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A Question of Identity: Names, Societies, and Ethnic Groups in Interior Kalimantan and Brunei Darussalam

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Issues of ethnic identity and nomenclature loom large in the recent anthropological literature on Borneo. The difficulties of delineating and naming ethnic categories and groups can be aptly illustrated in two recent debates: one on the nature of traditional "Maloh" society in the Upper Kapuas region of West Kalimantan and the appropriateness of the ethnic label "Maloh", and the other on the definition and characterization of Brunei society. The two cases demonstrate that some of our difficulties arise from the tendency to assume that ethnic categories and groups should be defined on the basis of both shared cultural features and a distinctive social system which persist through time. Instead, our understanding of the dynamics of identity formation and processes of social change can be enhanced by rethinking the concept of society or social system so that ethnic groupings are seen as constituent parts of wider sets of social, economic, political, and cultural relations. Despite the different historical experiences of the Upper Kapuas region and the Brunei sultanate, the parallels between the two cases are striking. They indicate the importance of examining the ways in which Malay political centres have served as nodal points in the articulation of both cultural identities and social models of egality and hierarchy in multi-ethnic situations.

One of the major preoccupations of the anthropological literature on Southeast Asia in general and the island of Borneo in particular is that of the problem of identifying, defining and naming ethnic categories (the conceptual dimension of ethnicity) and ethnic groups (ethnicity at the level of social interaction and group formation) (Rousseau 1990; Wadley 2000). This paper addresses a set of issues raised in two case-studies of ethnic identities in Borneo. First, I wish to examine a recent

debate among both foreign and local scholars about the appropriateness of various ethnonyms or ethnic labels used to designate an indigenous or "Dayak" population of interior West Kalimantan among whom I undertook fieldwork in the early 1970s. This debate touches on recent postmodernist concerns to question claims to authoritative knowledge and deconstruct particular interpretations of social and cultural life, and following Pierre Bourdieu (1977), to analyse how and why human actors create, reproduce, and change identities and taxonomies. These ethnic taxonomies in turn comprise symbolic representations which express and shape the social and cultural world which people experience and to which they give meaning. Not surprisingly the issue of competing claims to authoritative knowledge is thrown into even sharper relief when native intellectuals contest the interpretations of their own communities by foreign, usually Western scholars.

Secondly, and more briefly, I would like to return to a debate initiated some six years ago in a seminar paper which I delivered at a workshop on Brunei Studies at the University of Hull and then, in revised form, at the Academy of Brunei Studies, when I posed the question "What is Brunei Society?" (King 1994, 1996). At that time I raised problems in the definition of the ethnic categories and groups which comprise the modern sultanate of Brunei Darussalam and their interrelationships in an overarching social, economic, political, and cultural system presided over primarily by Brunei Malays. Although it is not my intention to prolong the discussion unduly, the responses to my 1994 paper by Allen Maxwell (1996) and Donald Brown (1998) deserve a summary comment in relation to my consideration of the problem of defining and naming ethnic categories and groups in Borneo and the way in which this debate bears on the problem of ethnic nomenclature in the West Kalimantan case.

Ethnic Identity: General Comments

At an important and well-attended symposium on "Sarawak Cultural Heritage" held in Kuching in 1988 a large number of the participants discussed the problems of ethnic nomenclature and classification in Sarawak; four special volumes of the *Sarawak Museum Journal* were

published as Symposium Proceedings. One particularly interesting contribution from a local participant, Mohd. Yaakub Haji Johari (1989) of the Institute for Development Studies in Sabah, pointed to the important practice of naming populations in Borneo in relation to specific localities and geographical features such as rivers. He also drew our attention to a number of other matters including the fluid quality of local identities and the difficulty of fitting these into neat conceptual "boxes"; the complexities generated by such processes as cultural exchange, religious conversion, intermarriage, and assimilation; the differences between self-identity and external categorization by outside observers; and, very significantly, the more recent creation of broader ethnic identities as an important element in processes of political and economic change. Mohd. Yaakub says, "In reality the reason why a particular group would like to change its name, renegotiate, or reinterpret its boundary is often coloured by other issues, including political consideration[s]" (1989, p. 217), and, in this connection, he discusses the emergence of "Kadazanism" in Sabah and the subsequent rejection of the term "Dusun" to refer to several interrelated native communities in the western coastal and plains areas of the state; in Sarawak and Kalimantan one can point to the political phenomenon of "Dayakism" and the appropriation of the term by indigenous élites in their efforts to create and develop "Dayak" political consciousness and political parties. Frequently in the history of Borneo, an ethnic term created by one ethnic grouping to refer to another and then used by colonial administrators and scientists has been subsequently adopted and accepted by those so named, even though the term might well have had pejorative connotations in its original meaning. What I want to emphasize here and return to later is the rather chance way in which in certain cases and at certain moments an externally generated ethnonym (or exonym) may be adopted by certain communities for political or other purposes whilst in other circumstances external ethnic names are rejected as entirely inappropriate.

Aside from the politically motivated creation of broader identities we must also appreciate that the numerous folk or indigenous taxonomies in Borneo, which comprise overlapping yet often conflicting sets of eth-

nic categories, labels, and defining criteria, constitute indigenous attempts to comprehend and bring order to complex and dynamic local social and cultural relations. Two neighbouring communities might well have very different systems of classification for themselves and each other. These taxonomies are then usually extended beyond the local context in a relatively piecemeal way to include more geographically and culturally distant communities. Rousseau has noted helpfully in this connection that a folk classification serves both conceptual and social purposes, that frequently it is not entirely the creation of its users, and that "new elements are added to the taxonomy as they become available, and they do not necessarily fit neatly with the rest" (1990, p. 53).

It is also noticeable that some demographically and politically dominant populations in Borneo are much more easily defined both in terms of self-identity and external categorization whilst minority or marginal ones often prove more problematical to delimit and denote. Three dominant ethnic axes across a wide span of northern and central Borneo comprise the Malays, Iban, and Kayan with which smaller satellite communities usually have to interact and to which they have to accommodate; minorities frequently create and sustain their own identities in relationship to the majority populations as Rousseau has demonstrated convincingly for the ethnic complex in Sarawak usually labelled "Kajang" (1975). The languages of the dominant ethnic categories are also important lingua franca across large parts of the island, and particularly in the face of the expansion of Malay language and culture and Islam, some smaller communities have been progressively absorbed into a Malay social and cultural world. Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that the definition of these dominant categories and their constituent groups in contrast to the minorities is itself without difficulties. As Wadley has noted, the Iban, for example, did not begin to perceive themselves as a relatively homogeneous and explicitly defined ethnic category until well into the nineteenth century when colonial rule brought them into wider administrative and educational systems, established connections and communications between far-flung river-based groupings, imposed law and order between previously warring factions and undertook ethnographic investigations, classifications, and censuses

of the native populations. It seems that the Iban have taken over an external term, though the "exact origin of the label is still unclear", and used it for their own purposes (Wadley 2000, p. 86). The weight of opinion suggests that the term "Iban" was first used by the Kayan (in their language "Hivan") to refer to those aggressive and migratory peoples who were moving into the Rejang Basin from the regions to the south and west during the nineteenth century. The source communities from which these migrants derived were usually referred to as "Sea Dayak" or simply "Dayak" by Brooke officers in Sarawak, and the so-called "Sea Dayak" commonly referred to themselves by river-based names. Over time the external referent "Iban" gradually replaced "Sea Dayak" and was adopted by the people themselves. Nevertheless, this wider "Iban" ethnic identity, which has been created over the past 150 years, continues to embrace considerable diversity and factionalism. There is a further complication in that neighbouring peoples in Kalimantan, including the Kantu', Mualang, Bugau, and Desa, who are culturally and historically related to the Iban, do not refer to themselves by this name and are usually not so designated in the anthropological literature, although Wadley notes that Kantu' and other "Ibanic" peoples usually "take on the Iban label while engaged in wage labour in areas of Sarawak where self-identified Iban form a majority" (personal communication, 2000).

Therefore, with regard to ethnic identity, inter-ethnic relations, and ethnic change in Borneo I have suggested in several previous publications that attempts to define and delimit particular ethnic categories and groups in isolation from others on the assumption that these are socially and culturally homogeneous and bounded entities are fundamentally mistaken and that one needs to understand and analyse ethnic units as interrelated one with another in broader sets of conceptual and social relationships (King 1993, pp. 36ff.).

My proposal to study ethnic groupings on a broader canvas is hardly an original one; among others, Leach had already shown the advantages of adopting a wider ethnographic perspective embracing interrelated ethnic categories and groups in his classic study of Highland Burma society (1970 [1954]) and in his survey of Sarawak societies (1950).

Rousseau notably has contributed to our understanding of an overarching central Borneo society (1975, 1990) by examining it as "a number of related [ethnic] groups". He says:

> It was very difficult to identify recognizable ethnic units, because groups with the same name might speak different languages, while groups with distinct ethnic names seemed to be identical. Central Borneo appeared as a checkerboard pattern of ethnic units distributed randomly through the vagaries of migrations. (1990, p. 1)

Bernard Sellato has also undertaken a similar wide-ranging study of the island's numerous hunting-gathering communities, which he refers to by the collective designation "Punan" (1994, p. xix). He notes that, unlike some other Bornean peoples, "nomads are not in the least concerned with the names used to refer to them" (p. 16).

I have long argued for the analytical utility of this kind of "middle range" analysis in the case of various of the ethnic categories and groups of the Upper Kapuas region of West Kalimantan (King 1979, 1982, 1985), and more recently I have attempted the same for the Brunei sultanate (King 1994, 1996). In other words, rather than study one community as in some sense a separate, defined, and autonomous entity, I have proposed that we take a particular region of West Kalimantan and a particular social system in Brunei which comprise several interrelated taxonomies and interacting groups and try to understand the dynamics of ethnic identity and nomenclature in this wider context. Obviously, there is an arbitrariness about this approach since ethnic categories and groups shade into one another and there is usually no clear regional, political, or socio-cultural boundary which one can establish. Instead the exercise is guided by one's specific analytical and ethnographic objectives at the time and it has to be recognized that any unit of study is not a natural geographical nor a real social and cultural entity. Nevertheless, I think this perspective avoids some of the difficulties experienced by anthropologists who have focused on a particular "category", "society", or "ethnic group" and been preoccupied with the discovery of essential core qualities which are assumed to coincide and define this unit as separate from others. There is also, I maintain, a tendency in this approach to search for concrete social and cultural elements

which are seen as "traditional" and a corresponding tendency to see ethnic identity as largely unproblematical, given that core features of a unit can be revealed and described, and separated out from other accretions which are assumed to be the result of culture contact and change. It is this frame of reference which has resulted in debates in Borneo studies about whether or not "real" Iban are egalitarian (Rousseau 1980; Freeman 1981) or "real" "Maloh" are stratified (King 1985; Thambun Anyang 1996). In some of my previous work I have also adopted this approach. Yet the questions we ask are bound to be rather different ones when we acknowledge, for example, that the ethnic category Iban was only created from the nineteenth century and those communities now called "Iban" do not comprise a bounded and homogeneous entity, and that the "Maloh" are a highly variegated and hybrid people who have been subject to a variety of cultural and other influences over a long period of time and with no internally agreed ethnic term to express their identity separate from their neighbours.

Let us turn to our first case: the "Maloh" (Embaloh) or Taman of interior West Kalimantan and the various communities with which they interact.

The Embaloh-Taman ("Maloh") Complex

I am gratified and not a little flattered that my ethnography of a relatively demographically small population in the Upper Kapuas district of West Kalimantan whom I referred to as "Maloh" in my earlier publications (see, for example, King 1985) should have attracted so much recent attention. I now place the ethnonym in quotation marks in firm recognition that it is not a generally accepted ethnic label. Prior to my field research in 1972–73 there had been virtually no modern anthropological research undertaken in this province of Indonesian Borneo and one was struggling to make sense of an extensive and relatively unknown ethnographic terrain. The bulk of the material available comprised Dutch records provided by colonial administrators, missionaries, scientists, and explorers with a scattering of post-war publications in the Indonesian language (Avé, King, and de Wit 1983). Indeed, in the whole of the vast and ethnically complex territory of Kalimantan up to that

time there had been very little detailed modern ethnographic research apart from the major studies by Western anthropologists of the Ma'anyan of Paju Epat (Hudson 1967, 1972), the Apo Kayan Kenyah (Whittier 1973), and the Mentaya Ngaju (Miles 1976), and work by missionary-anthropologists on the Kahayan Ngaju (Schärer 1963), and the Mualang of the Middle Kapuas (Dunselman 1955). This early work was not especially concerned with the problems of ethnic nomenclature and definition. However, since the early 1970s there has been a substantial increase in scholarly activity not least among the "Maloh", and its three divisions or sub-groupings (Embaloh, Taman, and Kalis), and an increasing interest in issues of ethnic identity and naming. We now have a large body of data on "Maloh" gathered and presented by both foreign and local observers: Jay Bernstein (1991, 1997), Henry Arts (1991), Katsumi Okuno (1997), Mudiyono Diposiswoyo (1985), Jacobus Frans (1992), and Thambun Anyang (1996). Much of this work concentrates on the Taman or Kapuas division of the "Maloh", although Okuno has studied the Kalis and Jacobus Frans the Embaloh divisions. There has also been detailed linguistic analysis of the "Maloh" or Tamanic languages by Alf Hudson (1978) and K. Alexander Adelaar (1994). Reed Wadley has recently examined issues of "Maloh" ethnicity and nomenclature (2000). Just as the "Maloh" are an internally culturally variegated complex of people so are the anthropologists who have studied them and the languages in which they have published — in English, Dutch, French, Japanese, and Indonesian.

Although the "Maloh" are not a homogeneous population with clearly defined boundaries, they do exhibit certain cultural markers which distinguish them from their neighbours. There is, however, the issue of the relative importance of internal similarity and difference to which I shall return shortly. The "Maloh" are speakers of an Austronesian language which is distinctive in central Borneo and is closely related to Buginese. Adelaar tentatively suggests that the original homeland of the "Maloh" was South Sulawesi (1994, p. 35; 1995, p. 375), although, of course, there is still insufficient evidence to demonstrate positively that the ancestors of the "Maloh" moved into Borneo from the east. The "Maloh" are found scattered in several of the

tributaries of the Upper Kapuas in and around the district capital of Putussibau; they are apparently a long-settled population there, and their settlements have been relatively stable over the past two centuries at least (Wadley, personal communication, 2000). However, their territories have been subject to encroachment by later arrivals and their culture has been influenced significantly by the spread of ideas, values, and practices from neighbouring communities. Therefore, although there are identifiable "Maloh" communities, their villages are interspersed with those of other ethnic units, including the Malays, Kayan, Iban, and Kantu'; appreciable numbers of Malays and Iban in particular live in or close to "Maloh" communities. Malay and Iban influences have been especially significant in shaping "Maloh" society, culture, and history, and some scholars of Austronesian languages, for example, have categorized "Maloh" within a broader "Malay" or "Malayic" sub-category, given the influences of Malay and Iban on the "Maloh" language (Blust 1981; Nothofer 1975, 1988). In addition, in his study of Taman ethnomedicine, Bernstein observes that "in the most distant Taman villages ... Malay healers ... play an important role", that the Taman have "incorporated many of the Malays' practices", and that "Malay concepts of spirits have probably penetrated Taman ideas about spirits to an extent" (1997, pp. 41, 43, 54). Thambun Anyang, a local Taman scholar, also argues that "Maloh" social stratification is an artefact of "Maloh"-Malay relations and of the preoccupations of colonial and other Western observers who described "Maloh" social organization in Malay terms (1996, pp. 6–9, 74–77, 113, 236). However, given the relatively recent creation of the category "Malay", and indeed other identities in Borneo, in the context of Dutch and British colonial concerns to demarcate, locate, control, administer, and tax ethnic units, it might be difficult to establish in which direction certain concepts and practices moved, and whether or not particular traits deemed to be "Malay" actually derived originally from a Taman source (Wadley, personal communication, 2000).

The "Maloh" numbered about 11,000 people in the early 1970s. Like their Dayak neighbours they were rice and rubber cultivators and they reared animals, particularly poultry and pigs; they gathered forest

products, hunted, and fished. Up until the 1960s another significant cultural marker was their skill in the manufacture of gold, silver, and copper jewellery and bodily adornments. It is likely that this expertise was initially acquired in the course of "Maloh" trading and other relations with Malay states. Colonial records and local oral traditions indicate that "Maloh" men travelled far and wide across northwestern Borneo as metal-smiths making items to order; their most important market was among the Iban with whom they intermarried and from whom they took various elements of culture. Many "Maloh" are fluent in the Iban language and Iban woven cloths as trade goods are commonly seen in "Maloh" villages. The Iban referred to these native smiths as "Maloh" or "Memaloh", a term derived from one of the rivers — the Embaloh — inhabited by the "Maloh" and close to Iban settlement in the borderlands between Brooke Sarawak and Dutch West Borneo. Many "Maloh" smiths were active in the immediate post–World War II period, but from the 1960s the increasing availability of modern consumer goods and competition from Chinese bazaar jewellery have resulted in the demise of this indigenous industry. Increasingly, young "Maloh" have moved into waged and salaried employment in the timber industry, commercial agriculture, urban-based manual work, and government service, especially in local and regional administration and education.

The "Maloh" can also be distinguished from others in the details and specific combinations of religious and other customary ideas and practices. However, many of these are shared by other neighbouring indigenous Borneo communities, again probably as a result of contact, exchange, and community fission and fusion over a relatively long period of time. In addition to skills in metal-smithing, the "Maloh" were adept in decorative beadwork and in painting and carving, particularly in relation to the cult of the dead and in the public expression of hierarchy. Again, aspects and elements of this material culture can be found among other non-"Maloh" populations, especially the stratified Kayan and Kenyah.

Some "Maloh" communities have had a long period of contact with the Roman Catholic missions which the Dutch established in Benua Martinus along the Embaloh river, and in Putussibau and Bika on the

main Kapuas river. Many young Catholic-educated "Maloh" have moved to the main centres along the Kapuas and to the provincial capital Pontianak as teachers and civil servants. Conversion to Catholicism has resulted in the disappearance of many of the pre-Christian traditions of the "Maloh", although some continue to survive in modified and attenuated form.

A significant number of "Maloh" villages have also had especially close relations with Malay society, and these interactions resulted in conversions and the abandonment of much of Maloh culture. Many of the Upper Kapuas Malays are descended from "Maloh" converts to Islam, particularly in Putussibau and its environs, and from the early nineteenth century or perhaps even earlier, "Maloh" villages were incorporated to varying degrees of intensity into larger-scale political systems centred on the Kapuas Malay states of Bunut, Jongkong, Piyasa, and Selimbau. Political relations between Malay rulers and surrounding "Maloh" communities were conducted mainly by members of what I have chosen to call the "Maloh" aristocracy (or *samagat*) who monopolized the positions of longhouse and village head and regional chief. Until recently, "Maloh" society was divided into four named ranks or strata comprising *samagat*, *pabiring*, *banua,* and *pangkam*, which I have suggested approximated to an upper rank or aristocrats, a middle rank, commoners, and slaves. This system was progressively undermined and transformed from the end of the nineteenth century onwards following Dutch colonial intervention, the introduction of Christian missions and education, the development of a market economy, and the subsequent incorporation of "Maloh" communities into the modern Indonesian nation-state. With regard to this indigenous system of social stratification the "Maloh" show similarities with such central Borneo peoples as the Kayan, although whether or not they adopted concepts of inequality and hierarchy from a central Borneo source is difficult to establish. Some scholars claim that relations and contacts with the Kayan have not been close, but there has certainly been some interaction recorded during the past two centuries.

It should be noted, however, that Thambun Anyang, in his study of one of the "Maloh" divisions, the Taman or Kapuas, argues that prior

to their contact with Muslim Malays the original "Maloh" society was relatively egalitarian (1996, pp. 1–17). He maintains that the differences between *samagat* and *banua,* for example, were based not on inequalities of class, status, and power, but rather were derived from genealogical distinctions legitimized in a charter myth. These descent or genealogical categories, which perform an important role in Taman marriage arrangements and bridewealth exchange, were subsequently transformed into distinctions of rank as a result of the incorporation of the Taman into Malay hierarchical political systems. I happen to disagree with this speculative evolutionary depiction of "Maloh" social organization which proposes a movement from egality to hierarchy on the basis of very little ethnohistorical evidence, although recent reviews of Thambun Anyang's study provide us with valuable insights into the perspectives of local anthropologists or "insiders" (Sellato 1998, pp. 508–10; Wadley 2000, pp. 94–95). Leaving aside the engagement and disagreements between local and outside anthropologists, Thambun Anyang's analysis seems to me to be an example of an anthropological perspective which in itself is profoundly ideological and searches for the pristine characteristics of a bounded "original" or "Ur" society whose essential qualities and nature are then seen to be transformed, one might even say "corrupted", by external contacts. What is more, it does not take sufficient account of the ways in which local communities deploy, debate, create, and re-create what we and often they refer to as "traditional" or "customary" beliefs and practices. Put very simply, it is perfectly possible that some individuals and groups in a given population claim that their social order is based on egalitarian principles whilst others emphasize social hierarchy, or argue that there have been shifts from an egalitarian to a hierarchical organization or vice versa. One or the other principle is then claimed to be "original" and that it serves to define a distinct ethnic category or group. I shall return to consider some of the implications of the local use of alternative models of society in a moment.

Ethnonyms: the Embaloh-Taman Case

A major problem which I faced during my fieldwork among the "Maloh" was that of deciding what to call these people of the Upper

Kapuas region. Certainly they possessed a cultural identity, although there was significant internal cultural differentiation, and ethnic boundaries between the "Maloh" and others were difficult to draw precisely. Indeed, during my field research I probably underestimated the degree and range of internal cultural and other distinctions among "Maloh" communities. I was fortunate in being able to travel quite widely in the Upper Kapuas district and to be able to note some of these differences, but the communities along the Embaloh river were my primary point of reference. I tended to interpret other "Maloh" through their eyes and my brief visits to Taman villages and passing conversations with members of the Kalis division were not sufficient to record ethnographic material in any detail. In 1972 I observed that the "Maloh" adopted different identities depending on their situation, purposes, and the level of contrast they wished to make. Aside from the identification with specific communities or villages and the rivers along which they lived, an important higher-level identity was that which I referred to as "divisions" or sub-groupings of which there were three: Embaloh or Tamambaloh, Taman, and Kalis (King 1985, pp. 33–34). There appears to be relatively broad agreement among those who have written about the "Maloh" that, with some minor differences in detail, there are indeed three such divisions, although Thambun Anyang prefers to refer to the Taman cluster as "Kapuas" (1996, pp. 1–2) contra Arts (1991), Bernstein (1997), and myself (King 1985). These divisions are based mainly on linguistic and other cultural distinctions, and they cluster more or less geographically. The Embaloh or Tamambaloh division comprises communities to the north of the Kapuas river along the Embaloh, Leboyan (Labiyan, Labian), Palin (Apalin), Lauh/Lauk (Alau), and Nyabau rivers, with a southern outlier on the Upper Mandai (Manday/Mande) river which has apparently intermixed with long-established Kalis and Peniung residents there; the Taman or Kapuas reside along the main Kapuas river as well as the Mendalam (Mandalam) and Sibau (Sio or Banuasio) in the vicinity of Putussibau; and the Kalis occupy parts of the Mandai basin, including the Kalis and Peniung (Paniung) to the south of the Kapuas river.

The difficulty, however, was that members of the Embaloh division

with whom I talked maintained that all "Maloh" should be called "Embaloh" or "Tamambaloh" and those of the Taman or Kapuas division stated that all "Maloh" were of course "Taman". The "Kalis" referred to themselves as "Kalis" and did not accept the label "Embaloh" or "Taman" as appropriate to them. There were also different versions of origin myths and of oral histories of movement and settlement which were used as a means of supporting particular claims to cultural and historical ascendancy. I therefore concluded that "there is no generally accepted, internally derived name appropriate for them [the 'Maloh'] as a whole" (1985, p. 35), and the Dutch colonial literature on this part of Borneo reflected this observation in that Dutch writers generally used river-based names in their references to the "Maloh" as a whole or their constituent units (p. 36). Rather than choose one or the other internal name, I employed the term "Maloh", "a general name ... used by the neighbouring Iban to refer to distinctive Dayak people in the Upper Kapuas who are widely known for their skills in fashioning metals" (p. 35). At the time of my research this ethnic label appeared to be accepted by those so named who had particularly close relations with the Iban and with Sarawak, though its association with the Embaloh division is obvious. In my experience "Maloh" smiths, whether they were from the Embaloh, Taman, or Kalis divisions, recognized the term as a valid designation of an overall cultural identity which they shared; it had relatively wide currency in Sarawak and the borderlands of West Kalimantan, and was a relatively well-established term in the English ethnographic literature on Borneo. However, rarely did the "Maloh" use the term among themselves; their most frequent points of reference were river-based names. What seems to have happened since the demise of metal-smithing and the disappearance of the itinerant artisan is that the term has become much less acceptable. Indeed, we have had recent disagreements among "Maloh" scholars and outside observers about ethnic nomenclature. In other circumstances the designation might have been adopted like many other exonyms in Borneo. But its fate was sealed very decisively after several "Maloh" scholars entered the fray and took exception to what was an externally imposed label and one which seemed to them to deny their ethnic integrity and sense of self-identity.

Reed Wadley has recently provided a very valuable reconsideration of the term "Maloh", and demonstrates that at the present time "educated 'Maloh' are making efforts to find a common indigenous ethnic label and at the same time to challenge Western ethnography about their group" (2000, p. 92). One of the early written challenges of which I am aware came from Jacobus Frans, a government official and politician, from the Leboyan, who has mixed Iban-"Maloh" ancestry, and who, in my terms, comes from the Embaloh division. He, along with Irene A. Muslim (1994) and Samagat Yuliana Anna (1991, cited in Wadley 2000, p. 93), has promoted the ethnonym "Dayak" (or Daya) "Banuaka" (Jacobus Frans 1992), which in itself is an interesting combination of a general external referent for non-Muslim Borneans or "Dayaks", usually translated as "interior/inland person or native", and a "Maloh" term, *banuaka*, which means "our people" or "people of our place". There is no doubt at all that the term *banuaka* is widely used to refer descriptively to institutions and practices which are distinctively "Maloh", but during my residence in the Upper Kapuas I never heard it used as a general ethnic label for all "Maloh". Jacobus' preferred ethnonym for which he has lobbied forcefully has in turn been challenged by another local scholar from the Taman or Kapuas division, Thambun Anyang. The latter is not convinced that the term *banuaka* is sufficiently discriminating since he states that its primary meaning is "us together" and it can be and is extended to those who are culturally "non-Maloh" (1996, p. 4). Instead, Thambun Anyang considers the term "Taman" or "Taman family" to be the most appropriate general ethnic label (pp. 18ff.). This difference of view seems to be a recent expression of the process which I identified in the early 1970s of representatives of different "Maloh" divisions attempting to extend their preferred ethnic label to others in the context of disagreements about historical and cultural priorities.

More importantly, as Wadley suggests, this challenge of local scholars, though they differ among themselves, "probably represents an assertion of intellectual authority over outside, Western scholarship" (2000, p. 94). This is a most welcome development, and if my ethnography has prompted, even in a modest way, local discussion about iden-

tity and aspirations then this is all to the good. Wadley also indicates that the internal debate among educated "Maloh" about the general ethnic label appropriate to them is likely to take interesting turns, depending on the political and administrative position and influence of key individuals in the debate (p. 96). He concludes that in the "Maloh" case "the search for a common ethnic label that is agreeable to both anthropologists and native politicians may actually be in vain" (pp. 97–98). At the present time his conclusion seems eminently plausible. Either anthropologists are content to confine their attention to a river-based grouping or division and use the local term appropriate to it without venturing beyond (Arts 1991; Mudiyono Diposiswoyo 1985; Okuno 1997), or they now employ a combined term such as "Maloh/Banuaka" (Bernstein 1997, p. 19) or "Embaloh/Taman" (King, in press). Wadley, having originally opted for the general term "Banuaka", now says that his "realization of its disputed nature ... throws my previous confidence in using the term out the window, so to speak" (2000, p. 97). We are now qualifying certain of the ethnic labels we use, recognizing that they are subject to dispute, negotiation, rejection, and replacement. Yet these problems present us with exciting opportunities to explore the processes and circumstances which generate debates about ethnic nomenclature and identity, to examine in more detail cultural variation, disputes, and factionalism within ethnic categories and groupings, and to address the problematical nature of cultural boundaries in multi-ethnic situations.

Homogeneity or Difference?

In reflecting on my previous work and subsequent research by others on the "Maloh", I have suggested recently that traditional modes of anthropological enquiry are clearly inadequate in analysing and comprehending the dynamic socio-cultural, economic, and political systems of the Upper Kapuas region (King, in press). I had already proposed in my earlier studies of the "Maloh" that they have to be understood in the context of wider systems of relationships interconnecting various ethnic groupings in interior West Kalimantan, though my main focus at

that time was what I tended to see as a defined "Maloh" society and culture. I recognized that elements of what I was describing were the result of ethnic interactions and transformations, but I was preoccupied with the examination of what I took to be "traditional" "Maloh" social organization and culture and the changes which had resulted from contacts with others, particularly following incorporation into Malay, Dutch, and Indonesian state structures.

My emphasis has since changed and I now think that it is more analytically useful to focus in much more detail on the social system or complex of social relationships which operates across ethnic groupings, and in different ways within these groupings; what we refer to as a "society" therefore is not necessarily coterminous with a given ethnic grouping nor does it serve to define it. In his analysis of central Borneo society, Rousseau too argues that ethnicity "is not the inescapable frame of social relations" (1990, p. 301). What is more, it is misleading to assume that, in the case of the "Maloh", its society, however characterized, has been transformed primarily by impacts or forces from outside generated by neighbouring, differently organized ethnic groupings, including the Malays, forest hunter-gatherers such as the Punan, and the longhouse-dwelling Iban and Kantu'. Although, for certain purposes we as anthropologists and the "Maloh" themselves distinguish "Maloh" from Malays, for example, what is clear from the historical evidence and recent ethnography is that they are part of the same society or social system. In other words, the relationships between them have been and are of such significance that one cannot understand the "Maloh" without reference to the stratified Malays nor can we address properly the history and development of Upper Kapuas Malay communities without reference to the "Maloh" and the processes of "Maloh" conversion to Islam.

In this connection we can also begin to appreciate and address Thambun Anyang's observation, which confirms one of my findings, that the *samagat* of the Taman division acknowledge a mixed ancestry, derived, so it is said in oral tradition, from the marriage between a female *samagat* and an Upper Kapuas Punan (1996, pp. 91, 106–7). The nomadic Punan populated the regions upriver of Taman settlement and, as Thambun Anyang notes, they are not stratified. *Samagat* genealogi-

cal links are also traced to the Bukat, another Upper Kapuas nomadic population (pp. 106–7). In the case of the Embaloh division there was also intermarriage with Bukitan or Ketan hunter-gatherers regardless of rank. The nomadic groups used to inhabit the upper reaches of the Embaloh river, but some were eventually absorbed into "Maloh" communities whilst others moved elsewhere (King 1985, p. 53). Recognition of the significance of relations between nomads and shifting cultivators, based primarily on the trade in forest products which were then channelled to the coastal emporia through riverine Malay states, also suggests that separately defined ethnic groupings such as the Punan and the "Maloh" should be seen as constituent parts of the same social system. It is true that nomads and agriculturalists occupy different socio-economic sectors but they "are not a separate society" (Rousseau 1990, p. 216).

Finally, there has been considerable absorption of "Maloh", especially from the Embaloh division, into Iban communities as the Iban have moved inexorably eastwards and southwards from the Sarawak-West Kalimantan borderlands into territories originally occupied by the "Maloh". There are, for example, mixed Iban-"Maloh" villages along the Leboyan river. It is acknowledged in the literature on the Iban that they are generally a relatively egalitarian population. Furthermore, there is evidence of "Maloh" intermarriage with the Kantu', a people culturally and linguistically related to the Iban, and living along the main Upper Kapuas river and in the lower reaches of some of its tributaries generally downstream of "Maloh" settlement.

Thambun Anyang (1996, pp. 106–7) appears to suggest that marriages between *samagat* and egalitarian nomads provide further evidence of the relatively egalitarian character of "Maloh" communities, whereas he argues that their relations with stratified Malays have resulted in *samagat* being ennobled and raised in status. By the same token, intermarriage with Iban might also provide evidence of "Maloh" egalitarianism. In contrast, I have suggested that these external relations can be accommodated and legitimized in a "Maloh" stratified system; *samagat* intermarry with the "leading families" of egalitarian peoples and *banua* marry with ordinary families, or at least those that are perceived to be

so. Interestingly, Rousseau notes in the context of relations between forest nomads and longhouse dwellers that, although hunter-gatherers are "usually reported to lack stratification ... the proximity of stratified agriculturalists creates a pressure towards the conceptual development of ranking, and some nomads talk as if they had a stratification system" (1990, p. 229).

However, it now seems that we need to move beyond a frame of reference which is concerned to define the "Maloh" as either egalitarian or stratified and begin to understand them as part of a wider system of relations with "others" and in relation to a spectrum of modes of social organization available in the Upper Kapuas region which range from Punan egality at one end to Malay hierarchy at the other. Even the notion of "others" is problematical, given that many Upper Kapuas Malays and Iban in particular have "Maloh" ancestors and relatives, and "Maloh" ancestry is itself multi-ethnic. This involvement with "others" has undoubtedly resulted in increased differentiation among "Maloh" communities, but we should also recognize that processes of differentiation have also been generated internally and have been operating for a considerable period of time. In this connection I suggest that rather than continue our preoccupation with the question "Who are the 'Maloh'"? and our focus on what defines the "Maloh" as an ethnic category particularly in terms of a type of social organization, we should recognize, examine, and attempt to understand the considerable differences — social, economic, political, and cultural — between "Maloh" communities and the close relations which exist and have existed with their neighbours. This is not to deny the importance that local scholars currently attach to the task of defining themselves and debating an appropriate ethnic label to express that identity but to acknowledge that definition and naming are made especially difficult in a situation of varied and relatively intense socio-cultural contacts and exchanges, and one in which internal differentiation is as significant if not more significant than homogeneity and similarity. What follows from this is the recognition that a not inconsiderable number of "Maloh" communities enjoy closer relations with their non-"Maloh" neighbours than they do with other "Maloh". For example, the "Maloh" of the Leboyan river are

clearly involved in a range of relationships with their close neighbours, the Iban, which will have more profound consequences for their future social and cultural development than any relations they happen to enjoy with fellow "Maloh" of the Taman and Kalis divisions, or indeed with some communities in their own division residing along the Embaloh and Palin rivers. Similarly, some communities of the Taman division interact much more intensively with Malays in and around Putussibau than they do with their "Maloh" cousins from the Embaloh and Kalis.

To my mind, the recognition of the highly problematical nature of the ethnic category "Maloh" as well as the adoption of a wider frame of reference for the study of social systems help us to explain and overcome some of the different findings of Thambun Anyang and myself from our separate studies of "Maloh" social structure. Let us briefly rehearse these. Thambun Anyang suggests that the villages of the Taman division are more egalitarian in organization than hierarchical, although they exhibit certain hierarchical ceremonial elements, particularly in relation to marriage and bridewealth (1996, pp. 262–65), and, in general, only the *samagat* can occupy the position of longhouse and village headman (pp. 116ff.). On the basis of Thambun Anyang's own ethnography, the relative distribution of population between the three categories, the marked practice of marrying within one's own category or with that immediately adjacent, and the differentiation of bridewealth between *samagat* on the one hand and *pabiring* and *banua* on the other (pp. 207ff.) are all suggestive of a system which is not obviously egalitarian. Thambun Anyang also states that the *pabiring*, which I have styled a middle rank, comprise a separate group or category and are not included in this set of status arrangements between *samagat* and *banua*. In support of this he points to the existence of a physically separate *pabiring* longhouse, Malapi, in the Upper Kapuas with its own *pabiring* headman (pp. 91, 98). He appears to consider that the *pabiring* have derived from a separate ethnic grouping which over time has been assimilated by the Taman (p. 112; Sellato 1998, p. 509). This separation is legitimized in oral traditions (pp. 71–73). What is also clear from Thambun Anyang's ethnography and mine is that the three social cat-

egories or, in my terms, ranks, were in practice not sharply defined (1996, pp. 93, 112). Individuals and households changed their affiliation through intermarriage in particular, and had mixed ancestry which they could then deploy in various ways to serve their own interests and needs.

However, what is especially interesting in Thambun Anyang's study is his need to include other ethnic groupings in his analysis in order to understand Taman social organization and its transformations. Indeed, his explanation for "Maloh" ranking, aside from claiming that Dutch observers interpreted "Maloh" society through a Malay lens, is that the relationships between Malays and "Maloh" resulted in *samagat* being ennobled; some intermarried with the Malay ruling élite, were granted Malay titles and the means to accumulate resources, and subsequently converted to Islam and became Malay (1996, pp. 6–8). Others managed up to a point to strengthen their position in their own communities by cementing political and economic relations with Malay overlords. Thambun Anyang and I have used broadly the same Dutch records on Malay-"Maloh" relations, and I would not wish to quarrel with part of this interpretation, although one should note that the influence of the Malays was not uniform; some "Maloh" communities were relatively remote from Malay control whilst others were certainly very closely linked to Malay political centres. Where I do disagree with Thambun Anyang is that I consider that "Maloh" aristocrats in an already ranked society formed relations with Malay rulers to enhance their position through trade, political support, and cultural emulation (King 1985, pp. 60–61). On the other hand, Thambun Anyang sees these relations as generating rank in a previously egalitarian society, which was then confirmed by colonial observers who translated "Maloh" society in Malay terms. It should also be noted, and here I owe a debt to Reed Wadley for reminding me of this (personal communication, 2000), that the process of conversion to Islam and the concept of "becoming Malay" in the Upper Kapuas are probably relatively recent phenomena dating from roughly the mid-nineteenth century, and that "becoming Malay" was a process which usually occurred very gradually over time. Wadley emphasizes that "Malay" was not an important regional identity in

Borneo until the distinction between "Dayak" and "Malay" was created and consolidated by colonial administrations.

Where I would revise and elaborate my earlier position is that I would now emphasize much more the divisions in "Maloh" communities and the internal variations between them so much so that it becomes difficult to talk in terms of a unified or homogeneous "Maloh society", which can be characterized as either stratified or egalitarian. With regard to "Maloh" relations with Malays I have already suggested that these "provided a different scale of values for the prestige-seeking and power-conscious aristocrats, and for those who were dissatisfied with their own society and culture". I went on to propose that perhaps it "reinforced and accelerated ever-present divisive tendencies in Maloh society itself, and served to translate discontent into real opposition by encouraging alliance with others of the same religion" (King 1985, p. 61). Unfortunately I did not carry forward this analysis in any detail. It now seems to me that Thambun Anyang's study of the Taman demands that we do precisely this. My reading of his thesis suggests that not only do we have to address the issue of the substantial differences between the main divisions or sub-groupings of "Maloh", on which he frequently remarks, and the variations between river-based groupings and villages, in part generated by their relations with their neighbours and the changes set in train by the Dutch and then the independent Indonesian government, but also the differences between the values and practices of individuals and households of different ranks.

I am persuaded that many of the differences in the findings between my study of the Embaloh and Thambun Anyang's study of the Taman cannot be explained merely by social and cultural variation between these divisions or sub-groupings nor by the space of twenty years between his study and mine, nor by the obvious fact that I am an outsider and he an insider. Rather it is my view that he has presented the perspective of the *banua* and, in part, the *pabiring*, whilst I have leaned towards an interpretation of "Maloh" society from the viewpoint of the *samagat*. In other words, it is perfectly possible for the "Maloh" to be characterized as both hierarchical and egalitarian depending on the rank and perspective of particular individuals. A *samagat* is likely to present

"Maloh" society as a social order based on class and privilege, whilst a *banua*, and even a *pabiring*, might well present a picture of a relatively egalitarian social system and explain differences, where they are identified, as based on descent and marriage arrangements.

Once we recognize the bases of our different interpretations then we can also acknowledge that relations with "others" will generate different outcomes depending on the position of an individual or a group within the larger community. There is sufficient evidence in the Dutch literature and in my field notes, and indeed in Thambun Anyang's thesis, to suggest that the incorporation of "Maloh" communities into Malay states and the translation of "Maloh" political systems into Malay ones, the migrations of other populations such as the Iban into the Upper Kapuas, the establishment of a Dutch colonial administration and Roman Catholic missions, and the political and administrative systems introduced by the post-war Indonesian government in the name of democracy, progress, and modernity, exacerbated and accelerated tensions and contradictions in "Maloh" communities. Some *samagat* attempted to meet the challenges by forming alliances with Malay rulers, or by converting to Christianity and securing mission education, or by entering local government and politics; others failed to adapt and lost their position. Some *banua* saw it in their interests to undermine the *samagat* position by championing an egalitarian ethos and selecting those elements in their own culture which would support their interpretation of "traditional 'Maloh' society". *Banua* also had new opportunities opening up for them to increase their status and position through such channels as religious conversion, education, salaried employment and commerce. This in turn led to some "Maloh" individuals and groups changing their ethnic identities and "becoming Malay" or "becoming Iban", or incorporating members of other ethnic groups into "Maloh" communities.

Let us focus briefly on the conversion to Islam and relations with Malay states to demonstrate how these processes might have operated. There are clearly striking similarities in the relations between the Upper Kapuas Malay states and surrounding non-Malay communities and the Brunei Malay sultanate and its constituent populations. As

Enthoven (1903, pp. 8, 94–97, 127–28, 157, 160, 178–79) and others have noted, Upper Kapuas Malay relations with such peoples as the "Maloh" and other Dayaks comprised intermittent hostilities, subjugation, and slave-raiding, as well as alliance and intermarriage. Malay rulers needed political and military support from assorted Dayak allies as well as reliable sources of manpower, trade goods, especially forest products, and basic foodstuffs such as rice, supplied by the surrounding agriculturalists and forest-dwellers. Malay states, located at the junctions between major tributaries and the main Kapuas river, controlled strategic points for the exchange of upstream with downstream goods.

Thambun Anyang, using Enthoven's material, points to the importance of intermarriage between "Maloh" *samagat* and members of the Malay ruling families (1996, pp. 7–9, 75–77). It is also clear that in addition to individual members of the *samagat,* both men and women, marrying into the Malay élites, some *samagat* men left their longhouse or village with some of their relatives and other households, presumably *banua* and *pabiring*, and relocated to or near Malay settlements and converted to Islam. Enthoven (1903, pp. 127–28) gives the case of an Embaloh *samagat*, who subsequently took the Malay title, Raja Kiyai Patih Uda. He and his followers separated from their original village to live on the lower Embaloh river, and then eventually settled at the mouth of the Embau river on the main Kapuas; they converted to Islam, and founded, along with other Islamized Dayaks, the Malay state of Jongkong. Thambun Anyang also cites the case of Sawang Sangi, a Taman *samagat*, who, in the 1870s, had brought seventeen Taman families to Putussibau; he took the Malay title Raden Aban Abas and his followers converted to Islam (1996, p. 7). The first acknowledged ruler of Bunut, Abang Barita, was also of Embaloh *samagat* descent, and was said to have founded the state of Bunut in about 1815, taking the title Panembahan Adi Paku Negara, and presiding over communities of Islamized Dayaks (Enthoven 1903, pp. 94–95). At this time the distinction between "Malays" and "Dayaks" was probably not significant, and the so-called "Malay" states comprised a mix of earlier and more recent converts to Islam, with some still adhering to various Dayak beliefs and practices. I have suggested that these processes of intermarriage, alliance,

conversion, and resettlement can be understood in some cases as attempts by established *samagat* leaders to enhance their political, economic, and social position *in situ*, but, in other cases, "ambitious *samagat* deprived of the headmanship, or aristocrats, who were in danger of falling in rank, might also move away, marry a Malay and convert to Islam, as an expression of discontent with the prevailing Maloh social order" (King 1985, pp. 60–61). This helps explain why some *samagat* uprooted themselves and relocated to Malay settlements, sometimes in the company of several other families.

Interestingly, Thambun Anyang refers to a category of Taman *samagat* as *samagat nik soo* who were not eligible to become longhouse and village headmen (1996, p. 93). He suggests that these *samagat* were no different in rank and status from *banua*, but, generally unhappy or "embarrassed" with their lot; it was these *samagat* who were likely to leave their community and move elsewhere. They would also attempt to establish themselves as longhouse headmen by persuading sufficient numbers of *banua* to follow them and found a new longhouse (pp. 116–17). Here is one of the sources of tension and conflict in a longhouse which could result in the physical division of the community. It is difficult to account for the rate of increase in Muslim Malay communities in the Upper Kapuas unless one notes that there were both individual cases of conversion usually occasioned by intermarriage, as well as multiple conversions as a result of a leader deciding to "enter Islam and Malaydom" (in the "Maloh" language referred to as *alo' Singanan*) and persuading his followers to do likewise.

It is also very likely that many of those who over time became Malay were from the *pabiring* rank. Thambun Anyang claims that these did not constitute a middle rank between *samagat* and *banua* (pp. 91–92). Instead, he suggests that among the Taman they comprised a separate group with their own headman; as evidence of this he refers to the *pabiring* village of Malapi. Nevertheless, I find it difficult to understand precisely by what means the *pabiring* sustained their separateness. As Thambun Anyang himself notes, they intermarried and intermixed with members of the other two social categories so that even in Malapi about one-third of the population comprised *samagat* and *banua* (p. 92). I have

argued elsewhere that the *pabiring*, as an intermediate rank of fallen aristocrats or aspiring commoners, shared certain of the attributes of *samagat*. Some might well have been in competition with longhouse headmen to secure a following because they and their families, having once enjoyed greater social prominence, were reluctant to accept their more lowly position (King 1985, pp. 86–87, 98–99). From Thambun Anyang's data it is difficult to establish how the *pabiring* village of Malapi came to be established, but it could well have resulted from community fission and factional conflicts between those competing for power and ascendancy among the *samagat* and *pabiring*. It is precisely these disaffected individuals and groups that would also have had the motivation to secede from their own communities and embrace Islam.

In these situations of conflict and factionalism where individuals are competing to retain positions of leadership, regain them from others, or establish them anew, the relationships with outsiders, particularly the ruling families of Malay states play a significant role. In this regard it is important to acknowledge that the "Maloh" are part of a wider social system and that, far from reacting passively to social values and practices imposed from outside, they actively used and deployed these for their own purposes. I would suggest that, in this competitive environment, some "Maloh" will present their "society" as hierarchical, as blessed by the order, structure, and stability which only *samagat* can provide; others will see it as in their interests to promote a more egalitarian, competitive world-view, elements of which were certainly present in "traditional Maloh" communities, in order to entice disaffected *pabiring* and *banua* away from overbearing and autocratic *samagat*, or to undermine and replace a *samagat*-dominated universe with a more democratic one. What was also available to those "Maloh" who wished to replace hierarchy with egality or withdraw from hierarchy into egality was association and intermarriage with the encroaching Iban and the Kantu'. The relatively egalitarian character of Iban society must have held much appeal for some of those "Maloh" of *banua* rank, although some *samagat* with whom I talked interpreted Iban social organization in more hierarchical terms and indicated that some of their number had married with prominent Iban families.

Brunei Society: Comparisons

The relevance of the recent debate about the conceptualization of what I chose to call "Brunei society" to the problems posed by the "Maloh" and the multi-ethnic relations in which they are enmeshed in the Upper Kapuas should be obvious (King 1994, 1996; Brown 1998; Maxwell 1996). In both cases ethnic groupings are constituent parts of an overarching social system focused on political and economic centres. Nevertheless, there are two important differences which need to be borne in mind in this comparison. First, the Brunei sultanate as a focus of Islam and Malay culture has been firmly established for several centuries and during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in particular it enjoyed considerable prominence as an international trading emporium. Its economic, political, and cultural influence, therefore, on the surrounding territories and populations was significant and it has been sustained through to the present time following the establishment of a monarchical Muslim-Malay independent nation. On the other hand, Islam and Malay culture came to the Upper Kapuas relatively recently. Malay states proper were only founded from the nineteenth century, though presumably indigenous state-like formations had been established along the Kapuas River prior to the introduction of Islam and the spread of elements of coastal Malay culture, and their effects on the region were much more uneven, particularly once the Dutch established a colonial presence and promoted the work of Christian missions. Secondly, and related to the first point, the socio-cultural values and practices open to the "Maloh" were much more diverse than those which confronted such native populations as the Kadayan (Kedayan) and the Dusun in Brunei. For example, for some "Maloh" communities, especially those of the Embaloh division, relationships with the Iban have been as important if not more important than with the Malays and the influence of Catholic missions has also been more pronounced than that of Islam.

Yet to my mind there are interesting parallels between the two cases which revolve around the disputed concept of a "society" or "social system". In my recent overview and analysis of Brunei ethnography I drew

particular attention to the observation which Donald Brown had made in his major study of the Brunei sultanate that the word "Brunei" has multiple meanings; among others it refers to a "people", a "society", an "empire", and a "state", and Brown was undecided whether or not the Malay-speaking Kadayan, close neighbours of the Brunei Malays (or Barunay), should be considered part of Brunei society (1970, pp. 16, 20, 76). Overall, Brown decided that the concept of Brunei society should be confined to the ethnic Bruneis — in other words, that the Brunei Malays as a cultural category should also be defined and analysed as a social group.

In contrast to Brown I came to the view that it was neither ethnographically nor analytically appropriate to draw a line around cultural and social relationships in this way when the Brunei sultanate comprises a stratified and plural social order (King 1994, 1996). For me it seemed more sensible to adopt an inclusive rather than an exclusive definition of "Brunei society" to embrace not only the ethnic Bruneis and Kadayan but also such neighbouring Dayak ethnic groupings as the Dusun (or Bisaya), Murut (or Lun Bawang/Lun Dayeh), Tutong, and Belait. Brunei society conceived of in these terms, at least historically before the establishment of the separate states of Brunei Darrusalam and Malaysian Borneo, also shaded into more distant communities such as the Iban and the coastal Melanau of Sarawak. This proposition acknowledges that territorial boundaries, ethnic and cultural distinctions, and social divisions are not coincident.

Brown responded subsequently to my comments on his concept of Brunei society by distinguishing between two definitions of "society", acknowledging that he had not made its meaning clear in his earlier work (1998). First, he provides what he sees as its prototypical meaning of "a collection of people who share a language, culture, and institutions and who are seen by themselves and others as a distinct people". He adds that the "distinctiveness of a society is often projected into the past so that it has a distinct origin too" (1998, p. 87). This is the primary meaning which he attaches to his use of the term Brunei society, or the society of the Brunei Malays. Secondly, he argues that there are variations from the prototype in which a collectivity of people share

some but not all of the above criteria. Brown has also employed this second notion of a society in his earlier work, but to make the two senses clear he has since proposed that this secondary notion should be referred to explicitly as a "plural society" (p. 88). He states that in this case "common governing institutions are shared (though unequally) but many other institutions, along with language and culture, are not shared or are much less shared than is prototypically [the] case" (p. 88).

In this connection Allen Maxwell, who studied the neighbouring Kadayan, also supports the view that the Brunei "social system" comprises a "plural society", and points out that its characteristics and "especially the friction between groups which is channelled along the fault lines of ethnic differences — often mask the extent to which the different groups are integrated into a single social system" (1996, p. 158). However, when Maxwell refers to "Brunei society" he means invariably the social order which embraces Brunei Malays and Kadayan; he demonstrates that historically the Kadayan were "an integral part of the fabric of Brunei society" (p. 164) as the main suppliers of food to the capital of the sultanate, as political allies, clients, and relatives of Brunei Malays, and as occupants of the crucial buffer territories surrounding the political centre. Finally, in ritual terms, the Kadayan, or rather their leaders, participated in a "set of traditional ritual offices and titles awarded by the Sultan" (p. 177). It is clear in this common social structure that it is one ethnic category and at the same time a closely integrated ethnic group — the Brunei Malays — which monopolizes political power (pp. 181–82), that the underlying principle which articulates this social order is rank, and that ethnicity interlocks with rank, providing a means to express cleavages in a social hierarchy and serving as a medium for individuals and groups to move from one status to another.

Brown's recent clarification and Maxwell's elaboration of the notion of plural society in relation to Brunei Malay-Kadayan relations certainly assist us in our analyses. But I still consider Brown's approach to the study of social systems too "corporatist" and deterministic. Much of his earlier work, both specific to Brunei and more generally, focused on the legal concept of the corporation in attempting to define and analyse social structures and delimit generic social units and the principles on

which they are based (for example, 1976). In his response to my critique of his analysis of Brunei society, Brown still appears to wish to assign primary importance to the definition of bounded units. In the case of the ethnic Bruneis he assumes that various principles of social structure coincide to demarcate them as a prototypical Brunei society, internally coherent and, one assumes, relatively homogeneous, and that the Brunei plural society comprises a collectivity of "more or less prototypical societies" (1998, p. 88). This perspective also tends to assign a static quality to prototypical societies because it is claimed that their definition and boundedness are often rooted in the past. In contrast, I would argue that in the case of both the Brunei sultanate and the Upper Kapuas region, the primary meaning of "society" should focus on the dynamic and complex network of relationships across ethnic groupings rather than on a single category or group defined on the basis of a number of assumed coincident criteria. I consider the definition of bounded ethnic groups in both these cases to be highly problematical and to risk the neglect of some of the most important social, economic, political, and cultural relations which help us explain the structure and trajectory of native Borneo communities.

In my terms the primary definition of Brunei society in its wider pluralist sense is based on four major considerations (King 1994, pp. 185–87). First, the roots of the Brunei Malays as an ethnic category and group can be traced to the pagan aboriginal populations of the Brunei Bay region. Far from the ethnic Bruneis and other non-Malay peoples defining themselves in terms of distinct origins, the various origin myths of Brunei point specifically to a common cultural heritage shared by the Brunei Malays and the interrelated pagan communities. Indeed, Brown has recently indicated that the Brunei Malays might not have been as homogeneous as they first appear since "in some contexts the peoples of famous and ancient wards of the capital ... were referred to as if they were a distinct people" (1998, p. 89). In this connection, he gives the specific example of the people of the former Kampong Pabalat, who claim their origins from local Islamized pagan communities. Secondly, there has been a continuous and dynamic interrelationship between Brunei Malays and others through the conversion of various commu-

nities to Islam, particularly through intermarriage, and the practice of conferring titles and offices on pagan leaders and incorporating them into a common political and administrative system, and the use of Malay as a lingua franca. There have also been processes of interaction and assimilation operating between non-Malay populations, particularly between the Kadayan and the Murut, so that while in theory some communities might be presented as clearly defined, in practice they shade into one another. Thirdly, there existed a common set of structural principles and shared social categories, comprising ranks, ethnic categories/groups and local units, which brought together and ordered the several populations of the Brunei Bay region. However, different communities interpreted these categories and the interrelationships between them in different ways depending on interests and circumstances. Finally, the Brunei social system was underpinned by a variety of economic relationships in which different groupings tended to fulfil different functions in the division of labour. In the case of the Kadayan, for example, they were important providers of food, especially rice, in the Brunei polity and exchanged this with Brunei Malays who mainly comprised administrators, traders, craftspeople, and fishing folk.

Conclusion

The similarities between the Brunei and the Upper Kapuas social systems are clear, although I would argue that the processes of change in the Upper Kapuas were if anything more complex than in Brunei, given the alternative models presented to such peoples as the "Maloh" by the Malays, the Iban, the Dutch, and the modern Indonesian state. There were obviously significant nodal points in this overarching social system which comprised the Malay centres of trade, commerce, court ritual, and administration. Yet we should recognize that these very centres were not alien implants established wholly or even primarily by immigrants; they were derived essentially from already established local non-Malay communities. These centres cannot be divorced from nor considered separately from those local populations which, culturally at least, chose to remain largely outside the Malay world. One of the interesting developments from the late nineteenth century in the Upper Kapuas region

was the foundation by the Dutch of other commercial, administrative and cultural centres which to some extent competed with such Malay states as Bunut and Selimbau. In some cases the Dutch established these centres almost from scratch like the Catholic mission station at Benua Martinus on the Embaloh river, and in other cases they built on already existing Malay communities like Putussibau. These colonial administrative and cultural centres provided an alternative focus for the "Maloh", many of whom embraced Catholicism and Western education rather than Islam.

I cannot escape the conclusion that the variations in social forms in the Upper Kapuas region and in Brunei also demonstrate some striking similarities with the interrelationships between different "tribal" forms and state structures described and analysed by Edmund Leach (1970) and Jonathan Friedman (1998) in the Kachin Hills area of Upper Burma. These similarities had impressed me when I was attempting to understand processes of change in the Upper Kapuas in the 1970s, although I probably did not articulate the argument with any great clarity at that time. The differences between relatively egalitarian and hierarchical communities and ideologies among the "Maloh" and other Dayak and Punan peoples and the integration of village-based populations into stratified Malay states based on the control of trade goods parallels the differences between Kachin "egalitarian", non-hereditary *gumlao* and "ranked" hereditary *gumsa* communities and their interrelationships with Shan feudal states. Friedman's observations on the Kachin very much correspond with the model of a social system which I have presented here, given that it is both political and economic relations which serve to articulate ethnic categories and groupings. He says, "Once a Kachin group becomes part of another economic system it is no longer possible to consider it in isolation as a single reproducing society, any more than it is possible to understand one class of a stratified society independently of the larger structure" (1998, p. 238). In his later re-evaluation of his earlier work on the Kachin, he also remarks on the analytical perspective which assumes that "tribal" societies move either in an evolutionary direction from egality to hierarchy or collapse and devolve from a stratified into a non-stratified system. He argues instead that there are "interlocking cycles of expansion, accumulation and

decline in systems dominated by the development of powerful centers" (p. 36).

I suspect that more detailed research on the ethnohistory of the Upper Kapuas region will reveal similar processes at work and that, although I continue to maintain that overall the "Maloh" were stratified, at any one time some communities were more stratified than others depending on internal struggles for power, resources, and prestige in the context of external relations with powerful centres. In some cases, local leaders were able to sustain and even increase their political and economic position and in other cases, they failed to control their followers and became increasingly involved in competitive struggles which were directed to undermining their position and replacing them. Sometimes these actions resulted in individuals and groups becoming something else and changing their ethnic identities. These dynamic processes themselves demanded the deployment of particular ideologies; sometimes a hierarchical view of the world held sway, at other times a more egalitarian ethos was in the ascendant. Yet these processes can only be understood in the context of wider sets of relationships so that the "Maloh" and other ethnic categories and groupings are seen as constituent parts of a social system, articulated by rank, ethnicity, and locality, and not as homogeneous societies in themselves.

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