Punitive Expeditions and Divine Revenge: Oral and Colonial Histories of Rebellion and Pacification in Western Borneo, 1886–1902

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Abstract. I present different accounts of two events in the efforts of Dutch and British colonial authorities to pacify the Iban within their respective territories on the island of Borneo; namely, I present both the Dutch and British reports of the punitive expeditions in 1886 and 1902 against rebellious Iban headhunters and the oral historical narratives of the Iban today. In addition to providing historical and cultural background to Iban resistance to pacification, I spell out the Iban conception of the past and fragmentation of related narratives. The weight that the oral accounts place on these two events is discussed in that light, with the Iban viewing their colonial experience as the struggle of spiritual forces allied with both the Iban and the European.

In their efforts to suppress Iban headhunting along the intercolonial border between Dutch West Borneo and British Sarawak, the colonial powers sent numerous punitive expeditions against these troublesome tribesmen. Two of these expeditions have lodged persistently in Iban oral histories. In 1886, Charles Brooke, the English ruler of Sarawak, launched a massive expedition against "rebel" Iban of the upper Batang Lupar river and, with Dutch approval, across the colonial border into Dutch West Borneo. The destruction visited upon numerous Iban longhouses in the borderlands resulted in the rebels formally submitting to either Brooke or the Dutch. Sixteen years later, in 1902, Brooke again sent an expedition to put down new rebellions in the upper Batang Lupar, but the Dutch did not allow him to cross the border. This time, Brooke forces were struck with a cholera epidemic before reaching their targets, and they were unable to complete their task. Today, the Iban in the Indonesian province of West Kalimantan remember

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the 1886 expedition as *Serang Rata*, "the attack that struck everywhere." They also recall the 1902 incident as one of divine revenge on their enemies who sought to lay the region to waste once again.

It almost goes without saying that oral histories are narratives of the past that have meaning for the people who tell them, rather than for those they are about. Indeed, historical narrative presupposes notions of people's places in time and history, not to mention notions of time and history themselves (Bloch 1996: 229–30). It is never solely about the past so much as it is about one's relationship to it, being neither "out of time" nor morally or pragmatically neutral (Lambek 1996: 240). Oral history is part of a rich, creative, and currently active oral tradition, not one by any means frozen in the past. In contrast, written accounts are, as Vansina puts it, artifacts "quite divorced from time" (1985: 70, 191). However, written accounts are by no means morally neutral and thus carry with them their own sets of culturally appropriate moral orders.

My aim here is to present both colonial and Iban oral accounts of these events and to analyze the differences between the versions, drawing out the important indigenously meaningful twists that separate the oral histories from the colonial accounts. My emphasis is on the cultural significance of the Iban narrative. I first describe the Iban ethnographically and then discuss the troubled relationship between the colonial powers and the Iban (and between the colonial powers themselves). With the general context established, I move on to the colonial accounts of the 1886 and 1902 expeditions, which emphasize the ultimate pacification of whom the English and Dutch regarded as a frustratingly recalcitrant people. Although I present this as "straight history," I accept the observation that "[t]hings are known by their relationships to a system of local knowledge, not simply as objective intuitions" (Sahlins 1995: 169), and that the Europeans who produced the documents for this history were positioned within their own moral universe (e.g., Cooper and Stoler 1997). I do not, however, extensively examine the cultural underpinnings of the colonial accounts. (Indeed, a proper treatment of this must await another effort.)

Iban oral histories of the same events follow the European version, and I provide context for the narratives within Iban cosmology and conceptions of the past. These histories form a powerful narrative that overshadows other, more fragmented accounts. The events of 1886 and 1902 stand out so prominently in Iban historical memory because the destruction and trauma they experienced in 1886 was widespread and seemingly indiscriminate and because colonial fortunes were dramatically reversed in 1902. A reaffirmation of the indigenous moral order within drastically changed political circumstances, a theme that is seen in other colonized societies (e.g., Bricker

1981; Farriss 1984; Peel 1984; van Till 1996; Walker 2001), helps explain the power of this particular narrative.

Ethnographic and Historical Background

The Iban today are a widespread indigenous population in northwestern Borneo, occupying large portions of the Malaysian state of Sarawak, with smaller populations in Sabah, Brunei, and along the border in the Indonesian province of West Kalimantan. In Sarawak, there are over 500,000 Iban, and they make up one-third of the state population. In West Kalimantan they number approximately 14,000 (Wadley and Kuyah 2001). The largest number of Kalimantan Iban inhabit the region along the Sarawak border known to them as the Emperan, a low-lying area between the present international border formed by the watershed in the north and an extensive network of lakes above the Kapuas River in the south. The Emperan Iban are closely related to and maintain extensive contact with those in the upper Batang Lupar River region of Sarawak (known as the Ulu Ai') (see Figure 1).

The Iban have traditionally practiced longhouse domicile, whereby a set of semiautonomous, generally closely related families occupy separate apartments connected into what appears to outsiders as a single structure. The longhouse and the household define the main units in Iban social and ritual organization (e.g., Freeman 1970; Sather 1993). The longhouse community holds generally exclusive material and ritual rights over a geographically defined territory vis-à-vis other neighboring longhouses. Within the community, each household has the responsibility for its own economic production and consumption, but it can rely on aid from the other households in the event of a harvest failure. Although most often described as egalitarian (e.g., Freeman 1981), the Iban place a strong emphasis on personal autonomy and achievement. They are highly competitive with each other for wealth and recognition, which can result in a high degree of inequality between individuals and between households. In the past, there were even named ranks to which both men and women aspired; for example, through headhunting for men and weaving for women (see Mashman 1991; Sather 1996).

The traditional economy of the Iban is based on a complex system of agroforestry, with its central component being the cultivation of rice in hill and swamp swiddens cut from fallowed forest within a longhouse territory. Iban have typically supplemented their subsistence farming with hunting, fishing, and collecting forest products; tapping rubber, cultivating pepper, and wage labor have become more important since the early twentieth cen-

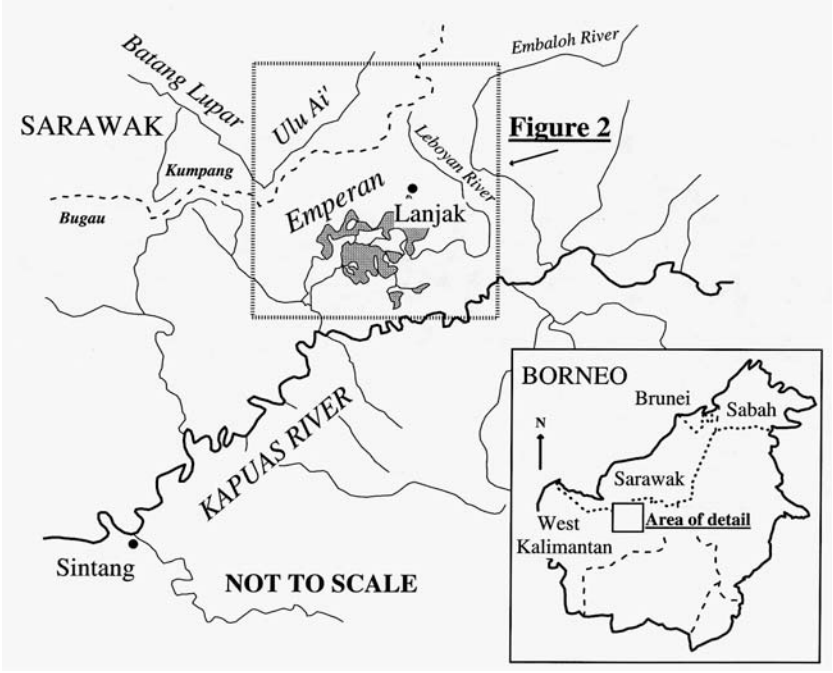

Figure 1. The Upper Kapuas of Dutch West Borneo.

tury. Many households, for example, cultivate rubber as a way to earn cash at times when farm labor is not needed, and forest products such as rattan can be sold or used at home. Wage labor is the modern substitute for long-distance headhunting and forest product collection (Kedit 1993), but it is generally not available locally given that Iban settlements are often isolated. With the heavy involvement of women in the rice production, in addition to their important domestic roles, it is more often the men who go off to work for wages.

The Emperan Iban originated in the upper Batang Lupar River region, or Ulu Ai'. Colonial Dutch accounts place the Iban migration from Sarawak into the Emperan in the early 1800s, but it is likely that they were living in some parts of the area from much earlier times.[1] It was not until the mid-1800s that the Emperan and Ulu Ai' Iban became directly involved with colonial powers—the Dutch in Kalimantan and the Brooke kingdom in Sarawak. Whereas the Dutch colonial government in the Indonesian archipelago was the successor to the Dutch East Indies Company (Fasseur 1979;

Ricklefs 1993), the Brooke Kingdom was founded in 1841 by the British adventurer James Brooke, who sought to extend and support British control of trade routes (Tarling 1982; Walker 2002). His successors continued ruling the kingdom for nearly 80 years: James's nephew, Charles, reigned from 1868 to 1917 and figures prominently in Ulu Ai' and Emperan histories; Charles's son, Vyner, passed on the governance of Sarawak to the British Crown after the Second World War (see Pringle 1970).[2]

Each colonizer had its own economic and political goals and strategies in the region (Irwin 1955), and each brought its particular version of northern European culture and morality. Although both sought the colonially noble goals of "free" trade, peace, and civilization, they went about their pacification projects against the Iban quite differently, as I describe later. Brooke's aspirations and practices often worried and horrified the Dutch (e.g., Niclou 1887), whereas the Brooke dynasty viewed the Dutch as far too bureaucratic and culturally inept at handling native peoples. Together, however, they established an intercolonial border and sought to control the activities of the people it partitioned, all the while mindful of the other's presence.

In an effort to deter possible expansion of Brooke influence into what they regarded as their territory and trade routes, the Dutch began to make their presence felt in the Emperan in the 1850s (Wadley 2001a). The Dutch and Iban first made contact in 1854 in the Lakes area as the former began to administer and make treaties with the various peoples and powers in the upper Kapuas basin. Between 1856 and 1866, the Dutch used Iban as both coolies and mercenaries to suppress Malay and Dayak rebellions elsewhere in the area. In this way they mimicked the sultans of the upper Kapuas Malay states, who made use of Iban warriors against each other, and the Iban responded enthusiastically to the new opportunity to obtain heads, plunder, and glory (Kater 1883; Kielstra 1890; Niclou 1887).[3] After they realized that this merely exacerbated headhunting, the Dutch stopped calling on Iban to help, although they continued to rely on so-called "help troops" from among the various Kapuas Malay states, as well as other Dayaks, to suppress Iban raiding.[4] These "help troops" proved to be more controllable than Iban auxiliaries.

Brooke contact with the Iban came in 1839, when James Brooke began his involvement in the area, especially as he sought to suppress coastal raiding by Iban of the Saribas and Skrang rivers. In this effort, he enlisted the aid of the numerous enemies of the Saribas and Skrang, among whom were other Iban. His nephew and successor, Charles, perfected the use of Iban auxiliaries in bringing other groups such as the Ulu Ai' Iban under state control. Indeed, it was the now-pacified Saribas and Skrang who became

the principal contributors to Brooke expeditions. In 1868, only seven years after his first peaceful encounter with the Ulu Ai' and the year he succeeded his uncle as *raja* (king or ruler), Charles Brooke led the first of many expeditions up the Batang Lupar river (Pringle 1970).

By the time the Ulu Ai' "troubles" began in the late 1860s, Charles Brooke was firmly convinced of his pacification philosophy: "only Dyaks can kill Dyaks" (Brooke 1990 [1866]: 188; Pringle 1970: 237). This meant that government expeditions against rebellious Iban or other native peoples would consist largely of Saribas and Skrang Iban, who had no military training but who possessed a keen desire for headhunting and plunder. It was, in essence, large-scale government-sanctioned and government-led raiding, and as Pringle (Ibid.: 132, 240) points out, this only encouraged further attacks and revenge raiding.[5] Although Brooke justified the use of Iban auxiliaries as the best means to the end, his government was perpetually short of cash, and calling on Iban levies did not cost much (Ibid.: 131, 138). It was not until the 1920s—under the third Brooke Raja—that a system of blockhouses was established to help patrol rebellious areas (Ibid.: 242–3), something the Dutch had instituted in the late 1870s with some success.[6]

Iban relations with the Dutch were in general less confrontational than their relations with the Brookes, but they nonetheless involved some conflict as the Dutch sought to end Iban raiding from their side of the border into Sarawak and other places in West Borneo. As mentioned above, the Dutch employed native "help troops" to accompany military detachments in their efforts to end Iban raiding. These auxiliaries were invariably drawn from people with scores to settle with the Iban. A primary concern of the Dutch was to keep these auxiliary forces small and manageable so that their use did not create further hostilities.[7] Like the Brookes, Dutch forces burned the longhouses, destroyed rice fields, and cut down the fruit trees of recalcitrant Iban. (There was some looting by the help-troops as well.) In contrast to the Brookes, however, their native forces did not engage in indiscriminate headhunting. The Dutch were therefore more selective in meting out punishment, and as a consequence they did not attack communities that were peripheral or uninvolved in raiding, which would have increased resistance to Dutch authority and hostility toward the auxiliaries. The generally undisciplined (largely Iban) Brooke forces probably constituted a greater threat to both hostile and uninvolved communities (cf. Ibid.: 241–2).

Despite their efforts to destroy longhouses, both Brooke and Dutch officials were of the opinion that Iban dwellings were of little value to their inhabitants. They did, however, recognize that although longhouses were

temporary structures, the Iban possessed many things of both economic and religious value; for example, iron implements, boats, fruit trees, rice stocks, sacred rice seed, preserved enemy skulls, and large ceramic jars (e.g., Kater 1867). The destruction or plunder of these by enemy forces was very likely a great blow to Iban economic and religious/cosmological well-being, and a great boost to (especially) Brooke prestige and spiritual power (Walker 2001). Both James and Charles Brooke were conscious of native beliefs and took advantage of that knowledge (e.g., Brooke 1990 [1866]: 36, 180–1; Walker 1998, 2002). Likewise, the Dutch were expressly aware of the importance of native ritual objects and even went so far as to seize the regalia of some native kingdoms elsewhere in the archipelago in their pacification campaigns (e.g., Chabot 1996: 119; Friedericy 1933; Kooreman 1883).

Taxes, headhunting, and migration were generally at the heart of Iban clashes with both Brooke and Dutch governments. Various Iban groups along the lower reaches of Sarawak's rivers had occasionally paid a "door tax" (the tax on households that Malays collected in the name of the Sultan of Brunei), and when James Brooke arrived, he instituted a similar tax (Pringle 1970: 87). Later, under the second Brooke raja, Iban paid a door tax of one dollar per household per year. This was one dollar less than what other people paid because the Iban were obligated to serve on Brooke expeditions. The Iban were very sensitive to tax increases and came to regard the one-dollar door tax as customary and inviolable (Ibid.: 162–4).

The Dutch also taxed their Iban subjects, but they did not appear to collect taxes regularly. In 1854 they imposed a tax of one guilder or 100 ironwood shingles per household (Kater 1883: 3).[8] By the late 1860s, the Emperan Iban paid *hasil* (a direct and fixed tax on households) to Malay agents of the Dutch government.[9] A decade later, after repeated efforts to stop raiding, the Dutch imposed a new tax of two guilders per household. All parties involved—Iban, Dutch, and Brooke—realized that taxes symbolized the authority of the state over the Iban. The Dutch pointed out that in Sarawak, taxes were regularly demanded by and paid to the government, and that the Iban respected Sarawak's government more than that of the Dutch.[10] As a Dutch resident observed, "The Dayak recognizes no authority than that to which he brings taxes" (Ibid.). This meant, of course, that the clearest sign of impending rebellion was the refusal to pay taxes (Pringle 1970: 164).

Headhunting was a second bone of contention between the Iban and colonial governments. The Iban regarded severed heads as essential to their way of life for several reasons. Human heads were needed to lift mourning taboos,[11] and young men were ever eager to prove themselves worthy of

marriage through the acquisition of a head or two (e.g., Ibid.: 21–25: 197; Kater 1883: 2–3; von Kessel 1850). In addition, one avenue to leadership in Iban society was through the organization of raiding parties. Greater prestige accrued to men (*tau' serang*) who had the proper dreams to lead large forces of warriors. They had claim on any heads taken in such attacks and were able to distribute plunder among their followers. With influence and authority resting on the number of people under one's sway, Iban leaders were hard pressed to prevent their warriors from raiding, despite repeated promises to colonial officials to do so. There were military reasons for raiding as well, such as the intimidation of enemies. For their part, the colonial powers were determined to stamp out the practice, but appeared to be more divided about its morality. Charles Brooke "could not severely blame them for head-hunting. It was an old established custom of their forefathers, and they considered it their duty to maintain it" (Brooke 1990 [1866]: 144). The Dutch were less romantic, regarding it as detestable, horrible, and standing in the way of peace and development (e.g., Kater 1883: 2–3, 6; Niclou 1887). Both authorities, however, occasionally gave tacit and even direct approval to Iban raiding if it appeared to be for "defensive" purposes (Pringle 1970: 228, 238, 257),[12] probably because neither government could fully protect vulnerable communities or maintain control of the Iban who were well disposed to their rule.

The freedom to migrate to new lands was as important to the Iban as headhunting and avoiding taxes. Some have argued that the local ecology and swidden farming practices did not allow for sustained use as the human population increased, thus spurring migration (see Cramb 1989 for a review). However, a more critical factor might have been Iban ideology.[13] Along with being a successful warrior, success in farming and pioneering was a way for a man to acquire prestige and authority. Furthermore, one way to resist colonial authority was to move to more inaccessible places. As noted earlier, many of the Emperan Iban were recent migrants from the Ulu Ai' when the Dutch first entered the area, and Brooke punitive expeditions and the increased raiding directly and indirectly spurred the numerous migrations in the mid- to late 1800s (e.g., Pringle 1970: 78, 216, 245, 272). The Brooke government expended much energy dealing with Iban migrations (Ibid.), as did the Dutch, though to a lesser extent (King 1976; Wadley 2000, 2001a). The events of 1886 and 1902 occurred within these just-described general conditions.

The European Versions of Events

Unwilling to submit to the distant Sarawak government, Ulu Ai' Iban, led by Ngumbang (a renowned war leader in the Ulu Ai' and Emperan)

and others, continued to raid and refused to pay the door tax to Sarawak (Pringle 1970: 216).[14] In 1868 Brooke led an expedition against Ngumbang and the other Ulu Ai'. Some of the force strayed across the ill-defined and unmarked border into Dutch territory, burning four longhouses and killing three people. The result was not what the Brooke government had hoped for, as Ngumbang subsequently attacked the newly established government post at Lubok Antu (Kater 1883: 9–10). The Dutch were also acquainted with Ngumbang, as he was continually enlisting his relatives living on their territory for raiding elsewhere, and he had even moved across the border after the Brooke attacks.[15] In 1875 Brooke sent two large expeditions against the Ulu Ai' with no more success (Pringle 1970: 217), and the Dutch took similar measures against the Iban living on their side of the border on several occasions during the late 1870s. The Dutch also established military posts to protect the local inhabitants and to guard the border area against Sarawak Iban raiding. In addition, they posted detachments and armed boats along the Kapuas to protect the settlements there from Iban attack. It seems, however, that whenever Dutch officials declared the Iban problem solved, there would only be renewed raiding.[16]

This pattern of raiding across both sides of the border continued into the early 1880s. At the time, the Dutch argued that the Sarawak government was to blame for not preventing their Iban from raiding across the border (Kater 1883: 9–13), whereas the Brooke government felt that the problem lay in the Dutch failure to use the kind of strong measures that Sarawak regarded as successful (Pringle 1970: 217–8; Baring-Gould and Bampfylde 1989 [1909]: 380). By late 1885, Brooke had convinced the Dutch to allow a Sarawak expedition to cross the border and deal a blow to the Iban who were troubling both governments. In giving permission, the Dutch stipulated that the attack be only against those Iban living in specified areas along the border. They also requested notification of the expedition's advance so that they could restrain the "well-disposed" Iban from aiding those being attacked. These friendly settlements lying to the west of the target area, as well as the Iban living near the abandoned fortification at Lanjak, were not to be attacked.[17]

With this permission in hand, Brooke assembled a force of 10,000–12,000 men, consisting mainly of Iban from "pacified" areas of Sarawak. On 9 March 1886, they set off in some 325 boats on what became known in the English-language accounts as the Kedang Expedition. Charles Brooke himself commanded the expedition. Once within "enemy" territory, they proceeded to burn the longhouses they encountered, all of which had been abandoned at least a day earlier. Small parties of hostile warriors constantly shadowed the force as it advanced, but no skirmishes occurred along the way. Once a base camp was set up on the Dutch side of the border,

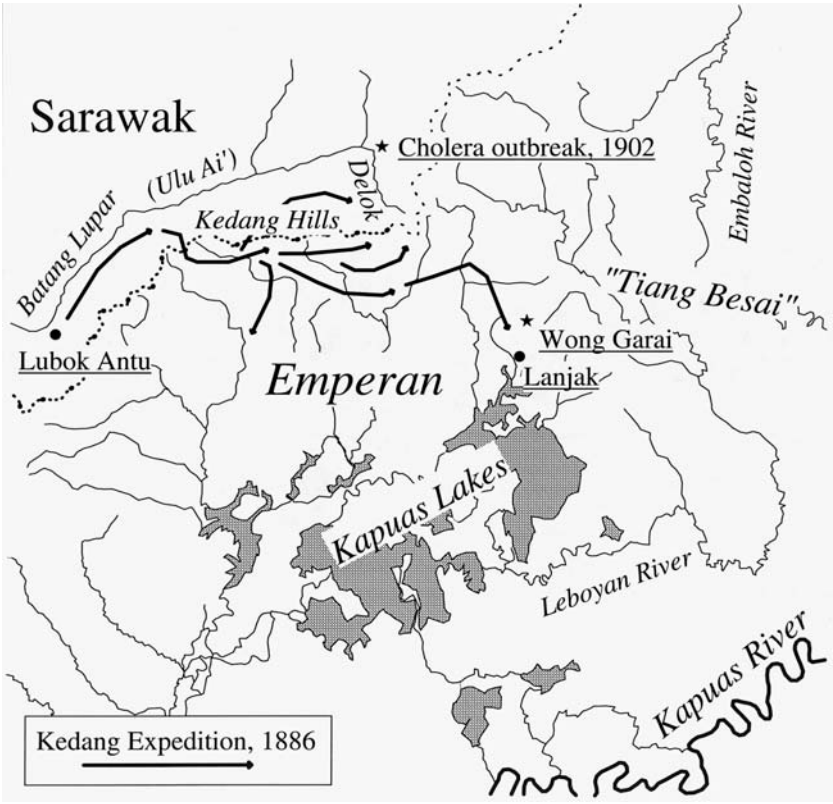

Figure 2. The Emperan of Dutch West Borneo and the Ulu Ai' of Sarawak.

Brooke divided the force into four divisions, each with its own destination (Figure 2). The first division was to proceed to Lanjak, the second was sent along the Kedang hills to the Delok river, and the third over the Kedang hills to the north. The fourth remained around the base camp sending out regular patrols in the immediate area. Each force consisted of about 2,500 men under either Malay or Iban leadership, and their task was to burn longhouses and slash rice fields.

Plunder—in the form of rice stocks, domesticated animals, and valued heirlooms abandoned by the enemy—was daily brought back to camp. A few human heads also ended up there. By the time the expedition began its return march after eighteen days, the four divisions had burned some eighty longhouses on both sides of the border, carried off countless items

of plunder, and killed about twenty of the "rebels." There was little in the way of actual combat. Only five Iban auxiliaries were killed in an ambush while on patrol. The division sent to Lanjak encountered a detachment of Javanese soldiers protecting a friendly longhouse, but no hostilities occurred (Niclou 1887: 60–66; Baring-Gould and Bampfylde 1989 [1909]: 384; Pringle 1970: 219).

For their part, the Dutch had been sent scrambling during the expedition. On 10 March the Dutch resident in Pontianak received a letter from Brooke (dated 25 February) announcing the expedition, but by this time it was too late, as the attack had begun on 12 March and the resident was several days travel away from the Emperan. The Dutch *controleur* in the Upper Kapuas received a letter (dated 3 March) from a Sarawak official on 12 March,[18] and with a detachment of soldiers he rushed to protect what longhouses he could. The resident arrived in a few days with soldiers and was able to protect the longhouse of their district headman at Lanjak. Once the expedition had returned to Sarawak, the Dutch counted forty-one burned longhouses on their territory, thirteen of which were considered friendly. There were also sixteen persons killed including some women and children.[19]

In the following months, Ulu Ai' leaders tendered their submission to Brooke, as did Emperan leaders to the Dutch. The Dutch gave their Iban two conditions for submission: First, those Iban leaders who still had valuable ceramic jars had to provide one as a token of their submission and promise to stop raiding, and second, all Iban communities affected by the expedition (even those regarded as friendly) were to move away from the border and closer to the lakes so that they could be better watched and protected. Anyone who refused would have their houses burned and crops destroyed. As might be expected, there were a few hold-outs, and the Dutch either forced their submission or drove them across the border. Some were arrested as well (see below). On the Sarawak side, Ngumbang, along with others, formally submitted in May 1886, although he supposedly blamed Emperan Iban for causing the troubles in the first place. He and the others resettled away from the border,[20] and he even helped the Sarawak government burn some of his own followers' longhouses because they refused to submit (Ibid.: 219).[21]

After this there were several years of relative calm in the region, but trouble began to brew in 1890 when Ulu Ai' Iban started to move into prohibited areas near the border. (On the Dutch side, Iban farming near the border was occasionally but tacitly allowed after 1890 [Enthoven 1903: 227].) Conflict erupted in 1896 when the Sarawak resident sent a force of downriver Iban against an Ulu Ai' man named Bantin who had moved into

a prohibited area of the Delok river some years earlier (see Baring-Gould and Bampfylde 1989 [1909]: 385–90; and Pringle 1970: 220–46 for detailed accounts). This led to revenge raiding and further Sarawak punitive expeditions well into 1897. There was a temporary reconciliation until 1901, when fresh killings and revenge attacks took place. At this point Brooke prepared to launch a major expedition against Bantin and his rebels.

In June 1902, a large force of some 12,000 downriver Iban assembled in 815 boats. By the time the expedition established camp at the confluence of the Delok and the Ulu Ai' rivers, the hot, rainless weather had shrunk the watercourses considerably. Cholera had been detected in the force even from the start of its journey, and the unsanitary conditions of so many people collected together resulted in a rapid outbreak of the disease.[22] Most of the "government" Iban fled downriver, dying along the way and carrying the disease back to their own longhouses. Only a small force remained to burn down a few longhouses. As many as a thousand Iban may have died in the outbreak (Baring-Gould and Bampfylde 1989 [1909]: 388–9; Pringle 1970: 225–6). In some oral accounts, Ulu Ai' leaders were warned in dreams not to take the heads of the victims who were left to die, and so the inhabitants of the area were entirely spared the disease (Pringle: 227). The general tendency to flee epidemics (not to mention punitive expeditions) would have kept the locals away as well (e.g., Knapen 1998).[23]

Ngumbang, who had cooperated with the Raja since the devastation of 1886, joined with Bantin. Together with closely related Iban in the upper Rejang River, they threw the region into a state of chaos, particularly on the Sarawak side of the border as their raids targeted Iban allied with the government. Brooke sent four more expeditions against the rebels between 1902 and 1904, but it was not until 1909, after attempts at peacemaking in 1907 and another major expedition in 1908, that Ngumbang and Bantin paid previous fines and ended their raiding. Bantin subsequently moved to Dutch territory (Pringle 1970: 227–33).

During this time of unrest, the Dutch tried with varying degrees of success to keep their Iban from joining with the Ulu Ai' rebels. In 1902, at the start of the Cholera Expedition and with the Kedang Expedition in mind, the Dutch sent soldiers to various places along the border to prevent the expedition from crossing and attacking Emperan settlements. They responded similarly to the other expeditions against Bantin, and sent regular patrols to prevent the Emperan Iban from joining the raiding. The Dutch resident noted that memory of the destruction in 1886 kept the Emperan Iban "docile" and willing to follow colonial commands.[24] Curiously, the Dutch were on surprisingly good terms with Bantin, and he formally submitted to their authority in 1917 after threatening rebel-

lion when the government forcibly resettled several recalcitrant longhouses away from the border. The controleur gave him a choice—either submit to Dutch authority or move back to Sarawak.[25] In the years after this, small-scale raiding continued, and one final rebellion occurred against Sarawak in the early 1930s, but by and large the era of unrest was over, and the continual threat of large raiding forces and punitive expeditions diminished.

The Emperan Iban Versions of Events

Today Emperan Iban often make the claim that before the arrival of Raja Brooke and the Dutch there was always war (although this runs counter to the above historical evidence that the Brooke state actually exacerbated raiding). They say that the European powers imposed fines if anyone made war, and most Iban are of the opinion that the colonial governments were not wrong in wanting to bring peace to the area. With all the raiding, they say, there was no way to farm safely, people were killed, and longhouses burned to the ground. In short, the land was in a perpetual state of disruption. Indeed, most stories from this period are of raiding and war heroes.

Melding the historical with the mythical, Iban claim that their distant and not-so-distant ancestors (*urang kelia'*) were half-human and half-spirit (*setengah mensia, setengah antu*). The man known to them as Raja Brooke is similarly regarded, being half-European and half-spirit. In some accounts, two of the Iban's most important mythic figures, Kumang and Keling, were his mother and father. Raja Brooke is also portrayed as a composite figure of all three "white rajas," but appears especially derived from the first two, James and Charles, who had the greatest effect on the region. As Pringle (Ibid.: 189) notes, Brooke and his officers "were not regarded as common men, of course; they were epic figures. Ibanized versions of their names appeared in songs and stories, and are recalled to this day." For the Iban, Raja Brooke was the ultimate "man of prowess," one who concentrates, preserves, and distributes spiritual power (see Walker 2001, 2002; Wolters 1999).[26]

In contrast, the Iban did not view Dutch officials who administered the adjacent border area in a similar light. Most Dutch officials either did not serve long in West Borneo or were not posted to one district for the duration of their careers. (Being part of a larger empire allowed the Dutch to rotate officials, something that Brooke's perpetually cash-strapped state could not afford to do.) In the Emperan, there was a regular turnover of officials, such that there was never any time for the Iban to build strong memories of individuals. When they recall the Dutch, they do so by referring to *urang Belanda* (Hollander), rarely to any particular individuals. Dur-

ing the colonial period itself, even the Dutch were well aware that the Iban respected the Raja more than them.[27] The essential contrast was that the Brookes had a personal, very local rule (something the Iban understood well), whereas the Dutch were more bureaucratically oriented in their administration.

With regard to the events of 1886 and 1902 described earlier, local memory is particularly vivid, though details do vary. As in the European accounts, Ngumbang is the most prominent Iban figure. People recall that it was because of his refusal to pay the taxes demanded by Raja Brooke that the troubles began (although his refusal to stop headhunting is also mentioned). They say Brooke imposed an annual "door tax" of seven *pasu* (127 liters) of rice to be paid by each household or door in a longhouse. (Some accounts give one pasu per door.) However, the government baskets used to collect the rice actually had hollow legs, so that the people would end up paying more than the official amount.[28] When the Sarawak government tax collectors came to collect from Ngumbang, he took his sword and split the basket in half to reveal the deception. Other Ulu Ai' longhouses joined Ngumbang in a general rebellion.

One significant result of the ensuing conflict between the Ulu Ai' Iban and Raja Brooke was what the Emperan Iban recall as Serang Rata, the attack that struck everywhere or the attack that did not discriminate. In most of its details, this obviously corresponds to the Kedang Expedition of 1886. The area within the Emperan between the Seriang river and Lanjak was worst hit, and there, it is said, many people were killed.[29] The longhouse of a Dutch-appointed leader was torched even though it flew a Dutch flag. Just east of Lanjak, a number of communities were also attacked, although the longhouse of another appointed leader was spared as Dutch soldiers protected it. The people of Wong Garai (a pseudonym), where my original fieldwork was based, say that just before the raiders attacked their longhouse, their ancestors first saw the smoke from a longhouse on a nearby ridge after the raiders burned it. They fled before the raiders arrived, but a young girl came perilously close to being captured. As she ran from one end of the longhouse, the raiders entered from the other.

However, she and all the others escaped unharmed. As they fled into the forest, they could hear the beating of their own brass gongs as the raiders celebrated their victory. Nearly every longhouse that was attacked was systematically plundered and destroyed. Few inhabitants had any time to hide or carry away valuables. (Raiders would also scour surrounding forests to find hidden heirlooms.) At Wong Garai, as elsewhere, they had just completed the rice harvest and were drying the new crop before storage. Their heirloom ceramic jars, brass gongs, and drums were stolen or

smashed; their pigs, chickens, and goats were killed, roasted, and eaten; and their freshly brewed rice wine, in preparation for upcoming ritual, was either thrown out or drunk by the raiders. All their preserved enemy skulls were taken or destroyed. After reaching the easternmost Iban settlements (Wong Garai being one), the raiders turned back to Sarawak.

As the Brooke force pursued Ngumbang, the *Urang Panggau* (a general category of ancestor hero-spirits that includes Keling and Kumang)[30] helped him by covering the trails and surrounding trees with *ulat bulu raja rigo'*, a hairy caterpillar with a poisonous sting. The Raja's warriors turned back when confronted with the prickly swarms. Because of this, they were not able to complete their task, the destruction of all settlements from the Ulu Ai' to the *Tiang Besai* ("large support post"). The latter were the Embaloh (non-Iban) settlements to the east of Wong Garai, called tiang besai because they were substantial, permanent structures standing on huge ironwood posts. Because he was not able to reach and destroy the Tiang Besai as well as fully eliminate Ngumbang's forces, Raja Brooke launched another attack not long after Serang Rata. This expedition, however, met with catastrophe in an event corresponding to the Cholera Expedition of 1902.

In most versions of the event, Brooke forces ascended the Batang Lupar river in such numbers that war boats stretched for miles. In response to this threat, Ngumbang asked his wife to make an offering for him, and he lay down to sleep with a flag given to him by the Urang Panggau draped over his head. As he dreamed, a spirit came to him and told him not to run and not to be afraid as he or she would help him.[31] On hearing of the approach of the expedition, all the Ulu Ai' people fled with their valuables into the forests, but Ngumbang stayed alone in his longhouse, assured that he would be safe.

When the force reached the Delok river, they encountered something that varies slightly with each version of the story. In some versions, one or two *nabau* (mythical water serpents) appeared in the water alongside the boats. Other versions hold that barrel-sized sections (*lumpong*) of a nabau floated downstream, sometimes bleeding as if they had been chopped off a living nabau, sometimes with intricate designs (*ukir*) indicating supernatural origins. One version has it that the nabau or its severed lumpong were actually Kumang herself. Whatever the version, the result is the same: The Brooke warriors chopped at the nabau with their swords or struck the lumpong with their oars. After they drank the water contaminated by the nabau blood, all fell ill with cholera and began to die (*parai mutah bira'*). In their desperate flight downriver to escape, the warriors carried the epidemic to their longhouses, infecting their wives and children. Corpses were piled on the river banks, but the Ulu Ai' did not take their heads, having

been warned by Ngumbang. In addition, no one could drink from the river for three months afterward because of its putrid smell, providing the Ulu Ai' name for this expedition, *Bala But*, the rotting force.

During this conflict between Ngumbang and Raja Brooke, as noted earlier, it is said that the spirit-woman, Kumang, helped Brooke and that Keling (Kumang's husband) aided Ngumbang. (In some accounts, Ngumbang is also helped by Kumang or other spirits from among the Urang Panggau.) One story holds that Raja Brooke climbed alone to the summit of Bukit Seratubong near his capital at Kuching, ascended a strangler fig tree (which has widespread associations with the supernatural), and was given betel nut to chew by Kumang, a sign of her favor and of Brooke's ultimate victory over the Iban.

There are three important points here: First, Kumang sides with the ultimate winner (Brooke) while her husband, Keling, sides with those who are eventually defeated (or Kumang switches sides). In most legends about these two heroes, it is Keling who is invariably portrayed as the superior one, while Kumang is continually finding herself in difficulty because of her own carelessness. Regional variation in Iban culture may explain this reversal. In the Saribas, an area from which Brooke drew many of his warriors for expeditions against the Ulu Ai', warriors were more commonly aided by Kumang than Keling (C. Sather, personal communication) in contrast to the Emperan and Ulu Ai' Iban.[32] There are also Saribas stories of Brooke meeting with Kumang and even seducing her. This suggests that the association of Kumang and Brooke might have already been established among the Saribas Iban, even before the troubles with the Ulu Ai' began.

Second, in one narrative, Brooke is said to be the offspring of these two ancestral spirits; yet here one or the other of his "parents" aid the enemy. This discrepancy may stem from two things: The use of Keling and Kumang, as a married couple, establishes Brooke's "spirit" credentials, which are also used for other Iban heroes. This ancestry then justifies his exceptional success. It also explains the heroic struggle of Ngumbang, for how could he have resisted Raja Brooke without the aid of a powerful spirit? (When I asked about these discrepancies, people simply said Kumang and Keling were spirits [*agi' antu*], implying that the ways of spirits are inexplicable.)

A third element is Brooke's mountaintop vision quest and meeting with Kumang. The use of the vision quest or *nampok* was common among war leaders. Typically, a man would go out alone to spend a night on a ridge top with the appropriate offerings, seeking aid from ancestral spirits in the form of courage or invulnerability. Should he flee out of fright, it is said, he would become insane or suffer a fatal accident. That Brooke is said to have

had a successful nampok, not to mention the claim of his spiritual ancestry, is testament to how thoroughly he has been incorporated into Iban culture. Indeed, given the first two rajas' deep knowledge of native culture and their long association with the Iban, both might well have encouraged such stories as an aid to their power (V. Sutlive, personal communication; see also Walker 2002).

As to the 1902 incident, what became of Bantin in the native accounts? In some stories, he is accorded a minor role, but Ngumbang is the principal protagonist, as in the Serang Rata stories. It is perhaps significant that Bantin was not a tau' serang (war leader), a rank that required special dreams to organize successful attacks with large forces. Bantin's raiding was often conducted under the nominal authority of one who was (Pringle 1970: 220; see Sandin 1994: 300). After Ngumbang's defection to the rebels after 1902, Bantin would have rallied his forces in Ngumbang's name, the likely source of the latter's preeminence in oral histories.[33]

These Iban narratives contain an obvious political edge. The divine revenge in the form of the nabau visited on the Brooke force is a clear statement of power and morality. Indeed, the appearance of nabau is a recurring theme in Iban accounts of their troubles with colonial authorities. Sutlive (1988: 34) points out that the nabau is a prominent feature in the Iban "theology of hope," and given the circumstances under which they manifest themselves, nabau are also part of the Iban theology of resistance. One well-known case is that of the Bong Kap Encounter in 1904, when a force of Iban rebels was routed by Brooke forces while on a raid. The huge rebel war boat called Bong Kap (built by an ally of Bantin) was sunk in the fight, but is said to have reappeared later as a nabau thrashing in the water (Pringle 1970: 228 n. 1; Sandin 1994: 203).

It is also significant that the Urang Panggau may manifest themselves as snakes, as Kumang is associated with the highly poisonous banded krait (*Bungarus fasciatus*), which is consistent with her transformation as a nabau. In addition, war leaders or other prominent men are often said to return after death as spirit-animals such as orangutans or crocodiles. Thereafter, the descendants of such men are forbidden to eat the meat of the actual animals (e.g., Wadley et al. 1997). Not surprisingly, Ngumbang, it is said, turned into a nabau upon his death. The same is told of Bantin. Indeed, a Dutch official heard the story soon after Bantin's death in 1933.[34] The heroes of resistance thus became transformed into the supernatural embodiments of that struggle. The political force of the nabau story, however, is muted by the fact that the Iban ultimately submitted to the authority of the colonial state, although they do not appear to retain any narratives of their formal submission.

Iban Histories in Context

For the Iban, the past is, in some ways, dualistic. There is the present (*diato'*), which includes the recent past within the memories of living individuals. The past beyond the memories of living individuals, the ancestral past, is referred to as *kelia'* or *kelia' dulo'*. This is a vaguely defined realm that includes the early memories of very old living people and those transmitted from generations past, where time becomes most strongly telescoped (Vansina 1965: 102; cf. Rosaldo 1980: 55). As the spirits of the recently dead join those of the long-dead, the boundary between diato' and kelia' continually shifts (Wadley 1999). An important element of the past is its close association with ancestral spirits and the establishment of *adat*, or the Iban moral order. People say that kelia' was the time when spirits and humans had regular contact (*agi' mabo' antu*), unlike today, when that association seems distant and, to some, even nonexistent. In some ways, this mirrors the separation between this world and the realm inhabited by the ancestors in Iban cosmology (see Sather 1994: 30). The purported appearance of ancestor gods in rituals or the Urang Panggau in dreams implies neither a nonlinear view of history nor a temporary "suspension" of time at such events. For the Emperan Iban today, these supernatural beings do not exist simultaneously in the past and the present even during rituals, but rather persist into the here and now just as the mundane world does.

The Iban record and transmit historical memory, and thus situate themselves historically, in several interrelated ways. Descent lines (*tusut*) trace ambilineal ancestry and provide the most obvious connection to the past. Although most people in the Emperan remember their tusut up to five generations back, there are exceptional individuals who have memorized tusut going back into mythical times.[35] Such tusut will invariably connect a large number of people, and they include "highly compressed narrative elements," particularly about the earliest and most mythical generations (Ibid.: 51–52). The ancestors recalled in tusut often appear in oral narratives, songs, and chants. Oral narratives encompass a mixture of myth, legend, and historical or eyewitness accounts, most with an emphasis on pioneering migration and raiding. Songs range from improvisations to those fixed in structure and content, telling of love and war or calling for curing. Chants include major invocations that bards sing at rituals and lamentations sung in mourning (see Ibid. for a detailed description). The Serang Rata-Bala But narratives fall within a genre known as *jerita lama'*, or old stories (which include family histories), though elements may appear in songs and chants.

The local landscape provides an immediately visible connection to the

past. Iban "historicize the landscape" (Sather 1990: 37) in their maintenance of long-lived inherited fruit trees, forest cemeteries, old longhouse sites, and fallowed swidden plots. While these places furnish economically valuable forest products, they also serve to situate the ancestral past for the living (see Peluso 1996; cf. Bloch 1993: 37). Inherited fruit trees directly relate to *tusut* and to the set of people descended from the first owner or planter, as do fallowed swidden sites to pioneering ancestors. Old longhouse sites mark community migrations and significant events. (Indeed, Iban in the area struck by Serang Rata point to the sites where their ancestors' longhouses burned, occasionally being moved to tears.) Forest cemeteries quite literally hold community ancestors, and other sacred sites situate mythical events found in narratives and chants. For the Iban, the narratives of the past drawn from these sources emphasize warfare, migration, and farming.

The Iban concern is not, of course, in sequential history as Westerners perceive it, but in history that makes sense culturally or that is, to paraphrase Bloch (Ibid.: 34), morally appropriate. Indeed, what could make more sense than for the Brooke forces to be so effectively stopped in their attempt to complete the task they left unfinished in the Serang Rata? The Kedang and Cholera Expeditions become explicitly linked in a moral sequence, and with the Tiang Besai included as Brooke's targets, the narrative effectively emphasizes the capricious destruction the Iban experienced. It may also deflect a certain degree of culpability by asserting that the Iban were not the only targets—that Raja Brooke had a wider devastation in mind.

Significantly, three Brooke expeditions before 1886 crossed the border (in 1868, 1869, and 1875),[36] resulting in fifteen longhouses burned and six people killed. However, there are no specific memories of these events. In addition, there were three other punitive expeditions against Bantin and the Ulu Ai' (in 1896, 1897, and 1898) before the Bala But, although none of these expeditions directly affected the Emperan because the attackers did not cross the border. (At the time, though, they certainly caused consternation among the Emperan Iban, simply because of fear of a repetition of 1886.) Even the various large and small Dutch expeditions in the Emperan are not part of this narrative. They, along with the other Brooke expeditions, fall into the general context of the times and have no specific referents. The events of 1886 and 1902 are of such moral importance that narratives of other events throughout this period are overshadowed. Other incidents, known from the European accounts, are either not remembered locally or are described in such general terms that it is hard to place them historically. There was so much raiding, counterraiding, and government

intervention through expeditions that this period is referred to as the time of war (*musin kayau*) or the time of disruption (*musin kacau*). Other narrated events within the same period are often "decontextualized," such that in the absence of European accounts that match local accounts, it is impossible to tell when such things may have occurred.

One account of Iban troubles with the Dutch illustrates this problem. According to elders at Wong Garai, an ancestor named Ngulan, along with Rantai, Giling, and Empitu, set off to make a raid on the Bugau people to the west of the Emperan.[37] On the way, the Dutch stopped and arrested them. They were jailed in Sintang but managed to escape with the help of a sympathetic guard, although Giling and Empitu were shot and killed during the attempt. The other two fled upriver using a stolen canoe, rowing upriver by night and hiding during the day out of fear of meeting with any enemies. This event was told as a snippet or fragment separated from other such short narratives, and there was no certain way to place it in general sequence with other narratives.

Fortunately, the Dutch recorded the incident because it was directly related to the aftermath of the Kedang Expedition. Five months after the Brooke attack in 1886, a Dutch patrol captured five men—Empitu, Ngulan, Aing, Jayan, and Bayak (the latter two being described as sons of Empitu)—who were out on a raid. Empitu was a wanted man because he had failed to formally submit to Dutch authority after the Kedang Expedition. During questioning Empitu said he had no wish to submit to the Dutch when he still had revenge to take on Sarawak for the deaths of his wife and two children. It was further revealed that less than a month before, Empitu had set off to attack the Kumpang Iban in Sarawak but turned back after having a bad dream. All five men were subsequently sent to Sintang, where they were tried. Three were sentenced to death, and a fourth was given hard labor.[38] There is no record of the execution, an escape, or the fate of the fifth man.

The contrast between these two accounts is instructive: First, there is the absence in the Iban version of any link between the Kedang Expedition and Ngulan's attempted raid, even though it was Ngulan's great-grandson who told me the story. (This is why Ngulan is the focus of the native account rather than Empitu in the Dutch report.) Then there is the reason for their arrest. In the Dutch version, it is because they refused to submit and had twice attempted a raid into Sarawak to take revenge for what happened during the Kedang Expedition. In the Iban account, the men were going to raid the Bugau, an area to the west of the target in the Dutch account but on the Dutch side of the border. It is probably because there was so much raiding and disruption from raiding during this

time that the Iban version is placed within this larger scene rather than being linked with more closely related events.[39] This underscores the "free-floating" nature of these narrative fragments; they are easily displaced from one another within a larger, more amorphous context.

That other events within the colonial period have been forgotten or are decontextualized is not surprising. On the one hand, many events are passed along as family histories, the narratives of which are notoriously subject to fragmentation and forgetting (especially given a high degree of individual and household mobility [see Carsten 1995; Vansina 1965: 157, 1985: 18–9]). On the other hand, oral histories routinely elevate certain events over others in importance and conflate different events, thereby providing more moral force for the local audience (see Walker 2001; cf. Sandin 1994: 183). Serang Rata and Bala But become inextricably connected in a way that is simply not possible in the colonial accounts. Although colonially Bantin's rebellion might be seen as consequence of resettlement following the Kedang Expedition, the Emperan versions ignore this. Serang Rata and Bala But take on such importance in Emperan Iban historical narratives because of the widespread, almost indiscriminate, trauma that the Brooke forces unleashed in 1886 and because those same forces, on their way to complete their task of destruction and again lay waste to the region, were annihilated in 1902 through divine intervention.

This narrative dramatically underscores the vital connection between historical events and cosmology for the Iban, as for many other colonized societies (e.g., Ballard 2000; Bricker 1981; Farriss 1984; Peel 1984). Things do not, indeed they cannot, occur by happenstance, just as material causes alone are insufficient devices for explanation (Wadley 2001b). This is complementary to the notion that "[p]eople act upon circumstances according to their own cultural presuppositions" (Sahlins 1981: 67), although these presuppositions themselves are historically shaped (e.g., Vandergeest 1993). Thus, people view and narrate the past based on their notions of what is important culturally. Moral neutrality in history simply does not fit with Iban conceptions of what matters most. In this light, the Iban interpretation of the events of 1886 and 1902 continues to make sense today as this narrative serves to reaffirm a cosmology and moral order challenged and shaken by the violence of colonial pacification.

Notes

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1 See Wadley (2000) for an extended treatment of settlement history.
2 The Brooke legacy lives on in popular Western "Orientalist" imaginings. For example, Joseph Conrad extracted significant portions of Charles Brooke's *Ten Years in Sarawak* (1990 [1866]) to create his still-read novel, *Lord Jim*, and a recent writer chose to recast the Brooke tale in the popular novel *Kalimantaan* (Godshalk 1998). A comparison of Iban and Western imagination surrounding the Brooke dynasty would be of considerable value but is beyond the scope of this article. One important contrast to mention, however, is that for Westerners, the notion of a European "going native" remains titillating, even scandalous, but for the Iban, it is part of their historical and religious identity. For Westerners, "Brooke" is a distant, foreign conception; for the Iban, he is immediate and part of who they are.
3 Algemeen Rijksarchief, Ministerie van Koloniën (hereafter ARA), Memorie van Overgave van den Gezaghebber van Semitau, 2 Maart 1930–14 September 1934, by J. E. L. Burgemeestre (KIT 999), Appendix: "Onze Verhouding tot Sarawak en de Batang Loepar-Bevolking: Nota van den Gezaghebber van Semitau," 9. Hereafter "Onze Verhouding" by Burgemeestre (1934).
4 ARA, Mailrapport (hereafter MR) 1877, Nos. 43, 47, and 65; 1878, No. 219.
5 Walker (2001) notes that had the Brooke auxiliaries been forbidden to take heads, they would not have joined in the expeditions and subsequently would have taken up raiding elsewhere. The Brookes were thus under pressure to provide legitimate headhunting opportunities for their subjects.
6 The Iban population in Dutch West Borneo was substantially smaller than that of Sarawak, and they lived in an area that was more accessible (especially during the rainy season, when the lake and river levels are high) to Dutch steamers than the upriver areas of Sarawak were to the Brooke state (Pringle 1970: 240–2; King 1976: 102 n. 65; Wadley 2001a: 637).
7 ARA, MR 1878, No. 219.
8 ARA, MR 1877, No. 440.
9 ARA, Geheim Kabinetsverbaal, 30 September 1870, J13, No. 37.
10 ARA, MR 1877, Nos. 182 and 440.
11 In the years following pacification, both Brooke and Dutch officials kept confiscated human heads that could be borrowed by communities needing to lift mourning taboos (e.g., Bouman 1924: 188).
12 ARA, MR 1873, No. 206.
13 It is important to note that Iban have been farming (and still do) in places like the Saribas and Batang Lupar basins for a long time without appreciable degradation of the landscape (Cramb 1993).
14 According to a Dutch report at the time, Ngumbang's rebellion stemmed from an increase in the head tax, rather than the initial imposition of taxes as Pringle suggests (ARA, Geheim Kabinetsverbaal, 30 September 1870, J13, No. 37).

15 ARA, MR 1871, No. 649; Geheim Kabinetsverbaal, 31 December 1873, Z34.
16 ARA, MR 1874, Nos. 420 and 579; 1877, Nos. 43, 47, and 65; 1878, Nos. 219 and 360; 1879, No. 224.
17 ARA, "Onze Verhouding" by Burgemeestre (1934): 11.
18 I suspect, but cannot yet prove, that this delay in receiving news of the expedition was deliberate on the part of Brooke. The Sarawak government certainly could have notified their Dutch counterparts much earlier, but Brooke was concerned about tipping off the enemy with Dutch troop movements (see Niclou 1887: 61).
19 ARA, MR 1886, Nos. 293 and 342.
20 ARA, MR 1886, Nos. 342, 364, and 733.
21 One consequence of the 1886 expedition, as ordered by the Dutch government, was a gradual abandonment of the ritual requirement that a fresh head was needed to end mourning taboos (Kielstra 1893: 2102; ARA, MR 1887, No. 219; see Wadley [2001a] for more on the aftermath of the Kedang Expedition).
22 Diseases such as dysentery and cholera were routine on government expeditions (e.g., Brooke 1990 [1866]: 127, 278, 293, 319) but had never before been so virulent.
23 A published report mentions that locals came out of their hiding places to finish off the cholera victims (Anonymous 1902). The fact that the cholera did not spread to the local population and that many of the dead and dying were taken downriver with the fleeing force (Baring-Gould and Bampfylde 1989 [1909]: 389) suggests that this report is in error.
24 ARA, Politieke Verslagen en Berichten, Verbaal, 26 August 1906, No. 39.
25 ARA, "Onze Verhouding" by Burgemeestre (1934): 16–29.
26 This is not to say that all indigenous encounters with Europeans resulted in the latter being transformed into ancestors or gods, in Borneo or elsewhere, though it is certainly not unusual (e.g., Sahlins 1995: 177–89). Most Europeans with whom the Iban had extensive contact remained mundanely human, even becoming the butt of practical jokes (Wadley and Sutlive 2001: 703).
27 ARA, MR 1877, No. 182.
28 Slashing tax baskets is a recurring theme in Iban relations with Malay rulers, as is the deception of tax collectors (Sandin 1967: 61, 127 n. 6; 1994: 162). This is similar to the "landlord's basket" described for peasant society in colonial Burma (Scott 1976: 71).
29 When I asked how many people "many" represented, I was told "about ten people"—not a lot by Western standards but a significant number for small communities (e.g., Keeley 1996: 88–93), and in keeping with the colonial reports.
30 The Urang Panggau, or people of Panggau, are "mythic spirit-heros" (Sather 1994: 4–5) who figure prominently in epics. They constitute a subset of ancestral spirits and serve as intermediaries between humans and higher-order ancestors during major rituals, some of which emphasized warfare in the past (Masing 1997). A number of the Urang Panggau such as Keling are skilled warriors, and both male and female Urang Panggau are said to appear to select humans in their dreams, conferring advice as well as amulets and other items of prowess.
31 Some versions have Keling in the role of the spirit, some Kumang, and still others mention other members of the Urang Panggau.
32 There is some consistency in this regional difference even today. In the Saribas,

Iban politicians are often said to be aided by Kumang (C. Sather, personal communication), whereas in the Emperan, it is Keling who aids aspirant politicians.

33 It is not so unusual that Bantin is superceded by Ngumbang. For example, in one legend, the lead protagonist, Ayor, becomes completely forgotten toward the end of the tale following the arrival of his father, Keling, a much more important mythic figure (Jimbun Tawai 1991).

34 ARA, "Onze Verhouding" by Burgemeestre (1934): 34.

35 Sather (1994: 48) notes that tusut in the Saribas area are commonly thirteen to twenty generations in depth, with the longest he knew of being thirty-two generations. One Emperan Iban man I interviewed knew several interconnected tusut of thirty to forty generations, though this is unusual for most people in this area.

36 The first two expeditions crossed the border intentionally but without Dutch permission and targeted Ngumbang and his kin; the third incident was apparently by accident (Wadley 2001a: 631).

37 Ngulan was the father of the young girl who escaped the Brooke attack on Wong Garai.

38 ARA, MR 1886, No. 733; 1887, No. 290.

39 The differences in the names or the numbers of the men arrested in the two versions are less significant. Giling and Rantai in the Iban account probably correspond to two of the other three Iban mentioned by the Dutch, as Iban are often known by different names to different people. The omission of one man in the Iban version is probably the result of that man being young and unmarried, and thus having no authority or larger social significance. For example, people who die young or childless are routinely forgotten in genealogies.

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