is generated through successful decision-making at this level; but in another sense, they are made by the community, the bawang, together. The decisions made by leading hearth-groups tend to be followed by other hearth-groups and the end-product is that the timing of the rice-year is synchronized, that varieties grown by the bawang tend towards identity and that fields are sited in groups.

It can thus be said that rice is not only grown by each separate hearth-group but also, in a sense, by each separate bawang.

Both men and women are involved in decision-making in rice-growing. The Kelabit couple makes rice-growing decisions together to a large extent, and it appears that this is the way that the situation is actually meant to appear. However, women are in fact more closely involved

in decision-making, particularly decisions that relate directly to the rice itself. There is a sense in which women are more closely associated with rice than men are.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE ORGANISATION OF FOOD PRODUCTION

In this chapter I want to look at the organisation of labour involved in the production of food, both cultivated and wild. In the previous chapter I looked at attitudes to different foods, and discussed the way in which rice is singled out from other foods, both cultivars other than rice and wild foods. In this chapter I want to look at the difference between the organisation of labour involved in the production of cultivars other than rice and in the organisation of rice-growing labour.

The organization of rice-growing labour shows quite clearly the emphasis placed on rice as a crop. There appear to be clear implicit prescriptions about the correct way of organizing labour in the cultivation of rice. Adherence to these prescriptions is highlighted, and prestige is associated with such adherence. While it is clear that there are also prescribed ways of cultivating other crops and of going about the hunting and gathering of what I am calling unmanaged resources, following these prescriptions is not made much of publicly. Explicit prestige is not associated with doing things the proper way. It is not nearly so easy to retrieve the prescriptions associated with the obtaining of foods other than rice since these are not publicized in the way that those associated with rice-growing are.

Rice has a strong association with the domestic group which cultivates it and which will eventually control its consumption, the group I am calling the hearth-group (see chapter five for a discussion of this term). The prominence given to correct organization of labour in its production is associated with this. The cultivation of rice is also associated with the community as a whole.

This is to be seen in the emphasis on cooperative cultivation.

Rice is always produced by a defined group, which legitimately controls its disposal. In one sense, this group is the hearth-group; in another, it may be said to be the community. The group that produces it has rights over its disposal and consumption. This differentiates rice from other crops and from unmanaged resources from the forest, disposal of which does not legitimately lie fully with any particular hearth-group nor individual, as we shall see.

Other foods do not have these strong associations, and there is little emphasis, if any, on the constitution of the group which produces them for consumption.

There is an important exception to this. Meat from domestic animals, consumed only when visitors from outside the community are present (in particular at irau feasts, discussed later in the thesis) is, like rice, marked as produced and controlled by a specific hearth-group. The meat from wild animals which is consumed on an everyday basis is not marked as is that from domestic animals. However, I will not go into the significance of the consumption of domestic meat in this chapter, reserving that for later chapters in which I look more closely at the underlying significance of wild foods and of meat, both wild and domestic.

### **1. The organisation of rice-growing labour**

In the Kelabit Highlands, some agricultural work is done through cooperative labour groups, involving the exchange of labour between hearth-groups belonging to one community (bawang), and some is done by members of the

separate hearth-groups on their own. However, only rice-growing tasks are done through cooperative labour<sup>59</sup>. Crops other than rice are cultivated by the individual hearth-groups on their own, without recourse to cooperative labour exchange.

### 1.1 Cooperative rice-growing work

There are at present two ways of organising cooperative rice-growing work - kerja baya and kerja sama. The term kerja is not Kelabit but Malay, and it is translated into English as 'work'. It is now widely used in Kelabit, largely to describe wage labour in town. The term baya appears to be an original Kelabit word for exchange labour. The term kerja sama has been introduced via the SIB church. It is also Malay and means 'working together'. It is used to describe a form of cooperative labour organisation closely associated with the church, as we shall see.

#### 1.1.1 Kerja baya

All cooperative work arrangements in rice fields except kerja sama may be described as kerja baya, whether involving a large number of hearth-groups or a few, and whether long-term or casual short-term. However the term is more often used of the larger exchange groups which have a longer-term existence. This is the most common form of organisation of cooperative labour. It is usually described as kerja baya, which means 'exchange labour', but it may also be called kerja kawan-kawan, which means 'working as/with friends', or ruyud, which appears to have

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There is no perceptible difference in the proportion of work done through cooperative work groups as between wet and dry methods of cultivating rice. Crain suggests (1970:323) that wet rice in the Mengalong Lun Bawang involves less need for cooperation than dry rice.

no meaning<sup>60</sup>.

In kerja baya, a group of individuals belonging to different hearth-groups work together, almost always on a task associated with rice cultivation<sup>61</sup>. This is on behalf of one of the hearth-groups in the community to which the participant individuals belong<sup>62</sup>. The labour contributed will be repaid at a later date, through kerja baja, by the hearth-group for whom the task has been done.

Kerja baya groups may be of any size ranging from two or three individuals to a large proportion of the agriculturally active population of the community. Only married people normally participate in kerja baya, although young unmarried people may participate in kerja sama, the other form of organisation of agricultural activity. Should a young person participate, this is always a girl.

No formal meetings are held at which decisions as to how kerja baya will be organised are made. A consensus as to the order in which a kerja baya group will visit its members' farms seems to come into existence gradually but it only becomes evident each morning.

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<sup>60</sup> The Lun Bawang have similar cooperative work arrangements for rice-growing. The Lun Bawang of both the Mengalong and of Ba Kelalan, like the Kelabit, use the term ruyud or riud for the most common type of organization (Crain 1970:265-272; 1973:12-15 and Langub 1984:8). Those of Lawas Damit use a different term, pemalui (Deegan 1973:50; 1974:234-237). However, there appears to be a tendency for cooperative work groups among the Lun Bawang to be more permanent than among the Kelabit, at least at present.

<sup>61</sup> Where the task is not associated with rice-growing, it is related to house construction. This, like rice-growing, is an activity which is closely associated with the identity of the hearth-group. I will be exploring this area in chapter five.

<sup>62</sup> It appears that in the Mengalong, unlike in Pa' Dalih, the riud may sometimes be used for activities not associated



Kerja baya works in two basic ways, although they fade into each other. During a given phase of the rice year, there is a tendency for longer-term kerja baya groups to form, which, in a general way, tend to work around the fields of their participant hearth-groups. The formation of such groups seems to be based on two things: the locality of fields, with hearth-groups making fields in a given locality tending to coalesce into a kerja baya group; and longhouse membership<sup>63</sup>. In Pa' Dalih in the first rice year I was there I observed that there were two groupings into cooperative work groups which seemed to be broadly based on longhouse membership, although there were certain hearth-groups which did not join the grouping appropriate to their longhouse of residence. In the second rice year only one kerja baya grouping coalesced for the whole community, however. This may reflect the fluctuations in the gradual integration of the community of Pa' Dalih, which originates from a number of different communities.

Where longer-term kerja baya groups do coalesce, they do not have a definite membership. Nor do all member hearth-groups always send representatives to participate when the group is 'going with' (me ngan where me = 'to go' and ngan = 'with') a given other hearth-group. Participation is classed as either me nemalio, which creates a debt on the part of the recipient hearth-group, or me mepil, which repays one (nemalio and mepil have no other meaning). There is no term for labour-debts as such, however, and calculations of person-days owing are kept by the hearth-groups concerned without being recorded in any concrete way or arbitrated by a third party. Such

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with rice cultivation (Crain 1973:18).

<sup>63</sup> Among the Lun Bawang too, there is a tendency for longhouse membership to be the basis for cooperative work groups (Crain 1973:12-13; Deegan 1974:237).

debts must be repaid, but they need not be repaid immediately. Although it is, I think, regarded as laudable and possibly prestigious to repay labour debts quickly, during the same phase of the rice year, this is not always achieved.

Kerja baya groups coalesce because of the proximity of the rice fields of a group of hearth-groups. They do not always last beyond the particular phase of the rice year during which they come into being. However, the form of the group may well be very similar at a later phase of the same rice year. There is more of a tendency for agricultural activities to be done in cooperative groups at some phases of the rice year than at others (planting and harvesting, which are enjoyed, are phases when cooperative work is very intense). A kerja baya group may disintegrate after a phase during which cooperative work is usual, or it may continue to exist in a much attenuated form. This means only some of the participant hearth-groups continuing to involve themselves in it, or that most hearth-groups only participate to the extent of repaying labour debts they have incurred at the earlier phase.

Where two or more definite, semi-permanent groups do not coalesce, for a particular phase of the rice year or for the whole of it - as occurred in the 1987-88 rice year - a number of small, very impermanent kerja baya groups tend to form, coalescing and disintegrating regularly. This is the other form of kerja baya referred to above. A certain amount of this form of kerja baya always seems to operate. During periods where the large kerja baya groups are quite stable (which appears to be the case where there is more than one large kerja baya group operating) these small kerja baya groups tend to be very small, two or

three individuals, and these are almost always women. They 'go with' a friend who has a small amount of work she wants done in her field, not enough for a large kerja baya group. During periods where only one large kerja baya group is in operation, however, almost all hearth-groups participate in the large kerja baya group which will 'go with' one of its member hearth-groups almost every day; most also participate in the small, more ad hoc groups which constantly coalesce and disintegrate.

The formation and disintegration of such small groups is largely based on the building up and repayment of labour debts; debts are built up the first time such a group goes out together and as these are paid off the group tends to disintegrate. With the large kerja baya groups, debts are not only created once, the first time a group goes out together to the field of one of its participant hearth-groups, but a number of times, as hearth-groups come along to participate on subsequent days. This is why the larger kerja baya groups have a more lasting existence. They seem to be recognized as having some sort of semi-permanent solidity, which leads hearth-groups to participate in them on such subsequent days, not only the first time they go out together to 'go with' a given hearth-group. It seems that the kerja baya groups which do become such semi-permanent entities, and which do not disintegrate as debts created on the first day are paid off, start off in the same way as the smaller, less permanent groups. But they somehow become something more solid. The reason for this happening is not always clear. There does seem to be a kind of urge to create and maintain more long-lasting kerja baya groups<sup>64</sup>.

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This echoes the more permanent riud among the Lun Bawang (Crain 1973:12-15; Langub 1984:8).

It is interesting to note that the degree of permanence of kerja baya groups and the degree to which the community participates in semi-permanent rather than very impermanent kerja baya groups seems to be related to the feeling about the prospects of success of the currently growing rice. Where the rice year is going well and the prospects for a bumper harvest seem good, as in the rice year 1986-87, participation in semi-permanent kerja baya groups is greater and there is little participation in small impermanent kerja baya groups. Where things are not going too well, for example due to adverse weather, and the rice does not seem to be growing well, there is a lesser degree of participation in the more permanent forms of kerja baya. This happened in the rice year 1987-88.

### 1.1.2 Kerja sama

Kerja sama is not as frequent as kerja baya. Full-day kerja sama takes place once, sometimes twice, a week. The ladies of the community may also occasionally hold a kerja sama kaum ibu, a 'ladies circle kerja sama', bringing the possible maximum number of full kerja sama days in a week to three. Occasionally a 'morning kerja sama' (kerja sama lokechang) is held. This takes place before breakfast at about eight o'clock. It counts as a half-day kerja sama.

Kerja sama is focused on the community as a parish (sidang). Decisions as to which hearth-groups are going to 'host' kerja sama<sup>65</sup> in a given week are made in time for

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I put 'host' in inverted commas because I am using the term in a slightly unusual way. The term usually refers to a situation where food, drink, entertainment and so on are provided by certain people for guests. Here, however, I am using the term to refer to a situation where the guests are actually

the Sunday main service in the parish (sidang) church, when they are announced. There is a good deal of variation in the frequency of kerja sama. It may not occur at all or only once or twice in a whole phase of the rice year, or it may occur at its maximum frequency over the whole of a phase. Like a higher degree of permanency in kerja baya, the frequency of kerja sama is directly related to the success of the rice crop; where the rice year looks like being a good one, many kerja sama are held. Kerja sama tend to be held most often at harvest.

Kerja sama is an institution which was set up by the SIB church. To some extent, it appears to replace in social function the pre-Christian agricultural feasts which were important among both Kelabit and Lun Bawang in the past and which appear to still be practised among some Lun Bawang<sup>66</sup>. The most important difference between kerja baya and kerja sama is that the labour contributed in kerja sama is not directly repaid as it is in kerja baya. The labour is seen as being donated to the church, although the work being done is for an individual hearth-group; that hearth-group contributes money to the SIB church on the occasion of the kerja sama held for its benefit. However, in practice there is a sense in which kerja sama is supposed to be repaid, as we shall see.

Whereas it is very unusual for kerja baya work not to be related to rice-growing, kerja sama work is sometimes not. A hearth-group may ask for a kerja sama to carry out

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participating in work for the benefit of the 'host', although food and drink are provided for them.

<sup>66</sup> Among the Kelabit these were termed ngerupan; the Lun Bawang of Ba Kelalan and of the Mengalong had three types, ngerufan (Mengalong)/ ngerupen (Ba Kelalan), musang and ngesul (Crain 1973:15-16; Langub 1984: 9). Those of Lawas Damit appear to have had only the musang (Deegan 1973:48). In Ba Kelalan church-focused cooperative labour similar to Kelabit kerja sama, termed umum, has not replaced but exists alongside pre-Christian agricultural feasts (Langub 1984:9)

anything it needs doing. We used to get our firewood collected in this way.

Kerja sama may be 'hosted' by an individual hearth-group or it may be 'hosted' by the whole community in its capacity as parish (sidang), if other communities are invited to participate. It must be 'hosted', because whatever group 'hosts' it must pay money to the SIB church. Where the work needs to be done by an individual hearth-group it will normally be that hearth-group which 'hosts' the kerja sama, although it seems that it is possible for a hearth-group to 'host' a kerja sama on behalf of another hearth-group. I was once told that this was planned, on behalf of someone in dire straits with her rice crop, although in the end it did not happen. Where the work needs to be done by the whole community it may be 'hosted' by one of the member hearth-group of the community on behalf of the community as a whole; it is clear from the way this is advertised and discussed that this is prestigious for the 'host' hearth-group. Where other communities nearby are asked to come and help in the task, the community on behalf of whom the task is being accomplished 'hosts' the kerja sama, and contributes money to the participating parishes.

Where it is decided that some work needs doing but no hearth-group offers to pay the church for it, such work may be simply carried out without any payment being made to the church. In this case it is called gotong royong, a term common in Malaysia and Indonesia for this type of work<sup>67</sup>.

### 1.1.3 Kerja baya and kerja sama: the organization of the day

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This is parallel to what the Lun Bawang of Ba Kelalan term peruyung, literally 'working together' in both Kelabit and Lun

The way in which the day is divided up for work and the way in which the amount of work to be done is calculated is the same for kerja baya and for kerja sama, where, in the latter case, a task associated with rice-growing is in hand and a full day's work is being done (not a half-day kerja sama lokechang; see above).

The work day starts at about 9.00. Within the last few years it has become usual to measure the work-day by the clock for certain tasks, and the beginning of the day is timed by the clock for all tasks. Members of the 'host' hearth-group will make clear which field and which part of the field is to be worked upon, but will not actually direct operations. Where some direction is necessary, for example in measuring out areas to be completed (certain tasks are measured by the area covered) it is not members of the 'host' hearth-group who do this but individuals from other hearth-groups who have been quietly asked to do so by members of the 'host' hearth-group. This accords with the general custom according to which occasions 'hosted' by a hearth-group, including irau, are not organized by members of that hearth-group. To do so would be seen as forward and would make the individuals concerned migu ('ashamed' or 'shy'; this word has more or less the same meaning as the Malay malu).

The basis for calculating the amount of work to be done varies according to the task in hand. For certain tasks, such as weeding and clearing of undergrowth, the area to be worked over is measured out, a standard area multiplied by the number of participants. For harvesting the amount to be harvested is prescribed, a standard quantity multiplied by the number of participants. For all other tasks the time is measured, in theory, although

there is a degree to which the finishing time depends on the 'host' hearth-group, as perhaps it always used to in the past.

There can be quite a lot of variation in how much actual time is counted as being a 'day's work'. The prescribed area of a very weedy field takes longer to weed than that of a field with few weeds in it. The prescribed area of a field with well-growing rice takes less time to harvest than that of a field with ill-growing rice. The difference between the length of the work-day varies even more as between different tasks than as between the same task accomplished in different fields. It is interesting to note that there is a strong tendency for work-days involving tasks which are more enjoyed (planting and, particularly, harvesting) to be longer than those involving tasks which are not much liked (weeding). Planting and harvesting are, as noted above, phases of the rice year at which cooperative work is most frequent.

Despite the above, not only are the work-days accomplishing the same task in different fields considered equivalent, but so are work-days accomplishing different tasks. A day's work weeding a field with few weeds is readily exchangeable for a day's work harvesting in a field of badly-growing rice, although the former may last two hours and the latter five.

There is, in fact, little economic 'fairness' in the way that kerja baya is organised. This is also illustrated by the fact that the work done by different people in cooperative work groups is always considered equivalent, whether done by a man or a woman, a young person or an old one, a skilled worker or a slow one. Although when wage labour is being employed, a man is sometimes paid a little more than a woman, in kerja baya



men's and women's work is worth the same.

It is usual to divide the day's work into two halves, with a break for the midday rice meal (kuman nuba') and a rest in the middle. Where activities not timed by the clock are being done, the afternoon session is usually shorter than the morning one, and sometimes all the work prescribed is completed before lunch. This is very often the case with weeding.

The midday rice meal is eaten either in a field house (daan) or back at the longhouse. It is eaten in the field house where the field being worked on is more than about five minutes from the longhouse.

When the midday rice meal is in a field house, this is not always that belonging to the `host' hearth-group. Sometimes another field house is used if it is closer or if the `host' hearth-group has not yet built a proper one. Where there is no proper field house at all nearby, the midday rice meal may be taken in the open, under the shade of some trees. There is usually a lean-to shack of some sort which is used for cooking the side dishes provided for the participants by the `host' hearth-group.

The side dishes provided for the midday rice meal are never cooked by someone belonging to the `host' hearth-group. This is another example of the `host' hearth-group not being directly involved in the running of an occasion it is `hosting'. A woman from another hearth-group is asked by the `host' hearth-group to prepare the side dishes during the morning session, instead of working in the field. If the woman concerned finishes cooking before the break, she will go and join the other participants in the field. The side dishes are cooked either at the field house, where the midday rice meal is to be eaten there, or

at the longhouse, if the participants are to return there for the break.

#### 1.1.4 `Hosting' kerja baya and kerja sama

`Hosting' a kerja sama involves two things: paying money to the SIB church, and providing food and drink for the participants. The money that is paid to the SIB church is paid to the local sidang or parish, i.e. to the parish of the home community (bawang). The amount paid was, in 1986-1988, M\$10 for a full day of work by however many people turn up and M\$0.50 per participant for a kerja sama lokechang. Where a neighbouring community participates in work for a given community the host community pays money to the parish of the participating community, the amount being fixed at the time. This is not common and no definite sum seems to be prescribed.

At both kerja sama and kerja baya, drink - usually sweet tea or coffee, sometimes sweetened condensed milk mixed with water - and side dishes for the rice meal are provided. At kerja baya this is usually all that is provided. Occasionally snacks are provided, but this is rare. At kerja sama the provision of food and drink is a more significant matter. Snack foods are frequently provided, which may be taken to the participants in the field in the middle of the morning or distributed before the midday rice meal (and consumed separately from it). The provision of snack foods is especially likely at harvest. The most common, and the most traditional, snack food provided at kerja sama is senape, rice steamed inside leaf packets. Where the snack is taken to the participants in the fields it is always senape. Urum, fried snacks, which are made from rice, root crops or wheat flour (bought in town), are also common, especially if there are a lot of wild pigs in the jungle at the time and there is consequently plenty of dripping available in which to fry them. The side dishes for the rice meal which are provided at kerja sama are ones which are

considered tastier, and they are more elaborately prepared and there are more of them than at kerja baya.

Normally rice in the form eaten at the rice meal (nuba') is not provided at kerja baya or kerja sama. Sometimes, however, at kerja sama, less often at kerja baya, it is provided for the participants by the host hearth-group. It is wrapped in the large leaf bundles used at irau, which contain about four times the quantity in a normal-sized leaf packet of nuba', as eaten at the everyday rice meal.

Such provision of rice by the host hearth-group usually occurs towards the end of the rice harvest, particularly if it is a good one, and when it occurs at this time it is described as kuman pade bru ('eating new rice'), since the rice served is from the new harvest<sup>68</sup>. When I witnessed this, it often appeared to be a surprise to the participants in the work group, who have brought their own rice, and not altogether a pleasant one. This may be explained by the fact that eating other hearth-groups' rice involves the creation of a debt<sup>69</sup>. However, it is also possible that the participants were aware that they were going to be treated to kuman pade bru and that they were simply making the appropriate noises. It is not usual nor even polite to accept another hearth-group's rice without making a show of it.

While kerja baya is a straightforward exchange of rice-growing labour (although the labour exchanged is not always very equal, as has been discussed) the attitude to kerja sama is complex. There is a sense in which kerja sama, particularly when they involve the provision of rice in the form of nuba', appear to function as displays of

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<sup>68</sup> A communal kuman pade bru is also held at the end of the rice harvest. I will be discussing this in chapter six.

prestige. It was clear from the atmosphere and from the way in which the event was talked about afterwards that the number of participants in a kerja sama definitely reflects the prestige of the members of the hearth-group hosting it. This may be seen as relating to the descendance of kerja sama from agricultural feasts, which were in the past generative of prestige<sup>70</sup>.

However, there is another sense in which kerja sama can be the opposite of prestigious, especially where they are held too often by a given hearth-group. There is a recognition that the labour received at a kerja sama is usually worth more than the money contributed to the church and the food and drink provided really merit<sup>71</sup>. The fact that wage labour now occurs in the Kelabit Highlands underlines this, since paying the going rate of M\$5 a day per worker is clearly considerably more costly than paying M\$10 for perhaps 20 or 30 participants in a kerja sama. Kerja sama is, I think, seen partly as a form of exchange labour. The fact that all hearth-groups have the possibility of 'hosting' kerja sama means that the cheapness of the labour provided is negated by the fact that the hearth-group which receives the labour will then contribute labour to the hearth-group which contributed to it. However the relationship between giving and receiving labour is not as direct nor as obvious as it is in kerja baya, because the fact that someone came to your kerja sama does not mean that you have to go along to theirs (although your not going will be adversely commented on). Also, not all hearth-group actually do 'host' kerja sama during a given phase of the rice year, or even during the whole rice year, so repayment is not always made.

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<sup>69</sup> I will be discussing this in chapter five.

<sup>70</sup> As they still are when practised by the Lun Bawang (Crain 1973:15-16; Langub 1984:9).

<sup>71</sup> This goes against the basis of the generation of prestige at agricultural feasts among the Lun Bawang, according to Crain

The anomalous attitude to kerja sama can be clearly seen in the comments made concerning it. Hearth-groups which hold kerja sama too often are gossiped about. I witnessed the issue of people holding kerja sama too often being mentioned publicly in church by one of the deacons.

However, the fact that such hearth-groups are actually making capital out of the underpaid labour they are receiving is not actually discussed. The prestige which supposedly should be accumulated via hosting kerja sama is however also not emphasised. Only if an extremely good spread of food (side dishes for the rice meal and snacks) is provided are any positive comments likely to be passed concerning the hearth-group hosting a kerja sama. The absence of positive comments indicates the lack of prestige build-up since such comments are, in this social set-up, the only indicator of any accumulation of prestige.

## **1.2 The relative importance of cooperative and hearth-group labour in rice-growing**

The amount of rice-growing work done by members of the hearth-group on their own rather than through kerja baya or kerja sama varies from hearth-group to hearth-group. Some hearth-groups rely much more on kerja baya and kerja sama than others.

Not to participate in the cooperative work group is disapproved of and unprestigious, and those hearth-groups which do not participate in Pa' Dalih tend to be regarded as eccentric and lacking in prestige. However, it is not well regarded to depend solely on cooperative work either, because this means that no work is being done after the day's work with the cooperative work group, which finishes

anytime between 11.30 and 3.00. This implies that the members of the host hearth-group are not rajin (hard-working). Even where a hearth-group is capable of producing enough rice without its members working in their own rice-fields after the cooperative work group has finished work for the day, not doing so is regarded as unprestigious, da'at (literally 'bad')<sup>72</sup>. Individuals who are well regarded in the community and whose decisions are respected are those who spend most time in their own rice fields working on their own after the cooperative work day is finished<sup>73</sup>.

Cooperative labour may be used for most rice-growing activities: for late baa: lemidik (clearing of fields), naro' patun (making and repairing of bunds), naro' taa (making of fences), nibu (transplanting seedlings into late), ramamo (weeding) and rane (harvesting of rice), maba pade (carrying of harvested rice back to rice storage hut [lepo]); for late luun: lemidik (clearing of undergrowth), nepung (cutting down of trees), ngarik (chopping off of branches of felled trees), sometimes temo'a (gathering together of unburnt matter after burn into piles) and nutud bupun (burning off this unburnt matter), no'an (dibbling) and mra (sowing), naro' taa (making of fences), ramamo (weeding), rane (harvesting of rice), maba pade (carrying back of harvested rice to rice storage hut [lepo]).

The activities which are done by cooperative work groups are all ones which involve a considerable investment of time; this makes it worthwhile to get a work group in. They are also, however, those considered least likely to fail. Activities which are considered likely to fail, for reasons either of skill or because they

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The association of 'bad'-ness with lack of prestige is discussed in chapter eight.

necessitate prayer (Christian prayer, nowadays) are carried out by members of the hearth-group which is making the rice-field. These all involve late baa: naro' samai (making of nursery beds), ngepo (putting rice seed to soak) and ngotad (sowing of sprouted seed in nurseries). All of these activities are much more likely to be directed by a woman than by a man. Moro (guarding the ripening rice against attack by birds) is also always done by members of the hearth-group making the rice-field.

## **2. The association of rice-growing with the hearth-group**

The close association of rice with the hearth-group may be seen in the fact that all input into the cultivation of rice is either actually hearth-group labour or, because it is considered to be exactly repaid (although, as we have seen, it is actually not), as equivalent to hearth-group labour. The labour input via cooperative work groups is repaid by the host hearth-group when attending cooperative work groups hosted by other hearth-group. It is extremely rare for one hearth-group to contribute labour to the production of rice by another hearth-group. While I was in Pa' Dalih there was only one instance where this happened: one day's labour was contributed by each of two women to another hearth-group which was clearly having a good deal of trouble carrying through its rice harvest.

Pade (unhusked rice) and bra (husked rice) are equally not normally given by one hearth-group to another. There is a form of harvesting (rane mole) which involves members of one hearth-group harvesting in the rice-fields of another hearth-group and taking home with them what they harvest or part of it. Where this occurs, the rice which they take home is worth more than the sum of money



they would have been paid for a day's wage labour. This is a way of donating rice to a hearth-group in need, although it is slightly masked. It appears to be very rare, however.

### 3. The communal character of rice-growing by the bawang

I hope to have demonstrated that rice cultivation is in one sense communal. There is a strong prescription that rice-growing work be done in cooperation with other hearth-groups. Almost every day cooperative work is organized for the bulk of the day; it is only after the cooperative work day is over that individuals go to work on their own fields separately.

All Borneo peoples who grow rice do so at least partly and very often largely through cooperative labour arrangements. If they did not synchronize their planting and harvesting and make fields close to one another, this would, say the Kelabit, mean that the rice would be more susceptible to attack by avian pests. Such synchronization implies the need for the mobilization of large amounts of labour at certain bottlenecks.

However, the prescription for cooperative work seems to go beyond the purely utilitarian. Firstly, cooperative labour arrangements are used not only for bottleneck points - which means planting and harvesting - but for activities like weeding. Also, while there is certainly disapproval (voiced or expressed in other ways) of a hearth-group which distances itself from cooperative labour organization, this is not phrased in terms of possible crop failure but is a question of what can only be termed 'morality'. It seems clear that rice is 'supposed' to be grown by cooperative labour.

People say that work is lighter and easier in cooperative work groups, because of the company. This is a reason commonly given in South-East Asia for working in this way. I feel that such statements should not be

simply taken at face value, however, since the desire to work together does not apply to the cultivation of all crops. There is theoretically no reason why planting of other crops could not be organized in this way. Certain crops, such as cassava and corn, are grown in considerable quantities and some of the work involved (particularly the planting) could be done in cooperative work groups.

The cooperative production of rice involves both decision-making and actual practice being led by individuals of high status. It could be said that the whole community is made to appear to be cultivating rice together under the direction of these individuals.

#### **4. The organization of rice-growing labour and prestige**

I have already discussed the way in which the decisions made by individuals of high status are followed by others. I said that the selection of varieties, the selection of sites for fields, and decisions regarding the initiation of the rice year tended to be spearheaded by such individuals. This may also be seen in the organisation of labour. There does not always appear to be very definite leadership of the semi-permanent cooperative labour groups which form for kerja baya, but where there are, they are prestigious individuals, and where there appears to be no formal leader it still tends to be such individuals whose lead in terms of decision-making tends to be followed. It is also prestigious individuals who follow the 'correct', prestigious pattern of work, involving themselves fully in kerja baya and also doing individual work in their fields after the cooperative work day is over<sup>74</sup>. They are also likely to

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Among the Lun Bawang of Lawas Damit, it was a basic qualification for the status of lun do' that you were able to exist largely within the reciprocal work structure in rice farming (Deegan 1973:269).

hold kerja sama just the right number of times, not too often but just often enough.

##### **5. The organisation of labour in the cultivation of crops other than rice and in the hunting and gathering of unmanaged resources**

I group together crops other than rice and unmanaged resources here because I feel that the way in which activities concerning them are organized has a good deal in common and separates them from rice.

While the separation of hearth-groups is always very clear in the cultivation of rice, this is not so with the cultivation of other crops. I pointed out in the last chapter that crops other than rice may be planted in late luun other than that belonging to the hearth-group. The harvesting of these crops, too, is done in a manner which de-emphasises the separateness of hearth-groups. They are not treated as hearth-group property, as rice is; rather they are treated as though they were wild foods which you ought (but do not absolutely have) to have permission to gather.

Tasks associated with the cultivation of crops other than rice are never done by cooperative labour groups. Harvesting of these crops may be carried out by members of other hearth-groups as well as by members of the hearth-group which is cultivating them. When women or girls go to harvest cultivars other than rice, they very often ask a friend or two to accompany them. Where individuals from other hearth-groups harvest crops other than rice, they keep them; this is in effect a way of giving away parts of these crops to other hearth-groups. Crops other than rice harvested by members of the hearth-group which planted and tended them in their rice field are also given away back

at the longhouse. Although the courtesy of inviting people to harvest cultivars other than rice in this way is likely to be reciprocated, no calculations are made as to exact amounts taken or times invited.

There is a close similarity in the manner of gathering and in the attitude to such gathering between this casual harvesting of cultivars other than rice by groups of friends and the gathering of non-cultivated vegetables, although the term used for the activity is different; the former is described as ngalap, whereas the latter is mrin. There is a casual atmosphere about such expeditions, and they are considered enjoyable in a way quite different from the rather rule-governed behaviour associated with rice-growing.

The fact that young girls participate in the cultivation of cultivars other than rice to a greater extent than they participate in the cultivation of rice strengthens the parallel between the harvest of cultivars other than rice and the gathering of wild vegetables, since the latter is particularly the province of young girls.

The harvest of cultivars other than rice is never done all at once, and in this it differs radically from rice. Such crops are harvested gradually, as they are needed for consumption. They are not normally stored but are consumed within 24 hours of being harvested (occasionally cassava is sliced and dried for later frying as cassava crackers, and some corn is dried to be cooked as popcorn). The casual, gradual nature of their harvesting means that there is much less emphasis on it than there is on the harvesting of rice, which is a crisis point of the year.

Far from it being unprestigious (na'am doo, literally 'not good') to treat crops other than rice in the way just described, this is seen as the 'proper' way to behave. It would not be well regarded to behave otherwise. However, it would not actually be unprestigious; and it is not prestigious to behave 'properly' - inviting others to harvest with you and sharing what you have harvested back at the longhouse. There appears, in other words, to be no prestige associated with ways of cultivating crops other than rice. This is in sharp contrast to the cultivation of rice, where 'proper' behaviour - not sharing, making clear the separateness of hearth-groups, having just the right mix of participation in cooperative labour groups and working alone in one's own fields - is generative of prestige. I shall look more closely at the nature of prestige among the Kelabit in chapters seven and eight.

The way in which the cultivation of crops other than rice is organized and the way in which wild foods are gathered or hunted reflect what I have already said about attitudes to these foods: that they grow either totally without human aid or almost without human aid. Just as decisions regarding the cultivation of crops other than rice are placed in the background, as I have already argued, the organization of labour de-emphasises human involvement in their production. If no particular hearth-group can truly be said to be responsible for their production, then there is no logic in that hearth-group benefitting solely from them. Hence the harvesting of crops other than rice, like the gathering and hunting of wild foods, lays emphasis on sharing but does not give credit to the hearth-group cultivating the crop or actually obtaining the food through any prestige generation.

## **6. The role of gender in the production of rice**

Men and women almost always work side by side in rice fields. This emphasises the joint responsibility of man and woman, of the couple, in the production of rice. This applies whether in a cooperative work group or when a couple are working together in their own rice fields. Where nepung (tree-felling) is being carried out, women carry out ngarik (cut off the branches of the fallen trees) or lemidik (clear undergrowth) while men nepung. Sometimes where there is heavy earth moving to be done in late baa, the men will do this while women perform some other task. But apart from these situations, men and women are not separated in the fields. Within the group of men and women working at the same task, there is a slight tendency for men to try to work alongside men and women alongside women, but this does not lead to any very notable separation; rather there will be, in a line of people working their way across a field, three or four men and then three or four women, followed by one woman and then two men and so on. Cooperative work groups are almost always composed of both sexes approximately equally - except for kerja sama kaum ibu, which is organised by the women's section of the SIB church and is theoretically women-only, and this occurs very rarely. In fact, I noted men present even at kerja sama kaum ibu on a number of occasions, so even here there is a tendency for the genders to be brought together.

An examination of the distribution of labour between the sexes, however, reveals that women are, in one sense, more intimately involved with the rice itself than are men. In tables seven and eight I list the activities of the rice-growing year for late baa and late luun, showing which tend to be performed by women and which by men. It can be seen that women tend to be more involved in activities which involve 'hands-on' with the rice itself,

while men carry out activities which are heavy labour. Women have a more continuous involvement with rice-growing. The tasks which are generally carried out by men are heavy tasks which are necessary in occasional bursts; those more likely to be performed by women are more constant<sup>75</sup>. The tasks engaged in by women are also those thought to be more likely to fail, and therefore to necessitate a close understanding of the rice.

**TABLE SEVEN**

**Involvement of women and women in different rice-growing tasks: late luun**

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>ENGLISH DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>CARRIED OUT BY WHICH GENDER</b>
<u>nepung</u>	felling trees	men
<u>ngarik</u>	chopping branches off felled trees	women, some men
<u>nutud</u>	burning off trees and undergrowth	man or woman, perhaps more usually man
<u>temo'a</u>	gathering together of unburnt matter after main burn into piles for reburning	men and women
<u>nutud bupun</u>	burning off matter unburnt in main burn ( <u>nutud</u> )	men and women
<u>no'an</u>	dibbling	men
<u>mra</u>	sowing of seed	women, sometimes men
<u>ramamo</u>	weeding	men and women, more often women
<u>moro</u>	guarding rice crop against pest attack	men and women
<u>rane</u>	harvesting rice	men and women

<sup>75</sup>

Among the Sipitang Lun Bawang women begin the harvest; the men and boys only join in later (Crain 1970: 256).



<u>maba pade</u>	carrying harvested rice to rice storage hut ( <u>lepo</u> )	men
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**TABLE EIGHT****Involvement of men and women in different rice-growing tasks: late baa**

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>ENGLISH DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>CARRIED OUT BY WHICH GENDER</b>
<u>lemidik</u>	clearing of grass and undergrowth from rice fields	men and women
<u>naro' patun</u>	making and repairing bunds of rice fields	men
<u>naro' taa</u>	making and repairing fences of rice fields	men
<u>naro' samai</u>	making rice nursery beds	men and women, perhaps more men
<u>ngepo</u>	putting rice seed to soak	women
<u>ngotad</u>	sowing sprouted rice seed in nursery beds	almost always women
<u>nibu</u>	transplanting of rice	men and women
<u>ramamo</u>	weeding of rice field	usually women
<u>moro</u>	guarding rice crop from pest attack	men and women
<u>rane</u>	harvesting of rice	men and women
<u>maba pade</u>	carrying harvested rice to rice storage hut ( <u>lepo</u> )	men

The Kelabit word bete' describes a person who engages in inappropriate activities. An example of being bete' is engaging in activities appropriate to the other gender.

However, the fact that an activity is bete' for one gender does not exclude their occasional involvement in it, and there is no disapproval when it occurs, which may be quite regularly. In late luun, because a ratio of 2:1 of sowers to dibblers is necessary, it is common for some men to sow. This may be joked about, with a man who sowed saying that he was a woman today, but it is perfectly acceptable and ordinary, and not a matter for embarrassment.

In general, men are more involved in late luun than in late baa. There is heavy work involved in the making of both types of rice field, which men are considered particularly able to do. However, this is necessary every year for late luun, while it is only necessary on a large scale in the initial few years of a late baa. After this, late baa are considered manageable without a man should this be necessary, although occasional major repairs are necessary and these are usually undertaken by a man. However, this merely highlights the fact that a man can be dispensed with on a regular basis in the cultivation of late baa, not that he will be dispensed with.

Women spend more time alone in their rice fields than do men. Men are much less likely to go on their own to the rice fields without their wives, than are women to go without their husbands. It is not an uncommon sight to see a middle-aged woman working alone in the rice fields of her hearth-group, who, upon being asked where her husband is, will reply that, after the cooperative work day finished, he went 'to the forest' (me polong), hunting or gathering forest produce such as rattan.

It is clear that in a certain sense women are associated more closely with rice than are men, although at first glance men and women appear to be fairly equally involved in rice cultivation. The fact that it is women

who take charge of the tasks which are considered likely to fail, mentioned above, underlines this point. Significant here is the fact that not only are adult women more closely associated with rice than are adult men but so are unmarried girls more closely associated with it than are unmarried young men.

Involvement in rice cultivation does not seem ever to be forced on young girls, but there is approval of girls who do involve themselves to some extent which encourages them to do so. It is regarded as essential that a young girl has some notion of rice-growing by the time she marries and becomes a mother. At this point she will very quickly be expected to begin to involve herself actively in rice-growing. Normally young girls begin by involving themselves in the processing of rice, helping in the husking of rice and in the pounding of rice into rice flour, bunid. Later they begin to go along to the late to prepare the midday rice meal for cooperative work groups.

Eventually they begin to do a little work in the late, although, at least in Pa' Dalih, they rarely participate in cooperative work groups<sup>76</sup>. When they do participate, it is usually at the rice harvest, which is a festive time of year and particularly enjoyed. Even here, however, most young girls only do half a day's work with the cooperative work group, with someone else from their hearth-group doing the other half. Occasionally, a young girl will participate quite fully in rice growing. There was one young woman in Pa' Dalih, not yet married or a parent (although later revealed to have been pregnant at the time) who took complete charge of transplanting the rice crop for her hearth-group in the 1987-88 rice year,

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I have been told by female informants from Bario Asal that when they were young they used to form their own kerja baya groups and make the rounds of the rice fields belonging to their hearth-groups. This recalls the formation of riud groups on the basis of generation among the Lun Bawang of Sipitang (Crain

because her mother was away.

Young men, on the other hand, practically never take any interest in rice-growing. Very occasionally a young man will help with nepung (felling of trees) in late luun. Otherwise the only time I ever saw young men doing any work in the rice fields was during the 1987 harvest, when the whole group of young unmarried men in Pa' Dalih turned up for kerja sama on one occasion. The 1987 harvest was a very good one and the festive attitude to the whole harvest was no doubt behind the participation of the young men. Their arrival, considerably later than that of the rest of the kerja sama group, was greeted by calls, greetings and jokes. It was clearly seen as an outstanding and unusual occurrence.

The fact that young men do not participate in rice-growing is never commented on. Although the participation of the group of young men on that occasion was certainly approved of, their more usual non-participation was clearly not seen as anything to criticise. It was seen as normal. Even in the case of one woman in Pa' Dalih who was newly widowed, had a number of young children and no other adults in the hearth-group, no criticism was levelled at her 21-year-old son, although he never helped her in the rice field. This was despite the fact that she was clearly completely unable to cope and failed to produce a rice harvest of any significance in either of the rice years during which I was resident in Pa' Dalih.

## **7. Conclusion**

In this chapter I have looked at the organisation of food-producing activities involved in the growing of rice and of other crops and in the gathering and hunting of

unmanaged resources. I have shown how there is a strong prescription for cooperative production of rice through two forms of cooperative work group, kerja baya and kerja sama, and at how this is organized. Cooperation in rice growing, although it derives partly from practical considerations, also stems from a strong belief that rice should be grown in this way.

However, the organization of cooperative labour is based upon the exact reciprocation of labour contributed. Through this means it is always clear that the rice grown by a hearth-group is grown through its own labour. Also, a significant proportion of rice-growing labour is carried out on their own by hearth-group members in their own fields.

Prestige is associated with organizing rice-growing labour the 'proper' way. This means both participating in cooperative labour groups and working in one's own fields individually. I have discussed how it is prestigious individuals who are the leaders in cooperative rice-growing activities, just as they are the leaders in decision making in rice-growing, as discussed in chapter three.

It is through success in growing rice as a hearth-group that prestige is achieved, and the separateness of hearth-groups is of fundamental importance. This separateness is constantly emphasised through the separateness of control over rice and its production, and the emphasis on the separateness of the decisions made by each hearth-group. In another sense, however, rice-growing is an enterprise which is engaged in by the community cooperatively, led by prestigious individuals.

In the production of other crops and in hunting and

gathering, on the other hand, there is no organized cooperation involving repayment of labour invested. While such foods may be gathered or harvested by groups of people, they cannot be said to be produced cooperatively.

An invitation to gather or harvest with someone, either from the wild or from a field, is not cooperative. It is merely done at the same time in the same place.

I have also looked at the role of gender in the production of rice. I have concluded that although both men and women are closely involved in rice-growing, women are in fact more involved than men. This reminds us of what was noted in the previous chapter: that although both genders are involved in decision-making in rice-growing, women are more closely involved than men and are considered more capable of making these decisions. I would argue that this all suggests that women are, in one sense, more closely associated with rice than are men. However, both men and women are involved, as a couple, in both decision-making and investment of labour in rice-growing. There is also, then, a sense in which it is the couple as a unit which is associated with rice growing.

I would like to illustrate the relationship between men and women in rice-growing by relating what one informant said to me. There is a pre-Christian deity called *Deraya* which was particularly strongly associated with rice cultivation. This deity was prayed to for success in growing rice. The word deraya also means something similar to 'luck' (perhaps the Malay nasib). It is said nowadays that some people have a greater quantity of deraya than others, and this is said to be coupled with having a special relationship with the ada' pade, the rice spirits. When discussing this with an informant, she listed three people in Pa' Dalih who had this greater quantity of deraya and a special relationship with the

ada' pade. They were all women. When I pointed this out, the informant said that she meant the couple rather than the women, but then she said that perhaps she did mean the women... This illustrates nicely the fact that in one sense it is the couple which is associated with rice-growing, but in another sense the woman is more strongly associated with responsibility for and success in rice-growing.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**LONGHOUSE AND HEARTH**

In the Kelabit Highlands it is the norm today to live in a longhouse. In Long Lellang, a Kelabit community outside the highlands (see chapter two), about half of the population now live in separate houses, but those that do told me that they plan to build a longhouse; in other words it is seen as the proper form of residence. Leach has argued that all peoples in Sarawak except the Malay and Chinese traditionally lived in longhouses (Leach 1950:62-3).

The Kelabit word for what is conventionally referred to in English as 'longhouse' is ruma' kadang or sometimes ruma' rawir. Kadang and rawir both mean, literally, 'long'. Ruma' is most conveniently translated as 'house', and I will use the term longhouse to refer to ruma' kadang; but the English term 'house' has of course specific connotations, not all of which apply to the Kelabit ruma'.

The majority of Kelabits resident in the Highlands live in ruma' kadang. A small proportion of the population does not. These people live in separate houses, termed ruma' sebulang, literally 'alone houses'. Except for Padang Pasir, the community by the airstrip in Bario, Kelabit settlements all consist of longhouses, usually together with a very small number of ruma' sebulang. Even the community at Padang Pasir has now built itself a longhouse at some 20 minutes walk from the airstrip and is, in theory, based there rather than in the shophouses at the airstrip. In Pa' Dalih and other communities outside Bario, very few people do not live in longhouses.



In Pa' Dalih, the community in which I carried out fieldwork, there are two longhouses, one of fifteen hearth-groups (see below for a discussion of this term) and the other of six (figure 1, p. 64a). There are also eight separate houses containing one hearth-group each<sup>77</sup>, four of which are built in pairs as semi-detached houses.

I do not think it is justified to term these small longhouses, since they are quarters provided by the government for the teachers at the school and for the health worker at the clinic and it seems likely that their architecture was dictated by the government. Government quarters are built in this fashion in town.

There is only one hearth-group in Pa' Dalih which lives in a ruma' sebulang which has not been provided by government funds. Members of this hearth-group told me that they have, for some time, wanted to build on to the end of one of the two longhouses. However, they say, they have encountered objections from someone who owns fruit trees there which would have to be felled. I do not know if this was true, but the point is that it was felt necessary to explain to me why the hearth-group was living in a ruma' sebulang, a 'separate house'. In many communities, although not in Pa' Dalih, there are cases of hearth-groups living in ruma' sebulang because they have moved from another community. This is likely to occur if the hearth-group concerned is not closely related to anyone in the new community of residence, which is particularly common in Bario.

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In fact one of these was inhabited, at the time when I carried out my census of Pa' Dalih in October 1986, by a single teacher and it is doubtful if one should call his household a hearth-group, since he did not cook or eat there. He only slept there and ate his meals at the hearth-group of a relative in one of the longhouses. Another separate house, built to accommodate the pastor, was vacant. The pastor, a Penan, did not live there but boarded with a hearth-group in one of the longhouses.

### 1. The structure of the Kelabit longhouse

In longhouses in Borneo, division into residential units is on the basis of separate cultivation, cooking and consumption of rice, at least on an everyday basis. I am referring to each unit as a hearth-group for reasons which will become apparent shortly. Each hearth-group occupies a separate part of the longhouse, which I shall refer to as an apartment, using a term which has been used to refer to similar entities among other Borneo groups (e.g. Schneider 1975b; Morris 1978; Rousseau 1978; Whittier 1978a). Apartments are placed next to each other in a long line, thus creating the 'long' structure of the building.

For most, perhaps all, Bornean groups, there is a division within the apartment into an area said to be more private and one said to be more public. Divisions between 'public' areas belonging to separate apartments are not, for any group, marked by any very definite physical division, and there is thus an open gallery down one side of the longhouse. Divisions between 'private' areas are generally marked by a physical separation, a wall.

In this respect, Kelabit longhouses are distinctive. Traditionally the physical separation between the 'private' areas of different hearth-groups is limited or minimal, if it exists at all (Douglas 1907:55; Talla 1979:51; Schneeberger 1979:26). It is possible that this was true of the longhouses of all of the related Lun Bawang people in the past, although those that have migrated downriver in the Fifth Division of Sarawak and in Sabah have adopted more significant divisions between apartments<sup>78</sup>. Up to the 1960's, Kelabit longhouses

<sup>78</sup>

Ricketts 1963 [1894-5] describes what are presumably downriver

consisted of one building divided into two lengthwise, but with no other substantial divisions.

The lengthwise division separated the longhouse into two areas, the dalim and the tawa'. Each hearth-group had a section of the dalim and a section of the tawa', and it built and maintained these. It is probable that there was a small low wall extending about two or three feet from the outside wall of the longhouse into the dalim, separating the dalim areas belonging to each hearth-group, such as exists nowadays in many Kelabit longhouses<sup>79</sup>.

It does appear that there is a general equivalence between the public, 'gallery' part of the longhouse described for other Borneo tribes' longhouses and the tawa' on the one hand and between the 'private' parts of other tribes' longhouses and the Kelabit dalim on the other. However, the ways in which the two categories of area are really equivalent in different tribes is likely to differ in a number of ways<sup>80</sup>. It is difficult to know to what extent what I found to be the case among the Kelabit applies to other tribes, although it seems clear

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'Murut' (Lun Bawang) houses as having the private area divided. Crain (1970: Appendix A) also reports a divided private area among downriver Lun Bawang. However Deegan, writing of the Lawas Damit Lun Bawang, says that in the past there were many instances where different households' areas within the longhouse were not separated by actual partitions but by the remainder of the community's recognition of their space (Deegan 1974: 236). Moulton (1912a: 16) records that in upriver 'Murut' houses there is only a low partition between private areas and it is possible, by standing up, to see the length of the house, and Schneeberger (1979: 26, 31) gives a diagram of two house-types of groups which he terms 'Kelabit' house-types, but which are actually of groups which I am terming Lun Bawang, both with the private living quarters undivided.

<sup>79</sup> It is interesting to note that among the Selako the wall running the length of the longhouse, separating the public and private areas, was much more considerable and the doors in it heavier than the walls and doors between private areas belonging to separate family groups (Schneider 1975: 213).

<sup>80</sup> See for example Miles 1964.

that the Kelabit and Lun Bawang tawa' and dalim were more or less the same in the past. The Lun Bawang have in most areas abandoned living in longhouses or are in the process of doing so. This is particularly true of Lun Bawang in Kalimantan, where there has been a good deal of government pressure to give up longhouses.

The structure of the Kelabit longhouse has changed a good deal since the Second World War. One of the most significant changes is that whereas it appears that in the past there was a high level of standardisation between longhouses, nowadays longhouses tend to vary a good deal.

However, within a given longhouse all member hearth-groups follow the same pattern of building - although they do not all always use the same materials, since not all can afford the same quality. Certain general changes have taken place, however, which apply to all present-day longhouses.

The first and most striking change is that dalim and tawa' are now built as separate parallel buildings, so that the wall which used to separate them has been replaced by a gap between the buildings of some fifteen to twenty feet.

In Bario, there has been an increasing tendency since the 1960's to separate dalim areas belonging to different hearth-groups, although so far this has only amounted to the heightening and lengthening of the low wall protruding from the wall on the side of the hearth. This wall does not in any instance fully separate dalim areas belonging to separate hearth-groups and people can still walk up and down the dalim from end to end.

The longhouse has become, also since the 1960's, a complex structure consisting of a number of separate buildings, although the basic structure of the longhouse, in all cases, is two long buildings parallel to each

other. These are the dalim and the tawa' respectively, now separated physically. Access from the dalim to the tawa' has changed: whereas in the past it appears that there were only a small number of doors, perhaps two or three, in the wall dividing dalim from tawa', now each hearth-group has its own walkway linking its dalim to its tawa' area.

The present-day longhouse also contains extra elements. Toilets and sometimes bathrooms have been built on adjacent to the dalim. Telong, which are rooms used for sleeping and for storage of valuables, are now built by most hearth-groups. These are usually built on to the tawa' building, either on the same level as the tawa' proper or above it. To build the telong above the tawa' requires a very strong structure, since present-day telong are not just attics under the eaves as sleeping areas for young girls were in the past, and the materials used include cement and other materials not locally available.

Such materials cost money, which is not abundant in the southern part of the Highlands, and are difficult to transport and to use. It is easier to transport the materials into Bario, by air, and there is more money in Bario due to the sale of rice to town from here. Therefore, telong have only been built above the tawa' in the Bario area.

### 1.1 The dalim

The term dalim, which literally means 'within' or 'deep', is one which is used to refer to the innermost parts of things. It is used to refer to certain words, which are described as pakaro nok dalim, 'deep words'. These words are used in parental and grandparental names.

Grandparental names should convey the true nature of the person carrying the name, and parental names convey what

it is hoped will be revealed as their true nature. The word dalim, then, conveys a sense of 'trueness', of a deeper reality. This is relevant to the role of the dalim, as we shall see.

The dalim building of the present-day longhouse is a long building which contains a line of areas each containing a hearth, adjacent to each other, each of which belongs to and is utilized mainly by one hearth-group. Each hearth-group builds its own area of the dalim, unless it is borrowing an area belonging to another hearth-group which does not at present need it. The adjacent areas are built to form one complete building, of a uniform height and width. Good-quality planks are always used to build the dalim, some of which have been transferred from previous longhouses and were made by hand with adzes and some of which have been recently made with chainsaws. The roof is now uniformly made of corrugated metal; in the past leaves which the Kelabit call isip leaves (which are also used to wrap rice and to hold other foods) were used to make the roof (as they still are to make the roofs of most field huts at Pa' Dalih and other southern communities). In the mid 1960's, after the Confrontation with Indonesia, the British army left behind large quantities of corrugated metal which were used by the Kelabit to roof their longhouses. It has now become **de rigueur** to have a corrugated metal roof on a longhouse, although it costs enormous amounts of money to bring metal sheets up from the coast and these roofs, when they become caked with soot inside the dalim, retain heat and make it very hot inside the house.

The building of an area of the dalim is a major undertaking. It appears that in the past longhouses, including the dalim, were not always so substantial but often consisted in large part of betong bamboo which had

been split and splayed out. This type of bamboo can also be used to make walls and floors, as it still is to make the walls and floor of field huts. The floor was, in the past, the most likely part of the longhouse to be made of planks, which would be re-used each time the longhouse was rebuilt. The use of bamboo to construct longhouses made sense in the past, when Kelabit communities moved frequently. Bamboo does not last more than about five years at the most, due to attack by insects, but it is very quick to build with it.

The present-day dalim is single storey, with the area under the roof being used only for the storage of segments of isip leaf roofing for use in the construction of field huts. In the past, until about twenty years ago, there were often two floors to the dalim, with the upper, less substantial one being used as sleeping quarters by the unmarried girls of the longhouse. In the past, the adult, married members of the hearth-group slept by the hearth in the dalim. Nowadays most people sleep in the telong, although some older people still sleep by the hearth. Guests are usually accommodated in telong, and when telong belonging to a hearth-group are being used to accommodate guests, their usual occupants go and sleep by the hearth.

When anyone is sleeping by the hearth, the fire in it is kept alight all night.

When a new longhouse is built, the first part to be built is always the dalim. Without a dalim a longhouse or a hearth-group apartment cannot exist. It is quite possible to make do without a tawa' or telong for long periods, as has been the case with the recent rebuilding of one of the two longhouses in Long Dano. Here, makeshift telong were built in the dalim area and the tawa' and telong proper were not built for a couple of years.

Along the side of the dalim away from the tawa', the wall along which the hearths are located in Pa' Dalih, each hearth-group inhabiting the longhouse has a door leading out of it. Also along this side runs the pipe leading from the stream feeding the gravity-fed water system, and each hearth-group has at least one tap and a toilet. Some hearth-groups have built simple bathrooms and some have metal kitchen sinks. The water is used to flush the toilets, to wash people, dishes and clothes (all of which may also be washed in the river) and to provide water for cooking.

The dalim is focused on the hearth<sup>81</sup>. Few dalim contain anything much besides the hearth; some contain sinks at which dishes and pots are washed at the back, and some contain cupboards for storing food, dishes and pots.

Many, however, contain nothing but the hearth. The fire in the hearth is made on a square area of packed earth at the same level as the floor and supported underneath the floor by a small suspended floor of bamboo. On this earthen area two parallel pieces of iron are erected a foot or so from each other, supported at either end by a support made of metal (often biscuit tins) or stone. These supports hold the bars about a foot above the earth.

Halfway across these two bars the fire is made under them and cooking pots are placed supported on the two bars over the fire. These bars are, in Pa' Dalih, apparently all made of pieces of metal left behind by the British Army after Confrontation in the mid-sixties. In the past, no

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Both Crain and Deegan comment on the focal nature of the hearth (the term for which, tatal [Crain] or tetel [Deegan] is the same as the Kelabit term, which I spell tetal). for the Lun Bawang of downriver areas. Both report that the cooking area containing the hearth may nowadays be separate from the living area, dalim in Kelabit, but Deegan considers that this is recent. (Crain 1970:306; Deegan 1973:62-65). Among the Kayan, too, Rousseau says that the fireplace may now be in a separate kitchen behind the main room, but that it used to be in the room (1974:189).



such bars were used; no metal cooking pots were available and the locally fired earthenware pots could not be placed on top of the fire because they would be liable to crack. They were, instead, placed around the fire supported by stones.

Above the fire is a structure called the raran. This extends from about four feet above the earthenware base almost to the roof of the dalim and is used primarily to store firewood, split into pieces about four foot long and a few inches thick which fit neatly into the raran (see figure 9). The raran is also used to dry food items such as meat and fish, to keep salt packets dry and to keep natang (resin used to light the fire and sometimes to burn for light on bamboo props), matches, bogo (bamboo or wooden cooking implements similar to wooden spoons but with flat, squared-off ends) and, nowadays, some metal implements. All of these things are usually kept in a holder for bogo (tara bogo) which is kept suspended from the raran, but they may be inserted unceremoniously amongst the pieces of wood or on top of them.

In Pa' Dalih, the hearths are sited towards one wall, that away from the tawa' and in which are the doors leading out of the longhouse. In most longhouses, they are all sited at the same distance from the side wall, and thus form a line of fires down the longhouse; however, in the smaller of the two longhouses in Pa' Dalih, three of the five hearths are sited a few feet further from the wall than the other two. In Pa' Dalih, the hearths are sited just behind the small wall which divides the parts of the dalim belonging to different hearth-groups from each other, except in the case of the three hearths in the smaller longhouse, which are further towards the centre of the dalim. Individuals cooking or sitting at the hearth normally sit on the side of the hearth towards the

wall towards the tawa'. This means that such individuals are not behind the wall separating hearths and hearth-groups and are clearly visible all the way down the longhouse.

## 1.2 The tawa'

Nowadays, the tawa' is built as a separate building from the dalim, with the sections belonging to each hearth-group still being opposite their dalim, but reached by crossing a bridge. The tawa' is, like the dalim and like the old-style tawa' which it replaces, open; there are no divisions between the sections built by and belonging to the separate hearth-groups. This the Kelabit tawa' has in common with the 'public' area in the longhouses of other tribes in Sarawak, which is usually referred to in the literature on these tribes as either the 'gallery' or the 'verandah' (e.g. Schneider 1975b; Whittier 1978; Rousseau 1978).

In the old-style tawa', built as one half of the same building as the dalim, there was a raised platform along the wall away from the dalim for sitting. Each hearth-group had a fireplace in its part of the tawa'. These were for warmth. They were not used for cooking rice meals, although they might be used to cook snacks. The present-day tawa' has neither platform nor fires, but is simply a long open gallery.

Both the old-style and present-day tawa' are enclosed entirely by walls, with windows in the wall facing outwards from the longhouse. This is in contrast to the Kenyah and Kayan gallery, which is open on the side away from the private areas. The reason for the enclosed nature of the Kelabit tawa' is at least partly the need to retain warmth, which was also the reason for building

fireplaces on the tawa'.

Nowadays each hearth-group has a door into the tawa'; in the old-style longhouse there would have been only two or three doors, for about fifteen hearth-groups, in the wall running the length of the longhouse separating dalim from tawa'.

Telong, rooms for sleeping and storage, were not built in the past. It is only since the early or mid 1960's that these have been built. In Pa' Dalih most telong are built as part of the building housing the tawa', which as a whole is called the tawa', so that the telong are in effect part of the tawa'. In some other longhouses the telong are built as separate structures between the dalim and the tawa'. In Bario Asal, the whole space between the dalim and the tawa' is taken up with such telong.

In Pa' Dalih, most telong take up half of the building which houses the tawa' gallery, on the side facing the dalim. However, not all the hearth-groups in Pa' Dalih have built tawa'. Because of this there is only an incomplete tawa' building parallel to the complete dalim building for both the two longhouses in Pa' Dalih. Hearth-groups which have not built tawa' have built telong as separate makeshift buildings between their dalim and the tawa' built by other hearth-groups (see figure 8). Those hearth-groups which have built tawa' sections have also, in some cases, built such extra telong. In some longhouses, such as Remudu (three hours' walk from Pa' Dalih), some hearth-groups have filled the whole of their tawa' section with telong, leaving no tawa'.

All hearth-groups say that they see the proper course as the building of complete segments of the parallel

telong/tawa' building. Those that have not built tawa' say that they plan to do so. The smaller buildings which have been built on to the dalim as telong, where no proper telong/tawa' has been built, are less well built and it is clear that they were not built to be as long-lasting, almost certainly with a view to eventually constructing a 'proper' telong/tawa' segment. However, many of these smaller buildings were built as many as ten years ago, which is a long time in terms of Kelabit house-building. It seems that, although there is a stated belief in the necessity of building proper tawa', many hearth-groups appear to be putting off building these indefinitely. They do find it essential to have some kind of telong, probably largely in order to have somewhere to store shop-bought items which suffer from the smoke in the dalim, and so they built makeshift telong. However they do not seem to find it inconvenient not to have a section of the tawa' proper.

There seems to have been a decline recently in the importance of the tawa'. This is illustrated by the fact that not all hearth-groups bother to build tawa' sections nowadays. This decline appears to have been taking place since about the late sixties, when the change in the ways of building the longhouse, both in materials and in style, began to be apparent.

The presence of valuable items in telong was often given to me as the reason for not making fires in the tawa' any more. However, this has contributed to the decline in the use of the tawa' proper. The lack of fires there has made it impossible to sit in the tawa' in the evenings, when it used to be the focus of evening socialization. It is simply too cold to sit around chatting and socializing in the Kelabit Highlands after dark without a fire.

## 2. The hearth-group

Longhouses are inhabited by a number of groups of individuals, the basic-level residential and economic units in Kelabit society. There are at least four terms for this group. These are 1) ruma', literally 'house', 2) lobang ruma', literally 'the cavity of the house', in other words, I think, 'what is contained inside the house', 3) tetal, literally 'hearth' and 4) dalim, a word which means literally 'the inside' but which also refers to the core or true nature of something.

The term ruma' is used to describe the longhouse as a whole as well as the smaller group. The double meaning of the term ruma' makes it a confusing one to use regularly as a term for the smaller group.

While ruma' refers to the physical structure more than to the people, lobang ruma' refers more to the people contained within it. The terms tetal and dalim both refer to the focal quality of the hearth; the hearth is at the core of the dalim. I will be discussing this later in this chapter. The term tetal is used to refer both to the hearth itself and to the group of people sharing a hearth and inhabiting<sup>82</sup> the physical structure belonging to it, not only the area housing the tetal itself but other buildings too. The term dalim in this context also refers not only to a part of the longhouse, the area containing the hearth and used for everyday living, but also to the group of people inhabiting it<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> As we shall see, not all individuals belonging to a tetal use the buildings belonging to a specific tetal equally.

<sup>83</sup> According to Deegan, the Lun Bawang of Lawas Damit refer to the group of people using one hearth by the term di-ngeruma, literally, he says, 'those of the house' (Deegan 1974:59). This is similar to the Kelabit term diweng-ruma', which refers to the couple and appears to mean literally 'they two of the house'. Crain writes that the

The term lobang ruma' or ruma', used to refer to a single 'household', may, I have been told, refer to a household which contains more than one hearth (although I know of none that do). The term tetal, however, can only refer to a group with one hearth. It appears that the term dalim too could refer to a group which has two hearths, although the focal nature of the hearth is inherent in it. Where a ruma'/lobang ruma'/dalim has two hearths, although the individuals associated with the two cultivate rice together, it is well on the way to splitting, since in effect it retains only affective ties rather than the rice-based ties which in the end hold the group together.

I have been told by some Kelabit that tetal refers to the most basic, fundamental identification of an individual. This is to the group which cooks and eats together. I have been told numerous times that this should also be the group that grows rice together. It is quite clear that the basic group, ideally and almost invariably in practice, is co-rice-cultivating, co-rice-cooking and commensal (in terms of the rice meal). Since only the term tetal refers to a group which is always both, this appears to be the most appropriate term to use to refer to the basic 'residential' group<sup>84</sup>. Crain says, speaking of the Sipitang Lun Bawang: 'The possession and use of its own hearth, more than anything else, signifies the corporate exclusiveness of the domestic family. On those occasions when another domestic family (usually a child of one or both of the co-founders with his or her

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Lun Bawang of Sipitang use the term uang ruma', literally 'the flesh of the house' (Crain 1978:126-7). I have been told by Kelabits that this is a term which was used in the past for the group I am calling the hearth-group, although it does not appear to be used now.

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Harrison refers to the unit which I am calling the hearth-group as the 'fireplace' (1959a: 42).

spouse) shares the use of an apartment it will invariably have its own separate hearth within the kitchen' (Crain 1970:307-8). This could equally well be said of the Kelabit<sup>85</sup>.

I shall, then, use the term tetal to refer to the basic 'residential' unit in Kelabit society. This is the group which builds a separate apartment for itself, which grows rice together and which cooks and eats the rice meal together. I translate tetal into English as either 'hearth' or 'hearth-group' depending on whether the referent appears to be the people or the actual hearth; but it must be borne in mind that in Kelabit there is only one term available.

### **3. Recruitment to and constitution of the hearth-group**

For the Kelabit, everyone who lives in the same community, and indeed all Kelabit, are considered to be related. It is co-residence that defines kinship in its widest sense. Kinship can always be traced somehow with every other person in the community of residence. Kinship terminology is almost exactly the same (using closely cognate terms) as that which Crain found among the Sipitang Lun Dayeh (Lun Bawang) (Crain 1970a, chapter 3), except for the absence of the affinal term arum and a much less common use of affinal terms than among the Lun Bawang. This terminology is of the broadly Bornean form indicated by Leach (1950). It tends to extend kinship widely, on a cognatic basis.

Recruitment to the hearth-group is based on kinship, both in this wide sense - that everyone is related - and on the basis of perceived close kinship. Most recruitment

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Among the Lun Bawang of Lawas Damit, too, it is the hearth which is the focal point of the household's living space. Any person who consistently eats at a particular hearth over a period of months is by definition a member of that household for the time being (Deegan 1973:63).

to the hearth-group is by birth to members of the hearth-group or by marriage. Marriage is not supposed to occur between individuals closer than third cousin, but with the third cousin it is actually preferred; if it does not occur at this point, an effort is made to arrange marriage between fourth or fifth cousins. One might say that the Kelabit tend to turn consanguines into affines.

The relations between different hearth-groups do not appear to vary according to the closeness of kin ties between their members. Hearth-groups containing individuals who consider themselves close kin relate to each other, as hearth-groups, in the same way as those containing individuals who consider themselves distant kin. It is as though the kin ties which exist are pressed into service in the creation and maintenance of the hearth-group, rather than the hearth-group existing to further kin ties.

Indeed, kin ties sometimes appear to run counter to the maintenance of the hearth-group. Adoption is common among the Kelabit. There were 15 cases of adoption which I knew of involving people in Pa' Dalih, in a population of 122. Where a couple is childless, they are always given a child in adoption, usually by a close relative but sometimes by a fairly distant one. Such adopted children are supposed to remain with their adopted parents and to belong to their adopted hearth-group; the Kelabit are what Freeman has termed 'utrolateral' and an individual can only belong to one hearth-group at a time (Freeman 1955).

However, these imposed ties appear to go against the natural inclination of most adopted individuals, who feel very drawn to biologically closer kin within their natal hearth-group. As children, they often return to their parents' hearth-group, although this is criticized. As adults, they usually fulfil the obligations which they are considered to have to their adopted parents but tend to maintain links, often the closest links, with their



biological parents and siblings.

The to-ing and fro-ing of adopted children applies largely to the young. Children and young people who have not yet had children are, as I shall be discussing later in this chapter, rather lightly bound to the hearth-group to which they belong. The difficulty, in some cases, of ascertaining the hearth-group membership of an adopted child stems from behaviour which is only an extreme form of behaviour which is common among his or her peers - a tendency to be mobile between hearth-groups.

The Kelabit hearth-group never contains more than one married couple with children at each generation level, in other words it is a 'stem' family. At marriage, a young member of a hearth-group either joins his or her spouse's parents' hearth-group, immediately or eventually; stays, with his/her spouse, in his/her own parents' hearth-group; or forms a separate hearth-group. At the present time the first two options are by far the most common, because emigration from the Highlands has meant a shortage of young people. There was only one incidence of neolocal residence in Pa' Dalih while I was there, and this was due to a quarrel<sup>86</sup>. Only one child, said ideally to be a boy but in practice probably just as often a girl, may stay in the parents' hearth-group once s/he is married and, more especially, once s/he and his/her spouse has a child.

The 'stem' family has been found to be the rule with some other Bornean groups, such as the Kayan (Rousseau 1974:219) but other groups have been found to contain 'extended' as well as 'stem' family units, containing, in other words, more than one couple at each generation

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Crain says that in Sipitang, on the other hand, the most common pattern is for a young couple to establish neolocal residence rather than taking on the role of junior couple within the hearth-group of the parents of one of the spouses (Crain 1970: 222).

level. However, there is a strong tendency in all Bornean groups which have been studied for married couples of the same generation level living within the same longhouse apartment to farm rice separately and sometimes to cook separately. There is an awkwardness and a desire for fission where there are two married couples of the same generation level co-resident (King 1978b:13-15). This suggests that it is not regarded as right for there to be more than one married couple at each generation level.

I have no data, due to the high level of emigration from the Kelabit Highlands, on what would happen were there to be already one married child with children resident with both the husband's and the wife's parents, although the theory is that one would set up residence neolocally in the longhouse of one of the spouses.

Residence is said to be ideally virilocal - with the husband's parents. However, such factors as farming need or the care of an aged parent appear to be more important than the stated preference for virilocality, and uxori-locality appears, if anything, to be more common. In Pa' Dalih there were, in 1987, six cases of virilocality, nine of uxori-locality and none of neolocality (although one instance of uxori-locality became one of neolocality some months later). Informants from the highland Lun Bawang area have told me that for them, as for the Kelabit, virilocality is the 'proper' course. In practice it seems, however, that uxori-locality is common in highland Lun Bawang areas. Crain says that among the Lun Bawang of Sipitang there is no preference for either virilocality or uxori-locality (Crain 1970: 236).

There are no payments made at marriage among the Kelabit. This is one of the points which distinguishes them (and which they see as distinguishing them) from the

Lun Bawang in the highland areas in Kalimantan, who pay substantial bridewealth (purut or furut). In the highland Lun Bawang area, these payments mainly consist of buffaloes. Virilocality and the ability to make this payment appear to be prestigious. It seems arguable that, for the Lun Bawang, virilocality is prestigious although it may not be the norm. The fact that the Kelabit say that virilocality is the norm may be due to prestige associated with such residence<sup>87</sup>.

There appears to be no conception of the hearth-group existing as a named entity lasting over time among the Kelabit, as Freeman found to be the case among the Iban (Freeman 1955a). The Kelabit are a society in which prestige is not equally distributed amongst individuals and amongst hearth-groups, and it may be that this is significant here. Links with the past are through a line of ancestors; these are chosen, in a cognatic context where links can be traced with practically any deceased individual, by reason of the prestige associated with certain ancestors - and not with others - rather than through lines of core members of the hearth-group, as

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<sup>87</sup> Post-marital residence tends, in the societies termed by Rousseau 'Central Bornean', - which includes the Kelabit - to be flexible according to the needs of the two families. In general uxorilocality is the norm, with high payments, referred to by Rousseau as 'bridewealth' (Rousseau 1990: 94), being paid by the groom's family to establish virilocality. Among the Kayan, for example, the establishment of permanent virilocality involves the payment of a substantial bridewealth payment. It is the norm only among 'aristocrats' (Rousseau 1978: 85). It appears arguable that virilocality may, in this part of Borneo, be regarded as prestigious. The association of prestige with virilocality may relate to its predominance among higher-status individuals, which is probably at least partly based on the facilitation of father-son inheritance of leadership.

It is interesting to note that among the nomadic Penan, where uxorilocality is usual, virilocality, practised among the Western Penan, involves a high payment (Needham 1953, p. 150-168). This is among a people with very little wealth to give away.

among the Iban<sup>88</sup>.

#### **4. The utilization and significance of the different parts of the longhouse**

##### **4.1 The dalim**

All activities carried out in the dalim occur next to the hearth, with reference to the hearth. The hearths are on the floor, and everything is done sitting down, on mats made of grass or split rotan. There is normally one permanent mat or group of mats (depending on the number of members the hearth-group has) by the hearth in an inhabited apartment, which may be temporarily removed if the inhabitants are away for more than a day or two. This mat or group of mats is always next to the hearth, between the hearth and the further wall of the dalim, on the side facing the tawa' building. Extra mats are only laid down when they are actually currently being used for sitting, since otherwise they would get unnecessarily dirty from soot. Such extra mats are usually laid down at the sides of the permanent mat or mats. A subsidiary mat or group of mats may be laid down at the side of the hearth away from the door to the outside. This is only done if there are a number of guests or hearth-group members present and there is not enough room to accommodate all of them in the area between the hearth and the further wall of the longhouse, or because some people present at the hearth are eating and others are not. In this case those eating may be seated at the side of the hearth.

It is the area around the hearth that is seen as truly private, as an area where only members of the hearth-group may move freely and without invitation. The

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Crain discusses how genealogies are manipulated among the Lun Bawang of Sipitang to establish prestigious links (Crain 1970:91-94).

area between the mats in front of the fire and the opposite wall, which is in Pa' Dalih about fifteen feet wide, is freely used as a passageway by members of other hearth-groups, with no necessity for any permission. Entry doors next to the hearth are also quite freely used by individuals who do not belong to the hearth-group which built the door. Bathrooms and toilets attached to the dalim at the back are likely to be used by members of other hearth-groups if they need to, normally without asking. The hearth and the fire in it, however, are never used by members of other hearth-groups nor would they ever sit by the fire, lit or unlit, without invitation.

It is, then, the hearth which is the core of the area of the dalim inhabited by a hearth-group, something suggested already by the fact that the same term may be used to refer to both. It is the use of the hearth, and the consumption of the rice cooked at it, which defines, within the longhouse, who belongs to the hearth-group to which the hearth belongs<sup>89</sup>. Members of other hearth-groups may only use the hearth on behalf of the hearth-group to which it belongs: for example, during a cooperative work day, the woman who has been asked to do the cooking for the hearth-group with whom the group is currently working will use that hearth-group's hearth to cook the side dish or dishes to be eaten with rice (penguman; see chapter six) which is being provided by the 'host' hearth-group. At irau a number of the hearth-groups in the community of the hearth-group hosting the irau are used to cook rice for the guests. However, the hosts of the current irau will then reciprocate by making their own hearths available to be used by other irau-giving hearth-groups in the future.

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Deegan writes that this is the case with the Lawas Damit Lun Bawang as well (Deegan 1973:63). Rousseau says that it is also

Thus, the use of the hearth is not freely available to those outside the hearth-group. Its use must be reciprocated, just as the labour of the members of the hearth-group when they are working as members of a hearth-group (in other words, engaged in labour involving the growing and processing of rice) must be reciprocated. The fact that hearths other than that of the hearth-group holding the irau are used to cook rice for irau is, however, significant also because it symbolises the fact that the entire community is, at irau, represented as being one hearth-group (see below and following chapters).

Other parts of the longhouse do not contain areas which are fully private in the way that the hearth is. They may be freely used by members of other hearth-groups than that which built them without reciprocation being necessary. Although they do 'belong' to the hearth-group, in that the materials making them up were collected, processed and put together to make the buildings via the labour of the hearth-group, these buildings may be used for the purpose or purposes for which they were designed by members of other hearth-groups. A telong (sleeping/storage room), for example, may be used by a group of young men belonging to a number of hearth-groups although it actually belongs to the hearth-group of which only one of them is a member. Even outhouses such as chicken sheds are freely used by members of hearth-groups other than that which built the outhouse if the outhouse is not being used by the hearth-group which owns it.

Uninhabited dalim, usually together with all of the tawa' -including telong - bathroom areas and outhouses may be borrowed by another hearth-group. This occurred in Pa' Dalih where hearth-groups were resident in Bario temporarily or were living in Pa' Dalih but in a house

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the case with the Kayan (1974:212).

provided by the government. The apartment which we borrowed belonged to a hearth-group whose female head was the 'school mother' at Pa' Dalih school, and she lived in a house provided by the school. Such borrowing, it is said, should be without payment. The hearth-group borrowing the apartment acts more or less as though it were its owner; the true owners behave, in relation to the dalim especially, as though they were in the same category as other members of the community, not approaching the area around the fire without invitation, for example. However, where such borrowing includes the dalim, it appears to be unprestigious. The borrowing of other parts of the hearth-group apartment, on the other hand, such as telong or chicken sheds does not appear to be in any way unprestigious. These are regularly borrowed by other hearth-groups even where the owner hearth-group is in residence in the associated dalim. This illustrates the centrality of the dalim and the hearth in it.

The dalim is focused on the fire in the hearth. People do not sit in the dalim (where they always sit next to the fire) without lighting the fire if it has gone out. If there is someone belonging to a given hearth-group in the longhouse during the day the fire in the hearth belonging to that hearth-group should not be allowed to go out<sup>90</sup>. Since the dalim is open, conversations are easily held between individuals cooking at different fires belonging to their respective hearth-groups, so socialization can be combined with remaining closely associated with one's own hearth.

The fire has two functions: cooking and provision of warmth. The latter function only becomes apparent after the sun has set, when it becomes too cold to sit around

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Crain notes that a fire is always kept alight in the hearth among the Sipitang Lun Bawang (1970:306).

without a fire or a blanket (which the Kelabit did not own in the past). At this time a distinctive type of socialisation may occur, which tends to de-emphasise the separateness of hearth-groups, and which involves the consumption of snack foods (see chapter six).

The importance of the hearth and of the fire during the day rests on the fact that it is used for the cooking of the rice meal, which is consumed next to it. If cooked in the longhouse, the rice of a given hearth-group is always cooked and practically always eaten at the hearth of that hearth-group.

#### 4.2 The tawa'

The tawa' was, in the past, used for the entertainment of strangers including government officers - as even now it sometimes is. It was also used for the entertainment of visitors from outside the longhouse at irau, feasts, as it still is in Bario. But I have been told that when casual individual visitors arrived in the longhouse, they were not entertained in the tawa' unless they were not related to anyone in the longhouse. If they were related, they passed into the dalim area of the hearth-group to which they or their hosts considered them to be most closely related.

Nowadays, the dalim is used as though it contained the tawa'. When visitors arrive, they sit down in the dalim, away from the hearths, against the opposite wall. Visitors will usually sit down opposite the headman's or another hearth-group's hearth - but in the area which is used as a public passageway, not near the hearth itself. Only if they are closely related to members of a hearth-group and if a member of the hearth-group concerned is at the hearth will they sit down at the hearth, and then only



when asked to do so. This relates to the private nature of the hearth discussed above.

On an everyday basis, the tawa' appears to have been used in the past to different extents by different categories of member of the longhouse. It was also used in different ways and to different extents at different times. During the day, it was used most by men in general, and particularly by young men; this was largely for handicraft work. During the day, women used the tawa' very little. In the evenings, however, all informants were categorical in saying that women and men gathered equally on the tawa', and that they normally gathered in mixed-gender groups. These groups consisted of members of different hearth-groups. They gathered around one or more of the fireplaces on the tawa', which provided warmth and at which snack foods were sometimes cooked. Although these fireplaces were sited in the area built by and belonging to a specific hearth-group, their use was not restricted to members of the hearth-group who built them. Other people could light a fire on them, unlike the hearth in the dalim.

In general, the tawa' is now used less than it was in the past. It is still used for meetings and for irau (feasts) in many longhouses, although in Pa' Dalih (and other southern communities), where there is a wide and very open-plan dalim in both longhouses, meetings are often held there. The everyday use of the tawa' has declined most dramatically, however. Both evening and daytime use of the tawa' is now minimal on everyday occasions. All evening social interaction now takes place in the dalim. The use of the tawa' during the day by men and young people is rare. Occasionally it is used by men for handicrafts or for sitting and talking.

The reason for the decline in use of the tawa' in the evenings is said by the Kelabit of Pa' Dalih to be directly related to the absence of fires on the modern tawa'. Because the telong are built next to the tawa', the things stored in the telong would get smoke-blackened (as does everything in the dalim) if fires were lit on the tawa'. And without a fire it would be cold to gather and snack foods could not be cooked while conversation is going on.

The decline in the use of the tawa' is also related to the building of telong. These appear to have taken over some of the functions of the tawa'.

The tawa' appears to have been less intimately associated with the identity of the hearth-group than was the dalim; it is, as it were, at the periphery of the hearth-group. The tawa' was not used by the separate hearth-groups in a way that would exclude members of other hearth-groups, as was the dalim. Most significantly, rice was not cooked at the fires in the tawa', only snack foods, especially meat (as a snack food; meat is also eaten in the rice meal). Snack foods are always shared between members of different hearth-groups, as rice normally is not; this will be discussed in chapter six.

It seems to me that the tawa' is defined negatively rather than positively. It is not-dalim. Its functions can be taken over by the dalim. The part of the dalim away from the hearth, which is used as a passageway by all members of the longhouse, may be used to fulfil some of the functions of the tawa', as when it is, in Pa' Dalih and other southern longhouses, used for irau. The dalim is now used for socializing in the evening. Telong have been able to take over others of the functions which the tawa' had in the past. The longhouse and the hearth-group

apartment is focused on the dalim, which defines a structure as a house, ruma', and it seems that the tawa' may be dispensed with without affecting the status of the entire structure as a ruma'.

#### 4.3 The telong

Telong did not exist in the old-style longhouse. They are used for four purposes: sleeping, socialization, storage of goods and as a private place. Let us examine how telong are used nowadays for these functions and how they appear to have been fulfilled in the old-style longhouse.

The telong are, nowadays, used for the storage of valued goods as well as for sleeping. Nowadays this means primarily town-bought goods, including town-bought foods; only beads, of the old value objects, are still actively valued. Telong which are used for the storage of such goods are nowadays usually kept locked, for fear, it is said, of theft. In the past, before there were telong, valued goods were not kept under lock and key. Large value objects, gongs and jars, were kept in the dalim. It was probably not considered feasible to steal such objects since it was well known to whom they belonged, and stored in the dalim they advertised and perhaps generated prestige through their display. From what informants have told me, beads were worn more frequently in the past than they are now. This in itself would have avoided theft.

Telong are occasionally used as private places to retire to. Occasionally meetings which do not concern all members of the ruma', are held in them; for example while I was in Pa' Dalih a meeting was held in a telong to witness a verbal will (although the person making the will was very ill and the meeting may have been held in her

telong in order not to move her). Individuals who want to have a private discussion with other individuals may sometimes invite them into their telong for this purpose.

Handicrafts are occasionally worked at in telong. In the past there would have been no easy equivalent private place to retire to. However, there is a general feeling even now that it is rather improper to hold private meetings in any case, and they are certainly fairly uncommon.

In Pa' Dalih, it seems to be a plausible contention that, in a sense, telong are considered to be part of the tawa'. In many cases they are physically part of the same building as contains the tawa' proper. Even when they are not, and are built as makeshift structures between dalim and tawa', they are always built separately from the dalim (except in Long Dano, where, as mentioned above, areas have been partitioned off in the dalim for sleeping and storage). People may say that they are 'going to the tawa'' (me tawa') when they mean that they are going to a telong built as part of the tawa'. Telong have also taken over many of the functions of the tawa', as we shall see.

Talla says that in Pa' Ramapoh in Bario separate bedrooms originated in a division of the dalim (which he spells dalam, following Bario pronunciation) into two parts in the early 1950's (1970a:52). However, it is clear from the plan of Pa' Ramapoh in the 1970's which he provides (ibid:53) that the bedrooms are now built as part of the separate tawa' building, as in Pa' Dalih.

Traditionally the focal couple and their small children slept immediately next to the hearth. I will argue that there is a close association between the couple and the hearth. Because of this, it seems plausible that initially the bedrooms were associated with the dalim

rather than the tawa'. The fact that they have come to be built as part of the tawa' seems very likely to be due to the storage of items in them which would, if kept near the hearth, become smoke-blackened. The danger of town-bought items stored in telong being damaged in this way was given to me as the major reason for not making fires on the tawa' any more by many people in Pa' Dalih.

## **5. Different categories of membership of the hearth-group: lun merar/anak adik and male/female**

The members of the hearth-group may be divided up in two cross-cutting ways. The first of these may be said to be the most explicit and perhaps the dominant one. It involves a primary division into two categories: lun merar, literally 'big people', and anak adik, literally 'junior children'. The second way in which the members of a hearth-group are divided up is into males and females.

### **5.1 Anak adik and lun merar**

The lun merar of a hearth-group may be subdivided on the basis of their status within the hearth-group into those who are active in rice-growing and those who are too old to be able to be. Anak adik are children and young people who do not yet have children and who do not involve themselves at all or only in a very subsidiary way in rice-growing. Lun merar are married and have at least children if not grandchildren. Lun merar are either involved in rice-growing to a substantial degree or have been so involved in the past. Although old people who are no longer active in rice-growing are technically lun merar, they cease to have much significance. Their status is markedly different from that of lun merar active in rice-growing, who are the focus of the hearth-group.

Changes and transitions in Kelabit society are gradual, and all parents and grandparents are to some extent lun merar. However individuals may be more or less merar, 'big'. The change in status begins with the birth of the first child of a couple.

Of the couples of different generations co-resident

in a Kelabit hearth-group, one is dominant and focal. This is the couple in charge of the rice-growing activity of the hearth-group. Other couples are either too young and inexperienced to do other than follow instructions or too old to be fully active in rice-growing. By the time the younger couple attains competence in managing rice-growing, the older couple may semi-retire, allowing the younger couple to take over the reins and themselves acting as the subsidiary couple. Where there are two couples both fully competent and active in rice-growing co-resident in a hearth-group, they grow rice separately.

I was told that they ought to store their rice and cook and eat it separately (which would amount to running a separate hearth-group)<sup>91</sup>, although in the one case of this kind that I know of the two couples cook and eat rice together, although they store - and own - rice separately.

The presence of two competent rice-growing couples in one household is seen as problematic by the Kelabit. The difficulty involved in there being two married siblings who have children co-resident in a hearth-group may be due to the strong likelihood that both will be at the same level of ability and dominance in rice-growing<sup>92</sup>; of co-resident couples, one should be senior in this respect.

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<sup>91</sup> Among the Sipitang Lun Bawang, too, each 'domestic family' (i.e. couple plus unmarried children) should have its own hearth, even if not its own apartment. Unlike among the Kelabit, a young couple apparently never caters together with the senior couple in a hearth-group, if it is sharing with the parents of one of the spouses; the two couples have separate hearths, although they store their rice together (Crain 1970:307-8). This also appears to be the case among the Melanau (Morris 1953:98). Among the Kayan, Rousseau reports that two amin (simple families consisting of parents and children) rarely live together in one apartment, but if they do they operate as separate 'economic' (i.e., certainly, rice-growing and perhaps cooking) units (Rousseau 1974: 226).

<sup>92</sup> The point about having children is that only once children are born does a couple begin to involve themselves seriously in rice-growing.

It is the focal couple which are the most fully lun merar of all lun merar belonging to a hearth-group. Thus, although lun merar-hood tends to increase with age, this is only true as long as a couple continues to participate in rice-growing. Old people who are not active in rice-growing are in practice treated much like anak adik. Although technically they are lun merar, people rarely refer to them as such.

All individuals belong to a hearth-group. However, it is those who are most fully lun merar who are the most closely associated with their hearth-group and anak adik who are the least closely associated. This is illustrated in the different relationships of the two categories of member to the hearth itself.

I have, I hope, argued successfully that it is the dalim, and particularly the hearth within the dalim, that is the physical core of the hearth-group apartment. In this context, the clearest physical manifestation of association with the hearth-group and the hearth is the proportion of time actually spent by the hearth. When they are in the longhouse, lun merar spend a very large proportion of their time physically next to their hearth.

There is a sense of shame in a lun merar being away from his or her own hearth, at another hearth within the same community, for too long. This is especially true if there is no other member of his or her hearth-group at the hearth to tend the fire. In particular, lun merar almost always insist on eating their rice meals next to their own hearths, even when side-dishes are being provided by another hearth-group during a cooperative work day. Old people wander more than do middle-aged lun merar at the peak of their lun merar-hood, as though they are slowly losing their bonds to their separate hearth-group as they



no longer associate themselves with rice-growing. However they remain by their hearth-group's hearth far more than do anak adik.

Anak adik spend a good deal of time at hearths other than their own<sup>93</sup> and away from the hearth itself. They spend a good deal of time nowadays in telong which have been allocated to one of them, in groups singing songs or socialising. If the telong are considered as part of the tawa', as I have argued above, then in doing this they are associating themselves with the tawa', which is at the periphery of the hearth-group. They are frequently to be seen eating rice at other people's hearths, sometimes even other people's rice. Unlike lun merar, they appear to feel no embarrassment at being frequently away from their own hearth.

While lun merar have a fairly clear distinction between daytime, when one is awake and above all when one works in the rice fields, anak adik, particularly boys, sleep when they feel like it, day or night. The frequent hunting in which Pa' Dalih boys engage, which is often at night, is one reason for this. The different patterns of activity and sleeping tend to separate lun merar from anak adik. This particularly applies to boys. Male lun merar, while they hunt, hunt much less often than do male anak adik at night. Lun merar, in other words, have a commitment to a fairly strict pattern of activity and sleep dictated largely by rice-field work, while anak adik are more flexible.

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Deegan writes that among the Lawas Damit Lun Bawang the young have unrestricted access to any kitchen area (1974:65). Among the Kayan, Rousseau reports that before marriage children and adolescents share their time between different households, but after marriage this ceases and the individual devotes his time to the amin (apartment) where s/he is resident (Rousseau 1974:239).

While lun merar sleep by their own hearth or, nowadays, in a telong belonging to their own hearth-group, anak adik often sleep away from their own hearth-group, with other anak adik of the same sex. The ease with which the Kelabit have taken up the opportunity of utilizing the boarding facilities at the school in Pa' Dalih is almost certainly not only due to the provision of meals - which they can afford to provide for their children - but also to the way in which the grouping together of anak adik for sleep and socialization is customary here. As they grow older and leave school, anak adik begin to sleep together in a rather mobile way. They change from a telong in one hearth-group apartment to one in another but appear to prefer to sleep with other anak adik, from other hearth-groups, rather than sleeping alone in their own hearth-group's apartment. Only at marriage do they give up this wandering and sleeping in groups with peers.

Thus there is a distinction between lun merar on the one hand and anak adik in that the former has a commitment to sleeping in their hearth-group's apartment while the latter does not, although lun merar often now sleep in telong belonging to their hearth-group rather than by the hearth itself, as they would have in the past.

In the past, under the 'old life' (ulun ma'on; this is what Kelabits call the customs, aio', which they followed before they became Christian), it seems that the same general pattern existed of lun merar sleeping in their own hearth-group's apartment together with their young children, while anak adik were mobile. Boys slept in the tawa' and girls slept in lofts above the hearth. However, the custom of sleeping together before marriage (which was not supposed to include sexual intercourse) meant that the boys spent many nights together with the girls in the lofts. The boys and girls did not, however,

in sleeping in the tawa' or in the loft, sleep always in the section which belonged to the hearth-group to which they belonged. They appear to have been mobile, and slept in different areas in the tawa' and loft and usually in groups, rather than singly.

It appears probable that the boundary between socialization and sleeping was as blurred among the young in the past as it is now. It is difficult to retrieve behavioural patterns as regards socialization for the past, but it is probable that the young spent a good deal of time socializing as well as sleeping in the tawa', where the boys slept, or in the loft, where the girls did.

## **5.2 Males and females**

I want now to turn to the other division within the hearth-group, that between males and females. Initially, it may seem that this division rests uneasily with the first division, discussed above, since the associations of the one side and the other are to all intents and purposes the same for the one division and the other. However, I want to suggest that the two ways of dividing up the members of the hearth-group co-exist; that both perspectives exist and that in order to understand the symbolism of the hearth-group it is necessary to appreciate both.

Kelabits are rather reluctant to admit to a greater association of women than men with the hearth or with the hearth-group, while they easily accept the suggestion that the couple is closely associated with the hearth and with the hearth-group. Behaviourally, though, it seems clear that this association exists. Women do most of the cooking and spend all of their time in the longhouse at

the hearth, either theirs or that of another hearth-group.

They may be said to be 'in charge' of the hearth. They normally cook the entire rice meal on an everyday basis. Although lun merar men spend a large proportion of their time at their hearth, they rarely cook. I shall be arguing in chapter six that the cooking of the rice meal, which is carried out at the hearth, constructs the hearth-group through its enabling of the co-consumption of the rice meal. The rice meal is cooked only at the hearth in the dalim; fires made in the past on the tawa' were used only to cook snack foods.

Men spend time in the tawa' part of the longhouse, which the women practically never do. Men sometimes engage in craftwork on the tawa', for example, making fishing nets or baskets. Women, on the other hand, never actually sit down to do anything on the tawa'. There seems no doubt that the tawa is associated with men rather than women<sup>94</sup>. There is a tradition among both Kelabit and Lun Bawang of unmarried young men and boys sleeping on the tawa' (Talla 1979:51; Crain 1970:309). Girls used in the past to sleep in attics above the hearth area, and they spend considerably more time by their hearth than do boys, although they are away from it much more than their lun

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Engagement negotiations among the Lun Bawang of Sipitang involve the girl's party sitting on mats in the inner room (takap) and being referred to as takap, while the boy's party sits in the gallery section (tawa') and are referred to as tawa' (Crain 1970: 128). Among the Kayan, where the separate kitchen is recent, the whole household usually eats in the kitchen but men eat in the room at feasts while women eat in the kitchen (Rousseau 1974: 339). Women are thus more closely associated with that which is arguably the 'inside', while men are more 'outside'; the room, now bereft of the hearth, now partakes more of the nature of 'outside'. Rousseau's interpretation of the situation, that the pattern of eating at feasts indicates female inferiority (ibid), seems untenable. Being closer to the 'inside' could as easily indicate superiority, although the use of the terms 'inferior' and 'superior' seem in fact rather dangerous since they have very specific meanings in different cultural contexts which need to

merar seniors within the hearth-group. At an early age they begin to help with cooking and associated tasks around the hearth. This division among the anak adik, who are in general associated with the periphery of the hearth-group, strengthens the contention that females are more closely associated with the hearth than are males<sup>95</sup>.

## **6. Conclusion**

In this chapter I have given a description of the longhouse and the hearth-group and of the ways in which different parts of the longhouse and of the apartments belonging to different hearth-groups are used. I have introduced the separation of the hearth-group into different categories in two cross-cutting senses - into lun merar and anak adik on the one hand and into women and men on the other - and have suggested that in both cases the former is more closely associated with the hearth-group than the latter. I have suggested that for the Kelabit an association of lun merar with the hearth-group and with the dalim and the hearth in it is more easily openly admitted to than is the closer association of women with the hearth and the hearth-group.

I have linked this to the division between the two main parts of the longhouse and of the hearth-group apartment, dalim and tawa'. I have discussed how the dalim is both the core of the longhouse and of the hearth-group apartment and is closely associated with the cooking

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be analysed carefully.

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For the Selako of West Kalimantan, Schneider presents a similar association of men with the 'gallery' (saami') and of women with the 'family room' (biik), in which the family eat. Bachelor males and male visitors sleep on the 'gallery', while small children and unmarried girls sleep in the 'family room' (Schneider 1975b:208). The association of men with the gallery and of women with the private area of the longhouse is implicit, although not always directly addressed, for many other Borneo peoples.

of rice. Rice is what constitutes the hearth-group. The dalim is more closely associated with lun merar than with anak adik and more closely with women than with men.

The two perspectives on responsibility for rice-growing discussed in chapters three and four tie in with the two ways of dividing up the membership of the hearth-group. Just as both men and women are seen, in one sense, as responsible for rice-growing, so they are together, as lun merar, associated with the core of the hearth-group, the hearth, where rice is cooked. However there is another sense in which women are both more closely associated with growing rice and also with cooking it, an action which I have argued constructs the hearth-group.

**CHAPTER SIX**  
**THE RICE MEAL**

In this chapter I want to look at Kelabit consumption of food. The main focus is the rice meal, kuman nuba'. Other foods are discussed as they contrast with or can be understood in relation to the rice meal.

**1. Categories of food and drink**

There is a distinction between 1) the consumption of rice together with side dishes (penguman; see p. 202); this is termed kuman nuba', which I translate as the rice meal, 2) the consumption of senape, which are made from rice (see below) and drinking hot sweet drinks (usually tea or coffee, sometimes milk) and 3) the consumption of other foods, without rice. I refer to this last category as 'snack foods'. In the past, when borak, rice wine, was consumed, it fell into category two. I will argue that hot sweet drinks nowadays are to some extent treated as borak was in the past. Category three includes root crops, sugar cane, maize, millet, fruit and meat eaten on its own (without rice).

Eating rice with side dishes may be termed kuman nuba' ('eating cooked rice'), but is often simply referred to as kuman ('eating'), whereas a reference to eating any other food always mentions that food by name: kuman ubi, for example, ('eating tubers'), or kuman bua' ('eating fruit'). This suggests that the core act of eating is eating rice.

A social and ritual distinction exists between the above three categories. All food, when consumed in the longhouse, is consumed in the dalim. Not all foods are consumed in the dalim area belonging to one's own hearth-group, however.

The rice meal is almost always consumed in the part of the dalim belonging to the hearth-group to which an individual belongs. Other categories of food - categories two and three above - are often consumed in dalim areas belonging to other hearth-groups. While the rice meal is normally a private, hearth-group matter, eating snacks is much more public. A snack is actually prepared in order to be eaten with non-own hearth-group members, during conversation groups including members of various hearth-groups. When it is ready all nearby individuals are called to eat and readily come. They are aware of the fact that the snack is being prepared and are ready to be

called over. Senape and hot sweet drinks are shared with members of different hearth-group by the hearth-group which produces them, but only in defined contexts and not without significant social implication.

## **2. Rice as food**

In its unhusked form, rice is called in Kelabit pade (c.f. Malay padi); in its husked but uncooked form, it is called bra (c.f. Malay beras). There are a number of words to describe the form rice takes once it is prepared for consumption.

Rice may be consumed in five basic forms: boiled in water to make the core food of the rice meal (kuman nuba'), when it is called nuba'; boiled in water to make rice porridge for the consumption of babies, pregnant and nursing mothers, sick and old people, when it is called beraan; boiled in water with a vegetable or with meat to make a side dish at the rice meal, when it is called kikid; steamed in leaves, when it is called senape; and as rice wine, when it is called borak.

Nuba' is the proper and usual form in which rice is consumed at kuman nuba', which I translate as the 'rice meal'. Kuman nuba' literally means 'eating rice (in the form of nuba')'. At the rice meal, rice, in the form of nuba', is placed in complementary opposition to side dishes, literally 'something to eat' [with rice]'. I term these foods side dishes. They may consist of foods which I term vegetables, or of meat.

There are, however, two other forms in which rice is eaten which are associated with the rice meal. These are beraan and kikid.

### **2.1 Beraan**

Beraan, often known now by the Malay term bubur, is rice gruel. The word may derive from the word bra, meaning husked but uncooked rice. It is fed to babies from the age of about four months. At about the age of six months some vegetable juices are added. Beraan continues to be important as the basic food, together with breast milk, up to the age of two or three. However, the small child will be present at kuman nuba' from a very young age and is given pieces of meat to chew from the age of six or eight months. Gradually it is introduced to nuba' by its mother, dipped into the juices of the side dishes. The feeding of beraan to babies is always kept separate from kuman nuba'; the baby is fed beraan which has been specially prepared



for it about three times a day, but separately from kuman nuba'. A baby's beraan is gradually thickened, mixed with less and less water, making it more and more similar to nuba'. Nursing mothers also eat beraan, which is considered to help in milk production, but they eat it at the rice meal instead of nuba'.

## 2.2 Kikid

A common side dish eaten with nuba' at the rice meal is kikid. In making kikid, husked uncooked rice (bra) is boiled in a great deal of water together with a vegetable, some meat or some fish, and Kelabit salt (see below). The vegetable, meat or fish which is used is usually one which is considered to be especially tasty, for example smoked meat or fish or peanuts, so that the resulting kikid is palatable. Kikid is often made as a side dish at cooperative work parties, kerja baya or kerja sama, perhaps because it stretches small quantities of side dish ingredients.

Kikid appears to be regarded as a side dish which is not quite 'proper'. During the first year we were in Pa' Dalih, we were almost never given kikid. I did not realize how often it is, in fact, eaten until later. I was eventually explicitly told that we were deliberately not being given it at the beginning. It became apparent to me that there was a feeling of embarrassment surrounding serving kikid. It would rarely be produced for visitors from other longhouses and then only if they were close relatives.

## 2.3 Nuba'

The term nuba' does not only describe boiled rice. Roots (ubi; in other words taro, cassava and sweet potatoes) and corn (dele) may also be boiled in water, mashed and packed in leaves in the same way that rice is processed to make nuba' laya', 'soft rice', the standard form which Kelabit nuba' takes. These are described as nuba' ubi ('root nuba'') and nuba' dele ('maize nuba''). It seems that the term nuba' describes the form which the cooked rice, roots or maize take when cooked in this way. However it seems clear that it is rice which is the core stuff of nuba'. If one mentions nuba' without saying which variety of nuba' one is referring to, it is assumed that one is referring to nuba' made of rice. There is no way of qualifying the term nuba' in order to make clear that one is referring to rice nuba', whereas other types of nuba' are referred to as nuba' ubi or nuba' dele.

Boiled in water, nuba' made of rice is the staple starch food eaten at meals three times a day together with side dishes<sup>96</sup>. Nuba' ubi and nuba' dele are eaten only as snack foods.

There are two types of rice nuba': nuba' laya' ('soft rice') and nuba' to'a ('hard rice'). Different varieties of pade are used to make the two types of nuba'. There are only a small number of varieties of pade which are used to make nuba' to'a, the varieties which are termed pade adan and pade dari. These varieties can only be grown in wet rice fields. Except for these varieties, all Kelabit varieties of pade are almost invariably made into nuba' laya'. The popularity of pade adan and pade dari has spread recently since they began to be exported to town for sale.

While nuba' to'a is cooked in enough water to produce a mass of separate cooked grains, nuba' laya' is cooked with a great deal more water and for a much longer time than nuba' to'a: two or three hours. It is regularly stirred while cooking and once deemed ready it is mixed and mashed with a bogo (bamboo cooking utensil with a flat end) for ten minutes or so. It is then in a soft mushy form. Dollops of this are then placed in the centre of a leaf, usually one planted for this purpose called da'un isip, and wrapped in it. The leaf-wrapped parcels are then stored in a basket with a lid until they are to be eaten. As the nuba' cools, it solidifies. It is not eaten hot because it is too sticky and is difficult to handle. Once it is warm it is ready to be eaten, but it can equally be eaten cold.

The senior female lun merar of each hearth-group makes nuba' laya', the standard form of nuba', early every morning, rising at 3.30 or 4.00 a.m. to do so. If, after the morning and midday rice meals have been catered for, it is clear that there will not be sufficient for the evening meal, someone belonging to the hearth-group will make nuba' laya' again in the late afternoon. If the senior female lun

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<sup>96</sup> It seems that the Kelabit custom of eating a rice meal three times a day is unusual in Borneo. In town, a rice meal is eaten twice a day, at midday and in the evening. The Melanau eat a rice meal once (at midday) or, if they have enough rice, twice (in the evening too) a day (Morris 1953:8-9). Neither town dwellers nor the Melanau are, normally, rice-growers. But Ave suggests that a rice meal twice a day is usual in the interior of Borneo among rice-growers, except where heavy work is to be carried out, when three are eaten (Ave 1990:13). The people of Long Lellang, a Kelabit community outside the Highlands proper, eat a rice meal only twice a day, and this may be due to the fact that they are in very frequent contact with Kayan and Kenyah rather than through contact with town. Malays in Sarawak eat a rice meal only twice a day (Jamuh and Harrisson 1969:210). The alternative to a rice meal in the morning - and for the Melanau often in the evening too - is another starch food: among the Melanau, sago, and elsewhere bananas, potatoes, or, very often, cassava. Sometimes rice cakes are eaten. For the Kelabit, these are all, except rice cakes, in the category of what I am

merar is not yet back from the rice fields, this will done by a younger woman of the hearth-group. Only if there is no woman about will a man perform this task. Nuba' to'a is usually only made if more nuba' is required unexpectedly, usually because visitors arrive unannounced. It is much quicker to make, taking twenty minutes or so, but it is not so well liked as nuba' laya.

### **3. The consumption of the everyday rice meal**

Before kuman nuba', those who are to participate gather together in a circle, with the senior female lun merar of the hearth-group having her back to the hearth and serving from it. The side dishes are placed in the middle of the circle and leaf packets of rice are taken out of the rice basket (belalong nuba') by a member of the hearth-group. This is almost invariably a woman and usually the senior female lun merar. These packets of rice are placed in a circle around the side dishes, side by side, with their ends facing the side dishes and the participants in the meal. Grace is then said. This will always be said by a lun merar, the more prestigious the better; if a guest of high status from another community is present, he or she will be asked to say grace.

During the meal there is silence. Concentration is on eating and not on socialisation. The meal is consumed rapidly. This all contrasts strongly with the atmosphere surrounding the eating of snack foods, when much conversation takes place, the whole proceeding is slow and relaxed, and the point of the eating seems largely to be the socialisation involved rather than nutrition. I will return to this below. Rice meals held in the longhouse, by the hearth, are the most solemn and rapid. Those eaten outside the longhouse, in a fieldhouse during a cooperative work day or in the forest on the way to Bario are rather less solemn. Here more conversation takes place. This may be because the meal is being consumed away from the hearth, which is the major focus of the hearth-group.

### **4. Side dishes at the rice meal**

The term penguman literally means 'something to eat' but it is always used to refer to side dishes eaten together with rice in the form of nuba' at the rice meal. Penguman consist of meat and other protein foods and of vegetables, and may include kikid, discussed above.

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calling snack foods.

Raw foods used in the making of side dishes at the rice meal are very often shared. Both cultivated and wild vegetables and wild meat are divided up and sent to relatives and neighbours via children if a hearth-group has more of these foods than it can eat at one meal<sup>97</sup>.

Before metal cooking pots began to be brought into the Highlands<sup>98</sup>, no cooking except roasting could be done on top of the fire and most foods in side dishes were boiled. Although fried side dishes are now often made, soupy side dishes are still the most common side dish. Meat is most often boiled for consumption at the rice meal. Roast meat is normally eaten as a snack food rather than as a side dish to the rice meal.

Although it is not uncommon for a hearth-group to have only vegetable side dishes at a particular rice meal, this is not likely to be repeated for more than one or two rice meals. A hearth-group will not allow itself to go without any protein food in its rice meals for more than a day. If no other hearth-groups have sent over any raw meat from their male members' own hunting, and the male members of a hearth-group have not been successful in hunting recently, one of them will go fishing or will bring back some grubs or other protein food from the forest to ensure that there is some protein food to eat. Meat is seen as perhaps the most important food cooked as a side dish eaten at the rice meal. I will return to the significance of the consumption of meat in chapter nine.

##### **5. The rice meal as constituted by rice and side dishes**

The foods eaten as side dishes all derive from plants and animals which are considered to grow on their own without human help.

This applies to hunted meat and wild vegetables; and I have argued that vegetables grown by the Kelabit, which might be described as semi-cultivated, are treated as though they grew without human aid, and as such are radically contrasted with rice.

Both side dishes and rice are essential to the rice meal, and

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<sup>97</sup> Rousseau says that the sharing of meat, termed ngepiah, 'to equalize', is usual among the Kayan too, and that it was compulsory before the Bungan reform (Rousseau 1974:149-50, note p. 149). Gifts of fruit are also made casually among the Kayan (ibid:151).

<sup>98</sup> Although there are reports of metal pots being used to boil down water from salt springs in the Highlands to make salt by travellers to the area in the early part of this century, it seems unlikely that metal pots for everyday cooking began to be brought in until after the Second World War.

they are in complementary opposition to each other<sup>99</sup>. This may be said to derive from the difference in the way they grow and is symbolized by a distinction between them in terms of taste.

Tastiness is described using the word mein, which means tasty, salty and sweet. In the rice meal mein refers to tastiness and saltiness. Kelabit make their own salt by boiling down water from local salt springs, which are known as lobang mein, 'tasty/sweet/salty holes in the ground (springs)'. Salt in its prepared form is known as tusu', but it seems that this describes the form which salt takes rather than the quality of saltiness, which is mein. Side dishes at the rice meal ought to be mein; they are always cooked with salt. Rice, on the other hand, is always cooked without salt, whether it is cooked as nuba' for the rice meal, as senape or as borak. Within the rice meal, mein is an attribute of the side dishes eaten with rice.

It seems probable that the reason that kikid is regarded as not being a 'proper' side dish for rice and for the embarrassment surrounding serving it to outsiders may be the fact that serving a dish containing rice as a side dish breaches the correct structure of kuman nuba', where rice should not be cooked with anything else but should come into contact with food in side dishes only at the rice meal, when it is consumed.

A rice meal on an everyday basis may consist of rice with salt. Without at least salt it is not a rice meal. Thus, it is arguable that being mein is the essence of side dishes at the rice meal. In this context, the fact that salt, like wild foods, derives from the forest appears significant.

## **6. Rice in the rice meal as nutritious**

Side dishes at the rice meal are appreciated for their flavour, the fact that they are mein. Rice, cooked without salt, is appreciated primarily because it nourishes rather than for its taste.

While the Kelabit do nowadays have some understanding of the nutritional contribution of foods besides rice in terms of their vitamin content, this does not go very far. Their notion of nutrition focuses on rice.

If one is hungry one should eat rice, in the rice meal; other

<sup>99</sup> The Semai of peninsular Malaysia consider that a 'real meal' must consist of a protein food and a starch, either rice or tapioca (Dentan 1968:50, paraphrased by Manderson 1986:6).

foods are not considered capable of satisfying hunger. When we first went to the Highlands and I found the mashed-up rice unpalatable, I used to seek out people eating snack foods such as cassava or maize, to fill my stomach. If it were noticed, however, that I appeared to be eating these foods because I was hungry, I would be enjoined, in shocked tones, to kuman nuba', i.e. to eat a rice meal.

At the rice meal, there is a great deal of emphasis on consuming as much nuba' as possible. It is quite explicit that side dishes are eaten explicitly in order to make it possible to eat more rice. This is because of their tastiness<sup>100</sup>. If there are guests, they will be frequently enjoined during the rice meal to 'eat rice' (kuman nuba') - i.e. take another leaf parcel of rice - well before they have finished their present parcel. This remark is usually the only thing that is said during a rice meal. If an individual shows a reluctance to finish the last parcel of rice s/he has embarked upon, s/he will be told to finish it, otherwise it will rain while someone is walking in the forest. The possibility of it raining is often held up as a consequence of improper behaviour.

Comments are often made once the meal is over regarding the quantity of rice which was eaten by each individual. It is a matter of pride and pleasure to both the participants and to the host (where there are guests) that a great deal of rice was eaten. Since nuba laya', the usual form of nuba', is in countable leaf parcels of a fairly uniform size, it is very easy to compare quantities of rice consumed. Individuals will discuss how much rice they ate at a particular rice meal and are likely to know exactly how many packets (to the half packet) they consumed at each rice meal for the whole day and even the day before. The subject of how many packets of rice an individual tends to eat at a rice meal is one of great interest and is frequently discussed. A tendency to consume too few is regretted and will certainly be considered the reason for any weakness on the part of the individual. A tendency to consume more than average is a matter for boasting and tends to make the individual concerned secure that he or she will remain strong and healthy.

The fact that rice is what nourishes is illustrated by the reaction to a child not being healthy, not growing well. Where this happens s/he may be given to another hearth-group to foster or even

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<sup>100</sup>A similar attitude to rice is described by Jane Hanks for the people of Bang Chan in Thailand: 'Rice itself is considered drearily tasteless, and the hot and spicy fish and vegetables are only to add flavor to help one consume as large a quantity of rice as possible.' (J. Hanks 1960:298).

adopt; this is because it is assumed that the rice of his/her own hearth-group is not nourishing him/her properly. The only other food which is considered essential to a small child is breast milk; where a mother does not breast-feed her baby but brings in powdered milk (with great practical difficulty and at great expense) to feed him/her, this is considered lamentable and likely to lead to illness. Possible deficits in other foods, apart from breast milk (in a child under about three) and rice, are not considered feasible reasons for ill health in a small child.

### 7. The everyday rice meal: separating hearth groups and bringing them together

Two of the three daily rice meals, the morning and evening meals (eaten at about 8.00 a.m. and 7.00 p.m.), always take place in the longhouse unless an individual is on a journey or in the jungle. The midday meal often takes place outside the longhouse, wherever the individual happens to be.

In one sense, the rice meal is always a hearth-group matter. In another sense, however, rice meals are taken in common by all co-resident members of a longhouse and also of a multi-longhouse community.

Within the longhouse, members of a given hearth-group almost invariably eat rice meals together. This is particularly and almost invariably true of lun merar. Within the longhouse, this means eating at the separate hearths. In the fields, when a cooperative work group is working together, it means making clear the separation between hearth-groups. This is done through the grouping of members of different hearth-groups into inward-facing groups, focused on the packets of rice which they have brought with them and the side dishes provided by the host hearth-group.

Although, when rice is being eaten, anyone nearby who is not a member of the hearth-group is always called to eat, this is an invitation which it is regarded as improper to take up<sup>101</sup>. It would, in fact, be unprestigious for the person accepting and prestigious (although sometimes an inconvenience) for the lun merar of the hearth-group offering. These are strong reasons for both the regular offering and the regular declining of rice meals.

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<sup>101</sup>Rousseau says that among the Kayan too, outsiders to a household are always invited to participate in a meal but they must decline; the Penan, however, cause consternation by accepting the invitation. (Rousseau 1990:244 note 5).

Despite the explicit separateness of the consumption of rice by different hearth-groups, there is also a strong tendency for all the members of a co-resident longhouse community to eat at the same time and in physical and visual proximity. Morning and evening rice meals are taken at almost exactly the same time by all the hearth-groups belonging to a longhouse, even though separately at their separate hearths. The open-ness of the dalim of the longhouse means that all hearth-groups, grouped around their own hearths, are clearly visible to all others. Although all hearth-groups scrupulously eat their own rice, side-dishes are freely shared with neighbours, friends and relatives (most longhouse-mates will be categorised as all three). As the meal is starting, large numbers of dishes of cooked side dishes are seen being sent over from hearth to hearth. Earlier in the day, uncooked vegetable and protein foods have already been shared around.

#### **8. Kuman nuba' as generative of higher-level hearth-groups**

I would argue that there is a sense in which all rice meals, including everyday ones held in the longhouse or outside it, generate higher-level entities represented as equivalent to the hearth-group. The way in which everyday rice meals within the longhouse occur - at the same time and in visual proximity - suggests that the longhouse is represented in this way. There are certain meals, known as kuman peroyong, 'eating together', where the commensality of the community, whether single or multi-longhouse, appears very clear. These occur at certain important occasions, such as the kuman pade bru ('eating new rice') eaten by the whole community together after the harvest<sup>102</sup>, and when visitors come to the community. On these occasions, all the member hearth-groups of the community provide rice, but the rice is pooled and people do not eat rice which their hearth-group has provided. Given the differences seen by the Kelabit to exist between rice produced by different hearth-groups and the close association between health and eating the right rice - which is that of the hearth-group to which a person belongs - this is of some significance. It indicates that in some sense all the hearth-groups of the community are of one substance and eat the same rice<sup>103</sup>.

As has been discussed in chapters three and four, the way in which decision-making operates with relation to rice-growing and the

<sup>102</sup>This is equivalent to the irau babpat fulu' among the Lun Bawang of Sipitang (Crain 1970:257).

<sup>103</sup>Compare the Berawan festival of papi lameng ('prayers of the house') among the Berawan, which is, Metcalf writes, 'above all a rite of



way in which the growing of rice is organised through cooperative work groups both emphasises the separateness of hearth-groups by making labour reciprocity the basis of the system, and ties the participating hearth-groups together as in some sense co-producers of rice. Only rice is grown by cooperative labour, in which the hearth-groups of the community cooperate in the groups known as kerja sama and kerja baya. Other crops are grown by the individual hearth-groups without recourse to cooperative labour groups. The growing of rice is a matter which concerns the lun merar of the whole community operating as a unit, as well as being something which is the concern of the lun merar of each hearth-group, operating separately from the lun merar of other hearth-groups.

Although hearth-groups do operate as distinct units concerning rice, and within the community rice is seen as the property of the separate hearth-groups, there is a sense in which rice is regarded as being community property on an inter-community level. Rice meals provided for visitors are in a sense represented as being provided by the whole community. This applies both to rice meals provided casually for visitors by their main-host hearth-group and by other hearth-groups, and to kuman peroyong at which visitors are present; the presence of visitors is in fact often a reason for holding a kuman peroyong.

Rice meals for visitors are, theoretically, the responsibility of either the hearth-group of the male leader of the community, now known as the ketua ruma', or of that of the head of the womens' circle of the parish (kaum ibu) of the SIB church of which the community, if the visitors are pelawat. Pelawat are groups of people from one SIB parish, usually couples, travelling around the area spreading the gospel. They are always hosted very lavishly, both by individual hearth-groups and also at kuman peroyong.

The ketua ruma' and the head of the womens' circle stand for the community in any case. But the fact that the whole community is providing for the visitors is made even clearer through the way in which the visitors are fed. It is not only the host hearth-group which provides rice and side dishes. The lun merar of other hearth-groups send over both nuba' and side dishes to the host hearth-group whenever a meal is eaten there. Almost every hearth-group sends these and the food is sent rather ostentatiously. By contrast, side dishes sent over to neighbouring and related hearth-groups on an everyday

basis are sent over without any sense of ostentation.

It is, I would argue, fundamentally the co-consumption of the rice meal which constitutes higher-level hearth-groups. I have argued that the hearth is the focus of the apartment. This is the basis for using the term hearth-group for the group of people who inhabit it, as discussed in chapter five. The culmination of rice production is in its consumption.

### **9. Identification of higher-level hearth-groups**

There are, within the community of Pa' Dalih, two levels above that of the hearth-group which may be argued to be represented, at certain rice meals, as equivalent to the hearth-group: the longhouse and the bawang (community), which is in practice the same thing as the sidang (parish of the SIB church). The longhouse as a higher-level hearth-group is constituted through the daily consumption of the rice meal at the same time and in visual contact in the longhouse - and in field houses, since there is a tendency for cooperative work groups to be constituted on a longhouse basis. The community/parish level is generated through the holding of kuman peroyong, at which rice is actually pooled, and at kuman nuba bru' held by individual hearth-groups, which host as much of the community as can be mustered (see below). This level also appears to be generated through the presentation of the whole community/parish as host at rice meals provided for casual visitors, as discussed above, and at kuman peroyong and irau (feasts).

At a still higher level, the whole of the Kelabit population is considered to be lun tau, 'our people', and to have a unity, to be different from people who are not lun tau (and perhaps superior to them, where the other people are less successful rice-growers than the Kelabit). Sometimes the community of lun tau is taken to include non-Kelabit Lun Bawang, particularly those geographically close. In Pa' Dalih this means those living in the Kerayan area immediately across the international border with Indonesia. This overarching community of lun tau is represented and generated at irau.

### **10. The significance of hosted rice meals which generate higher-level hearth-groups**

Irau are one of the two occasions, and the most significant, at which rice meals eaten in common by members of different hearth-groups, meals which are generative of a higher-level hearth-group, are

hosted by one hearth-group, rather than being held in common by the whole of a community or being hosted by one community (as at kuman peroyong). Such occasions emphasise commensality, as do those where rice is provided by all participants, but state in effect that such commensality is made possible by the host hearth-group. This hearth-group provides all the rice consumed<sup>104</sup> as well as the side dishes.

Besides irau, the other occasion of this kind is kuman pade bru ('eating new rice') when held by an individual hearth-group. This occurs at the midday rice meal during a kerja sama cooperative work group, which on this occasion is provided in its entirety by the host hearth-group.

At such kuman pade bru, commensality is created within the community, as at kuman peroyong. Theoretically, all hearth-groups belonging to the community should send at least one person to kerja sama, and so kuman pade bru held by individual hearth-groups could, potentially, host all hearth-groups belonging to the community. In fact, attendance is not enforceable, and it depends on the standing of the host hearth-group. Thus, the degree to which the rice meal held in this situation in fact creates a true commensality of all member hearth-groups depends on and reflects the status of the host hearth-group.

The other occasion at which a rice meal is provided by members of other hearth-groups by the lun merar of one hearth-group, irau, is on a much larger scale. Ideally, all Kelabits should attend, together with anyone else associated by social contact with Kelabits; all are invited. The more people who attend, the more inclusive is the higher-level hearth-group which is generated, hosted by the lun merar of the host hearth-group. The ideal might be said to be the creation of a super-hearth-group which ideally covers the whole social universe, lun tau, 'our people'.

The fact that kuman pade bru held by individual hearth-groups and irau are hosted by a single hearth-group is stated through the holding of the rice meal around the host hearth-group's hearth. Side dishes for the rice meal, as provided on an everyday basis by the host hearth-group at a cooperative work group, are normally taken back to be eaten with the participant hearth-group's rice at their own hearth.

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<sup>104</sup>The rice is packed in leaf parcels approximate four times as big as the standard leaf parcel of rice, and each person is given one of these - more than even the largest man could eat easily, since I have never seen anyone eat more than three standard-sized parcels. Thus, the provision is overtly generous.

The rice and side dishes provided at individual kuman pade bru, in contrast, are consumed next to the host hearth-group's hearth. At irau, the participants or guests are seated along the length of either the dalim or the tawa', ranged along both sides facing each other, as they are at kuman peroyong held by a community. However, at kuman peroyong there is no focal spot within the area being utilized. At irau there is: the place where speeches are made, prayers are said, gifts are distributed, and which is the centre for the distribution of food and drink. Where the irau is being held in the dalim, as it is in Pa' Dalih, this focus is at the hearth-group's hearth.

There is also, however, a sense in which irau, although funded and hosted by one host hearth-group, can be seen as being hosted by the whole of the host hearth-group's community (bawang/sidang). The whole of the community helps in the preparation of the food. The rice, although it is rice belonging to the host hearth-group, is divided up to be cooked by all female lun merar of the hearth-groups belonging to the community. They cook this rice at their own hearths. The food is distributed by members of the community according to their stage of life and gender (see chapter nine). All members of the host community are expected to generally look after the guests. Tom Harrisson says that in the past, irau might be held by a number of hearth-groups together, although one prominent hearth-group would main-host the irau, providing more than their fair share of the rice and domestic meat (Harrisson 1959a:118).

### 11. Snack foods

There is no Kelabit term for 'snack foods'. This is a semantic domain which I have mapped out following observation of the ways in which certain foods are treated and consumed. The consumption of foods which I term snack foods is simply described using the term kuman, 'to eat' followed by the name of the food concerned.

Root crops eaten as snacks - taro (opa'), sweet potatoes (ubi sia') and cassava (ubi kayu) - may be either boiled or fried in pig fat (sometimes in oil bought in town). Maize is roasted, popped or boiled whole, when it is either eaten as it is or scraped off the ear, mashed and packed into leaves in the form of nuba' dele (see above). Millet - rarely grown and little eaten - is boiled. Sugar cane is eaten raw and peeled, with pieces being torn off with the teeth, chewed and then spat out. Meat, as a snack food, is roasted. Fruit is eaten uncooked as a snack food (at least one kind of fruit is picked when unripe and cooked as a side dish to be eaten at the rice meal).

### 11.1 The consumption of snack foods

The consumption of snack foods contrasts with the rice meal, in that it operates in a way which lays aside the separateness of hearth-groups. Snack foods are freely shared with other hearth-groups. It is considered proper to share them, and it would be non-sharing of them which would be considered unusual. The sharing of snack foods is thus not seen as generous, but simply as normal behaviour.

Groups which form after the evening rice meal for conversation and sometimes story-telling and which may consume snack foods form nowadays at hearths, on the mats in front of them. In the past they used to form in the tawa'. I have discussed in chapter five how the tawa' used to be associated with a lack of emphasis on the separate hearth-groups. The socialization which is associated with eating snack foods, whether it takes place in the tawa', as it used to, or in the dalim, as it does now, is also associated with a de-emphasis on the separateness of hearth-groups. I would argue that it is not associated, however, with the generation of higher-level hearth-groups. Its association seems rather to be with something negative: a lack of emphasis on hearth-groups at any level.

The de-emphasis on the separateness of hearth-groups associated with the consumption of snack foods is illustrated by the relative lack of significance attached to the location of conversation groups which consume them. The location of a conversation group appears to carry no significance. Where a hearth-group has prepared a snack food, it is not necessarily at their hearth that a group will form. A member of the hearth-group may bring the food over to an incipient group at another hearth. Snack foods may also be provided by more than one hearth-group for a given conversation group. No prestige appears to stem from conversation groups forming at one's hearth, nor from the provision of snack foods for others.

The fact that snack foods are particularly likely to be consumed in the evening is of some significance. It might be said that whereas during the day there is an emphasis on the separateness of the constituent hearth-groups in a longhouse and an obsessive preoccupation with finding hearth-group-associated activities to occupy oneself with, in the evening after the evening rice meal the emphasis shifts away from the hearth-group. The post-evening meal period may perhaps be seen as a time out of normal time. This period is technically night-time; when snack foods are cooked and consumed by

groups of individuals, this happens at a time when it is actually usual to sleep<sup>105</sup>. Thus this socialisation and food transaction is actually something out of the ordinary. It is enjoyed a good deal, perhaps because it involves no tension deriving from bids for status, as surrounds the rice meal as provided for visitors.

The provision of snack foods for visitors contrasts with the provision of rice meals and underlines the difference between the two forms of eating. While rice meals emphasise the distinction between visitor and host, the consumption of snack foods does not. Visitors will sit around with their hosts in the evenings in a very casual manner, as though there were no distinction between them. There is no air of attempting to provide particularly tasty snack foods or of 'being the host' with regard to them, offering them with ceremony - as is the case with rice meals. It is perhaps particularly likely that snack foods will be made and conversation groups form when visitors are in the longhouse, because there is a lot to talk about. This kind of informative conversation between people who consider themselves relatives but who belong to different communities tends to blur the boundaries between visitors and hosts rather than emphasizing it.

## 12. Borak and senape

Borak (rice wine<sup>106</sup>) and senape (small flat parcels of rice - often glutinous rice [pade obuk<sup>107</sup>] - steamed in leaves) are distinct from other consumables made from rice. They are or were specifically made to be shared outside the hearth-group.

While nuba', senape and beraan are not seen as difficult to make - the processes prescribed for the processing of rice into these edible forms simply need to be followed and success is guaranteed -

<sup>105</sup>There is a great deal of variability in the formation of conversation groups. Some evenings no-one stays up beyond 8.00 p.m., while on other evenings there are numerous separate groups staying up as late as midnight (which is extremely late, bearing in mind the fact that the lun merar, at any rate, will be getting up at 4.00 or 5.00 a.m.).

<sup>106</sup>The term is also used to refer to alcoholic beverages made out of other starch foods, including root crops and grains other than rice. In the past, grains other than rice used to be grown solely in order to be made into borak. The cultivation of these grains has declined steeply now that borak is no longer made. I was told, however, that borak made out of grains other than rice carried much less prestige than borak made from rice. This was despite the fact that borak made from other grains is considered, in the opinion of some at least, to be tastier than borak made from rice. It was not prestigious to serve such borak to visitors.

<sup>107</sup>Pade obuk used in the past to be favoured for making borak, rice wine. Now it is little grown; when it is, it is usually used for making senape.

the making of borak is considered difficult. Success in brewing it is considered to be due to going through the prescribed process exactly correctly. This is not just a matter of physically following the proper procedure but also of treating the rice respectfully and properly so that it will be transformed into borak. Success in brewing borak thus indicates the correct attitude towards rice. It is closely associated with being lun merar.

While nuba', beraan and senape can be made by men, though they normally are not, borak was always brewed by women, by the senior female lun merar of the hearth-group. The fact that it was not made by younger women, and particularly not by female anak adik, emphasises its association with lun merar and the core of the hearth-group. The transformation involved in making borak could not be achieved by someone who was not lun merar, and was most likely to be successful when undertaken by a senior lun merar, the female member of the focal couple of the hearth-group.

The fact that borak was always made by a woman rather than a man underlines the close association which I have already discussed between women and rice.

Borak used to be made as often as there was surplus rice to enable it to be made. Early visitors to the Kelabit Highlands commented on the quantities consumed<sup>108</sup>. Rice wine is made throughout Borneo, and it has been frequently documented that rice was for preference made into rice wine, leaving inadequate supplies for consumption as food - i.e. in the rice meal. This has meant that the mixing of other starch foods with rice for the rice meal has been more common than it might have been if all the rice produced had been eaten at the rice meal. The Kelabit, however, who are rather successful rice-growers in comparison with other groups, appear to have been able, in most years, to put aside ample for consumption at the rice meal and still have, in most years, enough to make a good deal of rice wine.

Borak ceased to be made in the Kelabit Highlands in the early 70's when a Christian movement known as the Revival swept through which led to a greater degree of fundamentalism in Kelabit Christianity. While excess rice was in the past made into borak, it

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Very occasionally it is cooked as nuba'.

<sup>108</sup>Harrison says that the Kelabits might, in pre-Christian times, drink (in the form of borak) almost as much rice again as they ate in the form of cooked rice (1949b:145). Deegan's informants told him that in pre-Christian times about

is now, where possible, sold<sup>109</sup>. Prior to this, although the Kelabit became nominally Christian in the 50's, they had not abandoned the making of borak, just as they had not abandoned a number of other pre-Christian practices. The making and drinking of borak was seen by the missionaries and by the Kelabit themselves as one of the main distinguishing marks of paganism. Recently there are indications that certain individuals have begun to brew borak again in Bario. However, the strength of the interdiction on its manufacture and of feelings surrounding the significance of its making are very great. This meant that it was very difficult to gather data on this subject, since people were unwilling to admit that it was true that it was being made.

Nowadays, when borak is no longer (or very little) made, drinks made with materials bought in town appear to have taken its place, to some extent. Such drinks are served in the contexts when borak would have been served in the past. Their serving has the ceremonial quality which appears to have been associated with the drinking of borak in the past. It is possible to gain some insights into the significance of borak in the past through observation of the way in which drinks like highly sweetened tea, coffee and milk are consumed nowadays.

The provision of sweet tea and coffee is, nowadays, fundamental to ostentatious hospitality. Sweet tea and coffee are always provided for visitors from other longhouses, as borak used to be. They are sometimes provided for a longhouse-mate who sits down at one's hearth for a chat, but this is certainly regarded as a marked, hospitable act - much more so than the provision of snack foods. They are provided as a value-laden consumable at cooperative work groups. They are served in the church at the same sorts of events at which senape and urum are provided. And they are provided at irau.

Nowadays, there is a growing tendency to replace senape with snacks made from town-bought materials, especially wheat flour. These are known as urum, which refers in general to a fried snack food. Urum can be made of cassava flour or wheat flour. When they are made of cassava flour, they are eaten as snack foods (see above). When they are made of wheat flour, however, they are distributed in the

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half of the rice grown by the Lun Bawang was made into borak (1973:89).

<sup>109</sup>In the past this would have been much less common - although the sale of rice may have been a major way of accumulating prestige items - because of the lack of a market for it. For the Kelabit there is a strong stigma attached to buying rice. Nowadays the sale of rice has become much easier because it is non-Kelabit in town who are buying it.



same contexts as senape. This is probably because wheat flour has to be bought in town, and is therefore valuable. Cassava is considered without value. However, urum made of wheat flour and senape are not equivalent. There was a feeling of experimentation and lightheartedness about the distribution of urum which contrasted with a seriousness surrounding the distribution of senape. This suggests that it is considered to be 'proper' for senape rather than urum to be distributed. This almost certainly relates to the fact that senape are made from rice.

The prestige associated with the provision of both borak and senape is very clear. Both used to be provided at irau, which are generative of prestige. Nowadays senape are sometimes provided, and sweet drinks always are. Both used to be provided at pre-Christian agricultural feasts, which were also prestige-generating. Nowadays, senape and sweet drinks are distributed at kerja sama cooperative work groups, and sometimes, in addition, urum. Only sweet drinks are distributed at kerja baya groups. It is unclear whether in the past borak, which sweet drinks have replaced, was distributed at kerja baya. Harrisson talks of borak being provided every day by the hearth-group hosting the cooperative work group for that day. The fact that he says that this occurs every day would suggest that kerja baya was the form of cooperative organisation involved. I have discussed how kerja sama has elements of agricultural feasts. The lavish provision of drinks nowadays, and of borak in the past, is prestigious. It is clear that the more a situation is associated with the generation of prestige, the more likely it is that borak/sweet drinks and senape will be provided.

The sharing of any food or drink made from rice is associated with prestige. However, while nuba' is not shared on an everyday basis, but serves to demarcate and actually generate the hearth-group, borak (now replaced by sweet drinks) and senape are always shared. The prestige which is generated through this sharing belongs to the lun merar of the hearth-group which provides borak or senape. This may be said to strengthen the hearth-group and emphasise its separateness.

The sharing of borak and senape is also associated with higher-level hearth-groups, however. Sharing of borak and senape occurs at occasions at which rice meals are held which generate higher-level hearth-groups. It also occurs during cooperative work groups, which are, as I have pointed out, associated with the portrayal of rice-growing as a cooperative longhouse or community enterprise.

### 13. Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed Kelabit food and drink, and in particular the nature and structure of the rice meal, what it achieves and why. The rice meal is generative of the structure of Kelabit society. It achieves this through a delineation of its basic building block, the hearth-group. This building block is, I argue, generated at higher levels above the basic one. This occurs at rice meals at which members of a number of separate hearth-groups participate.

Where such rice meals are hosted by one hearth-group rather than involving the pooling of rice and side dishes, prestige is generated for that hearth-group. This, I suggest, is because of the very fact that such meals are generative of the structure of Kelabit society, which is based on the hearth-group.

The consumption of borak and of senape, made, like nuba', from rice, is also associated with the generation of prestige. It is also associated with the separateness of hearth-groups; the host hearth-group underlines its ability to maintain itself as a separate hearth-group through the provision of these consumables, and generates prestige for its lun merar.

Snack foods contrast with foods and drink derived from rice. These are freely shared and are associated with a de-emphasis on the separateness of hearth-groups. Their consumption is not associated with any particular hearth, and in the past took place on the tawa', which I have argued is associated with a de-emphasis on the separateness of hearth-groups. They are often consumed at night, a time not associated with rice cultivation or consumption and a time which is 'out of time' because it is a time when people usually sleep.

Snack foods, unlike food and drink derived from rice, are not associated with the generation of prestige. No prestige derives from the provision of snack foods for the hearth-group providing them.

**CHAPTER SEVEN**  
**THE CONCEPT OF LUN MERAR**

Literally, lun merar means 'big people' or 'important people'. As discussed in chapter five, lun merar are married people with children and later grandchildren. They are the human focus of the hearth-group to which they belong, associated with the core physical part of it, the hearth and the dalim. They are differentiated from anak adik, who also belong to the hearth-group but are more peripheral to it. Lun merar are responsible for rice-growing in their own hearth-group.

It is the lun merar that have the highest standing in the community. It is they who make all decisions, do all the talking both publicly and privately. They order young unmarried people (anak adik) about. They set standards. Anak adik are not listened to, in fact rarely talk in groups which include members of the rice-growing generation. They are fringe members of society.

**1. The essential achievements of lun merar**

The lun merar of a hearth-group are normally a couple. It is questionable whether it is possible to be lun merar of a hearth-group without being - or having been, one's spouse having died - a member of a couple<sup>110</sup>. In Pa' Dalih, all lun merar are or have been such. It is what is achieved through being a member of a couple that makes individuals lun merar.

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Although there are, I have been told, three individuals in the Bario area who have become successful rice-growers without being married. Since I know these individuals either not at all or only slightly, it is difficult to say how successful they have been in building up prestige and in being recognized as lun merar; I do know that the reputation of one of them, who engages in trade, is not high.

The production of rice, which is the responsibility of its lun merar, defines the existence of a separate hearth-group. The successful production of rice is one of the essential, defining achievements of lun merar, without which they are not lun merar.

But the rice, once produced, must be consumed at the rice meal; without the regular co-consumption of the rice meal, a hearth-group cannot exist. The lun merar of a hearth-group are the enablers of this consumption, and this is a second essential achievement of lun merar.

The third essential achievement of lun merar is the successful reproduction of the hearth-group in the form of descendants. The birth of children, and even more so of grandchildren, is essential to the status of lun merar<sup>111</sup>. Children and grandchildren are nourished at the rice meal, provided for them by the lun merar of their hearth-group. This is the bringing together, the culmination, of all that it means to be lun merar. The production of rice has resulted in the successful co-consumption of the rice meal, at which children and grandchildren are fed.

The dependants of the lun merar of a hearth-group are their biological children and grandchildren. Slaves were, Talla argues, treated as the children of their masters (1979a:86), but this certainly refers to everyday behaviour rather than to any potential for inheritance; this is perhaps, then, not contrary to Rousseau on Central Borneo in general (1990:173).

The crucial characteristic of the lun merar couple is that male and female are brought together fruitfully. All three of the aspects of 'being a lun merar' mentioned

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<sup>111</sup> Of the three individuals mentioned in footnote 1 who are not married yet grow rice successfully, two have adopted children.

above relate to this. Rice is produced through the cooperation of male and female lun merar; the rice meal is a bringing together of rice and wild foods, which are, in one sense, associated with female and with male respectively; and descendants can only be produced by the sexual reproduction of male and female and through the production of rice and the provision of the rice meal at which they are fed.

In all aspects of 'being a lun merar' the separation of male and female, as well as the ideological importance of the unity of male and female, may be seen. The existence of such separation is in fact crucial to understanding the Kelabit naming system, which is based on the development of lun merar status, and is also fundamental to the rice meal. It is more veiled in the context of rice-growing, where the unity of the couple is very marked ideologically.

I will look at the three characteristics of being lun merar separately, taking the production of rice first, the reproduction of the hearth-group in terms of children and grandchildren second and the enabling of the rice meal third.

## **2. The definition of the status of lun merar through the production of rice**

The attitude to rice as a crop and as a food is, as should be clear by now, a very special one and quite different to attitudes to other crops and other foods. It is the cultivation and consumption of rice which mark the Kelabit off from hunting and gathering peoples like the Penan, with whom they have historically had regular contact - but with whom they have very rarely intermarried. It is activities associated with rice-

growing which make it possible to become lun merar; Penan, at least so long as they engage only in hunting and gathering, cannot be described as lun merar.

## 2.1 The concept of lema'ud

Rice-growing and processing are special activities in terms of the way they are described in Kelabit. These activities are described as lema'ud, and are engaged in almost exclusively by lun merar.

The term lema'ud has no obvious translation in either English or Malay (the two languages with which both many Kelabits and I are familiar). Although the English word 'work' and the Malay term kerja might appear to be the closest equivalents, Kelabits themselves will not use these words to describe what they are doing when they are engaged in lema'ud. They will use the English or Malay term for the specific activity in which they are engaged.

Both the term 'work' and the Malay term kerja are used to refer to paid non-rice growing work in town; it would be inappropriate to use these terms to refer to rice-growing and processing activities. There is another Kelabit term, sin, which I have been told is the Kelabit for kerja. It does not have the same meaning as lema'ud, however. It appears to refer to any work, while lema'ud refers to work associated with rice-growing.

Activities classifiable as lema'ud include all those associated in any way with rice-growing and processing, although not cooking itself. This includes the making of rice storage huts (lepo) and the fencing of rice-fields. Activities associated with the upkeep of the longhouse apartment itself and especially the hearth area, the dalim - the area where rice is processed, cooked and consumed - are also classed as lema'ud. So is the care and feeding

of domestic pigs and chickens. These are fed rice and rice husks as well as other vegetable matter, particularly the stems and leaves of a kind of taro (opa') grown for this purpose. The feeding of pigs and chickens may be seen as part of the processing of rice, in that the production of these domestic animals is the production of rice-fed meat. The looking after of buffaloes, which graze on grass, is not classed as lema'ud. The closer association of pigs and chickens with the house and with rice (pigs used to be kept in pens under the dalim and chickens are kept in huts behind the dalim) is underlined by the fact that they are fed by women, who are in one sense, I have argued, closer to rice and to the focal centre of the house. Buffaloes, who are not associated with rice or the house, are fed by men, who are, in these terms, placed in opposition to that represented by women. This is something I will return to in discussing irau, at which pigs are always slaughtered and buffaloes sometimes are.

All of the activities described above are either associated with rice-growing and processing or with the maintenance of the hearth group and of the physical manifestations of the hearth group. Lema'ud, in other words, may be seen as describing all activities associated with the hearth group, and all those associated with rice-growing.

Lema'ud describes activities which are highly valued but are not highly relished. One gains the strong impression that there is a desire to convey the message that they are activities which have to be done. They are not actually stated to be burdensome but this is implied by the way in which they are talked about and approached. It seems important to the Kelabit to make it clear that they do not enjoy lema'ud. Actually, it often appeared to

me that lema'ud activities are enjoyed a great deal; but it seems to be important that this should not be openly stated. This would seem to be associated with the fact that rice-growing and the maintenance of the hearth-group, achieved by lema'ud, are represented as being a major, and difficult, achievement.

When individuals become parents and begin to be seen as lun merar, it is seen as proper that they begin to involve themselves in lema'ud; individuals who are reluctant to involve themselves are criticised in gossip, often in their hearing although not in addressing them. It is expected that as young parents grow older and have more children and as their children grow older, they will involve themselves more and more in rice-growing and processing. Eventually they will become the focal couple of the hearth-group to which they belong by virtue of being main rice-growers in their hearth-group and being in control of rice-growing decisions. The older couple, previously the focal couple of the hearth-group and the most definitely lun merar, gradually lose their involvement with rice-growing, only helping the focal couple occasionally. Although they may take on tasks which are associated with the processing of rice - particularly in the case of old women, who help with cooking - they spend more and more of their time sitting around chatting, often at other hearths. Thus older people appear to gradually lose their close bonds with their hearth-group and to revert to a status closer to that of anak adik. The fact that in many cases only one of the couple remains, the other having died, may be said to emphasise the 'separated gender' aspect of old people, bringing them closer to anak adik. They are never truly equivalent to anak adik, however; they have, after all, been lun merar and have successfully reproduced the hearth-group.



The transition to being a parent and a lun merar is not an easy one. Lema'ud is represented to the young as a great burden and responsibility, although it is also something to which they aspire since it brings full adult status and respect. The transition to becoming a rice-grower is represented as a difficult one and experienced as such.

Largely due to their greater involvement in rice growing and processing before they become parents, young women find the transition less difficult than do young men. In Pa' Dalih, the initial transition to being rice-growers was being experienced by two couples while we were there. Both had recently, within the last few months, become parents. In one case, the young man had moved in with his wife's natal hearth-group and in the other the young woman had moved in with her husband's. In neither case had the young man gone so far in the transition to being a rice-grower as had the young woman. This situation clarified attitudes to the transition, and the difference in attitude to the involvement of young women and of young men. In the instance of virilocality, the young woman did help to some extent in her mother-in-law's rice-fields, but she was criticized, not only by her mother-in-law but by others in the longhouse, for not doing enough. Her young husband did nothing in the rice fields at all, but no one said a word against him. It was clearly expected that the transition would be more rapid in the case of the wife than in the case of the husband, even where the couple were resident in the husband's natal hearth-group. The closer association of women with rice-growing is illustrated by the more rapid entrance of young mothers than of young fathers into rice-growing.

Although the transition is expected to be more

difficult and slower for a man, it is expected to take place within a few years. Husbands who already have a couple of children and still do not involve themselves to any great extent in rice-growing are heavily criticized. One father of a son of six and about to become the father of another baby, about 25 years old himself, was, when we arrived in Pa' Dalih, frequently gossiped about and ostracized. Gossip focused on his non-involvement in rice-growing. While we were there he made a sudden effort to become socially acceptable, began to involve himself properly in lema'ud, became a regular preacher in church and redeemed himself. It is probable that he did this because the general attitude to him beforehand made him feel worthless. After he had made the transition to being a rice-grower he entered the social universe of the lun merar as a junior member. His (and his wife's) pleasure in his new-found dignity was very obvious. He had been too old and too definitely a father to be able to mix with and do things with the anak adik dela'i, the boys who were not yet parents. He had therefore been able to belong to no clear category socially until he began to make the transition to lun merar-hood. He only achieved this through involving himself in lema'ud.

## 2.2 The importance of being rajin

The term rajin (a Malay term, but the only word used; there is now no other, Kelabit, term available) means hard-working. It does in theory refer to being hard-working in any enterprise (except activities categorized as raut - see later section). But above all it refers to being hard-working in the rice fields and in processing rice, i.e. in activities categorized as lema'ud. Verbal references by informants to individuals being rajin almost always referred to their involvement in activities classed as lema'ud.

In order to become a lun merar, being rajin is crucial. It is seen as necessary in order to achieve success in rice-growing, and is therefore a necessary attribute of lun merar. The identification of being rajin with being successful in rice-growing is so strong that if an individual achieves success without being rajin this is seen as inappropriate and tends to be ignored. There was a case of this while I was in Pa' Dalih; a young couple, parents of two young boys, were blessed with an extremely good harvest without having bothered much in the work they invested in the crop. There was a definite aura of resentment and a sense that this was most inappropriate, and people simply acted as though it had not happened most of the time, avoiding the subject. This contrasted with the tendency to talk about successful harvests where it is felt that they are deserved through hard work. This belief that it is hard work that leads to a good harvest is not altogether consonant with the attitude to the subject among some other Bornean rice-growers, who tend to attribute a greater role to non-human agencies. Harrison commented as early as the 1950's on the fact among the Kelabit 'it is completely understood that industry tempered by skill is the first essential (in rice-growing)' (1959a:75); thus, this attitude is not the result of contact with the more pragmatic modern world.

All lun merar must be rajin. People who are not rajin, although they may be parents or even grandparents, enjoy no respect within the community. They are not listened to at meetings, even those not related to rice-growing, and their opinion counts for very little. They may be openly ridiculed through the inappropriate use of their various names; as will be discussed later in this chapter, a person goes through a sequence of names in his/her lifetime according to the degree to which s/he is lun merar.

Respect, then, is linked to success and hard work in rice-growing and processing activities, lema'ud, but such success and hard work does not begin to appear until an individual becomes a parent. Parenthood, rice-growing and respect are closely tied up together.

The fact that rice-growing and processing necessitates a large input of labour appears to be very significant for the Kelabit. This may be seen as part of the representation of rice-growing as burdensome. Rice-growing is not carried out in a way that minimizes labour input; indeed it often seems that choices regarding rice-growing are made in order to maximise the labour invested in it. It also appears that choices may be made which maximise the unpleasantness of the type of labour invested. The adoption of permanent wet rice farming in the Kelabit Highlands, and especially in Pa' Dalih, has involved huge investments of labour in creating late baa. It appears that this choice did not need to be made. Since there is no shortage of land, it would have been possible in Pa' Dalih to have continued making late luun, dry rice fields, and not to have started making late baa. The labour input involved in making late baa, moreover, is largely earth moving, nakol tanah, and this is considered one of the most unpleasant activities there is.

Another instance of an apparent choice of a more labour intensive way of dealing with rice is the mode of cooking rice. The Kelabit eat most of their rice 'soft' (laya'), as discussed in chapter six. This method of cooking rice is very time-consuming and involves one woman in each hearth-group (normally the senior female lun merar) getting up before four o'clock in the morning (other members of the hearth-group rise at five or five-thirty) in order to have the rice ready for breakfast at about eight o'clock. The extreme earliness of the time of

rising of this lady is always emphasised by the lady herself and by all members of her hearth-group, since this indicates how hard-working she is.

### 2.3 Lema'ud and the generation of the hearth-group

Lema'ud is at the core of the identity and separateness of the hearth-group. The lun merar are primarily, and even obsessively, involved in the production of rice. It is essential for the lun merar of each hearth-group to succeed in producing enough rice to provide for its members. Enough rice means enough to enable only rice to be eaten at kuman nuba', at the very least. In the past the excess was made into borak, rice wine. Nowadays it is, if possible, sold by air to the coast. Not to succeed in producing enough rice for kuman nuba' three times a day ultimately negates the existence of a hearth-group, since it means relying on other hearth-groups for rice. To do this means the extinction of the hearth-group, since its separate existence is predicated on being able to produce enough rice to provide for its own kuman nuba'. Such a hearth-group is not pitied, but looked down upon<sup>112</sup>. It is said to have kaya ulun, 'weak life'. I have been told that in the past it would have eventually been forced through debt (of rice, presumably) to sell some of its members as slaves to another hearth-group.

The production of rice for the consumption of the hearth-group must be direct; it is a basic tenet that rice should never be exchanged for anything. Such exchange is termed mole and is extremely unprestigious for the hearth-group receiving the rice. The hearth-group giving it, on the other hand, gains prestige. Mole includes the buying of rice and also a practice termed rane mole. This

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As among the Berawan (Metcalf 1989:99).

practice, which literally means 'harvesting to mole', involves the members of a hearth-group with insufficient rice going to the rice fields of another hearth-group and harvesting for payment in rice, in other words exchanging work for rice. I witnessed an occurrence of this in Pa' Dalih while I was there, when one hearth-group belonging to the community went to rane mole with several other hearth-groups. It was quite clear that the hearth-group concerned was suffering considerable loss of prestige because of this. Where a hearth-group involves itself in mole in order to get rice, whatever the exchange is for, this is extremely unprestigious and embarrassing, provoking laughter and an atmosphere of scandal in discussion on the topic with Kelabits<sup>113</sup>. I have been told that the Kenyah and Kayan in the vicinity of the community of Long Lellang (which is outside the Kelabit Highlands although it is Kelabit, and which has closer contact with Kenyah and Kayan) come to rane mole in Kelabit fields because otherwise they would have to eat taro (opa'). The implication is that this would be as a substitute for rice at the kuman nuba'; taro is eaten as a snack food without embarrassment by the Kelabit. Whether this is true or not is not relevant; the statement highlights the importance of not engaging in mole. I have also been told that in the 1950's and 1960's, when certain Kelabits resident in the Highlands began to be employed by the government as teachers, administrators, upriver dressers and so on, they made great efforts to continue to cultivate their own rice fields in order not to have to buy rice, which would be mole. Nowadays not all government servants do this, but many still do. If they

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The fact that a certain individual in one of the longhouses in the Bario Asal area regularly exchanges (mole) hunted meat for rice provoked constant giggling on the part of a Kelabit who told me of this, who told me this was very bad (da'at). The term da'at has implications for prestige, as will be discussed in chapter eight.

do not cultivate rice fields personally, they are resident in the same hearth-group with parents or parents-in-law who do, and therefore they do not need to mole rice with other hearth-groups. Even so, there is an intangible negative attitude to the fact that salaried individuals in the Highlands do not personally work in the late (rice fields) of their hearth-groups. It is now sometimes said that kerja late iah (his [paid] work is his rice field) when speaking of a salaried individual, implying that paid work for money is regarded as equivalent to the production of rice. However, the acceptance of such an attitude appears tenuous. The fact that this assertion is often made by a relative of the person concerned tends to imply that it is not necessarily accepted by others.

Crain suggests, in his discussion of agricultural feasts (ngerufan) in the Lun Bawang area he studied, (such feasts used to exist in the Kelabit Highlands until the 1960's and were termed ngerupan) that the significant point, in the generation of prestige through the 'hosting' of such feasts, is that the labour contributed is considered to be worth less than the food and drink provided. It is clear that Lun Bawang and Kelabit ngerufan and ngerupan are essentially the same thing. For the Kelabit, at least, and perhaps for the Lun Bawang too, it seems to me that it is not only - perhaps not at all - that the food and drink were or are worth more, but that such food and drink, much of which is derived from rice, is not repayable at all except in rice terms. Labour should not be exchanged for rice in Kelabit ideology; rice is theoretically not available as a currency, although labour is. Rice can only be exchanged for rice, and rice-growing labour for rice-growing labour. It appears that rice and rice-growing labour are separate spheres of exchange, and that if they are mixed, the distribution of prestige among the hearth-group involved is affected.

Rice-growing labour can, however, be repaid in other terms, for example salt or buffaloes or, nowadays, money. Lun merar who held a ngerupan in the past and sometimes those who hold a kerja sama now are building up a debt owed to their hearth-group by giving away foods derived from rice. This debt can only be repaid in kind.

#### **2.4 The concept of raut**

Opposed to lema'ud we can place the class of activities which are described as raut. When Kelabits are speaking English they translate raut as 'play', and in Malay they translate it as *main*, which means, according to the dictionary, 'to play'. However the meaning of the word raut covers a wider semantic field than does 'play' in English.

Raut activities are particularly associated with the anak adik, those who are not yet parents and do not take responsibility for rice-growing. Raut is seen as appropriate to anak adik and little attempt is made to wean them from it even after they are married - not until they actually become parents. This particularly applies to young men.

Raut includes all non-productive and non-religious activities - the playing of games like football, swimming in the river, the play of children practising grown-up activities. This latter category of activity one might expect to be associated with lema'ud if it involves rice-growing and processing activities, but where actual rice is not used in the game this is not so. Where rice is used, the raut becomes lema'ud linguistically - but the rice must be treated with respect and properly processed for use, not discarded at the end of the game. Where children are too small to manage this they are not allowed



to use rice.

#### 2.4.1 Hunting and gathering

Raut also includes gathering, hunting and fishing - the only raut activities in which lun merar regularly engage. Both men and women are involved in the exploitation of unmanaged resources, although in the exploitation of different resources. Men hunt and collect produce in the polong raya, the 'big' polong (primary or old secondary forest), and in the polong i'it, the 'small' polong (younger secondary forest). The produce which men collect is not in the main for food (except sago hearts for vegetables) but for building and handicrafts. While hunting takes place both in polong raya and polong i'it, collecting by men takes place in polong raya only, which is where the plants concerned grow.

Hunting is a male activity. Women never hunt; this is the one Kelabit activity, as far as I could see, that is completely sex-specific. Gathering, on the other hand, is largely a female activity, although men do sometimes gather. Women gather in amug, the growth which appears within about five years of cultivation and to some extent in polong i'it, where they collect wild vegetables and fruit. They also fish and collect snails in small streams within the amug and polong i'it and in late baa. Men fish for larger fish in the main Kelapang river. Women never enter polong raya in their gathering activities (although there was one very eccentric lady who used to gather forest produce - not hunt - in the polong i'it and perhaps in the polong raya).

Although lun merar engage in hunting, collecting and gathering activities, this is in spare moments. Lun merar fit these activities around those associated with rice-

growing, processing and cooking. To spend too much time on activities exploiting these unmanaged resources (as I am describing them - see chapter three) is regarded as lazy, da'at mukol, since these activities are regarded as easy, being raut. Despite the considerable investment of time and energy involved in hunting, in particular, it is not considered any effort. When I once related to a Kelabit resident in town, for example, that a young father was not working in the rice fields yet but was an assiduous hunter, the reaction was that he should not be behaving like this now that he was a father and that hunting was 'a child's game' (the person concerned was speaking English but was almost certainly translating mentally from the Kelabit raut anak, literally 'child/childless young person's play' or 'game').

Anak adik, on the other hand, spend a large proportion of their time on these hunting (in the case of young men) and gathering (in the case of girls and young women) activities. This is particularly true of male anak adik. Young boys and teenagers are expected only to provide firewood for the hearth and they have a great deal of free time, especially once they have finished school. In Pa' Dalih they spend this time largely either playing football or hunting. Hunting is a passion for the young men, and the young boys still at school cannot wait to involve themselves in it properly too. One young boy of about 10 years old decided while we were in Pa' Dalih that he was no longer going to go to school. Instead he attached himself to the young men and began to spend his time hunting. This was seen as a disgrace for his mother, since it is prestigious to attend school as long as possible nowadays, but as understandable. For young boys, teenagers and young men, hunting is seen as something very enjoyable. I never heard any appreciation expressed of the enormous amounts of time and energy which they put

into providing meat for the longhouse. Hunting for men, like gathering for women, is seen as a natural inclination of the gender.

Hunting or gathering engaged in by anak adik is enjoyed in groups. It is rare for a girl to go out with a basket 'to pick (wild vegetables)' (me mrin) without asking a friend or two to come along. While lun merar are more likely to do things alone or with their spouses, anak adik operate in groups, both inside the longhouse and outside it. I have already discussed in chapter five how anak adik tend to socialize and sleep in groups, while lun merar sleep in couples in their own hearth-group's apartment.

Males are more closely associated with the concept of raut than are women. While young women begin to involve themselves in lema'ud activities well before they have a child, young men do not. The proportion of time spent by female anak adik in raut activities appropriate to their gender is also considerably less than that spent in raut activities by male anak adik. Even as lun merar, men spend more time and energy in hunting than do women in gathering. It is common for a woman, after the cooperative work day is over, to be found in the hearth-group's rice field, while her husband has gone hunting. If she does some gathering, it is likely to be on her way home or as a short excursion from work in the field.

### **3. The relationship between male and female within the lun merar couple with respect to rice-growing**

There is great emphasis on the unity of the lun merar couple. This is largely expressed through rice-growing, within which positive stress is placed on male and female working together. I have discussed how the senior lun

merar couple of the hearth-group are held jointly responsible for rice-growing, although women are more intimately involved with the rice. There is a strong sense that a couple, as they become more and more lun merar, should spend more and more time together in the rice fields. Where there is a cooperative work group, only one of the couple may go (the other going to the hearth-group's fields), but after the cooperative work day has finished - at any time between 11.00 am and 3.00 pm, depending on the activity - this person should go to the rice fields of his/her own hearth-group and work there together with his/her spouse. The fact that men may go hunting at this time is played down somewhat; it will not be mentioned unless asked about, whereas there is pride in remaining together until late in the rice fields. As young men grow older, they spend less and less time hunting and collecting in the forest and more and more time in the rice fields with their wives.

Anak adik socialize with the opposite gender, but never engage in economically productive activities together. By contrast, the ideal seems to be that male and female lun merar should spend a large proportion of their daily lives engaged together in tasks associated with rice-growing. In both cooperative work groups and when the couple is alone together in their own rice fields, male and female tend to stay together together, either doing the same work or doing different work but near each other.

The more fully lun merar individuals are, the more they cleave to their spouse, if he/she is alive. If he/she is dead, this is regretted, and widows and widowers usually remarry. Although it is quite easy to exchange male for female work and vice versa through cooperative work groups and thus to get a crop of rice without a

spouse, it is not only unfortunate but actually unprestigious to be without. There is an association between being a lun merar and being part of a couple, the two members of which come closer and closer in terms of everyday activity as they grow older and more and more lun merar. Once a couple are recognised as grandparents (see below), they will be spending all the time they can in the rice fields, going together to their own fields when the collective work day has finished and staying there until dusk. This is particularly likely if they have a teenage daughter who will look after things at the longhouse and prepare the evening rice meal.

After marriage, then, the separation between men and women appears to gradually dissolve. One might say that anak adik are separated one from another by their different genders while lun merar are separated not so much by gender but by close association with the different hearth-groups to which different individuals belong.

Despite the strong association of the couple with rice-growing, women are more intimately involved with the rice itself, as I have discussed in chapters three and four. They are more closely involved in both its growing and its processing, including cooking. Men, on the other hand, are associated more strongly than are women with raut activities. This distinction between male and female applies to both lun merar and to anak adik. However, the association between men and raut activities, which are associated with the wild, is not openly recognized, nor is it accorded any overt value. It is the couple as joint rice-growers that is emphasised, and the inseparability of the couple is emphasised. It is through male and female becoming rice-growers that they become lun merar. Hunting and gathering are not given overt value. Their association with anak adik, fringe members of society who

cannot generate prestige, underlines this.

There is, however, a sense in which hunting is accorded value. For men, success in hunting is vital to their adult manhood in a way that gathering is not vital to women's adult womanhood. It has been said to me that prestigious men in a community must be successful in hunting as well as in rice-growing. Although it is rice-growing success which actually generates wealth and overt prestige, without hunting success a man is 'ashamed', migu. It is part of 'being a man' to be a successful hunter.

The unity of the couple, of male and female, is stated in a complex way. It is not simply the growing equivalence of the man and the woman within the couple that matters. In one sense this appears to be the aim, with men and women leading more and more similar lives. In another sense, however, the distinctness of male and female within the couple is essential to its unity. This is to be seen in the importance attached to success in hunting, a raut activity, for adult men, lun merar. Rice-growing symbolizes the unity of the couple, in that it is their communal enterprise. It also brings about a cleavage within the couple - because it is associated with the female, while raut activities are associated with the male.

#### **4. The formation of lun merar: parenthood, grandparenthood and the naming system**

Lun merar do not gain this status overnight. The transition from anak adik-hood to lun merar-hood is gradual and comes with ever greater involvement in rice-growing, the birth of children and then of grandchildren, and the clearer and clearer responsibility which is taken

on by a couple for the provision of the rice meal for the other members of their hearth-group.

It is essential for a young couple to have children in order to become lun merar. In the past infertility was thought to be due to the relationship between the couple being somehow wrong - rather than to one of them having something physically wrong - and it would lead to divorce.

The expectation was that with different spouses the two would succeed in having children. The problem might also be remedied by adoption; this is the solution that is commonest today, when divorce is frowned upon by the SIB church to which the Kelabit belong.

The Kelabit have a complex system of what I refer to as parental and grandparental names and titles. Kelabit names and titles can be analysed as separate systems, although they interpenetrate each other. Each individual has a series of names and titles during his or her life, which relate to his or her status vis-a-vis the birth of children and grandchildren. Although at any point an individual technically has only one name and one title, in many cases they continue to be addressed and/or referred to by previous ones; the use of the most recent name and title depends on prestige and respect.

The successful adoption of parental and grandparental names (in terms of other people actually using them) is associated with becoming a lun merar. The fact that other people use these names means that an individual has achieved a certain point in becoming merar, 'big'. However the names themselves are powerless; they do not confer anything. The use of the names is simply an expression of the status of the individual who successfully carries the name.

The Kelabit system of parental and grandparental 'titles' is similar to, although simpler than, the system of what Needham terms death names and teknonyms among the Penan, Kenyah and Kayan (Needham 1954c; Urquhart 1958a, 1958b; Chin 1985). It has been suggested that the Kelabit borrowed it from the Kenyah (Pollard and Banks 1937:398; Pollard 1935:226), although this contention has been questioned (Urquhart 1958b:736). I am not using the term 'teknonym' in the same way as does Needham; I reserve this term for the calling of a parent after a child using that child's given name (as in 'father of Mary'). The system of what I am calling parental and grandparental 'titles' does not refer to the child by name but uses a general term for either 'female child' or 'male child' (as in the Kelabit tamamo', where tama means 'father of' and mo' means 'female child'). Needham includes both what I have called teknonyms and what I have called parental titles under the heading of teknonyms (1954c).

It is clear that the Kelabit system of what I am calling parental and grandparental names has echoes in the Kerayan Lun Bawang area across the international border, from data which I collected from informants from that area visiting Pa' Dalih. It seems likely that it is only within the last century that the Kelabit have developed the rather elaborate system which they have at the moment - informants told me that teknonyms were often used as parental names in the recent past - and that in the past they used the sorts of names now used as parental and grandparental names in the more limited way that the Lun Bawang still do. However, there appear to be radical differences between Kelabit and Lun Bawang ways of addressing and referring to people. While the Kelabit use kin terms only to a very limited extent to address and refer to people, kin terms, both lineal, affinal and fictive, appear to be the predominant ways of addressing



and referring to individuals among the Lun Bawang. It is possible that, with the development of the system of parental and grandparental titles, the Kelabit have abandoned a previous system of address and reference closer to that of the Lun Bawang.

The fact that the Kelabit have developed a system of names and titles which hinges as it does around parenthood and grandparenthood is not at all surprising, given the focal significance of these statuses which I argue exists.

One might expect, in fact, that other Apo Duat groups would have been likely to have adopted systems of address and reference which also emphasise parenthood and grandparenthood. As far as the system of titles is concerned, it is to be noted that only the Kelabit and the Sa'ban, of Apo Duat groups that anything is known of in detail, have been in contact with Kenyah. Data I collected from Lun Bawang from the Kerayan area in Kalimantan suggest that these titles are absent there, and it seems possible that the Sa'ban and Kelabit may have borrowed them from the Kenyah. The limited data I have collected from Kelabit informants relating to the Sa'ban resident in Sarawak (in Long Banga' near the Kelabit community of Long Peluan [see chapter two]) suggests that they do have a system of parental and grandparental titles. They also appear to have a system of parental and grandparental names.

On the birth or adoption of their first child, Kelabit parents begin to be addressed by parental titles: tamabo' (father whose first child is a boy), tamamo' (father whose first child is a girl), sinabo' (mother whose first child is a boy) or sinamo' (mother whose first child is a girl). (Tama' = father, sina' = mother, abo' = boy, amo' = girl.) From this time on, an individual's 'little name' (ngadan i'it), given at birth, should not be used on its own ever again, although it may be used together with the parental title. Within about a year

from the birth of the first child of a couple, an irau feast is held by the dominant couple, the full lun merar of the hearth-group to which the young couple belong. This couple will normally be the biological grandparents of the child of the couple. At this irau, a parental name is adopted by the couple. It is the same for both parents, although the mother has the prefix sinah (deriving from sina', mother) attached to it. The parental name adopted by a young couple does not relate to their character or achievements; they are too young to have achieved anything. It relates rather to what it is hoped they will achieve. It is strongly held to be proper for a young couple to take the name of an ancestor of one of them. Since it is believed that characteristics are inherited from ancestors, it makes sense that names held by ancestors should be taken. However, ancestorhood is difficult to prove or disprove, in a situation where everyone is held to be related somehow to everyone else.

The reason for the preference for one ancestor's name over another relates to prestige. Names of prestigious persons or couples from some generations back, which themselves are prestigious in meaning, 'big' (raya) names, are preferred, in fact almost universally used nowadays<sup>114</sup>. The hope appears to be that the young couple will live up to the name.

It is common for a young couple to be given a name which is said by others in the community or by people from other communities to be inappropriate, not 'really' the name of an ancestor of either individual in the couple. In other words the relationship with the ancestor is said to be too distant. Since there is no rule governing how

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<sup>114</sup> The generation of prestige has become complicated and confused (see chapter eight) and one result is that many people aspire to status mobility; this appears to be expressed in the taking of these 'high', 'good' names.

close the relationship has to be for an ancestor to be an acceptable ancestor for the purpose of name-borrowing, this is a complaint which cannot be taken far. It often appeared to me to relate to the perceived achievements of the parents and grandparents of the young couple - their immediate ancestors. If these were not such as to live up to a kin relation with a prestigious deceased person or couple of some generations back, then the kin connection should not be leaned upon. Another young couple, similarly closely related to the same prestigious deceased individual or couple, might successfully be given their name because their parents and grandparents' achievements were greater. It appeared to me that it was not considered that characteristics were automatically passed on from parent to child; whether or not they were passed on remained to be seen from the achievements of the child. Thus, kinship itself may mean something but does not necessarily mean anything in terms of likely prestigious achievements in life.

Young couples often complain about being given 'big' names because they feel embarrassed by them, but they have little say in choice of names; sometimes they are allowed to choose between two or three but it is not uncommon for a name to be decided on for them by the lun merar of their hearth-group.

Despite the clear inappropriateness of many of the names to young couples who are simply minor members of their hearth-groups, these names are always used, ultimately, by other members of the community, both in address and in reference. They are not used immediately after the irau at which they have been adopted, however. It is only after a year or two, when the young couple has had their first child and they are beginning to show an interest in rice-growing, that the name begins to be

adopted. Until then the parental title mentioned above is used. At formal occasions, however, it is used from the time of the irau onwards.

There follows a period during which the young father and mother involve themselves more and more in rice-growing and begin to participate somewhat in making decisions concerning rice, under the supervision of the focal lun merar of the hearth-group to which they belong.

During this period they have more children and these children grow big enough to help around the house. As this process goes on, the young couple becomes more and more respected, their opinions begin to be listened to and they participate more and more in church. Men become deacons and begin to speak at the main service, women become officers of the 'womens' circle' of the church and begin to speak at the 'womens' circle' services. During this period the young couple is more and more often and eventually (in most cases) exclusively both addressed and referred to by their parental name. Earlier on the individual is only addressed using their parental name, and referred to using their parental title and their 'little name'; later they are referred to using it as well, showing a greater depth of respect. The 'little name' is eventually completely discarded and is sometimes even forgotten.

With the attainment of full grandparenthood comes full lun merar-hood within the hearth-group. Grandparenthood is marked through the taking of a grandparental name. In theory, an individual makes his/her own decision as to when to 'become a grandparent', by adopting a grandparental name. This occurs at the irau being held 'for' a child who is described, in Kelabit terms, as a grandchild of the individual concerned. This includes not only biological grandchildren but the child

of any person who is considered a 'child' of the individual taking a grandparental name. This means any related person who is of the appropriate generation relative to the new grandparent. All related children separated by one intervening generation from an individual are grandchildren (mupun). Thus there is considerable scope for taking a grandparent name; in theory, it would usually be possible for an individual to 'become a grandparent' when still a small child. Through taking a grandparental name a person becomes entitled to be addressed and referred to by a grandparental title, either tepabo' (grandparent of a boy) or tepamo' (grandparent of a girl) (tepo'= grandparent, abo'= boy, amo'= girl).

The taking of a grandparental name does not guarantee its use, however. The rest of the community may not accept the status of grandparenthood on the part of the individual. A person who is not successful in rice-growing does not stand a chance of being referred to or even addressed regularly by a grandparental name or title. There was one individual in Pa' Dalih who was considered lazy and careless in rice-growing. This was frequently remarked upon and ridiculed. He was always referred to by his 'small name', the name he was given as a child. Even in address this name was sometimes used.

The taking of a grandparental name is based on an assessment by the individual that s/he has reached a point where his/her bid for grandparenthood will be accepted by others. Most people try to judge their entry into grandparenthood just right, so that their bid for this status will be immediately accepted and their grandparental name used, but they will not have waited longer than necessary. However, as a rule, even where a name is eventually adopted by the whole community, there is a period during which the parental name continues to be

used. There is likely to be a period of at least a year, often two or three years, during which the parental name is used some of the time, particularly in reference. Entry into grandparenthood usually seems to occur successfully, in most cases, when a person is in their early to mid forties.

It is common, perhaps even usual, for an individual to 'become a grandparent' before the birth of the first child of his co-resident child plus spouse, although it is seen as most proper to wait for the irau held 'for' this child. The theory is that an individual 'becomes a grandparent' 'for' a child with whom s/he feels a special affective bond. This is usually a closely related child. It seems to be considered most properly the first co-resident grandchild. However, there are cases where the bond with the child, either affective or based on close kinship, does not appear strong. When an irau is being held 'for' the co-resident grandchild of a prestigious couple, it is usual for a larger number of people to 'become grandparents' than at an irau held 'for' the grandchild of a not-so-prestigious couple.

At every irau held 'for' a child with whom close links are held to exist - often because of the prestige of the lun merar of the child's hearth-group - all individuals who are in a grandparent relationship with the child will either take a new grandparental name or 'renew' (ngebru) their existing one. At every irau nowadays, someone is delegated by the 'master of ceremonies' to go round and write down the names of everyone wanting to 'renew' their names 'for' the child. This amounts to a statement of relatedness. In the southern part of the Kelabit Highlands, where practically everyone is closely related, the list will contain the majority of individuals who can trace the correct generation relationship with the

child. In Bario, where the population is much higher and is from various original communities, not everyone is demonstrably related and a smaller proportion of the residents in the area's names appear on the list. However the absolute number is usually much greater.

The statement of relatedness which 'renewing' a grandparental name amounts to relates to the prestige of the lun merar holding the irau<sup>115</sup>. The greater their prestige, the greater the number of people wanting to 'renew' their names and thus declare that they are related to them. In fact, prestige is closely related to the number of 'relations' you have<sup>116</sup>. It is prestigious to have a large number of people related to you, and having these relations is largely proved through their declaring that they are related to you. People frequently state that they are related to lun doo to'o ('really good people'). It is likely that they hope by saying this to build up their own prestige, but in practice they also bolster the prestige of the lun doo to'o themselves, and strengthen their position as lun doo to'o.

Although many individuals have already 'become grandparents' at an irau held 'for' another child, they are very likely to change their names again when they hold irau for their first co-resident grandchild. If not, they will certainly 'renew' it. While only one parental name may be held by an individual during his/her lifetime, many people of the status of grandparents change their names

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<sup>115</sup> As does the number of people participating in exchanges at Lun Dayeh (Lun Bawang) marriages, who by doing so state that they are related to the principals (Crain 1970:129), as do those who renew or change their names at Kelabit naming irau. Thus, those who have the highest prestige appear to have the largest number of kin.

<sup>116</sup> The existence of prestige differentiation among the Kelabit and Lun Bawang certainly does not undermine the structural significance of kinship, as Rousseau suggests stratification does among the Kayan (1978:87-89).

more than once, although some Kelabit say that this is not proper<sup>117</sup>. This is probably because it appears to demonstrate a lack of definiteness, which should be an attribute of lun merar.

An individual may enter grandparenthood before s/he has co-resident grandchildren, but s/he will not reach the peak of grandparenthood before this occurs. Like parenthood, grandparenthood is not achieved suddenly, but gradually. The status of grandparent, which represents the peak of lun merar-hood, is not recognized immediately.

The degree to which an individual is fully recognized as a grandparent, and as having reached the peak of lun merar-hood, is expressed through the frequency with which the grandparental name and title are used rather than the parental name and title.

Grandparental names, unlike parental names, are adopted individually rather than by the couple as a unit.

This reflects the different personalities which the two individuals have developed, despite their unity as a couple. As an individual becomes lun merar, he or she gradually acquires a unique personality, expressed through the prestige s/he has built up. The grandparental name reflects the female nature of the grandmother and the male nature of the grandfather. While women take names which relate to nurturing, men often take names which relate to success outside the community. In the past this related largely to hunting and headhunting prowess. Nowadays it may relate to other successful activities in the world outside the Kelabit Highlands. This reflects the association of women, in one sense, with rice-growing, and also with the centre and the community, and of men, in this sense, with hunting, the outside and the wild; it must however be remembered that in another sense it is men

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<sup>117</sup> See Lian-Saging's and Bulan's comments on this, as an example of this perspective (1989:107).



plus women that are associated with rice-growing and the centre, as lun merar together in the couple.

A couple often does not enter grandparenthood at the same irau, 'for' the same child. This is because they have different kin networks and feel closer to different children. This tends to emphasise the separability of the couple at irau, when the names are taken. The differences in age between the two members of a couple may also mean that it seems appropriate for one - usually the man, since it is usual for the husband to be older than the wife - to become a grandparent before the other.

While the specific meaning of parental names is not really significant - names which are 'big' are taken simply because they are 'big', apparently without much thought as to the exact connotation of the name - there is a strong urge to relate grandparental names to the character of the person concerned. The reason for taking the name is always very definite and can be explained by the holder of the name. Such explanation is necessary, because Kelabit names are very subtle in connotation and words which are used in them may have many implications. They are often 'deep' (dalim) words, which have complex and many-faceted meanings; such words are also used in certain old stories.

Parental names are more likely to be too 'big' for the achievements and character of the person holding the name than are grandparental names. This is because the desire to match the name to the person as well as possible is strong for grandparental names. However there is no complete agreement as to the appropriateness of a grandparental name on the part of others in a community, and some names are considered extremely inappropriate. Where this problem arises, the individual is likely to adopt another grandparental name at a subsequent irau,

because his previous one is simply not being used. Unlike parental names, of which only one may be taken, any number of grandparental names may be taken, one after the other, at different irau. However it is clearly unprestigious to keep changing your name, because it reveals an indecisiveness of character, and decisiveness is prestigious.

##### **5. The relationship between male and female within the lun merar couple with regard to parenthood and grandparenthood**

As new parents, a young couple must learn to cooperate with each other productively. This is something they have not had to do before. Before marriage sexual encounters are not supposed to occur and if they do they are not supposed to be productive of children. If pregnancy occurs before marriage, marriage ensues, but for this to occur is considered most unfortunate. Economically productive activities are carried out in separate gender groups by anak adik. After marriage, a couple have to learn to be a unit. As has been discussed, the significance of this unity within the couple is very much emphasised. Productivity in terms of both children and rice depends on it.

Although the unity of the couple is central to the status of lun merar and a couple normally spends more and more time together as they grow older, the individual identity of the two members of the couple is important. This takes us back to the separation between male and female which is one of the important divisions within the hearth-group and between its lun merar, who are ideally, and usually in fact, a couple. I have said that this division may be seen in attitudes to rice and to rice-growing, with women being more closely associated with rice. The division between male and female is also

expressed in the difference in the grandparental names which lun merar take. The fact that one person is male and the other female is shown through the difference between male and female names. The union of male and female which the couple represents is played out in everyday life as similarity - in the fact that the daily life of the man comes to resemble more and more that of the female, in fact, as he eschews hunting in favour of rice-growing with growing lun merar-hood. From another perspective this unity may be said to be based on maintaining the difference between male and female, and this is expressed through grandparental names. This can be tied in to the two different Kelabit images of the male: in one sense, that which distinguishes the male from the female - his connection with the forest - is pushed into the background, but in another, expressed particularly at irau (see chapter eight), it is celebrated. Names, taken at irau, represent a reality which is not, with respect to men's names, an everyday one. It is not an everyday occurrence for a man to achieve the accomplishments suggested by the names, which involve conquering of forces outside the community. The achievements of the male, separate from the female - his relationship with the forest and in particular his bringing in of meat - are played down on an everyday level. The naming system is related rather to the reality which is played up at irau, when the difference of the male from the female is presented as essential to the maintenance of life.

#### **6. The definition of the status of lun merar through the provision of the rice meal for dependants**

I have argued in chapter five that it is the rice meal which constitutes the hearth-group. The provision of the rice meal for members of the hearth-group is the

responsibility of the lun merar of the hearth-group. The ability to take full responsibility within the hearth-group for the provision of components of the rice meal, particularly rice, and for the processing and cooking of the meal, are fundamental to being seen as lun merar.

### **7. The relation between male and female within the lun merar couple with regard to the rice meal and its components**

It is the combination of the two complementary elements of which the rice meal is made up - rice and 'wild' foods - which is important in the holding of the rice meal. In one sense these two elements of the rice meal may be separated and associated with the two genders involved in their provision. I have argued in chapters three and four that rice is, in one sense, associated with the female rather than the male. In another sense, though, rice is associated with the couple, male plus female, whose involvement together in rice-growing and whose association together with the hearth is more emphasised. Meat and wild foods are more closely associated with the male in the former sense, although in the latter sense they are associated with what is not the couple - the young, anak adik.

In provision for the rice meal, both rice and wild foods are associated, at one level, with both male and female. Both men and women provide the wherewithal to make side dishes, the 'wild' component of the meal. Both men and women work together to grow rice for the rice meal. Thus the two members of the couple are jointly responsible for providing both components of the meal. The rice meal is however presented as being a rice meal, as can be seen in the term for it, kuman nuba', literally 'eating rice'. Little emphasis is overtly laid on the

`wild' component, despite the fact that without it the rice meal is not a rice meal. In one sense, then, rice stands for the whole of the rice meal, both rice and `wild foods'.

In another sense, however, the closer association of women with the production of rice and that of men with the obtaining of wild food, especially meat - the paradigmatic `wild' food, as becomes particularly clear at irau - divides the couple. One gender is associated with the production of one element of the rice meal (rice), while the other gender is associated with the obtaining of the other (wild foods, particularly meat).

The fact that rice stands for the whole of the rice meal is perhaps based on the fact that it is the cooking of rice which is presented as the central activity involved in the preparation of the rice meal. At its most basic, after all, a rice meal may consist of rice plus salt. The `wild' component, just as it grows by itself, is seen as easily prepared for eating, while rice, just as it is presented as difficult to grow, is seen as laboriously prepared for consumption.

Just as the cooking of rice is made to `stand for' the whole of the rice meal, women, who are associated with rice, are in one sense presented as `standing for' the whole of the rice meal, which they normally prepare. Although men can cook rice, and do if necessary, this is presented as bete', `inappropriate' (to their gender). Men, are associated, at this level, with the `simply' (ideologically although not in practice) obtained wild foods. The greater difficulty that a man has in maintaining a separate hearth-group on his own is related to both his greater difficulty in growing rice on his own and to his lesser ability to cook rice and hence to

provide the rice meal.

The association of men with the provision of 'wild' foods and the significance of the separation of the genders is veiled at everyday rice meals, although I have argued that it is detectable. I will be discussing how at the rice meal held at irau, men's association with the provision of 'wild' foods becomes much clearer. This is associated with a validation of this role which is also not available on an everyday basis.

The basic building block, the hearth-group, is focused on its lun merar, who, through growing rice and through the reproduction of the hearth-group through the birth of children and grandchildren, bring it into existence. This is symbolically stated through the holding of the rice meal, which is their supreme achievement; it nourishes the dependants of the lun merar, many of whom are also their descendants, and ensures the continuation of the hearth-group. This applies for both the hearth-group itself and for what I have called higher-level hearth-groups, at longhouse or community level.

### **8. Lun merar and strength of human life**

The Kelabit speak of life in two ways. They speak of 'living' in verbal or adjectival terms, using forms of the word mulun, and they speak of 'life', ulun, a word which is a noun. Ulun is used with the word inan, which means 'to exist' or 'to have'.

All plants and animals are said to mulun, which means 'to live' or 'to be living'<sup>118</sup>. The term inan ulun, however, is only used to refer to human beings. It

<sup>118</sup>

In Austronesian languages the verb and adjective cannot be separated and the word mulun has therefore both these meanings.

may be said to be at least part of what defines a human being - that he or she inan ulun, which I shall translate as 'to have life'. Human life, then, is something special.

All human beings 'have life'. However the Kelabits speak of some humans having 'strong life' (kail ulun), while others have 'weak life' (kaya ulun). Only lun merar are actually spoken of in these terms; it is as though it cannot be known how 'strong' the ulun of anak adik may be.

The passing of comments on the strength of a lun merar's ulun are common; it is clearly a central concern. Comments regarding both the 'weakness' and the 'strength' of different lun merar's ulun are about equally common; but the former are made out of the hearing of the person concerned.

I was told by Kelabits that young people, anak adik, can be described as having ulun i'it, 'small life'. Lun merar could, I was told, be described as having ulun merar, 'big life', although they would normally be referred to as lun merar. It is the fact that he or she has not achieved what lun merar have which indicates that a person has 'small life'; and it is having achieved what a lun merar should achieve that indicates that a person's life is 'big'. Thus the growing and strengthening of one's ulun is directly related to the achievements which I have discussed as being associated with being a lun merar.

Comments on success in getting a good rice crop are directly linked to comments about a person's strength of life. Remarks such as 'They (a couple) have very good rice in their field; their ulun is strong' are typical. It is clearly involvement in rice cultivation, the fulfilment of the ideal of being a successful rice cultivator, of being lun merar, which makes the strength

of a person's ulun clear.

Although ulun is, in one sense, very clearly associated with success in this life, it is also, nowadays, associated with the attainment of life after death. Only humans can attain this goal; one informant in Long Lellang, on being asked (in Kelabit) if animals could have ulun (`Ken inan poong ulun?), answered immediately (in English), `No, they don't; when they die that's all there is'.

It is, nowadays, through Christianity that ulun - in both senses - is considered possible. This is made quite clear in prayer. `Lam eko tupu lemulun kerib ngalap ulun' (`Only through you [Christ] can people attain ulun') is a typical part of a prayer. Christian prayer returns constantly to the theme of ulun. Sometimes, in prayer, it is clear that it is success in rice-growing and in life in general that is referred to, and sometimes it is evident that it is life after death that is the issue. However it is often not clear which kind of ulun is being prayed for. It is possible that there is a sense in which the two senses of ulun are conflated, nowadays, in people's minds.

Christianity is associated much more with the lun merar than with the anak adik. It is only male lun merar who are elected deacons (or perhaps a man plus his wife; I was told that the election of a man meant that his wife was also elected, although she would not speak in church because of this) and female lun merar who are elected as officers of the womens' circle (kaum ibu) of the SIB church. It is lun merar who attend services regularly and who sit at the front of the church and participate fully. Anak adik, although they do usually attend the main service on Sundays, only attend for a short while at the beginning and then leave when the serious praying begins.



When praying is going on, they often chat to each other and do not bow their heads and close their eyes and pray aloud, as do the lun merar.

Thus lun merar are, through their close association with devout Christianity, more closely associated with ulun than are anak adik.

## 9. Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the key achievements of lun merar - the production of rice, the reproduction of the hearth-group in terms of children and grandchildren (expressed through the system of naming), and the provision of the rice meal for dependants, which means largely these children and grandchildren.

In terms of rice cultivation, I have argued that there is a strong emphasis, publicly, on the unity of the couple. The couple is jointly responsible for the production of rice. However, it is possible to trace a stronger association of the female with rice-growing, which we have already noted in looking at the organization of labour in rice-growing. This is parallel to a stronger association of the male with raut activities, specifically hunting. This takes us back to the division between male and female which we have already noted in looking at divisions within the longhouse, when it was pointed out that the male is associated with the tawa', which is not-dalim, or 'not-inside', while the female is associated with the dalim and with the hearth at which the rice meal is cooked.

The male association with hunting, a raut activity, however, is not simply negative. While raut activities are devalued when associated with anak adik, they are represented as essential to the status of adult man. This implies that the division of the couple into its component parts, male and female, is in one sense accorded value.

In the naming system, I have argued that the difference between parental and grandparental names may also be linked to an emphasis on the division between male

and female lun merar as having positive value.

The key point about lun merar is that they are, in all senses, fruitful. They produce rice together, rice which will, at the rice meal, nourish the children and grandchildren which are also their joint production. They are the focal point of the hearth-group, which is the forum for fruitfulness and reproduction. The achievements of the lun merar of the hearth-group are represented every day at the rice meal, kuman nuba', at which the rice produced by lun merar as a couple is combined with wild foods to make possible the continuation of life. The rice meal is the full statement of lun merar-hood.

Lun merar exemplify the human capacity to 'have life'. Through their success in rice-growing and in providing the rice meal for their descendants, they express their possession of ulun. The more successfully they perform as lun merar, the stronger their ulun is said to be. The close association of lun merar with ulun is underlined by their close association with Christianity and Christian prayer, which is nowadays considered to be the most effective way of bringing ulun, both in the sense of success in this life and in the sense of the attainment of life after death.

**CHAPTER EIGHT**  
**THE GENERATION OF PRESTIGE**

**1. Lun merar of hearth-groups and lun merar of communities**

In the last chapter, I discussed the achievements of the lun merar, the 'big people', social adults. I looked at how lun merar are defined in relation to rice-growing activities and to the birth of children and grandchildren, and at how this culminates at the rice meal. In chapter five, I looked at how rice serves to differentiate between individuals, in terms of their roles within the hearth-group. I discussed how these change through life and as different positions vis-a-vis rice-growing and parenthood and grandparenthood are adopted. This differentiation tends to emphasise the equality of people of the same status vis-a-vis involvement in rice-growing and involvement in parenthood and grandparenthood. However it is also the basis of differentiation between lun merar. In this chapter I want to argue that the prestige differentiations which exist between Kelabit are based on differential performance as lun merar; that the same qualities which generate lun merar-hood also generate prestige differentials across the society, marked out through the use of the terms do ('good') and da'at ('bad').

The term lun merar is used in two senses. It does not only refer to the 'big people' of the separate hearth-groups. It is also used to refer to the leaders of the community, who are the lun merar of the leading hearth-group of a community. The lun merar of a community are not only the lun merar of their own hearth-group but of the whole community. Nowadays, when the Malay term ketua kampong (community leader) has come into currency, this term may also be used to describe the head of the

longhouse or multi-longhouse community, but I have often heard the term lun merar used with this meaning.

Although there is no record available of what 'adults' are called by Lun Bawang or other speakers of Apo Duat languages, it is interesting to note that among the Kayan adults are termed kelunan aya', literally 'people who are already big' (Rousseau 1974a:343-4). Important members of a Kayan community are also called kelunan aya', 'big people' and the rest of the community is referred to as kelunan inyam, 'young people'. The kelunan aya' include all adult maren ('aristocrats'), a few other men and some priests (ibid:403-4). This is all very close to Kelabit usage. Qualities associated with attainment of kelunan aya'-hood among those who are not maren are hospitality and the frequent holding of dayong ceremonies (at whom others are fed) as well as oratorical and negotiating skills (ibid:420). This appears to echo the qualities of Kelabit lun merar.

I would argue that the fact that the term lun merar has these two meanings reflects the equation between the hearth-group and higher-level hearth-groups. I have discussed in chapter six the way in which the holding of a communal rice meal constitutes such higher-level hearth-groups, as the everyday hearth-group rice meal constitutes the hearth-group. The existence of a higher-level hearth-group at the level of the community is also arguably reflected in the strong prescription that rice should be grown cooperatively by the community, which I have discussed in chapter four. The fact, discussed in chapter three, that decision-making in rice-growing in practice tends to operate at a community level, with the lun merar of the more prestigious hearth-groups tending to take the lead in these decisions, suggests the same thing.

The constitution of 'houses' at different levels through the co-consumption of a rice meal has been explored by Carsten (1987) for Langkawi in Peninsular Malaysia. The presence of an entity which is founded in the notion of house (\*Rumaq in Proto-Malayo-Polynesian [Blust 1980:211]) at different levels has been suggested for a number of insular SE Asian societies (Fox 1980b:11; Fox 1987; Barraud 1979; Sellato 1987:39-41). Levi-Strauss' analysis of the role of the 'house' in South East Asia also suggests that it is present at different levels, but this is not something he pursues explicitly (1987a, 1987b). Hanks (1972:80-92, 116) gives an interesting discussion of the nature of kinship and the household in Thailand and suggests that the kingdom is equivalent to the household in the way it attracts dependants. It is interesting to note, in the context of this discussion, that Metcalf points out that a cognate of the term lamin, which in 'true' Kenyah means 'longhouse apartment' or 'its residents' is used to refer to the whole of the longhouse in Berawan, although the Berawan term for 'longhouse apartment' is ukuk (Metcalf 1989:43).

Certain of the rice meals shared by members of different hearth-groups and constituting higher-level hearth-groups are provided not through contributions by all lun merar of the community but by those of only one hearth-group. Where this occurs, it may be said that these lun merar are generating their own symbolic lun merar-hood of the whole community by presenting themselves as the providers of the rice meal shared by all. Other lun merar are, in effect, their symbolic 'children'.

The leadership of the lun merar of the community in cooperatively-organized rice cultivation, which I have discussed in chapter four, may also be seen as indicating that they are, in one sense, to be seen as responsible for

the production of the rice which is eaten by the whole community.

Prestige is associated with the generation of higher-level hearth-groups and with being the lun merar of such hearth-groups. I want to argue that this prestige is the basis of social differentiation among the Kelabit, of what has sometimes been discussed as a 'stratification' system.

## **2. Prestige differentiation in Borneo**

Many Bornean societies have what Leach (1950) termed hereditary ranks, involving the existence of named categories of people believed to be different from each other and having different economic, political and ritual roles. Groups with hereditary ranks include many of those which Rousseau has included as Central Bornean, a category including the Kelabit. Rousseau argues that the presence of hereditary ranks is a feature of Central Borneo (1990:163).

Rousseau refers to the system of ranking in Central Borneo as 'social stratification', which he defines as 'a particular kind of hierarchy, which explains and justifies inequality by classifying all members of a society in a limited number of ranked categories' (1990:163). He believes that 'Central Borneo is a society at an early stage of class formation' and argues that there is, thus, exploitation by the upper strata of the lower; this takes the form of 'corvees' on the 'commoners' and of slavery (ibid:199).

It seems to me questionable whether what Rousseau terms 'exploitation' in Central Borneo is the same thing as what has been termed exploitation of one economic class by another in the European context. The data I have collected suggests that among the Kelabit, at any rate,

the motivating force behind differences in prestige is not economic exploitation. For the Kelabit, the existence of prestige differences derives from the indigenous conceptualization of the relationship between people and indeed of the nature of human life. Prestige differences among the Kelabit do not imply exploitation; they are inherent to human society as the Kelabit see it. For this reason I prefer not to use the term 'social stratification', which has very specific implications originating in a European context, in discussing the Kelabit. I shall instead use the term prestige differentiation.

As regards the existence of indigenous conceptualizations of different 'strata', I would argue that this does not exist among the Kelabit, although Rousseau works on the basis that it does. There is certainly inherited difference in prestige as between different individuals among the Kelabit, but this does not, I would argue, involve the existence of distinct strata. I will return to this in a moment.

As among many, perhaps all, other groups in South East Asia with prestige differentiation, wealth is, among the Kelabit, a key characteristic of those of high prestige. Again as among many other groups, this wealth is expressed in terms of two things: the possession of prestige items, passed down the generations to establish the inheritance of prestige, and the display and sharing of wealth at feasts.

Rousseau argues that inequality in Central Borneo hinges on the hereditary transmission of chiefship (1990:203), which is the factor at the origin of the system. He places a great deal of emphasis on the chief's political role. While I would agree that hereditary chiefship is important, it is not so much the political



but the symbolic role of the chief upon which I would lay emphasis, for the Kelabit at least.

Rousseau concentrates on data deriving from groups which do not have feasts, particularly the Kayan among whom he did fieldwork. He sees the existence of competitive feasting as an aberrant and weakening characteristic of the Kelabit system (ibid:209), which he sees, together with that of other 'Kelabitic' (what I am calling Apo Duat) groups, as a weakened version of the basic Central Bornean system (ibid:213-4). However, I would argue that, for the Kelabit at least, the feast (irau), of which leaders, to legitimate their position, must be the most frequent and lavish hosts, displays the essential nature both of leaders as individuals of high prestige and of the very nature of prestige. The existence of competitive feasting (and, through it, regular competition for leadership) is not, as Rousseau argues (ibid:211-4) proof of the weakening of the system of differential prestige among the Kelabit, but at the core of it, and this may well be true of feasting among the Lun Bawang and other groups too.

King (1978:31) has suggested that Friedman's extension of Leach's original highland Burma model (Leach 1964 [1954]), to areas further west including the Naga hills and the Chin area, in which he argues that the production of surplus is translated into prestige via the holding of feasts (Friedman 1975) may be applicable to Borneo. King notes that among the Maloh and Kenyah there is evidence to suggest that in the past there was a graded scale of feasts which may have been the means of converting surplus into prestige. Metcalf has noted the importance of competitive feasting in generating prestige among the Berawan (Metcalf 1982:79) and this appears to be true of the Melanau as well (Morris 1953:57, 61). The

existence of feasts - often graded - associated with the generation of prestige, similar to those held by the Naga, is not uncommon in the Malayo-Polynesian world (e.g. see Powdermaker 1932; Volkman 1985; Stevenson 1937). There is, in other words, a clear precedent for considering feasting to be part and parcel of the maintenance of prestige differentiation in the geographical area, rather than evidence of the weakening of such differentiation. I suggest that there is a specific rationale behind prestige generation via feasting, at least for the Kelabit. This is based on the fact that the feast is focused on a rice meal.

### **3. Prestige differentiation among the Kelabit**

Rousseau, using data provided by Talla (1979), classes the Kelabit among the 'stratified' societies of Central Borneo, together with the Kayan, Kenyah, Modang, Kajang and Aoheng (1990: chapter 7). The people I am calling Lun Bawang (see chapter one), whom Rousseau does not include among the societies of Central Borneo (although he sometimes makes reference to them as 'Kelabitic'), have been described by other scholars as 'non-stratified' or more egalitarian' (King 1978a:21), nowadays but to have had a system of 'stratification' in the past (ibid:27; Crain 1970a:183; Deegan 1973:86).

Kelabit writers on their own people say that at least until the Second World War there was what they term 'stratification' among the Kelabit (Talla 1979a:76-90; Lian-Saging 1976/77:115-125; L. Bulan n.d.). Nowadays, the SIB church disapproves of status differentiation, and this has become veiled. Lian-Saging argues that it is only among older people that it is still significant (1976/77:115). This may reflect the very high migration from his longhouse of origin to town (higher than from

many other longhouses in the Kelabit Highlands). In town, it seems clear that the basis for status distinctions has begun to change. However, in the Kelabit Highlands and even among town-based Kelabits, considerations of how doo (here meaning 'of high status'; see below) a prospective spouse's ancestors were and of how doo his or her hearth-group and relatives have demonstrated themselves to be appear to have a very strong influence on arranged marriages (constituting a very large percentage of marriages between Kelabit). My data suggest that there is very definite competition for status - phrased in terms of doo-ness - at irau, which have traditionally been the forum for the advertisement and generation of status.

Talla, Lian-Saging and L. Bulan all say that there were four 'classes' traditionally among the Kelabit. However, they disagree as to the labels attached to these classes, their relative size, and the constitution of their membership. Lian-Saging and L. Bulan give the classes as 1) paran (the Kenyah word for 'aristocrat'), also known as tutul lun merar (marar for L. Bulan) ('descendants of leaders', literally 'big people'; here the term lun merar is used to refer to the lun merar of the leading hearth-group of a community rather than to the focal couple of a hearth-group) and as tutul lun do, ('descendants of 'good people')<sup>119</sup>, 15% of the population; 2) upa-upa, ('half-half'), 55% of the population; 3) anak katu, ('followers', literally 'children at the end [of the longhouse]'), 28% of the population and 4) demulun (slaves), 2% of the population. Talla disagrees with this analysis and gives the classes as 1) anak lun merar, equivalent to Lian-Saging's and L. Bulan's paran in size but divided into two parts, lun paran and lun dhoor (=do); Talla considers that the three terms paran, lun merar and

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This is a spelling more consonant with the Northern Kelabit (Bario) version of the Southern Kelabit term which I have given

lun dhoor are not interchangeable; 2) pupa (= upa-upa), an undetermined proportion of the population; 3) lun daat, ('bad people'), also known as lun naam lunnuwan (Talla's translation of which is 'man of no family genealogy'; but this can also be translated as 'person with no people belonging to him', i.e. with no known family); and 4) demulun. Talla disagrees with Lian-Saging's labelling the third class anak katu; he considers that the whole population except the anak lun merar should be termed anak katu.

Thus, Lian-Saging, L. Bulan and Talla all speak of four classes, but they disagree fairly radically as to what these classes consist of. In fact, of these labels, only paran and demulun might be considered labels for 'classes'; the others are adjectival descriptions. Paran may be a loan-word from Kenyah<sup>120</sup>. Lun do, lun merar, lun daat, and lun naam lunnuwan are ways of describing people which refer to qualities associated with prestige or lack of it.

#### 4. Doo and da'at

The importance of the adjectives doo (= Lian-Saging's and L. Bulan's do and Talla's dhoor) and da'at (= Talla's daat) quickly became apparent to me during fieldwork. The usual translation of doo is 'good' and of da'at 'bad', although the semantic fields they cover are to a large

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as doo. I use the latter spelling. Not only the term paran but maren and aren are frequently used in Kelabit parental and grandparental names; they connote superiority and success generally. The word paran is the Kenyah word for the 'class' described in the literature as 'aristocrats', and maren is the Kayan word for that same 'class'. Aren appears to be linguistically cognate with either paran and maren, perhaps both. If these are loan words, the Kelabit are unaware of the fact. However this does not prove that they are not loan words. Borrowing between languages in Borneo is extremely common and little is thought of it by the

extent different from those covered by `good' and `bad' in English.

Doo and da'at are key words in the Kelabit language. They are used on an everyday basis to denote positive and negative qualities of any kind, much as the terms `good' and `bad' are used in English. However, they are also used to describe variations in prestige and importance attached to individuals. Doo describes the person who is the ideal Kelabit<sup>121</sup>. I began to phrase questions about differential prestige in terms of lun doo and lun da'at, literally `good people' and `bad people'. However, when asked `Iyi lun doo tonge?' (`Who is lun doo here?') or `Iyi lun da'at tonge?' (`Who is lun da'at here?'), the Kelabit response was not at all straightforward. To my question `Iyi lun da'at tonge?' I got a furious response of denial that anyone was lun da'at. To the question `Iyi lun doo tonge?' I got various responses, the most common of which, especially when other people were listening, was `Kami ngabi ngabi lun doo kini' ('We are all lun doo now'). Sometimes the question would elicit an indirect implication that the person being questioned and his or her close relatives were lun doo, via telling me about the person's ancestry, describing how certain ancestors were great leaders and very wealthy. It was clear that there was something very interesting about the terms lun doo and lun da'at.

It became clear to me that the meaning of the terms lun doo and lun da'at depends on context. The term lun doo may refer to any group from the top status grouping of those who are or have been, or whose ancestors have been, leaders and wealthy individuals, to all Kelabits. The term lun da'at is one that tends to be avoided. It often

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speakers of the languages.

appeared to be largely a negative definition of what lun doo means. In most situations, 'Kami ngabi-ngabi lun doo tonge!' ('We are all lun doo here!') is really the only unproblematic response to the question 'Iyi lun doo tonge?'. To say that only certain individuals are lun doo implies that all others are not lun doo, in other words that they are lun da'at. This is very problematic. However, the Kelabit are quite clear that people may be more or less doo, in theory, although statements relating to this with reference to specific individuals is more problematic. The term lun doo to'o (the word to'o means 'original', 'true' or 'real') is used to refer to some people. This implies that some people are more truly doo than others, but all may well be doo.

It is clear that prestige is not distributed at the present time in a way that creates any specified separate classes, which have names to separate them one from another. There is rather a continuum of differential prestige, and the position of any individual on this continuum is described by intimating how doo he or she is. However it is never possible to definitely place an individual on this continuum. His or her position will appear different in different social contexts and depending on whom he or she is being compared with.

Upon eventually discussing his treatment of the 'stratification system' in his dissertation with Lian-Saging and after extensive discussion with older Kelabits, both in Pa' Dalih and in town, I came to understand that such definite classes did not exist in the past either. The terms which Lian-Saging uses in his dissertation were not used before the Second World War, any more than they are now, to describe classes which could be separated on the basis of rights, attributes of any kind, or dues from

other classes. Talla makes it clear that the distinctions between what he terms 'classes' were not, in fact, very clear (1979a:77). Lian-Saging appears to have used these terms in order to try to clarify prestige differentiation among the Kelabit and bring it closer to that which has been described as existing in other 'stratified' societies in Borneo. The terms lun doo and lun da'at are by far the most commonly used terms in Kelabit discourse about differential prestige and they do not refer to clearly defined status groups. The use of these two terms appears to be very different to the use of terms to describe status groups within some Sarawak groups among whom status differences are heritable, where there seems to be or to have been an explicit separation of people into named groups<sup>122</sup>.

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The Lepo Tau Kenyah and the Kayan have terms for different ranks (Rousseau 1978:86; Whittier 1978a:109-110). It is not clear that all other stratified peoples have such clear separations into named classes. Metcalf argues that the Berawan of the Baram (usually termed Lepo Pu'un Kenyah) do not (Metcalf 1976a:97) and although the Melanau do have named 'ranks', 'in theory the rank system is always justified by descent but in practice rank is no more than the recognition of a status in the community which a man has achieved by political, social and above all economic status' (Morris 1953:64). Among the Melanau there is a recognized mechanism for mobility upwards through feasting (ibid), as there is among the Berawan (Metcalf 1985). In fact, the Melanau and the Berawan are argued by Hudson (1977) to belong to the same language group, the Rejang-Baram, and Metcalf argues that the fact that they share the custom of secondary treatment of the dead, not practised by the Kenyah or the Kayan, supports the contention that they are related. He suggests that peoples speaking Apo Duat and Rejang-Baram languages are culturally related and separate from the 'true' Kenyah and Kayan (Metcalf 1976a). Thus the conceptualization of status differentiation among Apo Duat and Rejang-Baram speakers on the one hand and Kayan-Kenyah speakers on the other (whom Hudson groups in one language group [Hudson 1977]) may have developed in quite different directions, although the fact that originally they may have belonged to the same higher-order group of Austronesian languages (Blust 1972) may mean that in the past they were more similar.

However, it is to be noted that terms meaning 'good' and 'bad' are used by some groups to differentiate between people according

Among the Lun Bawang the term lun do appears to have been the only one available to describe those of prestige, which Crain describes as the 'aristocratic class' (Crain 1978:136). Deegan describes a situation among the Lawas Damit Lun Bawang where lun do and lun tap-tap (everyone else) are differentiated on the basis of degree rather than there being a rigid dividing line between classes, and he says that opinions vary from time to time and from person to person as to who is lun do (Deegan 1973:87). Deegan does not say that this represents an eroded stratification system, but implies that it is the way things have always been. This is very similar to the situation I have described among the Kelabit. Crain implies that an erosion of the 'stratification' system has occurred associated with a less rigid dividing line between 'classes', at least in Sipitang, (1970a:183-6). However, in the light of what Deegan says it seems possible that such an erosion may not be so significant as Crain suggests, since it appears that such a rigid dividing line between named classes may never have existed. The Lun Dayeh (Lun Bawang) studied by Crain are recent immigrants from the highland Lun Bawang area. They talk of greater prestige differentials and of great irau feasts in 'ancient times' (kareb mon), when they lived in the highland area. Crain says that there appear to have been three classes at that time: the highest class, the middle class and slaves. He records no names for the first two classes, though, and he says that they were collectively called lun do, while the slaves were lun daat. Distinctions between the classes were expressed at marriages and in the elaborate mortuary rites, at which

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to prestige. Thus, among the Kenyah studied by Whittier there are two ranks of panyin ('commoners'), the panyin tiga (the 'good panyin') and the panyin dja'at (the 'bad panyin') (Whittier 1973:72).



irau were held (1970a:184). Marriages between the 'classes' were not supposed to occur (ibid: 186). However, this may be idealized. The fact that there are no names for the top two classes which the Sipitang Lun Dayeh (Lun Bawang) say existed in the past, and the fact that the term used to describe the members of the top two classes was lun do might suggest that in practice there was a continuum of status, as there is at present.

The system of differential prestige in the Kelabit Highlands (and perhaps also among the closely related Lun Bawang) does not present itself as neatly divided into categories of people who have different rights and obligations vis-a-vis each other. There are nowadays and probably were in the past no individuals or hearth-groups which have any rights that other individuals or hearth-groups do not have.

##### **5. Lun merar, lun doo and lun da'at**

Prestige, among the Kelabit, is associated with the same qualities which are associated with being a lun merar, a 'big person'. I am suggesting, in fact, that being doo and being lun merar are the same thing. To say that someone is lun doo refers, in one sense, to the capacity to maintain a hearth-group. This means being able to provide enough rice to feed the members of the hearth-group and to be successful in reproducing the hearth-group in the form of children and then grandchildren; this success is represented in the regular co-consumption of the rice meal by members of the hearth-group. In this sense all Kelabit lun merar are lun doo, in that they are all able to grow enough rice to feed the hearth-group to which they belong, and which contains their descendants. This is the level at which the exclamation 'Kami ngabi-ngabi lun doo tonge!' ('We are all

lun doo here!') is relevant. At this level, being lun doo is posited on the basic ability and willingness to grow rice, and on the maintenance of a hearth-group through the growing of rice and through biological and social reproduction.

In one sense, then, all lun merar are lun doo. However, the possibility of fulfilling more or less fully the ideal of being lun merar, of being more or less doo, is the basis of the prestige differentiation system. At this level, the term lun doo is used comparatively, to differentiate between lun merar of different hearth-groups. In this 'mode', when an individual or a couple are referred to as lun doo there is an implication that not all lun merar are in fact lun doo. It is possible for different lun merar to possess different amounts of 'doo-ness'.

I have argued that one of the most basic characteristics of lun merar is that they are rajin, hard-working. This is also a fundamental quality of someone of high prestige, what Harrisson refers to as the 'upper class'. Thus, he states that 'The theory of the Kelabit upper class is that it is the industrious and intelligent; the higher you are, the harder you should work' (1959a:30)<sup>123</sup>. This refers most importantly to work in the rice-fields. There is no question of a Kelabit person of high status allowing others to take charge of the cultivation of his/her rice fields; to do this would be to negate his/her status. Among the Kelabit, there are no labour dues to the chief, as there are or were among other 'stratified' societies in Borneo (King 1978a:28-9). Leaders did at the time of the Second World War and do now

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Among the Lun Bawang of Lawas Damit too a lun do household must exhibit ambition, diligence and intelligence as well as technical skill in all activities, especially rice farming (Deegan 1973: 90).

the majority of the work in their fields themselves, either directly or indirectly through the system of cooperative exchange of labour. Although slaves helped in the fields, this was under the direction of their masters, who made all the decisions; I have discussed the importance of decision-making in rice-growing in the generation of status among the Kelabit in chapter three.

Having children is an essential achievement of a person described as doo. However, it is not just biological children that matter. There is a sense in which the whole population of the community are the symbolic 'children' of the leading hearth-group, those who are most doo in a community. The bulk of the population of a longhouse community were, I would argue, conceived of as the symbolic children of the lun merar of the leading hearth-group of the community. The term anak katu - 'children at the ends (of the longhouse)' - referred in the past to what Talla and Lian-Saging translate as 'followers'; Lian-Saging and L. Bulan (1989) refer to these as anak buah<sup>124</sup>. Talla argues that the whole population except for the lun merar were anak katu; 'the correct use of the term anak katu would be to refer to the general public and followers' (1979:84). Lian-Saging excludes the group which he describes as upa-upa (Talla's pupa, which he translates as 'half' or children of indeterminate rank) from the category anak katu (1976/77:122-3). The use of the term anak, child, and the fact that the anak katu are referred to as 'a leader's

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Among the Kenyah too the panyin ('commoners') and panyin lamin ('slaves, war captives and their descendants') may be referred to collectively as anak buah, which Whittier translates as children/followers (1973: 70). There is an interesting equivalence here terminologically between dependants within the hearth-group (lamin) and those outside it. Perhaps an analysis similar to that I am making for the Kelabit might see all as the 'children' of the paran ('aristocrats'), the former within the base-level hearth-group, the latter within the symbolic higher-level hearth-group which is the community.

anak katu' (see Talla 1979a:84) strongly implies that a majority of the population of a community, if not all of it, are conceived of as the symbolic 'children' of the lun merar of the leading hearth-group of the community. Lian-Saging and L. Bulan make it clear that a leader should and does look after the needy among his anak buah (Lian-Saging and L. Bulan 1989:112). Just so do the lun merar of a base-level hearth-group feed their children.

I have discussed the way in which certain rice meals participated in by all members of a community are hosted by the lun merar of one hearth-group. These lun merar may be said to present themselves as the lun merar of the higher-level hearth-group which is generated through the meal. All lun merar aspire to hosting rice meals for the whole community. However, not all succeed equally in doing so. It requires a good deal of rice to feed the whole community. Also, attendance at hosted rice meals is not compulsory. Those that take place in the fields at kuman pade bru held by individual hearth-groups are attended only by lun merar who have chosen to participate in the kerja sama at which they are held. This is a reflection of the estimation in which the host lun merar are held.

The most prestigious lun merar are the lun merar, the leaders, of longhouses or multi-longhouse communities. They are often referred to as lun doo to'o, 'truly/really good people'. Thus, such people epitomize most fully the ideal which all lun merar of separate hearth-groups aspire to.

The term lun da'at refers, in its absolute sense, to a person who is not at all doo. It refers to someone who is dependent for rice upon others, who appears to be incapable of producing enough rice to feed a hearth-group,

who, at the age where he or she should be the male or female head of a hearth-group, is incapable of maintaining a hearth-group and becomes a dependant of another hearth-group. Slaves, demulun, are certainly lun da'at. They are people without a hearth-group of their own. They are also people without relatives (Talla's lun na'am lunnuwan); having a lot of relatives relates closely to prestige, since the maintenance of horizontal kin ties, particularly ones more distant than first cousin, depends on prestige.

Lun merar who are on the borderline of dependence, maintaining a semblance of a hearth-group but unable to produce enough rice to feed it and therefore frequently dependant on help from others to feed themselves, can also be described as lun da'at. Such people are not, however, absolute lun da'at. Describing them as (relatively) lun da'at is part of the defining of the prestige differentiation system, in that if there are people who are more or less lun doo, there are also people who are more or less lun da'at. Thus people who are growing rice but are incompetent could, I was told, be described as lun da'at. However, I have never heard any living person thus termed. I have been told that in the past certain 'proud lun doo' would sometimes call someone else lun da'at to their face when they were drunk. I have also been told that even nowadays if someone is very angry with another person they may describe that person as lun da'at to a third party - though not to their face. Such occasions are clearly rare, however. Even slaves appear to have been uncommon compared to the numbers among some Kenyah and Kayan; there are none now, though the fact that certain individuals used to be slaves is remembered. I only heard of three families, the leading families of groups of longhouses, which had slaves in the past. It appears to be more the concept of slaves existing, and of their being owned by those who were the most doo - lun doo to'o,

`really good people' - which matters, rather than the widespread presence and economic significance of such a group. The possibility of there being lun da'at is important, but it is enough that stories are told of individuals who were completely incompetent rice growers and were, therefore, (relatively) lun da'at - living individuals do not need to be pointed to. The concept is clear.

When the term lun da'at is used to describe someone in anger, the term appears to be used as a kind of ultimate insult rather than actually to refer to particular qualities which the person described by the term actually has. As an insult, I had the strong impression from the context in which the term was said to have been used that it implied that the person so described was incapable of producing enough rice even to provide for his or her own hearth-group, let alone provide any hospitality to others. This implies that the person concerned is not capable of being lun merar and should rather be a dependant in another hearth-group, without any status whatever.

I know of no cases where the lun merar of a hearth-group were forced by lack of rice to actually join another hearth-group<sup>125</sup>. Other hearth-groups will provide rice as a gift or members of the hearth-group will exchange labour for rice (rane mole; see chapter seven) by working in the rice-fields of other hearth-groups. Where this occurs, however, it is very unprestigious. The only case I know of in Pa' Dalih where it did occur was clearly structured in such a way that it was made obvious that a kind of charity was involved, since the rice given for the labour was more than it should have been, on the basis of the

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Nowadays, when slavery has been eliminated, such a transition would probably not occur, since in effect such a dependant

usual daily rates for work in rice fields and the value of the rice. Where rice is provided as a gift this is seen as pemeran, as having a stigma.

Whether one is lun doo or lun da'at minimally, if at all, affects one's standard of living. A hard-working couple will tend to build a larger, more comfortable apartment, and will ensure that there is a good variety of side-dishes to eat with the rice meal. But there is never any question of actual deprivation of needs estimated to be basic by the Kelabit on the part of those who are not as doo as others. Should the members of a hearth-group actually not have enough to eat or a place to sleep through their own lun merar being 'lazy' (da'at mukol), that hearth-group is always helped by lun merar of other hearth-groups. In fact all such needs are considered to be freely available for the taking from the environment - except rice. Rice, the one thing which only humans can generate from the environment in which the Kelabit live, the only problematic need, will always be provided for those in need of it by those who have enough of it - at the price of prestige and ultimately of lun merar-hood. Although there is a constant awareness of the threat of the whole community not having enough, and thus of this not being possible, instances of such a thing occurring appear to have been very rare among the Kelabit, due to their general success in rice-growing.

The fact that it is the lun merar of a community, the lun doo to'o, who tend to be responsible for rice-growing decisions and for leadership in cooperative rice-growing, as discussed in chapters three and four, suggests that, in one sense, such leaders are seen as responsible for the rice-growing success or failure of the entire community. In this sense, it is almost as though it were they who are

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would be a slave.

actually responsible for the rice crop and the rice consumption of the community. Thus the rice meal is only the culmination of a process of production which is represented as the responsibility of the lun merar of the community, those who are most doo - lun doo to'o.

Prestige, for the Kelabit, derives from the taking of responsibility for others. Growing rice and maintaining a separate hearth-group, expressed through the holding of the rice meal, generates the status of lun merar and the status of lun doo in the most basic sense. Holding irau generates a higher-level hearth-group and differentials between lun merar of hearth-groups. This is the basis of differential distribution of doo-ness between such lun merar (in some contexts all described as undifferentiated lun doo). All rice meals provide for others, dependants.

The more dependants the better so far as prestige goes. Hospitality generates prestige<sup>126</sup>. There is always an eagerness to provide for others, particularly to provide rice meals, the forum at which the most prestige-generating provision for others occurs. Lun merar who have fallen on hard times and are in need of help from other lun merar are gladly helped. This generates prestige for those lending a helping hand and causes them to be seen as more doo, because those helped are put in the position of quasi-dependants.

The relationship between prestige and provision for others can be seen in the way that such provision is made.

There is a dignity and a pride which are associated with being able to provide a rice meal for members of other hearth-groups. There is a great deal of discussion of the quality of the provision for guests at a hosted rice meal for members of a number of hearth-groups, particularly an

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Among the Lun Bawang of Lawas Damit too, the lun do' are expected to be generous, and should provide for others (Deegan



irau. The number of animals killed, the amount of rice, the quality of the drink and the snack food, the number and quality of the gifts given (at an irau; see chapter nine) are matters for endless discussion immediately afterwards. One kuman pade bru hosted by an individual hearth-group will be compared with another, and one irau will be compared with other recent irau. It is very clear that lun merar who are seen to have provided a better spread and whose kuman pade bru or irau - especially the latter - was attended by the most guests derives respect and prestige from this. This is clear from the way that the event and the hosts are talked about. It may also be evident in such things as the position of the host lun merar in the SIB church. They may, for example, be more likely to be elected as officers of the church.

#### **6. Rice-growing as the sine qua non of prestige**

All of the rice-growing tribal groups - Kayan, Kenyah, Sa'ban and Lun Bawang - surrounding the Kelabit Highlands have differential distribution of prestige. The Kelabit assume that the distribution of prestige within these groups is equivalent to the continuum of distribution of doo-ness amongst the Kelabit, in other words that the generation and distribution of prestige among these groups is on the same basis as it is among the Kelabit. Marriage with these groups is regarded in a fairly favourable light, and is handled in much the same way that a marriage between two Kelabits is handled. This means that close consideration is (or should be) given to the prestige position of the other individual's parents, grandparents and ancestors.

The terms lun doo and lun da'at are not normally used to describe non-Kelabits, but where a marriage is being

considered between a Kelabit and a non-Kelabit they may be. Alternatively, the terms used by other groups to make clear how prestige is distributed - terms which appear to refer to 'strata' - may be used. These are assumed to be equivalent to Kelabit reality, despite the fact that there are not the clear separations between 'strata' among the Kelabit that exist in other groups, as I have argued above.

The key point for the Kelabit is the growing of rice. To be doo means to engage in rice cultivation<sup>127</sup>. Only individuals belonging to groups which grow rice could be described as doo - or da'at. In fact all groups in Sarawak except the nomadic hunter/gatherer tribes such as the Penan do grow rice or have (as with the Melanau) grown rice in the past. Even though, in many cases, rice may not be the only starch food which they eat at meals (equivalent to Kelabit rice meals, kuman nuba'), rice is the crop which for them is symbolically focal. Much is nevertheless made by the Kelabit of the fact that some neighbouring rice-growing groups rely less on rice than they do. The Kelabits say that other groups eat meals consisting of rice mixed with sago, and this is ridiculed. The failure of other groups to grow sufficient rice to enable them to rely solely on rice at rice meals is attributed to their failure to be properly rajin (hard-working). It is quite clear that the implication is that the Kelabit are 'better', more prestigious. This underlines the importance, at least in Kelabit eyes, of not only being rice-growers, but of being hard-working and successful ones. The fact that, amongst the Kenyah and Kayan, aristocrats (paran among the Kenyah, maren among the Kayan) traditionally did no work in the rice-fields is

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Among the Lun Bawang of Lawas Damit too it is the lun do' who dominate rice agriculture, who invariably produce a surplus of rice, and who are able to lend rice to other households and sometimes to make them their 'clients' (lun petepar or lun tebaring) (Deegan 1973:74, 268-9).

discussed as something which detracts seriously from their credibility. The fact that it is the hallmark of a Kelabit lun doo to'o to be the hardest worker in the rice-fields of anyone in his or her longhouse is reiterated.

I have briefly discussed in chapter one the centrality of rice for Bornean agriculturalists, and its association with prestige generation and leadership. Even among the Iban, considered so egalitarian, it has been argued that the basis of heritable differential prestige exists<sup>128</sup>. Only the Penan, who are not agriculturalists, cannot be said to have anything resembling a system of differential prestige.

The Penan until very recently were nomadic hunters and gatherers who practised no agriculture, although they appear to have managed sago palms (Brosius 1986)<sup>129</sup>. They are in regular contact with the Kelabit. They regularly travel through the Highlands and have special relationships with certain Kelabit individuals, who benefit by being able to trade with them on beneficial terms for jungle products and meat. The Kelabit frequently make jokes about the Penan. Jokes relate to how the Penan live and to how their habits are totally at variance with those of the Kelabit. Particular fun is made of their eating habits. The fact that they do not eat rice as the basis of their diet, but rely largely on sago, is very often referred to in these jokes. That the Penan themselves have been heard to declare that they are still hungry although they have eaten rice, because they have not eaten sago, is seen as extremely humorous. A

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<sup>128</sup> By Leach (1950:27); Pringle (1970:28, 36-7); King (1978a:27) and Rousseau (1980); however, Freeman (1981) opposes this position.

<sup>129</sup> Attempts are now being made by the Government to settle them and to encourage them to grow rice; it seems that for the Government, as for the Kelabit, true members of society must grow rice.

parallel is explicitly drawn with the way that Kelabits and other rice-growing peoples in Sarawak always declare that they are still hungry if they have not eaten rice; this appears to be intended to highlight the 'properness' of the latter position.

Penan are thus definable, in a sense, as the epitome of what is not doo in a human. The fact that they do not grow rice means that Penan cannot become lun merar, and they cannot be described as lun doo. "Penan are different. *They don't grow rice*. You can't compare them with Kelabits; they are Penan." (my emphasis) I was told by one Kelabit. It is the growing of rice, then, that makes them different.

It could perhaps be argued that Penan are seen as equivalent to Kelabit anak adik, young people who do not yet have children, grow rice or have responsibility for a hearth-group. In this context, their reputation for adoring meat, which is a wild food and thus associated with anak adik, is appropriate.

### **7. The making of lun doo**

The Kelabit do expect that achievement of both lun merar-hood as it refers to the leader of a community, and of the status of lun doo to'o should be on the basis of inherited potential. The success of ancestors in growing rice is enough to lead people to expect success, including success in the rice-fields, of their descendants. Lack of hard work and success in the rice-fields on the part of an individual whose ancestors were of high status, i.e. by definition successful in rice-growing, would be seen as due to the inmarriage of ancestors who were 'not good' (na'am doo). Individuals of low status are not expected to inherit the same level of ability to succeed in rice-

growing. Where they do show success at rice-growing, this may be regarded as proof of the inmarriage of 'good' (doo) individuals into their ancestry at some point in the past.

It may also simply provoke a certain level of indignation.

Display of abilities apparently not consistent with one's status position does, however, lead to social mobility, if not of the individual then of his children, through advantageous marriage. This is rationalised as merely putting things to rights; the individual concerned had proved, through his success in rice-growing that he actually had better ancestry than he was thought to have had and therefore he or she should have been in a higher status position than s/he was born into. The fact that all Kelabit are considered to be related to all other Kelabit and that kin ties can be traced through all sorts of circuitous routes, both horizontally and vertically, makes it very easy for an individual or other people to re-arrange his or her ancestry.

Thus, it is, in fact, success, which must include success in rice-growing, which generates status. The Kelabit agree with this estimate; but they place emphasis on the fact that people are born more or less likely to succeed in rice-growing.

This means that although lun doo, and particularly lun doo to'o, are considered to inherit the potential to succeed in all things - but particularly in rice-growing - they must activate this potential in order to achieve a position of prestige. Each couple with pretensions to high status must themselves succeed in increasing their store of wealth, must acquire prestige possessions and must display their acquired wealth in rice at irau in order to maintain the status for which they inherit the potential. This is as true now as it was in the past,

even though the nature of irau, the main forum for the demonstration and generation of prestige, has changed somewhat.

### **7.1 Irau**

The status of lun doo was counted in the past, I was told, by the number of irau feasts held and by the stones, the nabang (cuts in ridges) and the ulong (tall bamboo decorated poles) erected or made at such irau.

At irau, the whole of the Kelabit population is invited, together with any people belonging to other groups who are related by marriage or by blood to the Kelabit. How many actually attend reflects the status of the host hearth-group's lun merar. At irau the host couple presents themselves as lun merar of the higher-level hearth-group generated at the rice meal which is at its core, and the bigger this is the more prestige is displayed.

### **7.2 The acquisition of prestige possessions**

As well as through provision of rice meals for others, particularly at irau, prestige is advertised through the possession and purchase of prestige goods. In the past, dragon jars, ceramic plates, gongs and beads were the most important of such possessions. The prestige of an ancestor is remembered in terms of his or her possession of jars and gongs.

Nowadays there is a more complex array of prestige possessions, including a wide variety of modern manufactured items. Old jars and gongs are of practically no significance any longer as prestige possessions though there are a fair number remaining in the Highlands. Old

beads (ba'o ma'on), however, still have pre-eminence as favoured purchases. Gold as a prestige possession is being bought but beads are still more actively bought than gold.

The way in which rice-growing was used in the past to build up wealth of a tangible (heirloom) kind was explained to me by one Kelabit. Although rice, he said, cannot be used as a currency in itself (at least among Kelabit), it was used as the enabling power making the build-up of wealth possible, via its judicious investment as a consumable. For example, rice could in the past be invested in providing for parties to visit local salt springs to make salt, which was one of the main currencies traditionally for the Kelabit. In the past major expeditions to the salt springs were organised, and great quantities of salt were made for trade. These expeditions were organised by prominent lun merar, leaders of longhouses or multi-longhouse communities. Large quantities of rice would be needed to provide rice and borak for the participants during the often considerable time during which they stayed at the salt springs, but this was a wise investment repaid with interest when the salt was eventually exchanged. Such salt is used locally and it was (and still is) liked outside the Highlands too (it contains salts and minerals, including iodine, and its use avoided goitre). It used to be exchanged locally as currency and traded out of the Highlands in exchange for heirloom items and certain necessary commodities such as iron. Nowadays salt is made in small quantities for local use, and has some function as a local unit of exchange. It is not however made in large quantities for trade out of the Highlands, and even within the Highlands money is now usually used as currency.

Although the evidence regarding agricultural feasts

among the Lun Bawang - which appear to be very similar to those which existed previously among the Kelabit (the most important type has the same name - ngerupan [Kelabit], ngerufan [Lun Dayeh [Lun Bawang], Sipitang], ngerupen [Lun Bawang, Ba' Kelalan]) - suggests that these were regarded as prestige-generating for the sponsor in whose fields the party worked for the day because the feast cost more than it brought in, in terms of labour (Crain 1973:16; Langub 1984:9). I was told by one informant that agricultural feasts were also ways to tap labour at crucial times of year, and that they therefore involved the investment of rice in the form of cooked rice and, above all, rice wine, borak, with the expectation of a return in the form of even more rice. This build-up of rice could be used for the holding of irau or for investment in the making of salt, the major currency.



## 8. Prestige and the couple

Just as I have argued that the status of lun merar is based on being a member of a couple, producing rice and children with a partner of the opposite sex, being considered doo is also based on being a member of a couple. An individual or a couple cannot be referred to as lun doo or as lun doo to'o if s/he/they is not or has not been a member of a fruitful couple which has successfully produced rice and reproduced via the birth or adoption of both children and grandchildren.

It is arguable, I think, that it is the couple itself which accumulates prestige, rather than the individual members of the couple. The behaviour of the individual members of the couple matters, because it reflects on the prestige of the couple; and the behaviour of individual members will be explained by reference to the status of their ancestors. Whatever the potential which an individual has to become doo, this can only be expressed through the medium of the couple. As T. Harrisson put it, 'To be effectively industrious and intelligent, it takes two' (1959a:31).

I will discuss in chapter nine how Kelabit irau are held by the senior couple, the most fully lun merar in a hearth-group. The prestige which is displayed and generated at irau is the prestige of this couple.

Although I know of no cases of this happening while I was in the Highlands, it is conceivable and must happen occasionally that a single individual is responsible for the irau of his/her son or daughter plus spouse on the birth of their first child, his or her co-resident grandchild. Naming irau celebrate the fruitfulness of the senior couple, who have succeeded in producing not only children but grandchildren. Where one of the couple is deceased, the naming irau held by the remaining individual

for the birth of his/her first co-resident grandchild would still celebrate the fruitfulness of the couple of which that individual used to be a member.

### 9. Leadership

Prestige among the Kelabit is directly associated with leadership; it is rare for anyone not considered doo to'o to be accepted as leader<sup>130</sup>. Longhouse communities coalesce around one leading hearth-group focused on a couple who are fully lun merar. As is common in longhouses in Borneo, the apartment of the leading hearth-group is, at the time of the building of a Kelabit longhouse, situated in its middle, with close relatives on either side. Less and less prestige is associated with being further and further towards the ends<sup>131</sup>. Thus, those of least prestige in the community (apart from slaves, who did not have hearths of their own) were described as anak katu, 'children of the ends (of the house)'.

Qualities of leadership - strength of character, decisiveness, charisma, the ability to orate and arbitrate - do not mark an individual as doo. They are qualities which lun doo need in order to lead, they are even qualities which bolster an individual's position as lun doo, but in themselves, I was told, they are not doo.

As has been discussed, there is an equivalence, at a

<sup>130</sup> Among the Lun Bawang of Lawas Damit too, Deegan says that only the most prestigious may be leaders. Leaders of communities must be lun do' (the Lun Bawang do not describe people as doo to'o and the term lun do' is the equivalent of this) (1973:207).

<sup>131</sup> Among the 'stratified' societies of the category described by Rousseau as Central Bornean, the apartment of the chief is usually in the middle although sometimes at the end for 'convenience' (Rousseau 1990:107). For many other groups, the prestigious central apartment is inhabited by the descendants of the founders of the longhouse, what Leach

higher level, of the position of lun merar of a hearth-group and lun merar of the community; at the latter level, the term lun merar was, in the past, the only term for leader. Just as the lun merar of the hearth-group are a couple, so it was the focal couple of the leading hearth-group who were the *de facto* leaders of the community in terms of internal matters, although the appointment of a man as ketua kampong nowadays by the government has obscured this. The fact that a previous ketua kampong of Pa' Dalih had to resign when his wife died indicates the importance of the couple as leaders. It was impossible for him to hold the post without a wife.

Men speak, and spoke in the past, more than women at formal meetings, but women speak as much as men at informal gatherings at which attitudes, facts and decisions are thrashed out. Formal meetings are formal statements of the situation, and forums at which consequences, decisions and punishments are finalised and made public. Although, where the lun merar of a hearth-group are a couple, the man will speak at formal meetings, a woman will speak if her husband is dead. She, in this situation, is the leader of the hearth-group, its senior lun merar. She will speak rather than a male member of the hearth-group who is not so fully lun merar. There was a case in Pa' Dalih while I was there where a hearth-group headed by a widow was in confrontation with another. At the 'court case' held to resolve this issue, this woman spoke considerably more and far more vehemently than either of her sons, both of whom were in their twenties and co-resident with her and one of whom was married with a child and thus was a junior lun merar of the hearth-group.

Leadership of a longhouse or multi-longhouse

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terms the 'house-owning group' (1950).

community should be in the hands of one leading hearth-group, whose lun merar, the lun merar of the whole community, are definitely lun doo and preferably, for the prestige of the whole community in inter-community affairs, lun doo to'o. Such leadership is, on an everyday level, in the hands of both the man and the woman of this couple. The strength of character, charisma, ability to express themselves and decisiveness which they should have should enable them to lead the community in rice-growing decisions, which are the major cooperative decisions that need to be made within the community. These same qualities tend to cause people to come round to their way of thinking in the informal discussions which precede a formal meeting held to resolve a conflict within the community. Both the man and the woman will, in these contexts, persuade others to take their point of view, and at the formal meeting this will be very likely to prevail. For the sake of their credibility and prestige, it is important that the leading couple should not be seen to have varying opinions but to be in agreement substantially with each other. They should, in other words, express unity, which is vital as the visible hallmark of the successful couple.

In Pa' Dalih when I was there there was no hearth-group seen as fully qualified to lead; despite the presence of a ketua kampong, leadership appeared to be effectively shared out among a number of hearth-groups, none of whom had complete authority. The reason for this situation was probably that the hearth-groups at least some of whose members were considered to have inherited the greatest potential to be doo to'o could not provide a fully viable lun merar couple. One hearth-group, for example, consisted of a grandmother, her daughter and her daughter's young son, without an adult male. The daughter, who was in her forties, took the role of senior

lun merar<sup>132</sup>. Whether she had been married to the boy's father was unclear, but he was not a Kelabit, was resident in town and had never been to the Highlands, and she had effectively never been a member of a visible couple.

While the leadership of the community is in the hands of a couple, leadership of the community in its dealings with other communities is more in the hands of men than women. However, should a man not have a suitable wife, this would affect his position and even make it untenable, since even at this level the unity of the couple as a unit is important. It is certain men, always the male half of the leading couple of their own longhouse or multi-longhouse community, who represent the community in affairs involving other communities, and who become leaders of federations of longhouses. Among the Kelabit, distances between longhouses tended, before the resettlement of the mid-1960's in Bario, to be no more than a couple of hours' walk, often less. Groups and federations of smaller longhouses existed rather than fairly isolated large longhouses, as among the Kayan and Kenyah. Because of this the Kelabit had a number of levels of leadership at an inter-community level. The relative importance of the different levels appears to have varied, and leadership of federations seems to have passed about among the longhouses constituting it, always to a fairly close relative since all the leading families inter-married frequently. It appears that Kelabit longhouses were not very stable in membership. New longhouses appear to have frequently broken off. Regrouping of communities was apparently common (Lian-Saging 1976/77, chapters II and V).

It appears that in the recent past, before the Second

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She made the rice-growing decisions for the hearth-group, and her mother, who did not cultivate separately, followed these.

World War, there were, broadly, two federations of longhouses in the Kelabit Highlands proper (not including those longhouses outside the Highlands whose inhabitants had emigrated from the Highlands within the previous 100 years or so - see chapter two). These two federations might be termed northern and southern. Each had a leader, who might be drawn from any of the constituent longhouses. The position of leader of the federation appears to have passed from one longhouse or multi-longhouse community to another. The longhouse whose leader became leader of a federation in this way would have gained a great deal of prestige.

Dealings with 'the outside', then, at all levels of leadership, were more in the hands of men than of women. This could perhaps be seen as congruent with the way in which men are, in one sense, spatially associated with the 'outside' - the tawa' - within the longhouse itself, as discussed in chapter five.

#### **10. Prestige and strength of ulun**

It is the lun merar, the social adults in a community, whose 'strength' of life is commented upon, as I have discussed in the previous chapter, and who are associated with the attainment of ulun. These lun merar are also, as I have discussed, lun doo, by definition. The lun merar of the community, who are lun doo to'o, 'truly lun doo', are considered to have the strongest ulun; through their success in all things, but particularly in rice-growing, they demonstrate this<sup>133</sup>.

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In prayer, the Berawan refer to the 'tree of life' as being tiga ('good' in 'true' Kenyah) and as being maren (the term for the highest status grouping, the 'aristocrats' in 'true' Kenyah) (Metcalf 1989:151) (in prayer, Berawan make widespread use of words from neighbouring languages). The term tiga in 'true' Kenyah is used to refer to high status commoners (Whittier 1978a:110); thus the use of tiga and maren to

The more doo an individual is considered to be, the more comments are passed attributing 'strength' of 'life' (kail ulun) to him or her.

People who are considered to be doing badly in rice-growing are described as having 'weak life' (kaya ulun). Such people are on the borderline of being lun merar and of being lun doo. It would have been people in this position, I was told, who might be described in the past as lun da'at. Deceased individuals who were described to me as being lun da'at were said to have had 'weak life'.

Thus there is an association between prestige and strength of ulun. Prestigious individuals, who are successful in rice-growing, have 'strong life'; people who are of low prestige have 'weak life'.

The coupling of prestige and ulun is also clear in the fact that it is prestigious lun merar who tend to be the most devout Christians (although there are exceptions). It is such individuals who are asked to pray at public occasions, not only in church but at communal meals such as kuman peroyong, kuman pade bru and irau.

### **11. Changes in Kelabit prestige differentiation since 1945**

The close relationship between rice-growing and prestige among the Kelabit means that it is very difficult for prestige differentiation to be eroded without the erosion of the centrality of rice-growing; and this has not happened. Rice is not now the only source of wealth, as it was in the past. However, for the Kelabit of Bario it is a very major, perhaps the major source, through the

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describe the tree of life associates life with being of high status.

sale of rice to the coast. To be at the focus of rice-growing is still of central significance. The fact that lun doo to'o are the practical (not just symbolic) leaders in rice-growing among the Kelabit fortifies their position<sup>134</sup>. Among many other Bornean groups with prestige differentiation the 'aristocrats', while they are central ritually to rice-growing (King 1978a:29), did not have a central practical role. The erosion of traditional religious beliefs as well as that of slavery and the corvee appears to have weakened the link between them and rice-growing. Among the Kelabit, the erosion of the political and military role of the lun doo to'o has not, because of their focal position in rice-growing, led to the erosion of prestige differentials which appears to have occurred among the Kayan and the Kenyah. Such differentials are still very important, are expressed in terms of doo-ness, and are advertised and generated at irau.

It is characteristic of the Kelabit that the distribution of prestige has not petrified but has

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The theory that it is only hearth-group labour or its symbolic equivalent through cooperative labour exchange is, in fact, being eroded; there is more labour input into Kelabit rice-growing from outside the hearth-group now than there was in the past, because Kerayan and Brian individuals now come across the border to work for wages in Kelabit rice fields. This did not happen before the Second World War. It is particularly common in the immediate Bario area, because of the demand for 'Bario rice' on the coast, the availability of cash to pay labourers and the high level of emigration to town from the area, which leads to a shortage of labour. In some Bario longhouses, in particular Bario Asal, quite a large proportion of the labour in the rice fields is now done by such seasonally migrant labour. The fact that it appears likely that most of the labour in the rice fields belonging to certain hearth-groups will soon be done by outsiders to the hearth-group may be expected to have some repercussions as regards the status of the members of the hearth-group. However this point has not yet been reached and in most of the hearth-groups in this position its own members still do a good proportion of the work and maintain the ideal of being rajin (hard-working) in the rice fields.



reflected the constantly changing situation in terms of actual success in the cultivation of rice, displayed at irau. However, since the Confrontation with Indonesia in the 1960's the situation has altered much more quickly than it could have before the Second World War. This is due to the resettlement in Bario. Because of this, the two pre-war federations in the Kelabit Highlands which I have mentioned have been radically altered. A very large proportion of the members of the southern federation has moved to Bario, and the competition for prestige which used to take place over the length and breadth of the Kelabit highlands and beyond is now largely concentrated in the Bario area. In Bario, there appears to be a struggle going on between those originating from the southern area and those from the Bario area. The two federations, in effect, still have some reality as competitors, at Bario, although much complicated by increased proximity and a greater intensity of alliances between them through recent marriages.

Nowadays the Sarawak State government has taken into its own hands the highest level of control over the administration of the Kelabit Highlands, although actual administration takes place through Kelabit penghulu, wakil penghulu and ketua kampong, who are paid salaries by the government. The penghulu (in Bario) and wakil penghulu ('vice'- penghulu) in Long Dano in the southern part of the Highlands proper are the heirs to leadership of the two federations while the tua kampong are heirs to the longhouse leaders of the past. The penghulu and wakil penghulu do have quite considerable importance and relate directly and frequently to State government officials. The tua kampong, on the other hand, have positions which are quite minor, as far as the State government is concerned. The roles of penghulu and wakil penghulu are held by individuals who have 'very good' (doo to'o)

ancestry. It is said that the tua kampong should ideally also come from a 'very good' background, but it is admitted that this is not always the case (Lian-Saging and L. Bulan 1989:112). The minor role played by tua kampong as compared to that played by the penghulu and by the wakil penghulu are significant here; where real power is being exercised it is important that the individual concerned be of 'very good' family.

The southern Kelabit who did not move to the Bario area but remained behind in the southern area have, since the resettlement in Bario, been marginalised in social, economic and political terms. Despite their undoubted success in growing rice, it is very difficult for them to sell it in town and use the money to express prestige in ways which have become accepted in Bario. This includes the provision of town-bought snacks and presents at irau and the purchase of inflated numbers of prestige possessions. This is particularly visible in the contrast between the numbers of 'ancient beads' (ba'o ma'on) which are being purchased in Bario and the numbers being bought by individuals in the southern area. Irau in the southern area are attended almost exclusively by those resident in the southern communities. This means that a smaller higher-level hearth-group is generated and consequently also less prestige.

Pa' Dalih Kelabit do not, nowadays, discuss directly how doo different people are. This is in contrast to Bario, where people will, in certain circumstances, talk quite readily about differential prestige in terms of doo-ness. In the present highly-charged situation in Bario, where competition is very intense, there seems to be an urge to discuss the topic directly which sometimes gets too much for some (Bario) people. They will talk openly about who they consider more doo and who less; this

includes discussion of the position of people outside Bario. In such contexts, it becomes quite clear that people still resident in the southern area are regarded as marginal to the very active competition for prestige in Bario. This is not to say that the southern Kelabit are not attempting to compete in the prestige stakes; the making of permanent wet rice fields is, I have argued, part of this. They start off, however, with a disadvantage nowadays.

It is clear, then, that distribution of prestige among the Kelabit is not in any sense static, despite the theory that doo-ness is inherited; it has constantly to be demonstrated by each focal couple, the lun merar of a hearth-group, in each generation. Through the competitive holding of irau, there is a regular jockeying for position. This process is as important now as it was in the past, although the pace has quickened and there is a focusing of competition in Bario, while in the past it was spread out over all Kelabit communities.

## **12. Christianity**

The introduction of Christianity after the Second World War was accompanied by a Christian rhetoric which advocated a diminution in the importance of prestige differentials. The Kelabit have taken this up to some extent. The discourse against prestige differentials was particularly strong after the mid-1970's, after the fundamentalist 'Revival' which began in Bario and eventually spread to groups besides the Kelabit. This led to a decrease in the display of symbols of status differentiation, in particular the wearing of valuable beads by women. Recently, however, in the last five years or so, such outward signs are becoming more common. This seems to go with a waning of the effects of the 'Revival'.

It arguably indicates a lack of commitment to the ideal of a lack of prestige differentials.

The Kelabit do not really take on board the Christian notion that it is wicked to be rich. To them, wealth is a positive thing, although it should be associated with providing for others; the latter, at least, fits nicely with Christian notions. They do not have before them the image of poverty as deprivation stemming at least partially from the actions of the wealthy. The Kelabit see the environment as it stands at the moment - not only the forest but perhaps the town as well - as a limitless resource which needs only to be effectively tapped and channelled. Those who are more effective at doing this are wealthy, prestigious and 'good'. Those who are not are simply lazy and 'bad'<sup>135</sup>.

Christianity participates in prestige advertisement. The choice of officers for the church, both male deacons and female officers of the 'womens' circle' (kaum ibu) of the SIB church, is closely tied in to the estimation of both how much of a lun merar a person is and how doo he or she is considered to be. While an effort is made to think up enough posts so that all lun merar of hearth-groups can be voted (by secret ballot) into one - underlining their role as lun merar of hearth-groups - many posts are quite humble. Individuals considered to be more established lun merar and those considered particularly doo, preferably individuals falling into both categories, are invariably chosen to fill important posts<sup>136</sup>. Such individuals also speak most at services.

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The Berawan take a very similar view (Metcalf 1989:99). Among the Lun Bawang of Lawas Damit too, it is the lun do' who fill important posts in the SIB church, to which the Lun Bawang also belong. Deacons, as among the Kelabit, are mainly lun do'. Leaders in everyday life in Lawas Damit are also

### 13. Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the way in which the generation of differential prestige as between individuals of different hearth-groups is parallel to and in fact is generated on the same basis as adulthood, which means being lun merar of a separate hearth-group. The adjective used to differentiate between lun merar of different hearth-groups by status, doo, literally 'good', is also used to describe individuals who fulfil the basic qualifications for lun merar: success in rice cultivation, successful biological reproduction and the ability to provide rice meals for the members of the hearth-group<sup>137</sup>.

The possession of 'strong life', kail ulun, is associated with being lun merar and with being lun doo. Wealth derived in the past only from rice and still largely does, for Kelabits living in the Highlands. It is displayed in heirlooms and, nowadays, more modern prestige possessions as well. In the provision of rice meals for higher-level groups equivalent to the hearth-group - most importantly, at irau - status is generated of the same kind but of a higher order as that generated through provision of rice meals for the hearth-group. Lun merar of different hearth-groups are differentiated between: greater prestige, more doo-ness, accrues to those lun merar who succeed demonstrably in this enterprise. Such lun merar, indeed, were, in the past and to some extent in the present, described as the lun merar, the leaders, of the whole community, and as lun doo to'o, 'really good

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religious leaders (Deegan 1973:281-2).

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Among the Lun Bawang of Lawas Damit, too, all freemen (i.e. those who have not been forced through severe economic straits to join a lun do' household as dependants) should exhibit the qualities of lun do' to a greater or lesser extent. Those who do not are described as lun dat (lun da'at in Kelabit), but are an anomaly (Deegan 1973: 94-95 and note 31 p. 96). This echoes the Kelabit reluctance to call any lun merar lun da'at, since none should be so.

people'<sup>138</sup>. Thus, as with the term lun merar, there are two senses in which the term lun doo may be used, one referring simply to lun merar of hearth-groups, the other differentiating between them.

I have suggested that to call this differentiation between lun merar of different hearth-groups among the Kelabit a 'stratification' system is not appropriate; instead, I have used the term prestige differentiation. Among the Kelabit, there are no clear breaks between 'strata', but rather a continuum, with constant jockeying for position via the holding of irau, which, through their presentation of the host couple as lun merar of a higher-level hearth-group, realign the positions of different couples in terms of doo-ness. I have argued that such competitive feasting is a fundamental part of Kelabit prestige differentiation, as it appears to be elsewhere in the cultural area.

I have argued that it is rice-growing which makes prestige differentiation possible as far as the Kelabit are concerned. Thus, they relate to other rice-growing groups as though the prestige differentiation which these groups have, however expressed, is equivalent to their own prestige differentiation. The Penan, who do not traditionally grow rice, are not able to generate doo-ness.

Doo-ness cannot be demonstrated except through the couple. Just as lun merar must be fruitful, must have produced children as well as rice, it is individuals who are members of a couple who can be described as lun doo.

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Among the Berawan, too, the term de lo kiji, literally 'they who are big', is the only word for leader. However, its meaning varies according to context, as does the Kelabit term lun merar, and while it can mean the single greatest man of each generation, it may also mean all the

The prestige generated through displays of prestige possessions and the holding of irau celebrates the fruitfulness of the couple. It is the senior couple of the leading hearth-group of a community who are the leaders in decision-making within the community, in particular rice-growing decisions. Although men are the spokesmen and are involved in political manoeuvring between communities - reinforcing the association which exists, at one level, between men and the 'outside' - even here it is difficult for a leader to be credible without a well-respected wife. This underlines the importance of the unity of the couple.

I have touched on the changes in prestige generation which have occurred since the Second World War, and have argued that there has not been a fundamental change in the mechanism of prestige generation among the Kelabit, despite the resettlement in Bario and the introduction of Christianity. Prestige differentiation, I would argue, is a fundamental part of what it means to be Kelabit. It is not perceived as an inequity but as the natural and proper state of things.

**CHAPTER NINE**

**KELABIT IRAU**

Kelabit irau are feasts. They are prestige-generating events financed by the lun merar of a hearth-group, revolving around the consumption of a rice meal and other food and drink. The whole of the social universe is invited to them, although not all of it necessarily attends. The social universe means primarily all Kelabits, but also any other individuals who have relationships by marriage or in fact dealings of any kind with any Kelabits. Such people are likely to be re-classified as kin<sup>139</sup>.

Kelabit irau may be seen as similar in many ways to feasts held by other South East Asian groups<sup>140</sup>. This includes, in Sarawak, the Berawan (Metcalf 1982) and the Melanau<sup>141</sup>.

Irau are focused nowadays on the holding of a single rice meal. It seems that in the past, when some irau lasted much longer than they do now - a number of days - there may have been a series of such rice meals. The rice meal at irau is shared by all guests. The consumption of borak, rice wine, used to be very important at irau, and they were often referred to as borak (sometimes spelt burak) rather than irau (Lian-Saging and L. Bulan 1989:99). Since the conversion of the Kelabit to Christianity, they no longer make rice wine.

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<sup>139</sup> Crain says that 'the Lun Dayeh [Lun Bawang] tend to live with kinsmen, but also to make into kinsmen those with whom they live' (Crain 1970:190; see also 102-3).

<sup>140</sup> Particularly Naga Feasts of Merit (see e.g. Hutton 1922), Chin feasts (Stevenson 1937), and Toraja 'Feasts of Honor' (Volkman 1985).

<sup>141</sup> Status mobility occurs among the Melanau through marriage feasts, and in the past, through feasts held at funerals



### 1. The contexts in which irau are held

In the past there were two major occasions at which irau were held. One, termed borak lua or irau lua, was held to publicly affirm parenthood and grandparenthood and to 'initiate' a child<sup>142</sup>. The other, termed borak ate or irau ate (ate from mate, 'dead'), was held at secondary funerals.

Among the Kelabit secondary funerals were held only for deceased individuals of high status, lun doo to'o, the lun merar of the community (see chapter seven). Until secondary treatment, the bodies of such individuals were kept in the longhouse or in a small adjoining building adjoining the dalim until the decomposition of the flesh was complete<sup>143</sup>.

Harrison suggests that deceased who were not of high status were memorialized at borak ate held primarily for lun doo to'o (whom he calls 'aristocrats') (1959a:118), and Talla too says that this happened (1979:243-244). The implication of the rest of Talla's material is that if this occurred it did not involve an actual secondary funeral for the dead of the less well-off families but simply remembering the dead, who were already disposed of in the forest.

It was, ideally (although not always in practice),

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(Morris 1953:57,61, 146-7).

<sup>142</sup> Lian-Saging (1976/77) and Talla (1979), themselves Kelabits, both use the term 'initiation'. See p. 330.

<sup>143</sup> The Toraja held their 'Feasts of Honor' on the occasion of secondary funerals (Volkman 1985).

The Kelabit belong to a group of people, speaking either the Rejang-Baram or Apo Duat languages (Hudson 1977) who belong, Metcalf argues, to the 'nulang arc'. Peoples in the 'nulang arc' used to practise secondary treatment of the dead, accompanied probably in all cases by feasts (Metcalf 1976).

the co-resident child of the deceased, together with his/her spouse, who hosted the borak ate. The ideal of virilocality among the Kelabit meant that this would ideally be a son plus his wife.

Irau might also be held simply to generate prestige, although this was rare. Such irau were known as borak mo ('borak held for no particular reason'). Their purpose does not appear to have included the accomplishment of transitions related to human life.

With the coming of Christianity, borak ate ceased to be held altogether, since the practice of keeping dead bodies in the longhouse until they decomposed was regarded by the missionaries as unhygienic. The dead are now buried within about twenty-four hours of death in a graveyard in the forest. Borak lua were transformed into the present-day irau mekaa ngadan ('name-changing irau'), which may also be described as irau naro' ngadan ('name-making irau'); I shall describe these as 'naming irau'. These naming irau do not ritualise the transition of the child as did borak lua. It seems likely that the introduction of Christian baptism, held when an individual is in his or her teens, may have provided a transition which partially replaced that which children underwent at borak lua. However with respect to the status of the parents and grandparents, naming irau appear to be very similar in function to borak lua.

Nowadays, the majority of irau are naming irau. They are usually held within a year after the birth of the first child to a couple by the lun merar of the hearth-group to which they belong (i.e. their parents and parents-in-law). Sometimes naming irau may be delayed until the couple has more than one child, particularly if they live in town. Naming irau confirm the parenthood of

the young couple, and the grandparenthood of the lun merar of whose hearth-group the child and its parents are members<sup>144</sup>. I discuss Kelabit parental and grandparental names in chapter seven.

Irau are sometimes now held at engagements and weddings, when these are held in the Kelabit Highlands (if they are held in town a reception is held which has features of both a Western-style party and of an irau). The holding of an irau for an engagement or a wedding is unusual, however, and does not appear to be fully accepted as a proper irau. In the past weddings were celebrated as a minor event at an irau held for another purpose. Where marriage nowadays involves the holding of irau, this may perhaps be seen as the equivalent of the pre-Christian irau known as borak mo (see above).

At Easter an event is held which is also described as an irau, where one sidang (parish) or a group of sidang hosts the whole of a section of the SIB church. In this case the social universe relevant to the Kelabit as members of the SIB includes the Lun Bawang highland areas of Ba' Kelalan and Long Semadoh.

## 2. Lun Bawang irau

Although details are scanty, there is evidence that in the past the Lun Bawang kept at least some dead until the bones were dry and then held an irau at a secondary funeral. This was prestige generating (Ricketts 1894-5:282-4; Pollard 1933:153-4; Crain 1970:184-5; Deegan 1973:108-9). In the highland Lun Bawang area, and also in

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Where a young couple lives in town, there are grounds for thinking that they consider themselves in some sense as still belonging to the hearth-group of one of them in the Highlands. They always try to eat rice grown by that hearth-group, which is sent down to them by air.

the Adang river area (a tributary of the Limbang), previously inhabited by people apparently deriving from further inland - marks on the landscape - cuts in ridges and the erection of stones of various kinds have been noted (St. John Spenser 1862 II:129; Schneeberger 1979; Harrisson 1958c:398) similar to those made by the Kelabit until recently at secondary funerals.

The Lun Bawang do not hold name-changing irau; they do not change their names. Lun Bawang weddings are greatly elaborated and appear to be the major prestige-generating events, together with agricultural feasts. Lun Bawang marriage involves the setting up of an enduring economic and ritual relationship between affines (Crain 1970a). Although it does not appear that among the Lun Bawang there was a marking of the successful married couple's parenthood and grandparenthood via the initiation of the first child of a young couple, as is marked by an irau among the Kelabit, there are feasts (natadawa) hosted by the boy's and the girl's 'kinsmen' within the first two or three years of the marriage (Crain 1970:176) which may be parallel in some ways to Kelabit naming irau. During that time it is unlikely that the couple will not have produced a child. It may be that the time lapse is connected to a need to ensure that the marriage will be fruitful in terms of children, and that these feasts are, at least to some extent, affirmations of this. The emphasis on the forging of affinal links among the Lun Bawang may be another way of saying the same thing as that which is affirmed at Kelabit naming irau.

It should be noted that feasting is an integral part of the relationship between affines among the Lun Bawang and that engagement and marriage arrangements and celebrations are the major locus of prestige generation (Crain 1970). These involve the consumption of a

commensal rice meal provided by the hosts. Thus, as among the Kelabit, the provision of a rice meal which is shared by all present is associated with the generation of prestige. It also appears to be associated with the generation of the social universe to a greater or lesser degree. The higher the prestige of the hearth-groups involved as principals in the marriage the greater the number of people who involve themselves in it, stating their kinship by making furut prestations, and joining in the rice meal provided at the associated feast (Crain 1970:129, 159-161).

Crain sees Lun Bawang marriage and agricultural feasts, which are, like Kelabit irau and to some extent pre-Christian agricultural feasts and their descendants (kerja sama), the sites of prestige generation, as achieving this through 'having provided the mass performance of symbolic acts which embody the very essence of the system' (1970:302). However, this he sees as occurring through the provision of a locus for the creation of debtor-creditor relations, which are engendered through the exchanges which centre on marriage. Although these feasts centre on a rice meal, as do Kelabit irau, it is not this which Crain sees as focal to the embodiment of what it means to be Lun Dayeh (which is what the people of Sipitang, whom I am calling Lun Bawang - see chapter one - call themselves, because they are recent immigrants from the interior area).

### **3. The purpose of irau: the generation of lun merar-hood, prestige and ulun**

The two major types of pre-Christian irau - borak lua and borak ate - and the most frequent type of present-day irau, naming irau, achieve transitions. At borak lua and present-day irau, these are undergone by children, parents

and grandchildren. At borak ate the dead person underwent a final transition. The co-resident child plus spouse also went through a transition, taking over the leadership of the community which had been in the hands of the dead individual. These transitions were elaborated ritually in pre-Christian irau, less so in present-day ones. One purpose of the irau is to achieve these transitions. These transitions relate to stages in human life.

I want to argue that at irau the fabric of what the Kelabit see as proper, true, human life (ulun), is presented in a symbolic form. I hope to show that it seems clear that this symbolic statement is at the core of what is achieved at irau.

Naming irau held nowadays are said to be held kadi inan ulun, 'because there is life' or 'because we have a life'. This refers to the birth of co-resident (or rather commensal) grandchildren to their grandparents, full lun merar, who are the hosts of the irau. It also refers to the successful entrance into the path towards becoming full lun merar on the part of the young couple, child and child-in-law of the host couple, the birth of whose first child is celebrated at the irau. Naming irau are an affirmation of the status of lun merar, both lun merar of individual hearth-groups and lun merar of entire communities, which is founded on production of rice and descendants - who are fed at the rice meal.

I have discussed in chapter seven how it is lun merar who are described as having 'strong (human) life' (kail ulun). The lun merar of the community, in other words of a higher-level hearth-group, are described as having the strongest life of all. The more of a lun merar a person is the stronger his or her life. Thus the affirmation of lun merar-hood at irau is an appropriate forum for

statements about the nature of ulun.

Prestige is associated with the achievement of high levels of lun merar-hood within a community, as discussed in the last chapter. Irau are the most important forum for the confirmation of the achievement of prestige.

The generation of prestige is premised, I shall argue, on the very fact that it is made possible for the proper structure of human life, ulun, to be presented and for transitions associated with human life to be accomplished. The lun merar who host the irau present themselves, I shall argue, not only as the lun merar of the entire community of guests but as the enablers of human life.

The presentation of the structure of true human life at irau involves the explication and even perhaps the harnessing of the elements which make human life possible.

There are, I suggest, two elements involved, which must be brought together in order to accomplish the transition.

I hope to demonstrate that these two elements are, at certain points, separated, and represented by male and female, although this is only in order for them to be brought together. The unity of male and female represented by the couple is constantly re-stated.

The importance of these two elements is made clear through the way in which the rice meal at the irau is prepared, served and consumed. The rice meal at irau is much more elaborated than the everyday rice meal. At irau, it is possible to trace a relationship between the two components of the rice meal - rice and penguman - which may also be seen as a relationship between male and female. This relationship may be seen, I would argue, as a 'statement' about the nature of human life itself.

Additional light is shed on this relationship between male and female, and on the nature of human life, through looking at pre-Christian irau, at which the transitions relating to human life were more elaborated than they are at present-day irau. Although present-day irau are more clearly descended from borak lua - both borak lua and present-day naming irau are explicitly held to introduce a child to the social world and to publicly proclaim parenthood and grandparenthood - they also, I would argue, inherit something from borak ate. It is therefore pertinent to look at both types of pre-Christian irau to help in an understanding of present-day irau.

#### **4. The generation of higher-level hearth-groups**

I have argued in previous chapters that at rice meals the unity of the hearth-group is generated, and that at certain rice meals - including that at irau - a higher-level hearth-group is generated through a rice meal shared by members of separate hearth-groups.

Irau, particularly nowadays, consist essentially of a huge rice meal. Members of other communities besides the host community participate in the distribution of the food and drink. This may be said to underline the unity of the whole community of guests as one hearth-group generated at the irau. A list is drawn up by the 'MC' ('master of ceremonies'), in consultation with the hosts, of all those who are to participate in the distribution, and this is read out before the distribution. Individuals are asked to distribute different food and drink according to gender and stage reached in life (see below).

Probably as at borak lua and borak ate in the past, preparations for naming irau are made not only by the



hearth-group hosting the irau but by all hearth-groups belonging to the community to which the host hearth-group belongs. This, I would argue, symbolizes the unity of the longhouse community and its equivalence to a single large hearth-group which is hosting the irau. The rice to be served at the rice meal which is the focus of present-day irau is parcelled out among the hearth-groups of the community and is cooked separately by the women of the different hearth-groups at their own hearths. The meat to be served at the irau is cooked by a group consisting of all or nearly all of the men of the longhouse, both young men, anak adik, and adults, lun merar, in a huge metal pot over a fire made outside the longhouse. When senape are being made for irau, they are made, as senape are always made, communally in the dalim of the longhouse by groups of women belonging to different hearth-groups, although the rice belongs to the hearth-group hosting the irau.

The way in which the rice meal, now the focus of naming irau, is prepared and served demonstrates the fact that at irau higher-level hearth-groups are generated. Two levels of hearth-group above the base-level may be said to be generated. Although the meal is provided by the host hearth-group, the way in which it is prepared makes it appear that it is the whole host community which is providing the meal, as touched upon above. The way in which it is distributed and consumed, on the other hand, makes it appear that the entire group of people present, hosts and guests, are one hearth-group. The meal may thus be said to present both the host community and the entire community of people present as higher-level hearth-groups.

The hearth-group hosting the irau may be said to present themselves as the lun merar of the higher-level hearth-groups hosted through the commensal consumption of a huge rice meal. This is because they are the source of

all the food consumed, both rice and domestic meat.

### **5. The rice meal at irau: rice and meat**

Especially nowadays, when borak is no longer provided, preparations for the irau centre on preparations for the single huge rice meal which is to be held at it. This rice meal takes up about two-thirds of the irau, time-wise. An irau cannot be held without the rice meal, as I have many times been told. Even in the past, when borak was focal to the irau, this was, I was told, true. It is clear, then, that the rice meal is essential to the transition which the irau achieves.

On an everyday basis the rice meal, kuman nuba', consists of two categories standing in a complementary relationship with each other: nuba' (rice) and penguman (that which is eaten with rice). I have argued that the latter is represented as 'wild' food, even when it is in fact cultivated vegetables. Within this category it is not possible, in everyday rice meals, to establish that any food or foods are particularly emphasised as the most important penguman, although I have pointed out that an effort is made to eat meat regularly.

During irau, however, when the most ritualized of rice meals is held, the category of penguman is narrowed down. The rice meal at irau consists of rice and boiled meat; no vegetables are normally provided. The meat is from slaughtered domestic animals, pigs (berak) and sometimes buffalo (kerubau) as well<sup>145</sup>. In the past deer were captured in the forest and kept for slaughter at

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In other parts of South-East Asia where feasting is associated with prestige generation and display, meat from domestic buffalo and pigs is, in the same way, served in complementary opposition to the staple, which may be rice or millet (Volkman 1985; Stevenson 1937).

irau; the Kelabit remember a time when there were no buffalo in the Highlands. Wild, hunted meat, killed in the forest, is not served at irau; should wild meat be served it is not an irau but a kuman peroyong, 'eating together' (see chapter six). The animals killed belong to the hearth-group holding the irau, although they may have been handed over to them immediately before the irau by other hearth-groups. This is on the basis that either the animals were lent previously for irau other hearth-groups were holding, or that they are being borrowed by the host hearth-group with the promise of repayment later. While the meat eaten at everyday rice meals is wild food from the forest and belongs to no-one, and is therefore, as has been discussed, appropriately freely shared, that killed and eaten at irau belongs to the host lun merar couple. The pigs and buffaloes which are slaughtered at irau are valued very highly in money terms nowadays. Until recently they were reared solely for slaughter at irau. Nowadays some buffaloes are used to puddle wet rice fields, and, in Bario, to haul loads.

I have argued that the key characteristic of penguman is that they are mein, tasty/salty/sweet. The term mein refers particularly to meat. Although most foods can be described as mein, meat is considered the most mein food there is. This is particularly true of pork, whether from wild pigs (baka) or domestic pigs (berak). Pork is extremely highly appreciated. The most desirable and most mein pigs are those which have a thick layer of fat. I shall return to the significance of fat. Meat from domestic pigs is essential to the holding of irau; while an irau may take place with only the slaughter of pigs, it may not with only the slaughter of buffaloes. Thus the fact that it is meat, and particularly pork, which is placed in complementary opposition to rice at irau may be said to reflect the fact that it is, in essence, the

quality mein which is being opposed to rice.

It seems clear from this that it is meat that expresses the essence of penguman. The complementary opposition which is stated to exist between rice and 'that which is eaten with (rice)' may be said to be essentially stateable as a complementary opposition between rice and meat. Although on an everyday level a rice meal does not always contain meat, it seems arguable that everyday rice meals are less emphatic statements of what is stated at rice meals at irau and that meat stands most strongly for what all penguman represent. I have pointed out in chapter six that a hearth-group will not allow itself to go without meat or other protein food from the forest for more than about a day.

At the rice meal, which is essential to the transition being achieved at irau, then, it is rice and meat that are brought together as the two sides of the equation. Their commensal consumption states the unity of the group consuming them as a higher-level hearth-group in just the way that the unity of the hearth-group is stated at the everyday rice meal by the hearth.

At everyday rice meals only the rice is supplied by the lun merar of the hearth-group. Ingredients for penguman are very frequently supplied by junior members of the hearth-group and by members of other hearth-groups. By contrast, at the rice meal at irau both the rice and the meat are supplied by the lun merar of the host hearth-group. Thus the entire rice-meal is supplied by these lun merar, both elements in the complementary opposition of which it consists. All that the rice meal symbolizes is presented as being made possible by the lun merar who are hosting the irau.

## **6. Male and female at irau: the bringing together of two complementary elements**

Although women usually do all the cooking for everyday rice meals, men and women may cook both rice and wild foods, including meat. The preparation of both wild foods and rice is done at the hearth in the dalim. At irau, on the other hand, there is a clear separation of men and women in the preparation of the meat and the rice for irau. Meat and rice are also cooked in different places. The women prepare the rice inside the dalim, at the hearth, while men cook the meat outside the longhouse, although they bring it inside to put it on skewers.

There is a high level of interest, on the part of all males, in the preparation of the meat for the rice meal at irau. This is much greater than the interest shown on an everyday basis. Meat from hunted game eaten on an everyday basis is cut up and distributed to neighbouring and related hearth-groups by the hunter. This is done without ceremony and does not attract much interest. By contrast, the slaughter of domestic animals for meat at irau attracts most of the men and boys of the community. After the meat has been cooked outside the longhouse, it is brought inside to be put on skewers. The whole process of cutting up, cooking and skewering the meat is of great interest to all males. This suggests that at irau meat has a prominence which it does not have on an everyday basis, at least not overtly.

While the men are clearly associated with the preparation of meat for irau, the women, by contrast, express a repugnance for the killing and disassociate themselves from the cooking and skewering of the meat. They remain in the longhouse cooking the rice, thus emphasising their association with the rice rather than

the meat.

I have already traced an association of rice with women and of wild foods, particularly meat, with men. What I have just described concerning the preparation of meat and rice at irau underlines this. I would argue that what is happening at the rice meal at irau, and in fact in an unemphasised fashion at all rice meals, is, in a certain sense, a bringing together of male and female. The emphasis on both meat and rice, not just on the rice as at everyday rice meals, coupled with the focal (particularly in present-day irau) and essential nature of the rice meal at irau, invite the conclusion that this positive action of uniting male and female is essential to the transition which is being accomplished at irau. Indeed, of course, at present-day naming irau and at borak lua in the past it is the fruitful bringing together of male and female in the production of a child which is being publicly stated and celebrated.

I have discussed in previous chapters how in one sense rice is associated with male plus female, the fruitful couple, and with successful human life, and the wild is associated with anak adik, the young, who are not yet social adults and have no potential for accumulating prestige, which occurs through rice-growing and the reproduction of children. In another sense, however, the female is associated with rice, while the male is associated with the wild. I have argued that on an everyday basis it is rice that is more openly emphasised and accorded public value. Although the association of the male with the wild is clear, the significance of this association is not emphasised - although I have discussed how success in hunting is necessary to male adult status. The man's role as part of the couple, and as associated with rice, is, on an everyday basis, stressed. At irau,

however, the male association with the wild is made much clearer.

At the everyday rice meal, male plus female tends to appear to stand in contrast and even in opposition to and in defence against the forest, which is associated with 'not-couple'. Yet, at irau, the essential nature of the rice meal is shown to include within itself the forest, in the guise of meat. This forest is presented as positive, essential to human life, since it is associated with the male - half of the complementary opposition which the rice meal consists of.

There are two perspectives from which the rice meal may be seen. From one perspective, the contribution of the wild is recognized as vital and is associated with the male. From the other, the rice meal appears as a seamless entity associated with male plus female and with rice - and the wild, associated with non-couple, anak adik, stands opposed to what the rice meal and the couple represent. There is a constant shifting back and forth between these two pictures, both in everyday life and at irau; but particularly at irau. Here the unity of the couple is celebrated, as lun merar; but their separation is also highlighted, as male and female.

### **7. The distribution of food and drink at irau**

At present-day irau, distribution of food usually follows prayers, speeches and announcement of new names, although it sometimes occurs before the announcement of names. The 'master of ceremonies' ('MC') reads out the list of those who are to distribute the various categories of food. There are six categories of food: crackers or senape (steamed rice in leaves); sweets (not always distributed); sweetened drink (tea, coffee, milk); meat;

fat; and nuba'. The pattern of distribution of the different foods relates to the association of different foods with the two genders. I have suggested in chapter six that sweet drinks - tea, coffee and milk - may be seen as representing 'borak'. This is distributed by the young girls and new mothers (although it may be dispensed from the large container in which it is made by a man), as are the crackers or senape and sweets; crackers and sweets have partially replaced senape, which are, like borak, 'rice on its own'. Nuba', rice cooked in the form in which it is consumed at the rice meal, is distributed by established mothers and by grandmothers. Meat, to be eaten at the rice meal, is distributed by young men and new fathers, while fat is distributed by established fathers and by grandfathers.

Irau nowadays may be held either in the dalim or in the tawa'. In the southern longhouses, including Pa' Dalih, where the numbers of guests are not so great, they are held in the dalim, while in the Bario area they are held in the tawa'. The distribution of food is carried out by walking the length of one side of the dalim or tawa', distributing portions to all individuals one by one, and then walking back along the length of the other side of the dalim or tawa' and distributing to all the individuals on that side. Every individual, man, woman and child, is given equal portions. The distribution is carried out with ceremony. Each person's portion is carefully measured out.

The crackers, sweets and sweet drinks, which in the past would have been senape and borak, are distributed first. After an interval of perhaps ten or fifteen minutes, making a clear break, nuba', meat and fat are distributed. The meat is distributed threaded on to bamboo skewers, while the fat is given out in lumps, two or three to each individual. The rice is distributed wrapped in the large leaf bundles which are made for irau,



for kuman pade bru ('eating new rice') and for rice meals at those kerja sama cooperative work groups at which rice is provided by the host hearth-group.

The rice meal is clearly separated from the consumption of sweet drinks, crackers and sweets which precedes it. This is the ritual rice meal which lies at the heart of the irau and which, I argue, symbolically states the nature of human life. Although many people have eaten earlier in the evening and are not hungry, they must all open their bundle of rice and eat at least some rice and some meat in order to participate in the rice meal. The rest of the nuba' and meat they must take home and eat later. No-one ever leaves any food behind them.

#### **8. The significance of the pattern of distribution of food**

In Pa' Dalih, after the distribution of the food, there was, at the irau which I attended there, a fat-eating competition. These, I was told, are traditional at irau. Fat (lemak) was strung on rattan strips and these were hung from the ceiling in a line. A number of older men, very definitely lun merar of their own hearth-groups, were then called upon by the master of ceremonies, reading out from a prepared list, to line up, one at each strip. They were then asked to eat the fat. The man who finished first was the winner. Some participants clearly enjoyed the fat, but not all were keen. Some had to be practically coerced into it. One of these reluctant fat-eaters, who was our next door neighbour, explained to me afterwards that he really does not like fat much. There was however no way that he could refuse to participate.

It will be recalled that it is the older men, lun merar of their own hearth-groups, who also distribute fat.

Fat, then, appears to be associated with male lun merar. At borak lua, fat used to be hung around the neck of the child's father, who was just entering the path to lun merar-hood. Women do not eat fat on its own, although it is used nowadays as lard for frying (ngeriki), which is not a traditional method of cooking (see chapter six). Fat is, in fact, considered to be dangerous to women. At the Long Dano irau which I witnessed, I saw one woman become almost frantic when her small daughter insisted on eating some fat, and tell her that she would have a headache and would be ill if she did so. She raised no objection to her small son eating fat. It will be clear from the events at the fat-eating competition that male lun merar are actually supposed to eat fat; they are not allowed to refuse to participate in fat-eating competitions.

Fat may be said to be the 'meatiest' part of the meat. It was suggested to me by one Kelabit that it is the most 'mature' part. It appears to be even more strongly associated with men than is the flesh (uang or 'substance'). Men must eat fat; women must not eat it.

It is the flesh which is appropriately consumed at the rice meal. Although fat is not scrupulously removed from the flesh, it is never eaten on its own at the rice meal. At irau, skewers (pul) of flesh and fat are distributed to be eaten with rice at the rice meal. Very few women taste it, however, instead putting it aside to take home and render into cooking fat. In fact, not all the men eat the fat either. I had the impression that men are perhaps somewhat wary of extreme manifestations of their male nature. This may be behind reluctant participation in fat-eating competitions.

Women who are definitely lun merar of their hearth-

groups distribute nuba', the form in which rice is cooked for the rice meal. Flesh (uang) is distributed by young men. It is thus paradigmatically that distributed by the young men, together with that distributed by the older women, lun merar, which makes up the core of the rice meal.

Just as small boys being 'initiated' at borak lua are enjoined to become rice-growers, and yet are given implements which are useful only in hunting, so the nature of lun merar men is represented in an apparently contradictory fashion. In one sense they are presented as more and more deeply involved in rice-growing, as lun merar, yet on the other they are more and more associated with meat and the wild. This is carried to the point of being associated with a symbol of the wild (fat) which is so strong that women cannot eat it and which is not, at least on its own, a component of the rice meal.

While fat is associated with and distributed, at irau, by older men, who are very definitely lun merar, sweet drinks, which I have argued represent borak, are distributed by young women, unmarried girls and very new mothers. These women, if they are lun merar at all, are only just beginning to be so. It is most properly distributed, I have been told, by young marriageable girls; not very young girls, but not married women either.

Men, then, as they become older and more fully lun merar, are most appropriately associated, in this context, with the strongest statement of 'meatiness', while it is the young marriageable girls who are associated with the strongest statement of the nature of rice.

### **9. The significance of borak at irau**

It was explained to me that because borak is associated with life and fertility, it was proper for

young girls, who represent potential fertility, to distribute it. Older women, established lun merar aged from about thirty to about fifty, do not, I was told, represent potential fertility in the same way. As befits those who have achieved lun merar-hood, they distribute nuba', which is rice as it is brought fruitfully together with meat at the rice meal.

Irau were, in pre-Christian times, focused on the consumption of borak, rice wine. During the rituals accomplishing the transition at both borak lua and borak ate, borak was used extensively. Its symbolic association with fertility and the potential for human life is explicit in the statement that young girls should distribute it because they represent potential fertility. Borak was drunk by everyone present at key points in the ritual sequence. At borak lua, at the pre-irau eagle-calling ceremony (nawar kaniu), - the eagle was believed to be the messenger of Deraya, the deity associated with successful rice-growing<sup>146</sup> - water was taken by the women which was later made into borak. At the nuwat anak (translated by Talla as 'instilling knowledge into someone inexperienced' [1979a:200] and by Lian-Saging as 'blessing the child' [1976/77:140]) ceremony which formed part of borak lua, pure borak (known as abpa pade, literally 'rice

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The gender of Deraya, the deity who is the fount of fertility, life and rice, is not altogether clear, although Kelabits would - a little uncertainly - say that Deraya was male. However, my informants gave me indications that there is a sense in which Deraya is conflated with God the Father now that the Kelabit are Christian (although the emphasis is on God the Son, Jesus), and this may explain the assertion that Deraya is male. Metcalf points out that the Berawan Creator is similarly of uncertain gender. The Berawan language - like that of all Malayo-Polynesian languages, including Kelabit - allows gender to remain a nonissue. Metcalf points out that many Bornean peoples have a couple as their creator deities (Metcalf 1989: 60-62). It seems possible that where a single Creator deity exists, as among the Berawan and the Kelabit, this deity may be neither male nor female but, in a sense, both - combining the couple within himself/herself.

water') was spat into the mouths of the children. At this ceremony utensils appropriate to the gender of the child being initiated (sharpening stone and knife for a boy, weeding hoe used in the rice fields and cooking implement used in cooking rice for a girl) were placed in the child's hand, together with 'charm leaves' (Lian-Saging 1976/77:140, Talla 1979a:200)). These leaves signified good fortune (deraya, the same word as for the deity associated with success in rice-growing) and productiveness. The emphasis on rice-growing is very strong for both genders, despite the fact that boys were given implements appropriate for hunting and killing. The prominence of the deity Deraya and of the concept deraya, in particular, indicates this.

In borak lua, borak seems to be used as a facilitator of the transition of the children into true human life. In its use in nuwat anak, this is stated very clearly; the statement of what the children will, it is hoped, become in life is accompanied with the spitting in their mouths of the most refined variety of borak, borak apba pade, which symbolised prestige and prosperity (Talla 1979:201).

At the same time, the man carrying out the ceremony recited a verse to the child, referring to the power of the charm leaves, and wishing that through their power the child will always be successful in rice growing. Thus, at this point rice, and rice wine are presented as the symbol of successful human life. It seems arguable that rice wine is a very powerful symbol of the nature of rice, particularly when it is distilled into borak apba pade.

The identification of prestige and prosperity with success in rice growing, symbolized by borak apba pade, is clear. For the children being initiated, proper human life is to involve both being gendered and being successful in rice-growing. For the girl there is no

confusion. The implements given to the girl are associated with rice-growing and the cooking of rice, illustrating the close association of women with rice. For the boy, however, things are not so clear. He is given implements associated with hunting and killing, although he is enjoined to be successful in rice-growing. No mention is made in what is recited to him of success in hunting or headhunting. It is successful rice-growing which is declared in the verses recited to the child to be the goal of both girls and boys.

Borak may be seen as representing the sense in which rice is presented as a symbol of the entire human achievement, of human life itself (ulun). Success in rice-growing is the same as success in human life, is proof of strong life (kail ulun). Successful cultivation of rice, successful human life, is symbolically represented most powerfully by borak, particularly by borak apba pade, the purest form of it. The use of borak as such a focal element at irau is to be seen in this light. It, like the female with which it is associated, symbolizes, through its association with fertility, the continuation of life. In the making of borak, I was told that it was essential that a bit of lamud, yeast, from a previous batch of borak be used in making more borak; this, I was told, is to ensure continuity between one batch and the next.

Consumption of the rice meal and consumption of borak/sweet drinks plus senape/crackers emphasise different aspects of the same reality. The rice meal symbolizes the fact that rice in one sense stands as a symbol of the human achievement of ulun, human life, in that it is a rice meal; but at another level it emphasises the essential nature of life as being made up of rice plus wild foods, which are in this context associated with

female and male respectively. Borak simply presents rice as the symbol of the achievement of ulun; here, the unity of male and female is emphasised. This is clearly expressed in the fact that the spitting of borak abpa pade into the mouths of both male and female children is accompanied by exhortations to succeed in rice-growing, with no mention of hunting or wild foods.

Borak is associated with the achievement of the lun merar as the enablers of human life. But it is also associated with fertility. At irau this is located most potently in marriageable girls, whose potential fertility represents the future of the hearth-group. For this reason it is young girls, on the brink of entering the path towards lun merar-hood via marriage and the birth of children, who distributed borak. Nowadays they distribute the sweet drinks which have replaced it.

#### **10. Pigs and buffaloes: the generation of prestige**

A closer look at the animals which are killed at irau, both present-day naming irau and pre-Christian borak lua and borak ate, reveals more about the symbolism of the relationship between rice and meat and between male and female, and about the way in which human life is conceived as being generated. Pigs and buffaloes are both slaughtered at irau. I want to look at the difference between these two animals. This, I hope to show, helps in an understanding of the difference between what was achieved at borak lua and borak ate and what is achieved at different present-day naming irau.

At all modern irau pigs are killed. Only at major irau are buffaloes killed. While there is prestige in killing a large number of pigs, it is much more prestigious to kill buffaloes, which are extremely

valuable. While a pig is worth a few hundred Malaysian dollars, a buffalo is worth a couple of thousand dollars.

The fact that at all naming irau pigs are killed relates them to borak lua, from which they are most clearly descended and at which only pigs were killed. When buffaloes are killed this echoes the killing of buffaloes at borak ate, and, I would argue, shows that some of what was achieved at borak ate is now being achieved at naming irau.

During the rituals accompanying the transitions achieved at pre-Christian irau, particularly borak lua, there was a complex and shifting relationship between the level at which male plus female is contrasted to the young and that at which male is contrasted to female. The data presented by Talla (1979) and Lian-Saging (1976/77) indicate that there was an emphasis on both the separation of male and female and the unity of male and female. The essence of human life as being male plus female - contrasted with and even in defensive opposition to the forest -was constantly reiterated in the prayers which were said at pre-Christian irau. At certain points, however, the forest is represented as essential to the achievement of human life, and represented in this guise as associated with the male.

This recalls and reinforces what has been said about the rice meal, which in one sense is presented as the achievement of male and female as clearly separated genders, but at another is represented as achieved by the couple as a unity, with the existence of two separate genders within it veiled on an everyday basis. In the former sense, the separated male, associated with the forest, is presented as essential to human life; at the latter it is the young, non-couple, that are associated with the forest, presented in this context as alien.



## 11. Pigs and buffaloes at pre-Christian irau

### 11.1 Borak lua

Borak lua and present-day naming irau are both said to have been held and to be held, in the (English) words of one informant, 'to celebrate the continuity of life... The emphasis is on a new life - a new life has been created'. The new life referred to is the child 'for' whom the irau was and is held. It is not therefore surprising to find that in the rituals associated with borak lua, as described by Talla (1979) and Lian-Saging (1976/77), we find a particularly clear statement of the nature of human life (ulun). At present-day naming irau such statements occur too, during the prayers which are said; the locus for statements about the nature of human life has shifted to Christianity.

Talla (1979a:198) and Lian-Saging (1976/77:138) translate lua as 'initiation'; Lian-Saging and Bulan [1989:103] translate lua as 'to bless'. Ngelua actually involved smearing with blood; both when it occurred at borak lua and also in other contexts the individuals undergoing transition were smeared with blood from either a boar or a cock<sup>147</sup>.

The animal whose blood is used is always domestic and is an animal which has been fed by humans rather than grazing on grass (as buffaloes do). Chickens are regularly fed with rice while domestic pigs are fed partly on rice husks and partly on taro stalks and leaves. At borak lua, when boars were killed, Talla (1979:198-9)

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Metcalfe describes a similar rite among the Berawan, which used in the past to be a great festival in its own right although it is now performed as part of the death ritual sequence. This involved the inducting of boys into the first grade of warrior status. At it, pigs are sacrificed and their blood poured copiously over the initiates; a dab of blood is smeared on the whole 'congregation' (Metcalfe 1989: 88).

reports that tatang (which he translates as 'prayers') were addressed to the animals to be slaughtered which referred to the fact that they had been fed on the best of rice by the most prestigious of women.

Thus, the domestic pigs killed at irau are seen as paradigmatically fed on rice, and by women<sup>148</sup>. It is, in fact, women who care for and feed pigs and chickens. The pig itself is eminently male. It is of course meat, and meat, I have argued, is associated with men; and when slaughtered at irau it is always a boar - just as, when chickens were, in the past, killed at minor ngelua ceremonies, they were always cocks.

It thus appears that the animal whose blood accomplishes the transition carried out at ngelua represents something male which has been nourished by the female.

However, there are grounds for thinking that male and female are also being used as symbols for a distinction of a different kind - between fruitfulness and sterility. I shall return to this in a moment.

While the children undergoing initiation at borak lua were entering social life for the first time, other individuals who underwent ngelua on other occasions may be said to have been re-entering social life. Ngelua seems to have been performed when an individual was thought to have had dangerously close contact with the world of the dead, the spirits. This usually occurred during bad dreams. At borak ate, death irau, ngelua was also held, for those men who had taken the corpse to its final resting place in the forest.

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A close association between women and pigs also exists among the Toraja (Volkman 1985: 72), who feed them with symbolic

Contact with the non-human which necessitated ngelua always seems to have involved the forest. Spirits (ada') are closely associated with the forest, where almost all of them are said to live. The more an environment is dominated by humans, the less likely there are to be spirits around; I was often told that there are no ada' in town. The dead too are located in the forest; many ada' are, in fact, spirits of dead people. It is not desirable for the spirits of the dead to return to the longhouse. They are consigned to graveyards in the forest and it is hoped that they will stay there. They are never called back as they are among some other Bornean groups, such as the Berawan (Metcalf 1989:105-6) and the Iban (e.g. see Uchibori 1983). When the men who have taken the deceased to the forest return to the longhouse they erect a barrier in the path to stop the spirits of the dead following, and it is because they have been dangerously exposed to the spirits of the dead that they must undergo ngelua.

Although I have no direct evidence of an association between on the one hand the children undergoing initiation and on the other the forest and the non-human, the fact that other ngelua were held because of contact with this other world suggests it. There certainly appears to have been an emphasis throughout the borak lua on introducing the children to the human world. This involved, in particular, introducing them to their gender roles by giving them certain implements and objects.

The killing of the boar may be said to represent the 'domestication' of it, the channelling of its power in order to achieve the parallel transition of the children into social life. It might be suggested that this 'domestication' is made possible because of the feeding of

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'rice' (actually carefully cooked cassava leaves) (ibid: 70).  
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the boar with rice, which makes its power accessible to humans. The children are being initiated into a life in which both male and female, meat and rice, are fundamental, through the symbolic 'domestication' of the forest - represented here by meat and the male - by rice, represented by rice-growing and the female.

It can be said that at ngelua ceremonies, and at borak lua, a contrast is being made between a world where the two genders cannot be joined together productively and one where they can. As touched on earlier in this chapter, the male is used as a symbol to represent this sterile world (as far as human life is concerned) and the female to represent fruitful human life. However, the distinction is really between sterility - separated gender - and fruitfulness - united gender. This is a distinction which is associated with the distinction between the young, who are not yet fruitful, and the couple, who are. However it is male and female which are used, symbolically, to convey this distinction.

### 11.2 Borak ate

I was told by one informant that 'borak ate were just for status - to celebrate getting status. That is the difference between the two of them [borak lua and borak ate]. The couple gains status for themselves [at borak ate]. Borak lua is to celebrate the continuity of life'.

At borak ate, the secondary funeral, more than one transition occurred. The dead individual made the final transition from life to death (which was not fully accomplished until this point), and was returned to the forest - whence, as a child, s/he may be said to have come. The couple who hosted the irau confirmed their full lun merar-hood, their transition to leadership of the

hearth-group. It was lun doo to'o for whom borak ate were held, and the leadership which was being passed on to the successor couple was not merely lun merar-ship of the hearth-group to which he had belonged but the lun merar-ship of the whole community<sup>149</sup>.

While at borak lua it was pigs which were slaughtered, at borak ate it was buffaloes and sometimes, in the past, cows, goats or deer; not pigs<sup>150</sup>. Although all animals slaughtered at an irau are domesticated, there are two different types of domesticity involved. While the pig is fed by humans, buffaloes, cows and goats are not. They eat grass, which grows wild, on its own. Above all, though, they do not eat rice, while the diet of both pigs and chickens includes rice or rice husks. Deer, which used to be killed in the past, feed themselves, like buffaloes, eating wild food. Both buffaloes and deer, as well as cows and goats, might be said, then, be associated with pure forest, unaffected by rice.

I have argued that at borak lua the child is represented as entering the human world, having originated

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<sup>149</sup> Individuals for whom borak ate were to be held were kept in coffins within the community, initially in the dalim of the hearth-group to which s/he belonged and then in a separate specially built small building attached to the dalim of their hearth-group by a bridge. The body was kept in this building for a long period, usually a number of years. The symbolic presence of the deceased in the dalim was made clear by the building of a 'small fireplace-like structure' in the small hut in which it was sited, and an ember from the hearth in the longhouse was placed there every evening (Talla 1979:235). It was necessary to wait 'for years' before the body of a lun doo to'o was removed from the house, otherwise the whole of the Kelabit population would be unable to grow enough rice to feed themselves and to brew borak (ibid: 234). This makes quite clear the fact that lun doo to'o, who had the strongest ulun in the community, were closely associated with the rice-growing success of the whole community.

<sup>150</sup> At the erection of the memorial to the dead person in the forest, however, a pig was slaughtered and eaten and a chicken was abandoned (Talla 1979a:238-239). This was separate from

in the forest. Through borak ate the dead person is being returned to the forest. Graveyards, pre-Christian (menato) and Christian (tanem) are in the forest. Nowadays the dead are grouped in a cemetery, but in pre-Christian times not all dead were put in the same place; they were sometimes placed individually under rocks or on the summit of ridges next to standing stones erected in their names. All of these places were quite separate from areas frequented by living human beings, however. Living human beings never went near a graveyard except to take dead persons there. This is still true nowadays. When I wished to visit the Pa' Dalih (Christian) cemetery and the pre-Christian cemetery nearby, I had some difficulty persuading anyone to take me. I was accompanied on the visit to the pre-Christian cemetery by two older men, and on the visit to the Christian cemetery near the settlement by a young (unmarried) man. A young woman (not yet married) came too on the visit to the Christian cemetery, but only after a good deal of persuasion; she was strongly advised by other women not to go. When I felt ill after visiting the pre-Christian cemetery, this was attributed to my visit to it. In the past, men who took dead persons to the forest had to undergo ngelua when they returned, as discussed above.

The fact that the animals killed at borak ate were, I argue, associated with 'pure forest' may be seen as linked to the return of the dead person to the forest. While at borak lua the generation of life through the bringing together of the male (the forest) with the female (rice-growing) is stated in the body and blood of the boar as necessary to the business in hand, at borak ate this is not so. The animal that is killed represents only the forest, growing on its own without human intervention.

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the irau itself although it was a preamble to it.

## 12. The rice meal and the statement of human life through the couple

The rice meal was central to both borak ate and borak lua, and was generative of the lun merar-hood of the hosts. However, while borak ate were always attended by large numbers of guests, this was not always the case with borak lua.

The main purpose of borak lua appears to have been to generate the status of lun merar of an individual hearth-group via the successful transition of a child into human life, a transition which validates the claim to parenthood and grandparenthood of its relatives. There does not always appear to have been an attempt to attract large numbers of guests, which would generate the largest higher-level hearth-group possible, and thus the greatest amount of prestige possible. The higher-level hearth-group which was generated at borak lua appears to have often been limited to members of the same community. In the case of a prominent hearth-group, guests would come from outside, however, and a larger higher-level hearth-group would be generated - and hence more prestige, and a higher level of lun merar-hood. Borak ate appear to have been intended to generate a higher level of lun merar-hood through generating a larger higher-level hearth-group. There was always an attempt to attract as many guests as possible. To hold a borak ate was always to generate prestige.

The generation of lun merar-hood through the holding of a rice meal was essential to both borak lua and borak ate, although different levels of lun merar-hood were highlighted. The rice meal made clear the nature of human life, the generation of which is, I argue, the origin of lun merar-hood. I suggest that the consumption of the

rice meal at both borak lua and borak ate reiterated the nature of human life (ulun) in the face of the non-human forest, the latter standing on its own rather than productively channelled through the rice meal. At borak lua this was in face of the forest from which the children have been taken; at borak ate it was in face of the forest to which the dead were being returned. Borak lua might perhaps be seen as a victory over the forest, in its negative, dangerous guise (when it is associated with not-couple). At borak ate a submission to the forest was in effect made, since a member of the community was being returned to it. However, at borak ate, not only is a rice meal held during the irau in the longhouse, but one is also held in the forest by the group of people creating the memorial for the dead person; women cook rice in the forest and this is eaten together with the meat from the sacrificed pig (see above, footnote 12) by the assembled group of men and women. This is a very clear statement of the continuing existence of human life in a context where the non-human is very close and has deprived the community of one of its most prominent members.

Both borak lua and borak ate were held by a couple, lun merar. I was told by one informant that it would have been impossible for a borak to be held in the past by an individual, not a member of a couple. This couple, through the holding of the rice meal, expresses the continuation of human life. This is only possible through the fruitful couple. At borak lua the couple celebrated the creation of new life, which confirmed their status as lun merar. At borak ate they made a permanent mark on the landscape which might be seen as expressing the continuing achievement of life in the face of death.

The fact that borak ate was held by a couple is illustrated in the fact that the most common memorial to



borak ate appears to have been the erection of a pair of stones<sup>151</sup>. Sometimes one was pointed and the other more rounded; in other instances, both were pointed but one was shorter than the other. These were erected in a prominent position in the forest, often together with the making of a cut in a ridge next to the stones<sup>152</sup>. These pairs of megaliths are seen by the Kelabits and highland Lun Bawang as husband and wife couples (Harrisson 1962a; Lian Labang 1962)<sup>153</sup>. The erection of these pairs of stones echoes the form which Batu Lawi, a mountain to the north-west of the Kelabit Highlands, takes. Although these megaliths are normally known as batu senupid ('erected stones'), they can also be described as batu lawi (Banks 1931:145). Batu

<sup>151</sup> Stone is of major importance to the Kelabit. It is believed that transmutation of substance (balio) is possible, and one of the most important transmutations is from living flesh to stone. This is believed to occur through various types of human misbehaviour, when people and whole longhouses may turn to stone. Transmutation into stone also appears to be associated with death; this may be seen in the stone monuments which are erected at secondary funerals and in the fact that the dead used in the past to be buried in stone jars. Stone is also, however, associated with permanence, and contrasted to life, which passes away. In this context the couple holding the irau may be said to have been engraving themselves and their achievements on the landscape through the erection of stones, the diversion of rivers and the making of cuts in mountain ridges - and perhaps now, as I have argued, through the making of permanent wet rice fields.

<sup>152</sup> Although Harrisson has recorded single menhirs as well as pairs (1958b:696), Banks recorded in 1937 that he could 'not recall anywhere a single menhir' (1937b:414). It seems possible that where a single menhir is found this is because the other has been removed, damaged (soft sandstone is used) or buried under vegetation; the fact that megalithic activity appears to be very old in the highlands makes this quite likely.

<sup>153</sup> The Kenyah studied by Whittier had pairs of male and female stones called batu tuloi, which were an important paran ('aristocratic') symbol in the past. During the mamat ritual following a headhunt the male stone was balanced on the female by an 'elder', ensuring the well-being of the community (Whittier 1973:187-8). Metcalf reports the existence of similar stones among the Berawan, termed bito tiloi, kept in front of the 'most august' apartment of the longhouse; these were supposed to grow and exert a benevolent influence (Metcalf 1989:78).

Lawi is of enormous mythological significance to both the Lun Bawang and the Kelabit<sup>154</sup>. It is surmounted by two stone peaks, one smaller than the other, which are explicitly said to represent a couple, male and female. There is a widely-told Kelabit/Lun Bawang story telling of the origin of Batu Lawi which tells of a battle between Batu Lawi and Batu Apui which ended in the female half of Batu Lawi having her head cut off by Batu Apui; this is why the 'female' peak is lower than the male<sup>155</sup>.

Present-day naming irau can be said to partake of the nature of both borak lua and borak ate. They generate both the status of lun merar of the individual hearth-group and that of lun merar of a higher-level hearth-group. I have shown how at naming irau higher-level hearth-groups are generated. However, this is a more significant feature of some naming irau than of others. Those that are attended by the majority of the Kelabit population - which is the case with many of those held in the Bario area - and at which buffaloes are slaughtered

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<sup>154</sup> See Moulton (1912) for an early European reflection of Kelabit and Lun Bawang attitudes to Batu Lawi. Moulton tells how in the lower reaches of the Limbang river (i.e. among the Lun Bawang) there were 'numerous stories relating to the power of this wonderful mountain; how few people were ever allowed to get there, how those that did either met some dreadful fate there or else died shortly after their return, while others went so far as to assert that even to point at the mountain with one's hand would incur its just wrath, which the mountain would show at once by causing heavy rain to fall' (ibid:1-2). Moulton, no doubt influenced by these tales, made an expedition to the mountain in 1911, but found it very difficult to persuade any Lun Bawang or Kelabits to accompany him. There is no doubt that Batu Lawi is still regarded with awe. While I was doing fieldwork what can only be described as a pilgrimage was made to it by Kelabits and Lun Bawang from the entire highland area within Sarawak in order to pray to God, as Christians. A miracle was hoped for on the summit, although this did not materialise.

<sup>155</sup> I taped this story in Pa' Dalih and have also been told it in Long Lellang, which is outside the highlands. An incomplete version of it has been published by Clement

are, I would argue, more generative of the status of lun merar at levels above that of the individual hearth-group, because they are attended by more people; because of this they generate more prestige. Thus they relate back more to borak ate. Those attended only by individuals from the immediate area and at which only pigs are slaughtered may be said to be descended more from borak lua. They generate little more than the prestige associated with being fully-fledged lun merar of an individual hearth-group.

At all present-day irau, the status of lun merar is, as it has always been, generated through the holding of the rice meal. However, the animal from which the meat served derives symbolizes the different amount of prestige, and the different level of lun merar-hood, generated.

The potential for different amounts of prestige to be generated at different naming irau is demonstrated in a number of ways. One is the length of the prayers and speeches. The length and formality of these is always greater at large irau. Another is the identity of the 'master of ceremonies'. While at all irau there is an attempt to get prestigious individuals to act as 'MC', to give speeches and make prayers at irau<sup>156</sup>, this is more in evidence at irau which clearly aim to host large numbers of people and at which buffalo are killed. In Bario, the Kelabit Penghulu (chief) is particularly sought after as a speech-maker, and in the southern area his deputy, the wakil Penghulu. The content of speeches is clearly associated with prestige. Especially at major irau, there is constant reiteration of the achievements of the host lun merar and frequent reference to the size of the irau,

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(1911b).

to the numbers of guests and to the long journeys which they had to endure to attend. The implication is that it is prestigious for the host hearth-group that so many people have troubled to attend.

### **13. The announcement of new names: validation of lun merar-hood**

I have discussed Kelabit parental and grandparental names and titles, which are taken at irau mekaa ngadan nowadays, in chapter seven.

The new names of the child, its parents and its grandparents (real and classificatory) are announced publicly. The announcement of new names usually takes place after the prayer and the speeches, sometimes between them, and sometimes after the food has been distributed. It is the responsibility of the 'MC'; members of the host hearth-group take, publicly, a back-seat role. First of all the names of the young couple, those of the lun merar of their hearth-group (grandparents of the child) and that/those of the child or children 'for' whom the irau is being held are read out. When the name/s of the child/children is/are announced, it/they are physically displayed to those present, openly demonstrating that the status of parents and grandparents is validated. At the irau in Pa' Dalih and Long Dano which I have attended, this involved the lifting up of the children. This is in effect the ritual transition into parenthood of the young couple. It is also to some extent the entry into human life of the child or children; baptism may be also be said to partially accomplish this nowadays. In Bario, the young couple, the lun merar of their hearth-group and other close relatives were clearly on display, sitting on a line of chairs in the central part of the tawa'. Here, the children were not lifted up, but they could be said to be on display throughout the irau due to their seating position. This is the only point during the irau, nowadays, when any prominence is given to the child or children. After the announcement of the names of the

members of the host hearth-group, the names of individuals of grandparent status belonging to other hearth-groups who wish to change or 'renew' (ngebru) their names at the irau are read out.

The inclusion of a particular individual's name/names indicates kinship, and displays a desire to emphasise such kinship on the part of the person bearing the name. It is co-residence in the same longhouse community that effectively generates kinship rather than blood ties, as was shown by the fact that at a Long Dano irau which I attended a Kerayan man visiting from over the border and related to some of the people in Pa' Dalih and an Indonesian (and Muslim) couple who have been resident in Long Dano for a couple of years took Kelabit names. I was urged by people from Pa' Dalih to announce my Kelabit name, which had been given to my husband and myself shortly after we arrived.

The size of the kin group generated through the number of people announcing new grandparental names or renewing existing ones is certainly of some significance. It is prestigious to have a large kin group, but its size depends on self-selection of themselves as kin by as large a number of people as possible.

#### **14. The significance of raut at present-day irau mekaa ngadan**

At the Pa' Dalih and Long Dano irau, and at one of the Bario irau, the young unmarried people and the older children stayed up all night - until about four o'clock, which is the beginning of the day - playing games. This is classified as raut. Raut is associated with anak adik, as discussed in chapter seven.

It seemed that it was actually considered a good thing that the young people kept the irau going as long as possible by engaging in these raut. There was a feeling of sterility about the Bario irau at which there were no raut. This irau was 'for' the children of a young couple not resident in Bario. The husband was not Kelabit but Eurasian. This couple lived in Miri, on the coast, and had not been up even to visit for many years. They did not appear to enjoy their stay in Bario and there was an atmosphere of tension at their irau. It seems possible that the lack of raut at this irau was associated with this tension.

It was clear that these raut were ritualized. The players made a lot of noise, more than appeared necessary for the execution of the games, and there was a hectic, surreal atmosphere to the proceedings. All the games played seemed to relate to an opposition between male and female and to latent sexuality. In fact throughout the irau there was a tendency to refer jokingly to the sexuality of unmarried people, including pre-adolescent children, and these raut appeared to be a continuation of this. At pre-Christian irau it appears that there was a good deal of consorting between unmarried boys and girls and that this was a major time for key parts of the arranging of marriages.

On an everyday basis, raut activities are sterile, associated with separated gender; the term refers largely to activities, including hunting and gathering activities, engaged in separately by young boys and girls. Only at irau are raut activities engaged in together by young boys and young girls. They appear, at irau, to be explicitly associated with sexual reproduction and with potential fertility. This recalls the association between marriageable, potentially fertile girls and rice wine, the

most potent symbol of fertility and of human life. Raut, associated with the young and with the forest, is here being given a prominence it is never accorded in everyday life and its significance, like that of penguman at the rice meal at irau, also closely associated with the forest, is clearly admitted.

### **15. Conclusion**

In this chapter I have shown how, at irau, the Kelabit notion of the nature of the generation of human life is clarified. This occurs largely through the way in which the rice meal, focal to the accomplishment of the transitions associated with human life, is celebrated. At everyday rice meals it is rice which is presented as 'standing for' the human accomplishment, the achievement of human life. At the rice meal at irau not only is rice essential but so is that which is eaten with rice at the rice meal - penguman. I have argued that at irau the nature of penguman, that which is eaten with rice, is reduced to a single food - meat. It becomes clear through the marked significance which is attributed to meat at irau that it is actually essential to the meal.

At irau, the rice meal, associated on an everyday level with the lun merar as a couple, is split into its two essential components, and the necessary relationship between these is clarified. At irau the rice meal is taken to pieces, so to speak, and its nature as the achievement of the couple is presented from a different angle, which is not so visible on an everyday basis.

At everyday meals, when penguman are not accorded explicit value, they are associated with those who are not members of a couple, non-lun merar - that is, with the young, anak adik. I have discussed the association between



foods other than rice - both wild and what I have termed 'semi-cultivated' and anak adik. However, at irau, penguman, represented by meat, are associated with men, rather than with the young. In this context penguman are accorded explicit value. Thus the rice meal comes to appear as a bringing together of male and female, with each gender associated with one of the two essential components of the meal. On an everyday basis too the rice meal is presented as the achievement of the couple, male + female, and it consists of rice plus penguman; but it is the rice which is focused upon. It is the provision of the rice more than that of the wild foods - despite the fact that success in hunting is important to male adulthood - which is presented as the achievement of the couple.

Irau were in the past often described as borak. Borak is pure rice. Through the focal position of borak (now represented by sweet drinks), rice is still, at certain moments, made to stand for the achievement of human life. Through their closer association with rice, there remains a sense in which, even at irau, women are persistently presented as representing the enabling of human life. Young girls are, at irau, presented as the symbols of potential fertility.

At pre-Christian borak lua there appears to have been a similar to-ing and fro-ing between a presentation of rice as representing the achievement of human life and a presentation of rice plus meat as achieving this - the meat, however, here explicitly domesticated, fed with rice, by women. The main evidence for this comes from the tatang said by individuals participating in the rituals which formed part of the transition of the child into human life.

Through making possible the presentation of the nature of human life, the lun merar couple who host an irau generate the pinnacle of their own lun merar-hood, achieved through full grandparenthood, the presentation of their capacity not only to produce children but also grandchildren. However, through irau not only lun merar-hood of the individual hearth-group but that of higher-level hearth-groups is achieved. This is central to the generation of the status of lun merar at any level. But according to the size of the higher-level hearth-group generated, different amounts of prestige are generated, together with lun merar-hood of bigger higher-level hearth-groups. Thus, irau generate not only the status of lun doo but also that of lun doo to'o. The former is associated with lun merar-hood at the level of the individual hearth-group, the latter with lun merar-hood of the community and even of the whole Kelabit population.

I argue that those present-day naming irau which tend to generate lun merar-hood of higher-level hearth-groups, which host large numbers of guests and at which buffaloes as well as pigs are killed, are to some extent descended from pre-Christian borak ate. Naming irau which are smaller and at which only pigs are killed may be seen as generating little more than the status of lun merar-hood of the individual hearth-group. Pigs were, in borak lua and perhaps nowadays at naming irau, essential symbolically to the transition into life being accomplished. Buffaloes, associated in the past, at borak ate, with the return of the dead individual to the forest - which the buffaloes represent - imply the achievement of high levels of prestige.

**CHAPTER TEN****CONCLUSION****RICE, THE RICE MEAL AND THE GENERATION OF HUMAN LIFE**

This thesis is about the role of rice in Kelabit society. Rice, for the Kelabit, is the core crop. The growing of rice makes humans truly human. It fulfils the role of distancing them from the natural environment around them, which, in its immense tropical fecundity, is always threatening to take humans back into itself.

In an environment which has been impoverished by concentrated human settlement, particularly a fairly harsh environment which does not easily provide a living for human beings, the choices of ways of life are much limited and human life comes to seem a struggle to survive. In the tropical forest in which the Kelabit live, however, life is, assuming a familiarity with the environment, relatively easy. There is very little danger of starvation. The climate is relatively benign. The density of population is low. The choices of way of life which are made are much less affected by the necessity to hedge one's bets in terms of survival than in harsher settings or ones where there is overpopulation. In this type of environment it is possible to clearly perceive human manipulation of the natural environment to create out of it something which is particularly 'human'.

Nevertheless, humans are able to distance themselves only to a certain degree from what is around them. They remain, at a certain level, dependent on the natural environment. This is true in a simple physical sense, in that the vagaries of geography, climate and soil dictate the limits within which they can operate. It is also true in a more abstract sense: humans can never cease to be aware that they are part of their natural environment,

from which, ultimately, they derive life. The human construction of something separate from what is around them is a delicate edifice which is ultimately parasitic on the natural environment.

One of the most important ways in which humans go about differentiating themselves from the environment around them is through agriculture<sup>157</sup>. The practice of agriculture means that humans are not forced to utilize what happens to grow of its own accord in a particular environment. It means that, in order that humans may make use of them, certain plants are helped to grow in greater profusion than they would if left alone, or that they are made to grow in environments to which they are not native.

Cultivated plants, and domesticated animals as well, may be utilized in many ways. One of the most important ways in which they are utilized is through their consumption as food. As food, plants and animals often have significance that goes beyond their nutritional role; they may acquire a symbolic significance. This may be linked to the significance which they have for a given society as crops or as domesticated animals.

In many societies a reliance on one central crop has developed, a crop which provides the bulk of the starch consumed and which is described as the 'staple' crop. Very frequently, this staple is a cereal, in other words a

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Young says that among the Kalauna gardening, the planting of yams, is a symbol of civilization. The Kalauna say 'If we did not grow yams we would be like dogs...You think we are birds or dogs and can't plant food?' (Young 1971:195-8, quoted in Manderson 1986:6). For the Semai of peninsular Malaysia, a meal, although it consists partly of a protein food from the forest, must include either rice or tapioca. The idea of their not including one of these two starch foods in a meal is outrageous; their reaction to any such suggestion was 'What do you think we are, cats?' (Dentan 1968:50, quoted by Manderson 1986:6).

domesticated member of the grass family (*gramineae*)<sup>158</sup>. The heavy reliance which humans have on grasses for nutrition has led one science fiction writer to write a book called 'The Death of Grass' (Christopher, 1956) in which the catastrophic social effects of a virus which attacks all grasses are described: English society is portrayed as breaking down, within a world-wide scenario of social collapse.

I have discussed in this thesis the way in which rice, for the Kelabit, is central both as a crop and as food. It is their staple food, the focus of their agriculture, and is treated quite differently from other crops. I have argued that while other crops are treated as though they 'grow on their own' (mulun sebulang), rice is considered to be able to succeed only through human skill and hard work; it is, in other words, a human product. Not all humans prove equally capable of enabling rice to grow well, however. This underlines the constructed difficulty of forging something 'truly human', of the significance of the success of this enterprise. The possibility of different levels of success in rice cultivation is the philosophical basis of the system of differential prestige among the Kelabit.

Success in rice cultivation is considered to be largely due to the investment of hard work and skill; hard work in particular is very much emphasised. Rice is produced, processed and cooked in a way which is decidedly elaborated, and which places great stress on the necessity of investing high levels of labour in all procedures associated with rice-growing and with its processing into food.

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See Parry (1985) for a discussion of the importance of grains in Hindu belief. For Hindus, the human mind is annamaya  
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I argue that, at least at the present time and in the recent past, prestige, for the Kelabit, derives from successful rice cultivation<sup>159</sup>. However, prestige is actually generated and legitimated at the rice meal, which is the culmination of the production and processing of rice.

The production of rice and the provision of the rice meal is the responsibility of the social adults, the lun merar ('big people') of the hearth-group. The lun merar are the focal couple of the hearth-group, which is the basic co-rice-producing but above all commensal unit. Their status is acquired gradually with the birth of children and their growing involvement in rice cultivation. It culminates with the attainment of grandparenthood. Both parenthood and grandparenthood are proclaimed publicly at a feast, the naming irau. At this point the grandparents hosting the irau have clearly become the focal couple of the hearth-group to which they belong and which they actually generate through their rice growing and their provision of the rice meal for its other members.

The achievement of the lun merar culminates in the feeding of their co-resident children and grandchildren at the rice meal. These are the dependants of the focal lun merar of the hearth-group. The rice meal constitutes the hearth-group. It is not the only forum for the

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('comprised of grains').

Head-hunting, practised until the Second World War, used to be associated with the generation of prestige, at least for men. It is difficult to know exactly how this related to prestige generated through rice-growing. It is conceivable that the role of rice-growing in the generation of prestige has become more prominent since the ending of head-hunting. It is possible that head-hunting related to hunting and to the forest, in other words to the wild. However it is very likely to have had a significance that went beyond this and may have related to the very nature of human life.

consumption of food; mere filling of the belly can be achieved through the consumption of snack foods - root crops, sugar cane, corn, fruit and meat on its own. However, the fact that other foods can satisfy hunger should not, for the Kelabit, be admitted. Only the rice meal should do this. The rice meal, however, does more than fill the belly. Through the fact that it represents the feeding of dependants by the lun merar of the hearth-group, it constructs society, which is modelled as well as based on the individual hearth-group.

The hearth-group may be said to be a microcosm of Kelabit society. The rice meal, which constitutes it, also constitutes larger social groupings, nesting in each other - the longhouse, the multi-longhouse community and the whole of Kelabit society. All of these groupings are constituted at large-scale ritualized rice meals and are, I argue, equivalent to higher-level hearth-groups. The most important of these rice meals, held at present-day irau mekaa ngadan, naming feasts, are hosted by the lun merar of one hearth-group. To these irau the whole of the Kelabit people, the entire social universe, is invited.

It is the lun merar within Kelabit society, those who take responsibility for producing rice and who reproduce, generating children and grandchildren, who may be said to have made the successful distinction between the environment and humankind<sup>160</sup>. It is they who enjoy standing and respect in Kelabit society. Their standing may be said to derive from the fact that it is they who are able to make possible the generation of `true

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In this context, it is interesting to note that among the Kenyah of Long Nawang it is only the full paran, of the highest status in society, who has the right to use the human form on the baby carrier and elsewhere. Paran of lesser status may use the human head, but the panyin, the broad masses of the population, may only use curvilinear designs and not the human form (Whittier 1973:169).

humanity'. This is expressed through their success in enabling the commensal rice meal to be consumed regularly within their own hearth-group.

However, not all lun merar are equally successful in terms of making this distinction between environment and humanity. There are differences in relative success in rice growing. These are expressed in the different levels of ability to generate higher-level hearth-groups through the holding of irau. Although all Kelabit are invited to irau, the proportion who actually attend varies and so, therefore, does the size of the higher-level hearth-group which is generated at them. This is the actual basis of the system of differential prestige, whose philosophical basis may be said to be the difficulty of constructing true humanity, represented by rice-growing.

I am thus arguing that the basis for what has been called the stratification system in the literature on the Kelabit is in fact the status of social adult, lun merar.

The more a couple may be said to be lun merar, the more successful they are at producing rice and generating the hearth-group - both the individual hearth-group and the higher-level hearth-group, through the holding of irau - the greater their standing in the community and the greater their prestige. The fact that the same term, lun merar, may be used to refer to the focal couple of the leading hearth-group of a longhouse community vis-a-vis the rest of the community and also to refer to social adults within the individual hearth-group reflects this. It is to be noted that individuals who are of low social status within a community used to be referred to, and sometimes still are, as the 'children' of those of high status.

The use of the word doo, 'good', to refer to lun



merar of high status and also to those able to provide rice meals for their own individual hearth-group reflects the fact that the two statuses cannot be separated. The greater the relative status of a couple, the more able they are to provide a rice meal for higher-level hearth-groups above the level of the individual hearth-group, the more 'good' they are. A couple of the highest status, able to provide lavishly for a well-attended irau, are described as 'really good people', lun doo to'o.

Although it is actual performance that legitimates status and that generates prestige - successful rice cultivation and provision for dependants through the rice meal, whether at the level of the individual hearth-group or at a higher level - it is believed that different potential to succeed as a 'good' person is inherited. The achievements of one's ancestors are expected to be liable to be exhibited in an individual (although the possibility of manipulation of genealogies makes this very flexible in response to actual achievement). This is what has led to the system of differential prestige among the Kelabit - and other Borneo peoples - being described as a 'stratification system'. The fact that there is mobility due to performance in other 'stratified' groups besides the Kelabit has been realized but the fact that they have named 'strata' has led many writers into using this type of terminology. The Kelabit provide an interesting case for comparison; here the fluidity of the situation and the way in which it is dependent on actual performance becomes quite clear. The use of terminology like 'good' and 'bad', used in ways which make clear that it is the status of social adult and creator of true 'humanity' that is the basis of differentiation, might suggest a different way of viewing differential prestige among other peoples of Borneo as well as the Kelabit.

I argue then that prestige is, among the Kelabit, based on provision for others, classed as children and grandchildren. Only lun merar can have this prestige. Young people, anak adik, who do not yet have children or participate significantly in growing rice, cannot have prestige or be described as 'good', although they have the potential to be so because they are human. While the lun merar spend a large proportion of their time on work in the rice fields, described as lema'ud - a word used only to refer to activities associated with rice production and processing and with the maintenance of the hearth, closely associated with rice - the young spend their time at raut, 'play'. This is the word used to refer to the play of children, but it also refers to the hunting and gathering at which the young spend most of their time. Hunting and gathering are presented as appropriate to the young. They are easy, fun, leisure activities. Although lun merar do hunt and gather they do so in the interstices of lema'ud and do not make this their way of life, as do the young.

In their involvement in hunting and gathering, the young are represented as leading the life which comes most easily. This life is that which is imposed by the natural environment. The attraction of this life is reflected in the fact that it is considered so pleasurable and is described as 'play'. Its magnetism may be seen in the fact that it is difficult to wean the young from it. The beginnings of lun merar status for a young couple are always a trying time; it is clear that there is a sense in which they might prefer to remain hunters and gatherers. However, if they want any prestige in society they must become rice-growers. The few adults who persistently refuse to involve themselves whole-heartedly in rice-growing, and spend most of their time hunting and gathering, are ridiculed and given no respect or status in the community. Their opinions are not listened to, as

those of the young are not. They are liable to be referred to, if not addressed, by their 'child names' rather than by the parental and grandparental names which they have adopted as adults.

Rice-growing is the fount of prestige and of the generation of true humanity for the Kelabit. But, behind this very public assertion of dependence on rice, there lies an admission that rice-growing, alone, is not viable as a way of life. The forest remains a source of something which is vital to the maintenance of life. This admission is to be seen in the way in which gender is handled and utilized.

From the perspective from which it is rice-growing that is emphasised and at which the rice meal is presented as just that, kuman nuba', 'eating rice', it is the couple as an undivided unit that is emphasised. It is as a couple that two individuals, male and female, together become lun merar. Without a spouse it seems impossible for an individual to become lun merar. It is through the production of rice and the birth of children and grandchildren together with that spouse that s/he builds up prestige. From this perspective, the two genders become less and less distinct as the couple goes further into rice-growing responsibility. Their daily activities come closer and closer together. Although there are some activities associated with rice-growing which are appropriate to men or to women, the couple tends to remain together for most of the day and to engage in more and more similar activities.

This contrasts with the young, among whom the two genders are separate. Young men and young women are neither responsible for productivity in relation to rice-growing (although girls help the lun merar of their

hearth-group) nor are they supposed to engage in reproductive activities. They remain apart, in gender-specific groups, engaging in their hunting and gathering activities separately. They come together only occasionally for social purposes and are not supposed to engage in sexual activity. The young are, in fact, emphatically presented as sterile both in terms of production of rice and in terms of biological reproduction, although they are full of the promise of fertility and productivity.

As an undivided unit, the couple is presented as responsible for the production and reproduction of rice. The true nature of the rice meal, which is that it includes not only rice but foods which are either wild or are treated as though they are wild since they are seen as able to grow on their own, is pushed into the background. Such foods are, on an everyday level, treated in a very casual manner, shared freely, without any implications in terms of prestige generation. This is closely parallel to the way in which the hunter-gatherer Penan share all their food (Needham 1953: 124-132), and the foods that are treated in this way are the same for the Kelabit as for the Penan - wild foods or foods deriving from plants which are treated by the Kelabit as semi-cultivated and as growing 'on their own', like wild foods.

However, there is another perspective, from which the nature of the couple as constituted by two elements, male and female, is admitted to be important, and at which their ability to generate human life is presented differently. This is most clearly visible at irau. Here, not only the rice but the meat as well - the only food served with rice in this context - is marked as of value. Not only is it presented as valuable in exchange terms,

but it is explicitly associated with men. All foods and drink made from rice (or their modern replacements) which are served at irau, on the other hand, are associated with women.

The closer association of men with the forest and especially with meat runs throughout everyday life. It is not emphasized, although the importance of a grown man being a successful hunter is important. It is the role of a man as part of the couple and as a co-producer of rice with his wife which is publicly made to appear as most important. At irau, however, the association of men with wild food is both emphasized and validated. This amounts to an admission that foods eaten with rice, which are paradigmatically wild, are necessary to the rice meal and essential to the generation of human life, ulun. Through the association of these wild foods with one half of the couple, the focus of all production and reproduction, their role is admitted to be essential to that production and reproduction.

At irau, however, the perspective from which rice represents human life still remains significant. This is to be seen particularly in the focal role of borak (rice wine) in pre-Christian times; irau were usually, in the past, termed borak. Borak is explicitly associated with fertility and the potential for human life, ulun. It is also, at irau, explicitly associated with young marriageable but unmarried women. Thus there is always a sense in which the female 'stands for' human life.

Kelabits are extremely concerned with the generation of ulun<sup>161</sup>. This is to be seen in Kelabit Christianity,

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The Berawan appear to have a similar concern with the generation of life. Their prayers constantly return to this theme. Supplications for life (ulong in Berawan) are often coupled with supplications for abundant rice harvests (Metcalf

which centres on the search for life (nekap ulun).

The possession of ulun, which may be 'big' or 'small', 'strong' or 'weak', is associated with being lun merar. Anak adik have only 'small life'. The more a person is lun merar, the greater his or her ulun. This relates directly to prestige differentiation; the more an individual is 'good', doo, the stronger is his/her life. The strength of one's life is exactly parallel to the level of prestige reached. The more strongly one lives, the more able one is to generate a hearth-group of one's own and also higher-level hearth-groups. It is this that generates relative levels of prestige.

The ulun which humans have is generated through a rice meal which is constituted not only by rice - represented in one sense by women - but also by wild foods from the forest or foods which are treated as though they were wild - represented, from the perspective within which their significance is admitted, by men. The couple, generative of this human life, is, then, presented, from this perspective, as made up of not only of what might be described as the 'organizing' power of rice, which imposes itself upon the natural environment and creates something purely human, but also of something deriving from the forest itself. At a very fundamental level, then, the male plus female nature of the couple, through which rice is enabled to be grown and biological and social reproduction to occur, turns out, in fact, to embody an acceptance of the debt which humans owe to the environment from which they come.

I am, then, suggesting that for the Kelabit the growing of rice makes possible the generation of human life, ulun. Rice is presented, in one sense, as

representing that life. In another sense, however, the Kelabit appear to admit that rice must be brought together, at the rice meal, with that which comes from the forest. Only thus is human life truly possible.

## GLOSSARY

I have only included Kelabit words which I have heard used. Terms which I have referred to which are used in the literature, mostly by Kelabit writers, have been explained in the text. Some of the words in the glossary are borrowed from Malay and I have indicated which these are. Most of these words have entered via either the administration or the SIB church.

- aio' custom or way of life. Roughly equivalent to the Malay term adat.
- amug secondary growth following within about five years of cultivation.
- anak adik those individuals who do not yet have children. Refers to pre-pubescent children, to teenagers and to young adults who are as yet childless.
- anak katu the followers of a leader and his wife. This couple establish a longhouse of which they are the focus. While this couple and their close relatives live in the middle of the longhouse, the anak katu, literally 'children at the end', inhabit the apartments at the far ends of the house.
- atar a piece of patar land previously used as a rice field, late, and planted in the subsequent year to other crops.
- balio to change substance, e.g. from living flesh to stone
- ba'o ma'on 'ancient' beads. Refers to beads passed down as heirlooms through females.
- baka wild pig (*sus barbatus*, S. Muller and other varieties of *sus*, Linn.)
- bawang Kelabit community, made up of one or more longhouses and sometimes a few individual houses (ruma' sebulang).
- belalong nuba' basket used for storing rice cooked as nuba' for the rice meal and packed in leaves until it is eaten.



<u>beraan</u>	rice gruel
<u>berak</u>	domestic pig (var. of <i>sus</i> , Linn.)
<u>bete'</u>	to engage in inappropriate activities. Used to refer to men doing work appropriate to women and vice-versa.
<u>betong</u>	a large variety of bamboo used for many purposes by the Kelabit.
<u>bogo</u>	a bamboo (sometimes wooden) cooking implement.
<u>borak</u>	rice wine
<u>borak abpa</u>	refined rice wine, perhaps distilled rice <u>pade</u> spirit
<u>bra</u>	husked uncooked rice
<u>bua'</u>	fruit
<u>bua' lenamud</u>	millet ( <i>setaria italica</i> , Beauv.)
<u>bua' lengoh</u> by	unidentified grain crop grown in the past the Kelabit
<u>bunid</u>	rice flour
<u>da'at</u>	bad. A general negative term. When used to describe a person (very rarely), the use of <u>da'at</u> means: 1) that the person has failed to achieve full adulthood 2) that the person is of low status
<u>da'at mukol</u>	lazy
<u>dalim</u>	1) part of the Kelabit longhouse and of the longhouse apartment containing the hearth. Literally, 'within'. Built as a separate building from the other main part of the longhouse, the <u>tawa'</u> . 2) deep, inner
<u>dechur</u>	female person
<u>dela'i</u>	male person
<u>dele</u>	maize or Indian corn ( <i>zea mays</i> , Linn.)
<u>dele arur</u>	Job's tears ( <i>coix lachryma-jobi</i> , Linn.)

- demulun slave
- doo good. A general positive term.  
When used to describe a person, the use of doo means:  
1) that the person is fully adult and/or  
2) that the person is of high status
- gotong royong cooperative work done by the community for  
(Malay) its benefit, such as maintenance of  
roads. Gotong royong does not involve  
any payment.
- inan to have, to exist
- ira garden in which crops other than rice are  
planted. Traditionally appears to  
have been made by those Kelabit who made late baa,  
wet rice fields. This is because there are  
very few crops that can be planted in  
association with rice in late baa, while  
in late luun a wide variety of other crops  
are planted with the rice.
- irau feast to which all are invited
- irau mekaa feast held to celebrate the naming of the ngadan  
first child or children of a young couple  
and which advertises the parenthood of the  
this couple and the grandparenthood of the  
child or children's co-resident  
grandparents.
- isip plant which is cultivated for its leaves,  
rice for da'un isip, which are used to wrap  
the rice meal.
- iyi who?
- kail ulun `strong life'. Refers to someone who  
achieves a lot in life, particularly in  
terms of growing rice.
- kami we (exclusive of person being addressed)
- kaum ibu the `womens' circle' of the SIB church.  
(Malay) Each parish (sidang) has its kaum ibu, with  
a set of officers. The kaum ibu is very  
important to the community and to the  
parish; it organizes fund-raising, holds  
its own church services and organizes  
separate kerja sama cooperative rice-field

work.

kaya ulun `weak life'. Refers to someone who achieves little in life, particularly in terms of growing rice.

kebun type of vegetable garden, probably recently (Malay) introduced. Fenced and carefully tended and intended to be used for a number of years.

kerja baya cooperative rice-field work organized on the (Malay) (kerja is basis that all work is repaid. Malay)

kerja kawan-kawan `friendly' work in the rice fields. (Malay) Another term for kerja baya.

kerja sama cooperative rice-field work which is not (Malay) directly repaid but involves the payment of a specified sum to the SIB church in return for the labour contributed.

kerubau buffalo (*bos bubalus*, Linn.)

ketua kaum `head of the womens' circle'. Female leader of the kaum ibu or womens' circle of an (Malay) SIB church parish, which is usually also a longhouse community or bawang.

ketua ruma / ketua kampong (Malay) `head of the longhouse' / `head of the community' (kampong is the Malay term closest to the Kelabit term bawang, which means community). The elected and government-legitimated male leader of a community.

kikid rice cooked with a vegetable or protein food and a lot of water, so as to make a flavoured rice gruel. Eaten as a side dish at the rice meal.

kinan form of the verb `to eat' (kuman); exact grammatical status unclear to me.

kini now

krid vegetable side dishes eaten with rice at the rice meal

kuloi black sorghum (*sorghum vulgare*, Pers.,

probably var. *dochna*)

kuman to eat

kuman nuba' the rice meal, literally 'eating rice'.

kuman pade bru 'eating new rice'. This is held by each community as a whole after the harvest, and on this occasion each hearth-group pays a tithe of its rice harvest to the SIB church.

This is auctioned off immediately and the SIB parish (sidang) keeps part of the proceeds and sends the rest to the central SIN organization in Lawas to be used for missionary work. Individual hearth-groups may also host kuman pade bru, usually on a day when kerja sama cooperative work is done in their rice fields.

kuman peroyong literally 'eating together'. Involves the consumption of a rice meal together by the whole of a bawang, without any individual hearth-group hosting the meal. Rice is provided by all hearth-groups and is pooled so that people eat rice belonging to other hearth-groups. The only side-dish provided (except for visitors, who may be given some vegetables) is meat from game killed in a communal hunt held by a group of men from the bawang. Should the hunt fail, the kuman peroyong is cancelled. This type of communal meal emphasises the commensality of the bawang and presents it as equivalent to a single hearth-group but it does not generate prestige for an individual hearth-group, since it is not hosted by one. Kuman peroyong may be held on a variety of occasions; it is always held at the kuman pade bru ('eating new rice') held by the whole bawang together after the harvest and it is often held when visitors from outside the bawang are present, particularly if they are official or otherwise important.

la'al chicken (*gallus gallus*, Linn.)

laman kerubau buffalo pasture

late field in which rice is grown

<u>late baa</u> Literally	field in which wet rice is grown. `wet rice field'.
<u>late luun</u> surface	field in which dry rice (with other crops) is grown. Literally `field on the surface of the ground'.
<u>lema'ud</u>	work associated with rice growing or processing or with the maintenance of structures associated with rice, including the hearth-group apartment itself.
<u>lemak</u>	animal fat
<u>lemidik</u>	to clear fields prior to rice cultivation
<u>lemulun</u>	people
<u>lepo</u>	rice storage hut
<u>lobang</u>	hole
<u>lobang ruma'</u> one	literally, `the cavity of the house'. A term used to refer to the members of hearth-group.
<u>lokechang</u>	the morning period from about five or six o'clock until breakfast at about eight o'clock
<u>loket</u>	to fall over
<u>lun</u>	person, people
<u>lun da'at</u>	literally, `bad person'. May indicate 1) someone who has failed to attain full adult status 2) someone of low social status
<u>lun doo</u>	literally, `good person'. May indicate 1) a social adult 2) a person of high status
<u>lun doo to'o</u>	literally, `truly good person/people'. Refers to someone who is of very high prestige.
<u>lun merar</u> May have	literally, `big' or `important' people. refer to 1) social adults. This means those who children and take responsibility partly or wholly for the hearth-

group to which they	belong. There are degrees of being a <u>lun</u>
	<u>merar</u> and the peak is reached when one's
rest of	grandparenthood is recognized by the
	the community.
	2) the leading couple of a <u>bawang</u>
<u>lun tau</u>	literally 'our people'. Includes all
	Kelabit, nowadays, and those closely
	associated with the Kelabit, usually by
	marriage.
<u>maba</u>	to carry on one's back
<u>male</u>	accustomed
<u>me</u>	to go
<u>me mepil</u>	to repay a labour debt owed by one's own
	hearth-group towards another by
	participating in cooperative work in the
	rice fields of that hearth-group
<u>me nemalio</u>	to create a labour debt on the part of
	another hearth-group towards one's own
	hearth-group by participating in cooperative
	work in the rice fields of that hearth-
group	
<u>mein</u>	tasty, nicely salty, sweet
<u>merar</u>	big, important
<u>migu</u>	shy, ashamed. Roughly equivalent to the
	Malay <u>malu</u> .
<u>mo'-mo</u>	willy-nilly
<u>mole</u>	to exchange rice for something else,
	including labour. <u>Mole</u> is unprestigious.
<u>moro</u>	to watch over the growing rice crop in
order	
	to scare away birds hoping to eat the rice
<u>mrin</u>	to gather wild vegetables
<u>mulun</u>	to live
<u>mupun</u>	grandchild
<u>na'am</u>	not
<u>nakol tanah</u>	to dig earth

- naro' to make
- naro' patun to make bunds in rice fields
- naro' taa to make fences
- natang resin from various trees used for starting fires and for providing light
- nepung to fell trees
- ngabi/ngabi-ngabi all
- ngalap to take; to pick cultivated vegetables
- ngan with
- ngarik to chop off branches from felled trees
- ngebru to renew
- ngepo to put rice to soak so that it will sprout  
prior to sowing in a nursery bed (samai)  
and later in a wet rice field (late baa)
- ngerupan (ngerupen or ngerufan in Lun Bawang)  
an agricultural feast, where guests from other communities as well as one's own are invited to help in the rice fields of one hearth-group in return for lavish food in the form of a rice meal, snacks and drink (in the past, borak - rice wine).
- ngotad to sow sprouted rice seed in a nursery bed (samai)
- nibu to transplant rice seedlings into rice fields from nursery beds (samai)
- no'an to dibble holes in a dry rice field (late luun) in which to plant rice seeds
- nuba' a form in which rice, maize or roots may be eaten. Normally refers to a mush which is packed in leaves when hot and eaten when warm or cold.
- nuba' laya `soft nuba'. Refers to rice when cooked in a soft mushy form. This is the usual form in which rice is eaten at the rice meal.
- nuba to'a `hard nuba'. Refers to rice cooked so that

- the grains are separate. Rice is only cooked this way if it is needed quickly or if it is pade adan or pade dari varieties.
- nutud bupun to burn unburnt tree branches after the main burn in a dry rice field (late luun)
- opa' taro root or stems (*colocasia esculentum*, Schott.)
- pade unhusked rice
- pade adan small-grained variety of rice grown in wet rice fields. It is cooked with the grains separate unlike other varieties of rice. Since an air service has been operating between the coast and Bario, pade adan has been sent out by air for sale on the coast, where it is much prized and fetches a high price.
- pade dari a variety of rice grown in wet fields, very similar to pade adan.
- pade obuk glutinous rice
- pakaro nok dalim 'deep words', i.e. words said to have a complex and profound meaning. Often used in parental and grandparental names.
- paran person of high status; term possibly of Kenyah origin, but sometimes used among Kelabit.
- patar fertile, flat land
- pelawat Groups of lun merar, all belonging to the same community, who travel along a route decided upon beforehand preaching the gospel. Longhouses along the route appear always to belong to Kelabit or other Apo Duat peoples (Lun Bawang or Sa'ban).
- pemeran carrying a stigma
- pengah particle used with verbs to indicate past action
- Penghulu (Malay) the leader of the Kelabits, government-appointed.



<u>penguman</u> the eaten'	side dishes which are eaten with rice at rice meal. Literally, 'that which is [with rice]'
<u>polong i'it</u> than	literally, 'little' <u>polong</u> . Forest which has been cultivated in the past, more about five to ten years before.
<u>polong raya</u>	primary forest or forest thought to be primary (i.e. never cultivated) by the Kelabit.
<u>purut/furut</u> bride's.	a payment made at marriage among the Lun Bawang, by the groom's kin to the
<u>rajin</u> (Malay)	hard-working. Refers particularly to work in the rice fields.
<u>ramamo</u>	to weed rice fields
<u>rane</u>	to harvest rice
<u>rane mole</u> short field of invitation and or part of it.	'harvesting to <u>mole</u> '. Refers to an individual belonging to a hearth-group of rice harvesting in the rice another hearth-group at its invitation and retaining the harvested rice or part of it. The use of the term <u>mole</u> refers to the exchange of labour for rice, which is unprestigious.
<u>raran</u>	the structure above the hearth ( <u>tetal</u> ) which contains the firewood
<u>raut</u>	to play. Refers not only to the play of young children but to certain activities engaged in by young people and by social adults ( <u>lun merar</u> ). This includes hunting and gathering.
<u>raya</u>	big, important
<u>ruma'</u>	hearth-group apartment, longhouse
<u>ruma' kadang/</u> <u>ruma' rawir</u>	longhouse
<u>ruma' sebulang</u>	'alone house' i.e. hearth-group dwelling separate from the longhouse

- ruyud another term for kerja baya, rarely used among the Kelabit but commonly used by the closely related Lun Bawang
- samai nursery bed for rice seedlings to be  
(Malay) transplanted into wet rice fields (late  
baa)
- saog oxbow lake created by the diversion of a stream or river
- sebulang alone
- senape whole grains of rice (usually pade adan) or rice flour (bunid) wrapped in a leaf, usually an isip leaf, tied with creeper and steamed. Made to be distributed outside the hearth-group at certain cooperative workgroups, usually kerja sama, at certain occasions within the church building and, traditionally, at irau.
- sidang parish of the SIB church. Sometimes  
(Malay) coterminous with the community,  
bawang.
- sinabo' parental `title' for a mother whose first child is a boy, literally `mother of a boy [abo']'
- sinamo' parental `title' for a mother whose first child is a girl, literally `mother of a girl [amo']'
- tamabo' parental `title' for a father whose first child is a boy, literally `father of a boy [abo']'
- tamamo' parental `title' for a father whose first child is a girl, literally `father of a girl [amo']'
- tara bogo bamboo holder for bogo cooking implements.
- tawa' part of the Kelabit longhouse and of the longhouse apartment. The more public part of the longhouse (the `gallery') in which guests used to be accommodated and may still be at irau feasts. Built as a separate building from the other main part of the longhouse, the dalim.
- telong private rooms belonging to the separate

- hearth-groups of a longhouse. In Pa'  
Dalih, built as part of the tawa' building.
- temo'a to gather together unburnt matter in a  
dry rice field (late luun), after the main  
burn, in order to burn these again
- tepabo' grandparental `title' for a man or woman  
whose `first' grandchild (the one for  
whom he or she takes a grandparental name  
for the first time, not necessarily a  
biological grandchild) is a boy,  
literally `grandparent [tepo'] of a boy  
[abo'']
- tepamo' grandparental `title' for a man or woman  
whose `first' grandchild (the one for  
whom he or she takes a grandparental name  
for the first time, not necessarily a  
biological grandchild) is a girl,  
literally `grandparent [tepo'] of a girl  
[amo'']
- tetal the hearth, in the dalim part of the  
longhouse, at which the rice meal is cooked
- to'o real, true, genuine
- tonge here
- tusu' salt made by Kelabit and Lun Bawang by  
boiling down brine issuing from the ground  
at the numerous salt springs in the  
Highland area
- ubi root/roots
- ubi kayu cassava root (*manihot utilissima* Pohl.)
- ubi ketam potatoes (*solanum tuberosum*, Linn.)
- ubi sia' sweet potato root (*ipomoea batatas* Linn.)
- ulun life. Inan ulun, `to have life', is  
something that can only be said of humans.
- ulun ma'onthe `old life'. This refers to the time  
when pre-Christian customs and beliefs were  
adhered to fully - before about 1945.
- urum fried snacks made with wheat flour bought  
in town.

wakil Penghulu `vice-Penghulu'. The deputy to the (Malay)  
Penghulu, in charge of the southern Kelabit  
area

**APPENDIX****Varieties of rice cultivated in Pa' Dalih in 1987**

All varieties except those described as pade adan and pade dari can, according to the Kelabit, be cultivated in both wet and dry fields. However, many of these are only cultivated in one or the other type of field. The type of field in which each variety is at present cultivated in Pa' Dalih is indicated in brackets.

pade adan sia' (wet)  
pade adan sia' kulit (wet)  
pade adan buin (wet)  
pade adan buda' (wet)  
pade adan sia' dari (wet)  
pade dari buin (wet)  
pade dari nanong (wet)  
pade aga' (dry)  
pade silun (wet and dry)  
pade daya' (dry)  
pade sekorek (dry)  
pade layun (wet and dry)  
pade sia' (dry)  
pade mata' (dry)  
pade buda' (dry)  
pade siting (dry)  
pade Sabah (wet)  
pade tuan to'o (wet)  
pade turi (dry)  
pade tsi (wet)  
pade alud sia' (dry)  
pade gaya' (wet)  
pade nanong (wet)  
pade obuk buda' dari (wet and dry)  
pade obuk barit (wet and dry)  
pade obuk mitm (wet)  
pade obuk ilad (wet and dry)  
pade obuk buda' (wet and dry)  
pade obuk abang (wet and dry)

**Glossary**

buda' = white  
barit = many-coloured  
buin = nice-smelling  
dari = small  
daya' = downriver (indicating that this variety is said to have been brought from an unspecified locality down-river from the Kelabit Highlands)  
kulit = husk  
mitm = black  
obuk = glutinous

pade = rice  
sia' = red  
to'o = original

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